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A Stronger North? **Nordic cooperation in foreign and security policy in a new security environment**

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Abstract

Nordic cooperation on foreign and security policy has gained renewed attention in recent years. Changes in the Nordic states' immediate security environment after the Ukraine crisis, as well as growing global uncertainty, have turned foreign, security and defence policy into a focal point of the Nordic agenda.

Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation is characterized by informality, as it takes place outside of the institutional Nordic structures. This report assesses the current state of this cooperation by opening up structures and formats within which the informal cooperation takes place. The report then discusses future prospects for, as well as constraints on, deepening the cooperation from different angles, including agenda formation, institutional complexities, Nordic cooperation in multilateral contexts and bilateral Nordic relations.

Defence cooperation forms a separate sub-field of Nordic cooperation, as it has its own unique structures and practices. The report takes a look at developments in Nordic defence cooperation, at both the political and the military level.

Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation is based on commonality and trust. It enjoys a solid legitimacy among Nordic populations and politicians alike. The informal nature of the cooperation is perceived as one of its strengths. Nordic countries have significant potential for deeper cooperation and for obtaining a stronger voice. However, there are various drivers and considerable differences between the Nordic states in security political solutions, institutional affiliations, priorities and levels of commitment. These impose dividing lines and limitations on the cooperation that are hard to overcome.

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Tiivistelmä

Kiinnostus pohjoismaista ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittista yhteistyötä kohtaan on viime vuosina kasvanut. Ukrainan kriisin jälkeen tapahtuneet muutokset Itämeren alueen turvallisuustilanteessa sekä kasvava globaali epävarmuus ovat vaikuttaneet siihen, että ulko-, turvallisuus-, ja puolustuspolitiikka ovat nousseet pohjoismaisen yhteistyön keskeisiksi alueiksi.

Tässä raportissa analysoidaan pohjoismaisen ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisen yhteistyön nykytilaa. Raportti tarkastelee ensin yhteistyön muotoja, rakenteita ja aiheita, ja pohtii sen jälkeen yhteistyön syventämisen mahdollisuuksia ja esteitä eri näkökulmista. Pohjoismaiden välistä puolustusyhteistyötä tarkastellaan erillisessä kappaleessa, koska se muodostaa ulko- ja turvallisuuspolitiikan kokonaisuudesta irrallaan olevan yhteistyöalueen, jolla on erillinen rakenne ja omat käytänteet.

Pohjoismainen ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittinen yhteistyö on epämuodollista siinä mielessä, että se tapahtuu yhteispohjoismaisten institutionaalisten rakenteiden ulkopuolella. Institutionaalista yhteistyötä edustavat Pohjoismaiden neuvosto ja Pohjoismaiden ministerineuvosto. Yhteistyö perustuu keskinäiseen luottamukseen ja kulttuuriseen samankaltaisuuteen. Epämuodollisuus tekee pohjoismaisesta ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisesta yhteistyöstä joustavaa, mikä nähdään sen suurena etuna. Lisäksi yhteistyöllä on kaikissa Pohjoismaissa vahva kansalaisten ja päätöksentekijöiden tuki. Näiden tekijöiden valossa pohjoismaisen ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisen yhteistyön syventämiseen ja sitä kautta koko alueen vahvistamiseen olisi mahdollisuuksia. Pohjoismaiden välillä on kuitenkin huomattavia eroja liittyen niiden turvallisuusratkaisuihin, institutionaalisiin kytköksiin, prioriteetteihin ja sitoutumisen tasoon. Näistä aiheutuu jakolinjoja ja rajoituksia yhteistyölle, joita on vaikea ylittää. Raportti pyrkii osaltaan avaamaan tätä problematiikkaa.

Tämä julkaisu on toteutettu osana valtioneuvoston vuoden 2017 selvitys- ja tutkimussuunnitelman toimeenpanoa (www.tietokaytoon.fi).

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Sammandrag

Intresset för nordiskt samarbete i utrikes- och säkerhetspolitiken har ökat under de senaste åren. Det förändrade säkerhetspolitiska läget i Östersjöområdet efter Ukrainakrisen samt en växande global osäkerhet har lyft utrikes- och säkerhetspolitiken samt försvarspolitiken i nyckelposition i nordiskt samarbete.

Det nordiska utrikes- och säkerhetspolitiska samarbetet är av informell karaktär i och med att det sker utanför det nordiska samarbetets institutionella strukturer. Denna rapport analyserar samarbetets aktuella läge genom att först granska dess olika former. Sedan diskuterar man - ur olika perspektiv - möjligheterna att fördjupa samarbetet samt hindren som finns för detta: diskussionen omfattar agendabyggandet, institutionella komplexiteten, nordiskt samarbete i multilaterala sammanhang och bilaterala förhållanden. Försvarssamarbetet utgör ett separat delområde i och med att det har sina egna strukturer och praxis. Rapporten tar en utblick över utvecklingen av nordiskt försvarssamarbete på det politiska likaväl som militära planet.

Det nordiska utrikes- och säkerhetspolitiska samarbetet bygger på gemenskaplighet och tillit. Det njuter av ett starkt stöd från befolkningarna och politikerna. Samarbetets informella karaktär upplevs vara en av dess främsta styrkor. Det finns en betydande potential för ett djupare samarbete och uppnående av en starkare nordisk röst. Trots det finns det olika pådrivande faktorer samt påtagliga skillnader mellan de nordiska ländernas säkerhetspolitiska lösningar, institutionella anknytningar, prioriteter och graden av engagemang. Dessa skapar skiljelinjer och begränsningar för samarbetet, vilka är svåra att komma över.

Den här publikation är en del i genomförandet av statsrådets utrednings- och forskningsplan för 2017 (tietokaytoon.fi/sv).

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Tiivistelmä suomeksi	1
1. Introduction	5
1.1 Background.....	5
1.2 Objectives and structure of the report	7
2. Overview of the current state of Nordic cooperation	9
2.1 The structures of Nordic cooperation	9
2.2 The frameworks for cooperation	12
2.3 The role of institutionalized Nordic cooperation	17
2.4 Drivers of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation	18
2.5 Views of individual Nordic states.....	21
2.6 New dynamics affecting Nordic foreign and security policy.....	24
3. Prospects for development: Practices, gaps and potential for Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation	27
3.1 A broad and flexible, but fragmented agenda.....	27
3.2 Institutional complexities? Multi-layered pattern of Nordic cooperation	32
3.3 Cooperation without leadership?.....	36
3.4 The multilateral context: How to strengthen the Nordic voice?.....	38
3.5 Bilateralism as a challenge for Nordic unity?.....	40
4. Nordic Defence cooperation	42
4.1 Defence cooperation: political level.....	42
4.2 Defence cooperation: military level	43
4.3 NORDEFECO practice: structures and agenda.....	44
4.4 From all-Nordic to bilateral.....	45
4.5 Assessment – grounds for deepening the cooperation?	46
5. Conclusions: Towards a stronger Nordic voice in international politics	50
6. References	54

TIIVISTELMÄ SUOMEKSI

1 Johdanto

Pohjoismaiden välisellä yhteistyöllä on pitkä perinne ja sen institutionaalinen kehikko rakentuu Pohjoismaiden neuvoston (perustettu 1952) ja Pohjoismaiden Ministerineuvoston (1971) varaan. Tämän raportin kohteena oleva Pohjoismaiden välinen ulko- ja turvallisuus- ja puolustuspoliittinen yhteistyö tapahtuu kuitenkin virallisten instituutioiden ulkopuolella, ja on siksi luonteeltaan 'epämuodollista'. Tälle jaottelulle on osin historialliset syyt. Kylmän sodan aikana ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittiset aiheet jätettiin lähes kokonaan pohjoismaisen agendan ulkopuolelle, ja myöhemmin yhteistyötä näillä politiikka-aloilla on kehitetty irrallaan pohjoismaisen yhteistyön institutionaalisesti kehikosta. Kylmän sodan jälkeen pohjoismaisen ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisen yhteistyön kehittymistä on rajoittanut ennen kaikkea se, että EU ja/tai NATO muodostavat kaikkien Pohjoismaiden ensisijaisen ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisen viitekehyksen.

Pohjoismainen ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittinen yhteistyö ja tarve sen syventämiselle on kuitenkin enenevässä määrin herättänyt keskustelua viimeisen kymmenen vuoden aikana. Taustaa tälle voi hakea globaaleista epävarmuustekijöistä, kuten kansainvälisen sääntöpohjaisen järjestelmän heikkenemisestä, Eurooppaa koetelleesta talouskriisistä sekä arktisen ja Itämeren alueiden kohonneesta strategisesta merkityksestä. Nk. Stoltenbergin raportti vuodelta 2009 oli ensimmäinen konkreettinen aloite pohjoismaisen ulko-, turvallisuus- ja puolustuspoliittisen yhteistyön syventämiseksi. Stoltenbergin raportissa esiteltiin 13 konkreettista ehdotusta yhteistyön tiivistämiseksi. Samana vuonna aloitettiin tiiviimpi puolustusyhteistyö yhdistämällä erilliset puolustuksen yhteistyömuodot NORDEFCO-rakenteen alaisuuteen.

Viime vuosina Pohjoismaiden ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittinen toimintaympäristö on ollut vieläkin suurempien muutosten kourissa. Krimin liittäminen osaksi Venäjää vuonna 2014 ja Itä-Ukrainan sota ovat näkyneet Itämeren alueen turvallisuustilanteen heikkenemisenä ja epävarmuuden kasvuna Pohjoismaiden välittömässä lähiympäristössä. Lisäksi Pohjoismaiden ulko- ja turvallisuuspolitiikan peruspilarit, EU ja NATO, ovat olleet moninaisten muutosten keskellä. Pohjoismaiden oman turvallisuusympäristön heikkeneminen on nostanut ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittiset aiheet pohjoismaisen yhteistyön keskiöön. Tämä raportti pyrkii näiden kehityskulkujen valossa avaamaan pohjoismaisen ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisen yhteistyön nykytilaa, sen rakenteita ja toimintamuotoja. Raportti tarkastelee myös yhteistyön kehittämisen mahdollisuuksia analysoimalla yhteistyön aukkokohtia, rajoitteita sekä potentiaalia.

Tämä raportti on valmisteltu Ulkopoliittisessa instituutissa. Hankkeen tukena on toiminut pohjoismainen tutkijaryhmä (ks. raportin luku 1). Ryhmän jäsenet ovat tehneet taustahaastatteluita mm. Pohjoismaiden ulkoasian- ja puolustushallinnoissa sekä tuottaneet kirjallisia arvioita pohjoismaisen ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisen yhteistyön tilasta. Hankkeen loppuraportin kirjoittamisesta ovat vastanneet hankkeen tutkijat Ulkopoliittisessa instituutissa nojautuen tutkijaryhmän tuottamiin arvioihin, julkiseen asiakirja-aineistoon sekä tutkimuskirjallisuuteen.

2 Katsaus yhteistyön nykytilaan

Pohjoismaista ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittista yhteistyötä tehdään ennen kaikkea pohjoismaisten ulkoministeriöiden välillä (ns. N5-yhteistyö). Yhteistyö on epämuodollista siinä mielessä, että se tapahtuu yhteispohjoismaisten institutionaalisten rakenteiden (Pohjoismaiden neuvosto ja Pohjoismaiden ministerineuvosto) ulkopuolella. Yhteistyön keskiössä ovat N5-ulkoministerikokoukset, joita järjestetään yleensä noin kolme kertaa vuodessa tai erityisen tarpeen vaatiessa. Ministerien lisäksi ulkoministeriöiden virkamiehet, erityisesti poliittisen osaston päälliköt mutta myös valtiosihteerit ja eri yksiköiden, kuten turvallisuuspoliittisen ja YK-osaston, päälliköt tapaavat säännöllisesti.

Pohjoismaista ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittista yhteistyötä tehdään myös useissa muissa kokoonpanoissa ja muodoissa. Vaikka N5-kokoonpano muodostaa yhteistyön ytimen, se kattaa myös erilaiset kahdenväliset yhteistyömuodot Pohjoismaiden välillä sekä yhteistyön Pohjoismaiden ja näiden läheisten kumppanien kesken. Vakiintuneen yhteistyörakenteen muodostaa esimerkiksi turvallisuuspolitiikkaan painottunut Pohjoismaiden ja Baltian maiden NB8-yhteistyö. Uudempi yhteistyömuoto on nk. N5+1-yhteistyö, jossa Pohjoismaat yhdessä koordinoivat yhteistyötään jonkin kumppanimaan, kuten Yhdysvaltojen, kanssa. Pohjoismaisen ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisen yhteistyön keskeinen osa-alue on myös yhteistyö kansainvälisillä foorumeilla, kuten YK:ssa sekä Euroopan neuvostossa. EU ja NATO-viitekehityksessä pohjoismaisella yhteistyöllä ei toistaiseksi ole niin suurta painoarvoa.

Pohjoismaisen ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittinen yhteistyö perustuu keskinäiseen luottamukseen ja kulttuuriseen samankaltaisuuteen. Yhteistyön epämuodollisuus tekee siitä joustavaa ja pragmaattista, mikä nähdään kaikissa Pohjoismaissa sen suurena etuna. Epämuodollisuuden kääntöpuolena on kuitenkin yhteistyön näkyvien ja ulkopuolelta mitattavien tulosten puute; pohjoismaisen ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittinen yhteistyö johtaa harvoin sitoviin velvoitteisiin, yhteisiin kantoihin tai kansallisten politiikkojen koordinointiin. Yhteistyö perustuu sen sijaan tiedon ja näkemysten vaihtoon sekä yhteiseen tilanneanalyysiin.

Pohjoismaisella ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisella yhteistyöllä on kaikissa Pohjoismaissa vahva kansalaisten ja politiikkojen tuki. Näiden tekijöiden valossa yhteistyön syventämiseen ja sitä kautta koko alueen vahvistamiseen olisi mahdollisuuksia. Pohjoismaiden välillä on huomattavia eroja liittyen niiden turvallisuusratkaisuihin, institutionaalisiin kytköksiin, prioriteetteihin ja sitoutumisen tasoon. Nämä aiheuttavat jakolinjoja ja rajoja, joita Pohjoismaiden on vaikea ylittää.

3 Ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisen yhteistyön kehitysnäkymät: käytänteet, puutteet ja potentiaali

Koska pohjoismaista ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittista yhteistyötä kuvastaa hajanaisuus ja monitasaisuus, sen agendasta on vaikea saada selkeää kokonaiskuvaa. Agenda on laaja, hajanainen, joustava ja reaktiivinen. Yleensä agenda-aiheet seurailevat lähialueen poliittista tilannetta ja globaaleja tapahtumia; pysyviä prioriteetteja yhteistyölle ei sen sijaan ole määritetty.

Keskeisimmät jakolinjat pohjoismaisessa ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisessa yhteistyössä kumpuavat Pohjoismaiden erilaisista turvallisuuspoliittisista ratkaisuista. Erityisesti Pohjoismaiden jakautuminen puolustusliitto Naton jäseniin ja ei-jäseniin aiheuttaa yhteistyölle

merkittäviä rajoitteita. Lisäksi yhteistyön reunaehdoista määrittää kolmen Pohjoismaan EU-jäsenyys, mikä tarkoittaa, että yhteistyön on sopeuduttava EU:n yhteisen ulko- ja turvallisuuspolitiikan vaatimuksiin. Nämä eroavaisuudet heijastuvat myös Pohjoismaiden ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisiin painotuksiin ja sitä kautta siihen, miten maat suhtautuvat mahdollisuuksiin lisätä tai syventää pohjoismaista yhteistyötä. Yhteistyön lisääminen on potentiaalisinta alueilla, jotka ovat kauempana kansallisen turvallisuuden intresseistä. Tästä syystä esimerkiksi YK-yhteistyö jatkaa keskeisimpänä pohjoismaisen ulkopolitiittisen yhteistyön foorumina.

Yhteistyön syventämiseen tuo omat monimutkaisuutensa jako epämuodolliseen (N5) ja institutionaaliseen (Pohjoismaiden ministerineuvosto) yhteistyöhön. Vaikka ulko- ja turvallisuuspolitiikka ei kuulu ministerineuvoston mandaattiin, on neuvoston sihteeristö osoittanut kiinnostusta kasvattaa rooliaan tällä politiikkalohkolla. Pohjoismaiden ulkoasiainhallinnot puolestaan vastustavat ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisen yhteistyön muodollistamista tai institutionalisoimista. Tällä hetkellä yhteys ja koordinaatio pohjoismaisen yhteistyön eri yhteistyöformaattien ja rakenteiden välillä on heikko.

Yksi mahdollinen kenttä Pohjoismaiden aseman vahvistamiseksi on yhteistyön syventäminen monenvälisillä areenoilla. Koordinoidummalla pohjoismaisella yhteistyöllä olisi tarkoitus saavuttaa vahvempi yhteispohjoismainen ääni, joka ajaisi koko alueen etuja ja Pohjoismaille tärkeitä arvoja. Tässä on kuitenkin haasteensa. Pohjoismaiden kansalliset intressit ovat usein keskeisempiä, ja yhteistyön taso multilateraaleissa instituutioissa vaihtelee. Esimerkiksi EU:ssa ei ole pohjoismaisen yhteistyön traditiota, vaan unionin sisällä yhteistyötä tekevät kokoonpanot ovat laajempia, vaihtelevampia ja perustuvat yleensä samanmielisyyteen EU-politiikan suunnassa eivätkä pelkästään alueellisuuteen. Pohjoismaista yhteistyötä edustaa nk. NB6-ryhmä eli kolme Pohjoismaan ja kolmen Baltian maan luoma kokonaisuus, joka ei kuitenkaan muodosta pysyvää koalitiota EU:n sisällä.

Kahdenväliset suhteet Pohjoismaiden kesken ovat vahvistuneet viime vuosina. Erityisesti Suomen ja Ruotsin välinen turvallisuus- ja puolustuspoliittinen yhteistyösuhde on syventynyt. Myös Suomen ja Norjan, Ruotsin ja Tanskan sekä Ruotsin ja Norjan välillä on tiivistyvää yhteistyötä. Koska pohjoismainen ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittinen yhteistyö perustuu epämuodollisuuteen, mahdollistaa se myös kahden- ja kolmenväliset yhteistyökuviot, kun taas institutionaalinen pohjoismainen yhteistyö on lähes aina viidenvälistä. Pohjoismaisten bilateraalisuhteiden katsotaan täydentävän yleistä pohjoismaista yhteistyötä, mutta niiden kytkös laajempaan pohjoiseen kehiköön ei ole selvä.

4 Pohjoismainen puolustusyhteistyö

Puolustusyhteistyössä, niin pohjoismaisessa kuin laajemminkin, vallitsevana trendinä on siirtyminen kovan turvallisuuden kysymyksiin. Kun aiemmin keskeisin yhteistyön kohde ovat olleet kriisinhallintaoperaatiot, nyt niiden rinnalle on noussut kiinnostus NORDEF:n puitteissa tehtävään alueellisen puolustuskyvyn kehittämiseen. Tämä kehityskulku voi yhtäältä laskea yhteistyön syventämisen kynnyksiä. Toisaalta se voi osaltaan vahvistaa Pohjoismaiden välisiä jakolinjoja.

Puolustusyhteistyössä jakolinja Nato-jäsenten ja ei-jäsenten välillä on erityisen selkeä. Tätä rajoittavaa eroa vahvistaa lisääntynyt kahdenvälinen yhteistyö. Siirtyminen yhteispohjoismaisista hankkeista bilateraalisiin hankkeisiin onkin toinen Pohjoismaisessa puolustusyhteistyössä tunnistettavissa oleva trendi. Sotilaallinen liittoutumattomuus tekee Ruotsista ja Suomesta luontevat yhteistyökumppanit toisilleen, kun taas pohjoismaisten Nato-

jäsenten kanssa tehtävät hankkeet voivat olla hankalampia. NORDEFCON:n toimintalogiikka perustuukin joustavaan menettelytapaan, jossa NORDEFCON luo tiedonvaihtoon perustuvan ylärakenteen. Kaikkien Pohjoismaiden velvollisuutena ei ole osallistua yhteisiin projekteihin.

Arvioitaessa mahdollisuuksia pohjoismaisen puolustusyhteistyön syventämiseen on huomattavissa, että poliittisella ja sotilaallisella johdolla on osin eriävät näkemykset NORDEFCON mahdollisuuksista ja tähänastisista saavutuksista. Sotilaspuolella NORDEFCON-yhteistyön arvo tunnustetaan, mutta yhteistyön tehokkuuden ja saavutusten osalta arviot ovat paikoin kriittisiä. Poliittisella puolella näkemys on positiivisempi. Vaikka tarve puolustusyhteistyön kehittämiseksi nykyisessä tilanteessa tunnustetaan, institutionaaliset erot Pohjoismaiden välillä estävät nopean etenemisen. Pohjoismaisen puolustusyhteistyön tehostamisen mahdollisuuksia on nykyisten työtapojen hiomisessa, sillä uusien rakenteiden ja prosessien luomista halutaan välttää.

5 Johtopäätökset: Vahvempi pohjoismainen ääni kansainvälisessä politiikassa?

Pohjoismailla on merkittäviä mahdollisuuksia lisätä alueen roolia ja ääntä kansainvälisesti, eikä tätä potentiaalia pidä aliarvioida. Sen valjastamiseksi ja hyödyntämiseksi tarvitaan kuitenkin suunnitelmallisuutta ja strategisempaa ajattelutapaa. Pohjoismaat voisivat olla rohkeampia markkinoidessaan saavutuksiaan ja yhtenäisyytään kansainvälisessä politiikassa. Tässä ne voisivat hyödyntää niistä vallitsevaa ulkoista kuvaa, jossa korostuu Pohjoismaisten välinen yhtenäisyys, vaikka Pohjoismaat itse ovatkin hyvin tietoisia eroavaisuuksistaan.

Eryteisesti Pohjoismaiden yhteisten etujen edistäminen EU:ssa ja Natossa – sekä näiden instituutioiden toimintaan liittyvä koordinaatio ja tietojenvaihto – sisältää käyttämättömiä mahdollisuuksia, ja ne tulisivat nostaa pohjoismaisen ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisen yhteistyön prioriteeteiksi. EU ja Nato ovat kaikkien Pohjoismaiden keskeiset kansainväliset viitekehykset, joten tiiviimpi pohjoismainen yhteys voisi tuoda lisäarvoa niin Pohjoismaille alueena kuin sen yksittäisille Pohjoismaille kansallisesti.

Pohjoismaiden pitäisi soveltaa kaksiraiteista toimintatapaa ulko- ja turvallisuuspoliittisen yhteistyön jatkuvuuden ja tehokkuuden varmistamiseksi: Tämä tarkoittaa sitä, että samalla kun pidetään kiinni yhteistyölle luonteenomaisesta epämuodollisuudesta ja joustavuudesta, luodaan joitain konkreettisia politiikkatavoitteita ja pysyvämpiä prioriteetteja sekä niiden edistämiseksi yhteisesti sovittu toimeenpano. Tämä voisi tapahtua asettamalla pysyviä tai väliaikaisia työryhmiä keskeisten aihealueiden tai tavoitteiden toteuttamiseksi ja seuraamiseksi.

Pohjoismaat voisivat myös luoda mekanismin, jonka avulla rakennetaan yhteispohjoismaista tilannekuvaa, joka perustuisi yhteiseen arvioon. Jaettu näkemys turvallisuusympäristön tilanteesta tarjoaisi tukevamman perustan ja selkeämmän poliittisen lähtökohdan ulko-, turvallisuus-, ja puolustuspoliittiselle yhteistyölle.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Sub-regional cooperation between the five Nordic states – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden – has a long tradition and builds on a solid institutional framework, which is formed by the inter-parliamentary Nordic Council (established in 1952) and the intergovernmental Nordic Council of Ministers (established in 1971).¹ This does not apply to Nordic cooperation on foreign and security policy or defence, however. Up until the end of the Cold War, foreign, security and defence policy matters were almost completely excluded from the Nordic agenda, and Nordic cooperation in these areas was confined to coordinating Nordic contributions to UN peace operations. Even after the Cold War, Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation has developed largely outside the formal Nordic institutions. Moreover, the importance of Nordic foreign and security policy in the post-Cold War context has been limited, with the European Union (EU) and/or NATO forming the Nordic states' primary frameworks for international engagement.

Nevertheless, the idea of more extensive Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation has gained increasing attention and support since the late 2000s. This process was set in motion by the gradual weakening of multilateral institutions, the consequences of the economic and financial crisis in Europe, the expected US 'rebalance' towards Asia (and away from Europe), as well as the growing strategic importance of both the Arctic and the Nordic-Baltic region.² The Nordic foreign ministers reacted to the changing international conditions by tasking the former Norwegian Foreign Minister, Thorvald Stoltenberg, with writing a report on ways to strengthen Nordic cooperation in foreign, security and defence policy.³ Published in 2009, the Stoltenberg Report put forward 13 concrete and far-reaching proposals on deepening Nordic cooperation in the realms of foreign, security and defence policy. The year 2009 also saw the establishment of NORDEFECO as an overarching structure for Nordic cooperation in defence, merging previously separate forms of cooperation under one roof. A symbolic step in Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation was the adoption of the Nordic declaration of solidarity in 2011⁴, which had been one of Stoltenberg's proposals.

In recent years, the international environment around the Nordic states has undergone even greater changes. The annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and the subsequent war in Eastern Ukraine shook the European security order, resulting in a serious political stalemate between Russia and the western community of states. This has had direct implications for the Nordic states' immediate strategic environment, the Nordic-Baltic region, which has witnessed both political tensions and an increasing amount of military activity.⁵ At the same time, the main pillars of the Nordic states' international engagement, the EU and NATO, have been in

¹ The cooperation is based on the Treaty of Co-operation between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (known as the Helsinki Treaty), which entered into force in July 1962 and has been amended several times since.

² See e. g. Tiilikainen & Korhonen 2011; Etzold 2013, 5; Strang 2013, 18; Jokela & Iso-Markku 2013, 6–7.

³ Stoltenberg report 2009.

⁴ Nordic declaration of solidarity 2011.

⁵ Major & von Voss 2016.

the midst of significant developments as well. The geopolitical crisis with Russia, the success of Eurosceptic and populist political forces, and the prospect of the United Kingdom's exit from the EU (Brexit) all have important consequences for the EU.⁶ NATO, by contrast, is refocusing on its traditional task of collective defence, playing a significant role in the Nordic-Baltic region.⁷ Simultaneously, the uncertainty concerning the United States' foreign policy posture under President Donald Trump affects NATO allies in Europe, NATO as an organization, and the transatlantic relationship in general.⁸ Finally, the global power political set-up continues to evolve, with China increasing its footprint in international affairs.⁹ Traditional multilateral institutions, such as the UN, continue to be under great pressure in a world that is developing towards multipolarity.

It is against the backdrop of the recent changes in the Nordic-Baltic region, the EU, NATO, the transatlantic relationship, international institutions and the global power political set-up that this report sets out to assess both the current state and future potential of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. Where does Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation stand in an international environment marked by the above-mentioned developments? Do these developments imply new challenges, opportunities and/or constraints for Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation? The aim of the report is two-fold. Firstly, it seeks to provide an overview of the current state of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. This entails taking a look at its formats and structures as well as recent trends in this cooperation. Secondly, the report seeks to analyse in more detail possible gaps, constraints and problems as well as untapped potential in Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation.

Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation is viewed in the report from a broad perspective. The focus is primarily on the informal foreign and security policy cooperation between the Nordic states, also known as N5. However, the report also covers other formats in which the Nordics conduct foreign and security policy cooperation, including – but not limited to – the Nordic-Baltic Eight and the US-Nordic/N5+1 cooperation. Furthermore, more or less established forms of Nordic cooperation as part of wider multilateral institutions such as the EU, NATO and the UN are discussed as well. The report also evaluates the relationship between the informal foreign and security policy cooperation among the Nordic states on the one hand, and the formal Nordic cooperation within the institutional framework of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers on the other. Furthermore, the report takes stock of developments in Nordic defence cooperation, which is an essential part of Nordic foreign and security cooperation but has largely developed separately from the broader foreign and security policy frame. When assessing the positions and views of individual Nordic countries, this report concentrates on the four bigger Nordic states, that is, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. References to Iceland are made where applicable, but no in-depth analysis of the Icelandic position has been conducted when preparing this report.

⁶ Iso-Markku et al. 2017.

⁷ Lasconjarias 2014.

⁸ Aaltola et al. 2018; van Ham 2018.

⁹ Naarajärvi 2017.

1.2 Objectives and structure of the report

Objectives

This report has two primary objectives. First, it aims to assess the current state of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, portraying its forms, formats and structures, laying out recent trends and drivers, and pointing to some of the key constraints and obstacles in this cooperation. Secondly, the report analyses possibilities for deepening Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. This is done by reviewing existing practices, mapping out gaps and identifying untapped potential in this cooperation. The report also analyses the area of defence cooperation, which forms a separate sub-field of Nordic cooperation, has its own unique structures and practices, and largely follows its own institutional and political logic. By pursuing its main objectives, the report provides information about the state, level and prospects of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation for policymakers, analysts and interested readers in Finland, the Nordic region and beyond. The report also makes some observations and recommendations regarding the future development of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation that are directed particularly at Finnish and Nordic policymakers.

The research project was conducted and funded as part of the implementation of the Finnish Government Plan for Analysis, Assessment and Research activities for 2017. The initial objectives of the study were defined in the Memorandum of 2017 Government Plan for Analysis, Assessment and Research.¹⁰ It should be noted here that the report is not an academic study, but primarily a policy-oriented publication. The main premise set for the project was to underpin decision-making by producing horizontal knowledge on Nordic foreign and security political cooperation.

Methods and structure of the project

The research project was managed and coordinated by the Finnish Institute of International Affairs and steered by a group of officials led by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. The research was conducted by a group of Nordic researchers with a solid background in foreign and security policy analysis and Nordic cooperation. The group consisted of:

Research Assistant **Ragnhild Grønning**, University of Oslo, Arena Centre for European Studies

Researcher, Dr **Gunilla Herolf**, Sweden

Senior Researcher, Dr.scient.pol. **Hans Mouritzen**, Danish Institute for International Studies, DIIS

Research Professor, Dr **Helene Sjørusen**, University of Oslo, Arena Centre for European Studies

Security Analyst **Juha Pyykönen**, SecAn Oy, Finland

Research Fellow **Tuomas Iso-Markku**, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs

Research Fellow **Eeva Innola**, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs

Director, Dr **Teija Tiilikainen**, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs

¹⁰ Valtioneuvoston selvitys- ja tutkimussuunnitelma 2017 taustamuistio 2016, 80–81.

The final report of the project was written by Tuomas Iso-Markku, Eeva Innola and Teija Tiilikainen. The views expressed in the final report are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the research group as a whole.

The work carried out for this project takes advantage of a broad array of qualitative research methods. The primary research material consists of interviews as well as publicly available policy documents and statements. Interviews were conducted by the Nordic group of researchers in all Nordic states with the exception of Iceland. The interviews served primarily as background information rather than as a primary dataset and no direct references to individual interviews are made in the report. This is also because interviewees were assured complete confidentiality and anonymity. The main target of the interviews were civil servants in Nordic foreign ministries whose work is closely related to Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation or Nordic affairs more generally. Interviews were also conducted in Nordic defence ministries, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic parliaments as well as among military personnel. A total of 23 interviews were conducted. In addition to conducting interviews, the members of the Nordic research group also provided written assessments of their views on the state of and developments in Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. Over the course of the project, the research group met during three workshops organised in Helsinki to discuss findings and exchange views on the topic.

Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows: following this Introduction, the second part (sub-chapters 2.1 to 2.6) provides an overview of the current state of Nordic foreign and security policy, starting with a description of its structures, forms and formats. After that, it looks at the drivers of this cooperation, the views of individual Nordic countries and recent trends, also pointing to the constraints and obstacles that affect the extent and nature of Nordic foreign and security cooperation. The third part of the report (sub-chapters 3.1 to 3.5) is divided into several thematic sections, zooming in on some key aspects of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. The aim of these thematic sections is to closely review existing practices in Nordic cooperation, map out possible gaps and identify untapped potential in the cooperation. The fourth part of the report (sub-chapters 4.1 to 4.5) consists of an analysis of Nordic defence cooperation, which is an essential part of Nordic cooperation in foreign and security policy matters, but which has its own structures and logic and is therefore dealt with separately. The fifth part concludes the report by drawing general conclusions and making some concrete policy recommendations.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT STATE OF NORDIC COOPERATION

- Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation takes place outside the institutional structures of Nordic cooperation and is therefore referred to as *informal* cooperation. The informal nature of the cooperation is highly valued by most participants, as it allows a high level of flexibility and pragmatism, both of which are considered key characteristics of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation.
- The drawback of informality is the somewhat non-committal nature of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, which is reflected in its output: Nordic foreign and security policy seldom translates into binding commitments, joint positions or far-reaching coordination of national policies. Instead, the cooperation is primarily about sharing information, exchanging views and analysing current events and developments jointly.
- Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation is dispersed across a variety of formats and platforms. The Nordic five comprise the core, but the cooperation also encompasses bilateral relations among the Nordics as well as different forms of cooperation with external partners within and outside the Nordic-Baltic region. In multilateral structures, Nordic cooperation within the UN is the most established, whereas the Nordic label is of less significance in the EU and NATO.
- Recent changes in the Nordic states' immediate security environment as well as a broader international landscape have given a new sense of purpose to Nordic cooperation on foreign and security policy, turning questions of regional security into a priority area.
- Nordic cooperation enjoys strong legitimacy among Nordic citizens and decision-makers alike. However, there continue to be significant differences between the Nordic states in terms of basic security political solutions, institutional affiliations, strategic priorities, and their level of commitment to Nordic cooperation. These impose constraints on the cooperation that are hard to overcome.

2.1 The structures of Nordic cooperation

The institutional framework for Nordic cooperation consists of two main bodies: the Nordic Council (NC) for parliamentary cooperation and the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) for intergovernmental cooperation. However, while foreign and security policy matters are discussed within both of these bodies, foreign and security policy as a policy field is not included in their mandates. The same goes for defence policy. Thus, neither the NC nor the NCM has an organ specifically dedicated to foreign, security or defence policy matters. The NC is divided into six thematic committees,¹¹ which range from knowledge and culture to

¹¹ The six committees are the Committee for Knowledge and Culture in the Nordic Region; the Committee for a Sustainable Nordic Region; the Committee for Growth and Development in the Nordic Region; the Committee for Welfare in the Nordic Region; the Control Committee; and the Election Committee.

welfare, whereas the NCM is formed by 10 sectoral councils¹² and a recently formed ad hoc council for digitalisation.

Although foreign and security policy issues are increasingly on the agenda of both the NC and the NCM, the actual foreign and security policy cooperation between the Nordic states takes place outside the formal Nordic institutions, in an informal setting. The main actors in this cooperation are the ministries of foreign affairs (MFA) of the Nordic states. At the core of this cooperation is a format called the *Nordic five* or *N5*, referring to the five Nordic states.

Meetings in the N5 format take place at different levels. The meetings of the Nordic foreign ministers represent the highest level of this cooperation, and the foreign ministers thereby act as the 'engine' of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. Even though foreign and security policy cooperation is separate from the NCM structure, the country holding the annually rotating presidency of the NCM also chairs the N5 collaboration, having the responsibility for coordinating the foreign ministers' meetings as well as the meetings at the lower levels of this cooperation.

Due to the divide between the formal and informal side of Nordic cooperation, the ministers for Nordic Cooperation, who are nationally in charge of Nordic affairs and responsible for the practical work of the NCM, have no role in Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. Sweden is currently the only Nordic country where the foreign minister, Margot Wallström, also holds the post of minister for Nordic cooperation.¹³ This 'double-hatting' allows her to work as a personnel link between the formal and informal forms of Nordic cooperation. In theory, a similar link could be provided by the Nordic prime ministers. The prime ministers are formally responsible for steering and overseeing the institutionalised side of Nordic cooperation, but their meetings are informal, allowing them to address any issue or policy area that they see fit. In practice, however, the Nordic prime ministers have delegated the responsibility for the institutional side of Nordic cooperation to the ministers for Nordic cooperation as well as the different sectoral ministers, and the informal foreign and security policy cooperation to the Nordic foreign ministers and MFAs.¹⁴

In terms of the annual schedule for Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, the foreign ministers usually gather in N5 meetings three times a year, with the principal meeting organised in springtime in the capital of the country holding the presidency of the NCM. The second fixed meeting takes place in New York in September in conjunction with the UN General Assembly, and the possible third meeting in winter at the seat of the NCM in Copenhagen. Ad-hoc meetings between the foreign ministers can also be arranged if the

¹² The ten sectoral councils of the Nordic Council of Ministers are: the Nordic Council of Ministers for Labour (MR-A); the Nordic Council of Ministers for Sustainable Growth (MR-VÆKST); the Nordic Council of Ministers for Fisheries, Aquaculture, Agriculture, Food and Forestry (MR-FJLS); the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality (MR-JÅM); the Nordic Council of Ministers for Culture (MR-K); the Nordic Council of Ministers for Legislative Affairs (MR-LAG); the Nordic Council of Ministers for the Environment and Climate (MR-MK); the Nordic Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs (MR-S); the Nordic Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U); and the Nordic Council of Ministers for Finance (MR-FINANS).

¹³ At the time of the writing, in Denmark the minister for Nordic cooperation is Karen Ellemann, the minister for gender equality, in Finland Anne Berner, the minister for transport and communications, in Iceland Guðmundur Ingi Guðbrandsson, the minister for the environment and natural resources, in Norway Jan Tore Sanner, the minister of education and integration, and in Sweden Margot Wallström, the minister for foreign affairs. The group of ministers of cooperation also includes a minister from Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland.

¹⁴ See Strang 2016, 8.

situation so requires. Such an ad hoc meeting took place for example in relation to the refugee crisis in December 2015.

Below the foreign ministers, the director generals of the political departments of the Nordic MFAs form the most important lower level in Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. They have their own separate and regular meetings and have also undertaken some joint trips. The director generals have a central role in preparing the foreign ministers' meetings as well as coordinating common Nordic statements. To support the director generals in this work, the Nordic MFAs have Nordic or Nordic-Baltic desks – usually as part of their European departments – which are in frequent contact with each other. This means that the Nordic officials in charge of the practicalities of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation form a rather close circle. Overall, there is only a handful of employees within the Nordic MFAs who are formally responsible for covering Nordic affairs. Some of them work on this topic full time, whereas others divide their time between different topics. Somewhat paradoxically, the officials responsible for the institutionalised side of Nordic cooperation, including the preparation of the Nordic prime ministers' meetings and the meetings of the ministers for Nordic cooperation, are also located within the MFAs.

In addition to the director generals, the Nordic state secretaries also hold Nordic meetings of their own, as do the directors of the different MFA units, including the units for security policy and crisis management as well as the units for UN policy. Nordic defence ministers and defence ministry officials also meet in the N5 constellation, sometimes together with the foreign ministers. These meetings serve as a further channel to discuss foreign and security policy issues. However, much of the defence ministers' work is also dedicated to coordinating Nordic defence cooperation under the umbrella of *NORDEF*CO and/or in other constellations. Overall, defence forms a field that is largely independent of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. The informal cooperation between the Nordic states also covers the field of development, with the relevant ministers and MFA officials cooperating with one another on a regular basis, although this cooperation often takes place in a larger group of like-minded countries.

Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation also takes place in the framework of Nordic embassies, which cooperate with each other in more or less formalised ways in their respective countries. The Nordic embassy in Berlin, where the five embassies are present as separate entities under the same roof, and the Nordic House in Yangon, where the Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish embassies share the same building, act as the flagships of this cooperation.

Although the MFA-driven informal foreign and security policy cooperation is widespread and regular, it is very different from the formal Nordic cooperation under the institutional tutelage of the NCM and the NC. There is no joint administration and, consequently, no common institutional memory. Moreover, there is no shared budget. Despite elements of formalisation – such as the organisation of Nordic foreign ministers' meetings at regular intervals – Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation still builds heavily on mutual trust, past experience, personal contacts and the requirements of the situation at hand. The informal nature of the cooperation is highly valued by most participants, as it allows a high level of flexibility and pragmatism, both of which are considered key characteristics of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. In this sense, Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation is seen by many practitioners as the antithesis of the institutionalised Nordic cooperation, which is perceived to be too bureaucratic, ritualistic and slow, burdened by heavy structures and – in

the case of the NCM – strict adherence to the principle of consensus.¹⁵ Hence, there is little appetite in the Nordic MFAs for formalising or institutionalising Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation by integrating it into the remit of the NCM.

The drawback of the cherished informality is the somewhat non-committal nature of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, which is reflected in the practical output of this cooperation. The lack of formal structures, a joint administration and a common institutional memory means that Nordic foreign and security policy seldom translates into binding commitments, joint positions or even joint public statements (even though such statements are published every now and then). Instead, Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, especially at the higher levels, is primarily about sharing information, exchanging views and analysing current events and developments jointly. Steps like the adoption of the Nordic solidarity clause in 2011 or the drafting of the 2014 joint statement on deepening Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation ('Building security in a comprehensive manner')¹⁶ represent exceptions to this rule and are bound up with considerable administrative and political efforts by the Nordic states.

2.2 The frameworks for cooperation

While the N5 format forms the core of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, the cooperation extends way beyond this constellation, creating a dense, but complicated and fragmented network of frameworks and platforms. First, the N5 cooperation is supplemented by the bilateral cooperation between individual Nordic states. All the Nordic states have close and regular interaction with each other through a variety of channels, whether formally or informally. The full extent of such bilateral contacts, as well as their importance, is very hard to measure. Currently, the closest of the bilateral relationships among the Nordics is that between Finland and Sweden, whose cooperation has developed dynamically in recent years and is particularly important in the area of defence.¹⁷

Secondly, the Nordic five as a group also engages in foreign and security cooperation with a number of close partners. The most important of these broader cooperation formats is composed of the five Nordic countries and the three Baltic countries (together forming the *Nordic-Baltic Eight* or *NB8*). There are annual meetings between both the prime ministers and the foreign ministers of the eight countries. The defence ministers of the eight countries meet in a Nordic-Baltic constellation as well, discussing, among other things, the Nordic-Baltic defence cooperation that is conducted in a NORDEFECO-Baltic format. Apart from foreign, security and defence policy, NB8 cooperation also covers such areas as energy and transport, financial matters as well as domestic security and justice. Moreover, both the NC and the NCM are involved in several aspects of Nordic-Baltic cooperation.

The NB8 cooperation on foreign and security policy, like the N5 cooperation on these matters, is informal in nature. As is the case with the N5 cooperation, the NB8 cooperation also extends to the lower levels of the Nordic and Baltic MFAs, although NB8 meetings take place less

¹⁵ See Strang 2013, p. 60–69.

¹⁶ Joint statement by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden on Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation – building security in a comprehensive manner 2014.

¹⁷ Salenius-Pasternak 2014; Winnerstig 2017.

frequently than N5 meetings. Overall, the NB8 has long been a somewhat more security-oriented format compared to N5, but the recent developments in the Nordic-Baltic region have caused the agendas of the N5 and NB8 formats to converge more closely. The NB8 format has been of particular interest to Sweden and Denmark, both of which have been promoting the incorporation of the Baltic countries into more, or even most, areas of Nordic cooperation. Finland, by contrast, puts more emphasis on the N5 format.

In addition to the annual meetings between the foreign ministers of the NB8 countries, since 2013 annual foreign ministers' meetings have been held between the NB8 countries and the Visegrád group (V4), consisting of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. The constellation formed by these two regional groupings has been named *NB8+V4*. So far, NB8+V4 meetings have focused on security matters in particular, including the conflict in Ukraine, terrorism and energy security, but also on the Eastern Partnership and migration. In 2014, the foreign ministers of the NB8+V4 countries issued a joint statement condemning Russian actions in Ukraine and Crimea.¹⁸

Another, similar grouping is formed by the NB8 countries, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and the UK, which are collectively known as the *Northern Group*. This grouping, which was initiated by the UK government in 2010, is an informal forum for political consultation and concentrates on the areas of security and defence, including cyber and energy security.¹⁹ Due to the orientation of the Northern Group, the main actors in this group are the defence ministers of the countries involved. The UK has also engaged with the NB8 countries by establishing the so-called *Northern Future Forum* (NFF), which was initially known as the UK-Nordic-Baltic summit and gathered the prime ministers of the nine countries as well as experts and business leaders to discuss issues such as competitiveness, innovation and gender equality. While lacking an explicit foreign and security policy dimension, the Northern Future Forum has often been seen as an attempt to forge a group of like-minded countries that could work together on a number of issues and on different platforms, most notably the EU.²⁰ However, the group has been inactive since the 2016 NFF was postponed.

Apart from the above-mentioned formats, the NB8 countries as a group also cooperate with the US in a framework called *Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe* (e-PINE or sometimes De-PINE when defence issues are included). This framework was initiated by the US in 2003 and brings together civil servants from the NB8 and the US to address issues related to security and resilience, such as cyber security, terrorism and human trafficking. Apart from the civil servants' meetings, there have also been annual gatherings of Nordic, Baltic and US think-tankers under the umbrella of e-PINE. However, the importance of e-PINE is limited and not to be compared with that of the N5 or the NB8.

In the case of the Nordic five, there is also another, newer and less established format for cooperating with the US. This so-called *N5+1* or *N5+US* cooperation was initiated during the presidency of Barack Obama, reflecting Obama's interest in the Nordic welfare model. The first N5+US event was a joint meeting between the Nordic political leaders and President Obama in Stockholm in September 2013. This was followed by the so-called 'US-Nordic leaders' summit' in Washington in May 2016. The summit produced a joint statement, addressing several topical questions of mutual interest, such as the US role in European

¹⁸ NB8 + V4 Joint Statement 2014.

¹⁹ Breitenbauch 2017, 10.

²⁰ The Baltic Times 2011.

security and the Baltic Sea region; the response to large-scale migratory movements; issues related to climate, energy and the Arctic; free trade, as well as global development and humanitarian assistance.²¹ Whether or in what form the N5+US cooperation will continue under the administration of President Donald Trump still remains unclear.

Apart from the US, there has been some interest in using the '5+1' format with other states as well. In April 2018, a summit between the Nordic states and India was organized in Stockholm. During the summit, the prime ministers of the six countries addressed several broad topics, including global security issues.²² Similarly, China has shown willingness to engage with the Nordic states as a group, but this cooperation is still in its infancy. Overall, developing a unified Nordic approach towards partners in the N5+1 format is far from simple. By initiating such cooperation, the Nordic countries will have to think about the potential implications for their bilateral relations with the country in question. Moreover, in the case of the Nordic EU member states of Denmark, Finland and Sweden, there is the question of whether such 'mini-lateral' cooperation with non-EU countries is compatible with the nature and objectives of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. At the same time, the interest of partners to cooperate with the Nordic states as a group demonstrates that they are seen externally as forming a unit.

Nordic cooperation also extends to several institutional platforms. With regard to Nordic cooperation within broader institutional structures, the cooperation within the UN is the most established: Nordic cooperation on UN matters has a long tradition and the 'Nordic brand' has been very strong within the organisation. At the UN, the Nordic representatives have their own weekly meetings that are described as having the character of family affairs. There is also sectoral cooperation between the Nordic countries as well as a number of ad hoc meetings and events. In 2016, during the Finnish presidency of the NCM, Finland's UN ambassador organised meetings in which the candidates running for UN Secretary General came to introduce themselves to the Nordic representatives. Recently, the importance of the NB8 format has also increased within the UN context, with regular meetings taking place between the Nordic and Baltic representatives.

In contrast to the general, non-committal nature of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, Nordic cooperation within the UN extends to far-reaching coordination between the five states. Thus, the Nordics present joint candidates to key positions within the UN structure and support each other in campaigning. The most prominent example of this coordination was Sweden's campaign to gain a seat at the UN Security Council, which was supported by all of the Nordics. When possible, the Nordic states also try to agree on joint positions and promote them vis-à-vis other UN bodies and members. However, Denmark, Finland and Sweden as EU members coordinate their policies with the other EU members as well. This imposes some constraints on the ability of the Nordic states to act as an independent entity.

Nordic cooperation is also rather close in the Council of Europe, with the Nordic countries holding regular meetings, coordinating views and occasionally agreeing on joint candidates. As in the UN, the Nordic countries are also often supported by their three Baltic partners, forming a group of eight.²³ A further platform for Nordic cooperation is the OSCE. Within the

²¹ U.S.-Nordic Leaders' Summit Joint Statement, <http://tpk.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=346274&nodeid=44809&contentlan=2&culture=en-US>.

²² Joint Press Statement from the Summit between India and the Nordic countries.

²³ Torbiörn 2009.

International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the Nordic and Baltic countries together form a strong collaborative unit. However, with the exception of the UN, Nordic cooperation within the other institutional settings gets only limited attention from the Nordic foreign policy leadership and was seldom referred to in the interviews with policy-makers.

Unlike in the UN, there is only a limited amount of Nordic cooperation within the EU framework.²⁴ Only three of the five Nordic states are members of the EU and the Nordic label is of less significance in the EU, as there are a number of dividing lines within the Union. To the extent to which there is 'Nordic' cooperation in the EU, it takes place on an ad hoc basis or in a format called *NB6*, which brings together the three Nordic EU member states and the three Baltic states. The members of the *NB6* grouping have coordinated their positions before major EU meetings, such as European Council and Foreign Affairs Council meetings,²⁵ but the *NB6* does not form a permanent coalition within the EU.

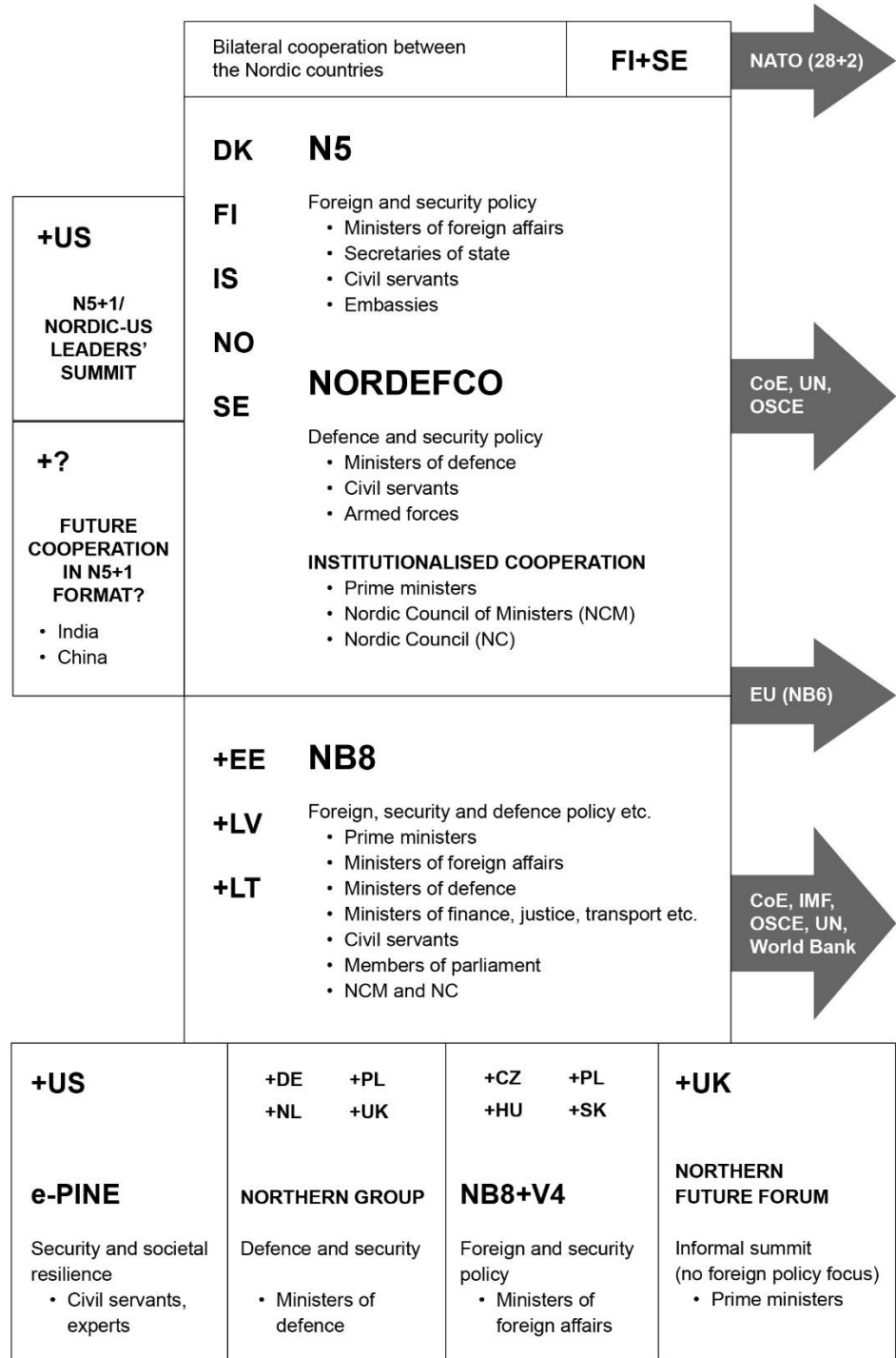
During its presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2016, Finland worked towards deepening Nordic cooperation with regard to EU issues, but this effort mainly concentrated on legislative issues and not on foreign and security policy. When it comes to Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation within the EU, Finland's and Sweden's different views on the development of the EU's security and defence policy have put some limitations on this, as has Denmark's opt-out concerning defence matters. While Finland is strongly disposed towards developing the EU's security and defence policy and embraces the EU's current broad defence agenda, Sweden has been much more cautious in its approach. Despite the limited amount of cooperation between the Nordics in the EU, they frequently exchange information about major EU policy issues in the *N5* setting as well. This is particularly important for the non-EU Nordic states, and for Norway above all, which traditionally sees the *N5* cooperation as a highly valuable access point to EU decision-making.

When it comes to NATO, there is no Nordic cooperation as such. However, the Nordic NATO members – especially Norway – have acted as an important access point for non-members Finland and Sweden, both of which currently cooperate very closely with NATO. Moreover, as is the case with EU affairs, Nordic member states exchange information and views with regard to developments in NATO in *N5* and *NB8* meetings. Apart from participating in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme and the recently established Enhanced Opportunities partnership, Finland and Sweden have also been called to cooperate with NATO in a so-called *28+2* format, which addresses issues concerning the security situation around the Baltic Sea.

²⁴ Tiilikainen & Korhonen 2011, 6.

²⁵ Haukkala et al. 2017, 28.

Formats and platforms of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation



Picture 1. This pictures illustrates the various formats and platforms of Nordic foreign, security and defence policy cooperation.

2.3 The role of institutionalized Nordic cooperation

As pointed out, the cooperation in the different forms and formats described above is conducted informally between the Nordic MFAs. However, the institutions of formal Nordic cooperation engage in international affairs as well. First, both the NC and NCM represent Nordic cooperation in the way that it has traditionally been understood. This means breaking barriers through economic and cultural exchange. Moreover, both the NC and NCM are also doing rather extensive international outreach, which overlaps at least partly with the remit of informal foreign and security policy cooperation. The Secretariat to the NCM has international offices in the Baltic countries and has maintained information offices in St. Petersburg, Kaliningrad and Murmansk, as well as contact points in Petrozavodsk and Arkhangelsk. However, the NCM activities in Russia were put on hold after Russian authorities requested the NCM's offices to be registered as 'foreign agents'.²⁶ The Secretariat to the NCM also has an interest in Arctic affairs and has played a central role in developing the nascent cooperation between the Nordic countries and China.

In practice, the NCM's international engagement develops above all through different cooperation projects that are funded from the NCM's budget. Overall, the Secretariat to the NCM – which often acts both as an administrative body and as a policy initiator²⁷ – would be ready to extend the NCM's role in foreign and security policy by bringing these areas more firmly into the institutional framework of Nordic cooperation, but there is little appetite for this in the Nordic MFAs.

The NC's interest in foreign and security policy has also increased considerably. In its session in Helsinki in 2017, the NC published a new 5-year international strategy for the years 2018–2022.²⁸ In the strategy, the NC takes on its traditional role as impulse-giver by formulating proposals that are directed at the Nordic governments and the NCM. The strategy pushes the Nordic countries to cooperate more closely together on "international affairs, defence and security, including civil defence, which contributes to the general level of security". It also argues that Nordic countries should increase their consultations ahead of meetings in different international fora, continue their traditional efforts in peace-making and civilian crisis management, engage more strongly in Nordic branding and ensure that more Nordic embassies and representatives abroad share premises. Furthermore, the strategy calls for more dialogue on international affairs between the NC and the NCM. The strategy also sets priorities for the NC's own international work, including the commitment to promote key Nordic values, the Nordic social model, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Nordic best practices, and to make sure that more countries in the world contribute to solving the refugee crisis.

The international work of the NC and the NCM are particularly important in strengthening the common Nordic image – the 'Nordic brand' – abroad. The NC and the NCM also play an important role in many areas that have a clear foreign and security policy dimension and either an explicit or an implicit link to the issues dealt with in the framework of informal Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. These include areas such as energy, migration, climate as well as relations with Russia and China, where the NCM has already been rather active. Due

²⁶ Barents Observer 2015.

²⁷ Strang 2013, 10–11.

²⁸ Nordic Council 2017.

to these links, there would be a clear need for more coordination between the institutionalised and the informal side of Nordic cooperation.

2.4 Drivers of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation

In general, Nordic cooperation has been seen as being driven by a common cultural and linguistic heritage, geographic proximity, shared values, similar socio-economic and societal models as well as a long history of cooperation and interaction.²⁹ These factors tie the Nordic countries together and create a sense of commonality between them. They are also key elements of the 'Nordic brand', the image that the Nordic states have internationally.

The same factors are also of importance in the area of foreign and security policy. Officials from the different Nordic countries frequently highlight shared values and a strong sense of mutual trust as the basis for Nordic cooperation. The sense of commonality and shared values between the Nordic states is also reflected in the very high levels of public support for Nordic cooperation, including Nordic foreign, security and defence policy cooperation. From the point of view of the policy-makers, the strong public support for Nordic foreign and security policy means that anything done under the Nordic label is bound to enjoy a considerable degree of legitimacy. This makes it easy for any Nordic politician to support Nordic cooperation. Indeed, there is strong support for Nordic foreign and security policy across party lines in all Nordic states. At the same time, only a few politicians in the Nordic states have a strong interest in Nordic cooperation and actively promote it.

As Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation is informal in nature, individual policy-makers' commitment to, interest in and knowledge of Nordic cooperation, as well as the personal relationships between policy-makers, are highly important for this cooperation. Although the cooperation among Nordic colleagues is often natural, it also requires time and effort to establish close personal ties and networks. There are some indications that Nordic policy-makers now have less time and fewer opportunities to build and maintain such relationships and networks.³⁰

When it comes to foreign and security policy matters, the Nordic brand has traditionally been closely associated with strong support for a rule-based international order and multilateralism; the use of diplomacy; expertise and engagement in various forms of peace-mediation and peace-making; relatively high spending on development; promotion of good governance and the rule of law; and the empowerment of civil society.³¹ While the commitment of individual Nordic governments to these values has varied over time, they still form a strong basis on which to build.³² At the same time, the common values have not hindered the Nordic states from defining their interests in very different ways, which has led to different institutional affiliations and put practical limitations on their cooperation.

Moreover, Nordic cooperation in foreign and security policy matters has been strongly shaped by external factors. During the Cold War years, Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation

²⁹ Korhonen 2011, 13–17; Strang 2016, 3–4; Mouritzen 1995.

³⁰ Strang 2013, 78–79.

³¹ Korhonen 2011, 13-14.

³² Ibid.

was largely impossible due to the sensitive power-political constellation between the Western and the Eastern blocs, and the Nordic states' differing positions in that constellation. At the same time, the Cold War context provided incentives for the Nordic states to seek cooperation in areas of 'low politics'. After the end of the Cold War, the previous constraints for Nordic foreign and security policy disappeared. On the other hand, the quick advance of the European integration process in particular, with Finland and Sweden joining the EU in 1995, and the establishment of new institutions in the Nordic-Baltic region, including the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and the Arctic Council (AC), meant that the significance of the Nordic format waned somewhat. However, Nordic states individually and collectively played an important role in supporting the accession of the three Baltic states into the EU and NATO, which gave a sense of purpose to Nordic cooperation.³³ Nevertheless, post-Cold War Nordic foreign and security policy has taken place in the shadow of the EU and NATO, with one or the other forming the most important framework for international engagement for all five Nordic states. Nordic cooperation in all its variants has generally been seen as a supplementary form of cooperation at best

However, since the late 2000s, external developments have generated increasing interest in Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. This process was set in motion by several developments affecting the Nordic states' international environment and engagement in the late 2000s and early 2010s. At the global level, the gradual weakening of multilateral institutions (most importantly the UN) at the cost of new informal forums (such as the G20) presented a worrying trend from the point of view of small states, such as the five Nordics, which have traditionally strongly relied on and supported multilateral institutions.³⁴ At the European level, the economic and financial crisis posed a challenge to both the EU and individual EU member states, creating widespread uncertainty and generating interest in alternative forms of cooperation.³⁵ Moreover, the crisis strained government budgets and hence underlined the value of cost-effective cooperation, also in the areas of foreign and security policy and particularly in the area of defence.³⁶ Finally, at the regional level, the Nordic states were faced with at least three notable trends. First, there were strong indications pointing to a shift in the strategic focus of US foreign and security policy, with the so-called rebalance or pivot towards Asia and away from Europe. In the Nordic region, this was most acutely felt when the US withdrew its military personnel from Iceland in 2006. Secondly, the Nordic states were taking note of Russia's aspirations to modernise its weaponry, as well as Russia's more assertive behaviour in its neighbouring regions. And thirdly, all Nordic states considered that the strategic importance of their own immediate surroundings, that is, the Arctic and the Nordic-Baltic region, was increasing.³⁷ Taken together, these developments motivated the Nordic foreign ministers to commission the Stoltenberg Report with practical proposals for deepening foreign, security and defence policy cooperation. At the same time, the Nordic defence administrations started working towards closer cooperation. While there was no significant qualitative leap in Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, the changing external environment did bring new momentum into the cooperation.

Against this backdrop, it comes as no surprise that the recent significant changes both in the Nordic states' immediate security environment as well as in their broader international environment have also had an impact on Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. After

³³ Borring Olesen & Strang 2016, 40–45.

³⁴ Græger 2011.

³⁵ Etzold 2013, 5.

³⁶ Jokela & Iso-Markku 2013; Forsberg 2013.

³⁷ Jokela & Iso-Markku 2013, 6–7; Forsberg 2013, 1176; Bengtsson 2011.

the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and the subsequent war in Eastern Ukraine, Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation has gained a new sense of purpose and relevance. All Nordic states have been increasingly interested in Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, and the different Nordic formats are now seen as an important channel for sharing information and exchanging views about developments that affect the Nordic-Baltic region and its security.

Consequently, the Nordic foreign and security policy agenda has gradually shifted, with issues of regional security turning into a priority area. Hence, among the key topics of Nordic foreign ministers' meetings since 2014 have been the Ukraine crisis, Russia's foreign and security policy posture as well as the security situation around the Baltic Sea. Debates about Russia's role in Syria or possible changes in the transatlantic relations have also been conducted with their implications for regional security in mind. This does not mean that other questions, including UN matters, would have disappeared from the Nordic agenda, which continues to be both broad and flexible. However, the balance in Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation has tilted in favour of hard security in the Nordic-Baltic region. In recent years, only the refugee crisis, which at its height led to tensions among the Nordics, has gained a similar level of attention and urgency among the Nordics as questions of regional security.

Overall, the Nordics have taken very similar views of the developments in European security, condemning Russia's actions in Crimea and other parts of Ukraine and highlighting the need to defend the European security order. These views have been expressed by the Nordic states on various platforms and both jointly and individually. On the other hand, the Nordic states still continue to adhere to different styles in their Russia policies, which reflect their different foreign policy traditions, geopolitical positions and bilateral relationships with Russia. These differences underline how difficult far-reaching policy coordination with regard to major issues such as relations with Russia would be even within the tightly-knit N5 grouping. In particular, officials highlight the contrast between Finland's pragmatic relationship with Russia and Sweden's more assertive and value-driven approach, whereas Denmark and Norway can be placed somewhere between these two poles.³⁸

Both the informal tradition of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation and the existing differences between the Nordic states explain why there has been little change in the concrete output of this cooperation despite the increasing sense of urgency and relevance. With the exception of formulating some joint statements, the Nordics have not engaged in more comprehensive efforts at policy cooperation. Instead, it is the opportunity to share and receive information, discuss openly, and jointly analyse the developments within and beyond the Nordic-Baltic region that are mentioned by officials as the most valuable aspects of this cooperation. Moreover, although the interest in Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation has increased among all the Nordics, their level of commitment to and preferences regarding this cooperation vary. This is where their different institutional affiliations as well as strategic outlooks and priorities come into play. Most importantly, the value of Nordic cooperation for the individual Nordic states continues to be largely defined by whether and how it can supplement their engagement in the EU and/or NATO.

³⁸ On Danish and Swedish Russia policies, see Mellander & Mouritzen 2016.

2.5 Views of individual Nordic states

In Finland, the interest in Nordic foreign, security and defence policy cooperation has increased during the last 10 years and especially since the Ukraine crisis, which provided a strong incentive for Finland to further strengthen its multi-layered network of foreign, security and defence policy partnerships. The importance of Nordic cooperation is clearly expressed in the key foreign and security policy documents published during the last few years. In Finland, Nordic cooperation is largely framed as a security question. The Finnish government's White Paper on foreign and security policy stresses that "*Nordic cooperation is of central importance to Finland and its security*".³⁹ Even though the EU is clearly the most important international framework for Finland, and the importance of Finland's cooperation with NATO and the US has increased significantly, the Nordic framework is regarded as a further channel of influence and security. According to the Finnish government, joint actions by the Nordic countries would allow the Nordics to "*strengthen security in their neighbourhood, and [to] increase their influence in international questions*".⁴⁰ By acting together, the Nordics could, among other things, intensify their relationship with the United States.

The Finnish political leadership's support for Nordic cooperation is high and seems to translate into the work of the administration, which speaks of Nordic cooperation in very positive terms. However, despite the repeated references to the importance of Nordic cooperation and the formal pledges to further deepen this cooperation, many of the official statements regarding this topic remain rather vague. Details about the areas or questions in which Finland would like to see the Nordics deepen their foreign and security policy cooperation – and how this is to be achieved – are difficult to find. However, during its one-year period at the helm of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, Finland proposed the idea of having a 'living document' of priorities for the cooperation. These priorities, compiled under Finland's leadership, included migration; cooperation between the EU and NATO; cooperation between NATO and Finland and Sweden (28+2); dialogue between the Nordic states and the US; European security and defence in the context of Brexit; cooperation in UN matters; and countering violent extremism.

Both the Finnish government's White Paper on foreign and security policy and its separate White Paper on defence policy⁴¹ also pay considerable attention to NORDEFECO as a central framework for Finland's defence cooperation. From the Finnish government's point of view, cooperation under the NORDEFECO umbrella is to be further developed for example in the areas of situational awareness as well as training and exercises. Defence cooperation has developed faster than the cooperation in foreign policy. Therefore, Finnish foreign minister Timo Soini, for example, has expressed a need to have efforts in foreign and security policy cooperation enhanced in order to match the level of defence cooperation.⁴²

Characteristic of Finland are the high levels of both political and public support for Nordic cooperation. An annual survey by the Advisory Board for Defence Information (ABDI), a permanent parliamentary committee, measures opinions on foreign and security policy and defence. The 2017 survey showed that 83 per cent of Finns believe that Finland's participation

³⁹ Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy 2016, 12.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 21–22.

⁴¹ Government's Defence Report 2017.

⁴² See e.g. Speech by foreign minister Timo Soini 6 September 2017.

in Nordic Defence cooperation improves security.⁴³ That figure is growing, having been 79% in 2016 and 74% in 2015. Nordic defence cooperation therefore ranks ahead of EU defence cooperation (70% in 2017), as well as the idea of Finnish membership of NATO (only 29% in 2017).⁴⁴ Within Finland's political parties, the support for Nordic defence cooperation is almost unanimous across the political spectrum.

In addition to broader Nordic cooperation, bilateral cooperation with Sweden is highly significant for Finland. Sweden's role as Finland's closest partner is emphasised in all public statements and documents, and was clearly expressed in the Finnish interviews as well. However, bilateral cooperation with Norway has also increased in importance recently.

In Sweden, politicians across the political spectrum generally regard Nordic cooperation positively. The Swedish *Statement on Foreign Policy*⁴⁵ prioritizes building common security multilaterally, in collaboration with other countries and organisations. A variety of multilateral cooperation formats are portrayed in positive terms and as complementing each other. Sweden, like Finland, has remained outside NATO. However, after Russian actions in the Nordic-Baltic region (most notably the "Russian Easter" incident, which saw six Russian aircraft simulate an attack on Stockholm and Blekinge) and the events in Ukraine, cooperation with both NATO and the US has become increasingly important in Swedish security policy. At the same time, a cross-party consensus on the importance of the Nordic dimension of Swedish security has increased as well.⁴⁶

The Swedish government mentions solidarity towards Nordic partners in times of crisis in its *Statement on Foreign Policy*.⁴⁷ The key Finnish foreign and security policy document, in contrast, refers only to the EU's mutual assistance clause and solidarity clause,⁴⁸ whereas Nordic solidarity is not mentioned in Norwegian or Danish foreign policy documents, as both of these countries see NATO's Article 5 as the cornerstone of their security. The lack of a reference to Nordic solidarity in the Nordics' national foreign and security policy documents is indicative of the nature of the Nordic declaration of solidarity, which was adopted in 2011. The declaration highlighted value-based elements of Nordic foreign policy and emphasized cooperation "in the spirit of solidarity".⁴⁹ It included a promise, albeit non-binding, of assistance in case a Nordic country is affected by a crisis, be it natural or man-made. However, it has remained a political declaration with few practical implications.

Despite Sweden's strong multilateral orientation, enhancing bilateral security and defence cooperation with Finland is mentioned as being particularly important. The salience of this bilateral relationship derives partly from Swedish and Finnish non-participation in military alliances. The Swedish *Statement on Foreign Policy* highlights the security and defence aspect of the bilateral cooperation as part of Sweden's security policy solution: "[b]road and responsible foreign and security policy combined with enhanced defence cooperation, particularly with Finland, and credible national defence capabilities". To what extent this bilateral cooperation is understood as 'Nordic cooperation' is ambiguous, as it often seems to be a higher priority than cooperation between the Nordic five. Sweden's bilateral relationship

⁴³ Advisory Board for Defence Information 2017, 14.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 37.

⁴⁵ *Statement of Government Policy* 2017.

⁴⁶ Friis & Garberg Bredesen 2017.

⁴⁷ *Statement of Government Policy* 2017.

⁴⁸ *Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy* 2016, 20.

⁴⁹ *Nordic Declaration of Solidarity* 2011.

with Norway has been more problematic, suffering from a mutual lack of confidence due to failed projects on joint defence procurements. However, relations have shown signs of recovery recently.⁵⁰

Despite Norwegian ex-minister Stoltenberg's role in furthering Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, Norway has not been as interested in Nordic cooperation as Finland and Sweden. This is primarily due to Norway's membership of NATO. While official Norwegian statements refer to Nordic cooperation in positive terms, NATO and the US continue to be the cornerstones of Norwegian foreign, security and defence policy, meaning that Norway continues to prioritise them above all else. The key documents setting out Norway's defence, security and foreign policy are the White Paper (Meld. St. 36)⁵¹ from the Solberg Government on Norwegian foreign and security policy, and the Long Term Defence Plan.⁵² The main focus in both of these documents is on NATO.

Nevertheless, Norway's White Paper of 2017 also lists strengthening 'the European and Nordic dimension' in Norwegian security policy as one of the main courses of action for Norwegian foreign and security policy.⁵³ However, this refers not only to the Nordic-Baltic region or Northern Europe, but also to Europe more broadly. Moreover, this regional dimension of Norwegian foreign, security and defence policy is clearly framed in NATO terms. Thus, the White Paper states that Norway's cooperation with the Nordic and Baltic states is an example of an increasing trend within NATO towards cooperation in smaller groups that may also include non-member states. Cooperation in the Nordic-Baltic setting is one of the groups in which Norway is present, but the White Paper also highlights the importance of Norway's cooperation with France, Germany and the UK.⁵⁴

The evolving situation in the Nordic-Baltic region can clearly be seen in the document, which states that the Norwegian government will "*maintain close dialogue with Nordic and Baltic countries on developments in neighbouring areas*".⁵⁵ Moreover, the White Paper notes that Norway's "*close relations with Sweden and Finland will be important in the event of a security crisis in our neighbouring areas*".⁵⁶ Apart from that, it also mentions the Nordics' joint experiences in international operations as well as the need to intensify cooperation on countering violent extremism and to 'defend the Nordic community of shared values'.

Due to the different institutional affiliations of the Nordic countries, Norway also sees Nordic and Nordic-Baltic cooperation as avenues for promoting closer cooperation between the EU and NATO.⁵⁷ Indeed, the EU dimension is traditionally a strong incentive for Norway to engage in Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, providing it with important information on the EU's foreign, security and defence policy, as well as other important decisions and discussions in the EU.

For Norway, a key aspect in its neighbouring regions is the Arctic region, and the Arctic or the High North are mentioned as one of Norway's most important foreign policy priorities. Hence,

⁵⁰ Friis & Bredesen 2017, 2.

⁵¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway 2017.

⁵² Ministry of Defence of Norway 2016.

⁵³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway 2017: 6–7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 11–12.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 33.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

finding common ground for enhanced cooperation in relation to the Arctic question might encourage Norway to invest further resources in developing Nordic cooperation. On the other hand, Norway considers Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation as being primarily about the security of the Baltic Sea region or the broader Nordic-Baltic region, considering a shift in its focus as unrealistic.

Denmark has traditionally not held Nordic cooperation as high on its priority list as Finland, Sweden or even Norway. Thus, Denmark has sometimes been described as an outlier among the Nordic five,⁵⁸ both in geographic and in political terms. Denmark has followed a more Atlanticist approach, paying particular attention to its relationship with the US and contributing actively to NATO, which continues to be the central and definitive element in Danish foreign and security policy. Among the Nordic EU members, Denmark has been perceived as the least eager member, especially in terms of the EU's foreign policy developments. Having the opt-out from the defence aspects of the EU's common security and defence policy (CSDP) unavoidably channels into differing approaches compared to the other two Nordic EU members, Finland and Sweden.

Generally speaking, the Danish perspective towards Nordic cooperation is pragmatic. It is of interest whenever there are practical benefits to be gained, not only for the sake of the cooperation as such. Denmark held the presidency of the NCM in 2015. In terms of foreign policy, the Danish presidential agenda highlighted the Arctic and Baltic security questions. Accordingly, Denmark has been active in engaging in Baltic-Nordic cooperation. This is expressed in the Danish Foreign and Security Policy Strategy 2017-2018, which states that “[h]istorically, Denmark has had close relations with the Baltic countries. The government wishes to continue and develop this cooperation. The NATO countries around the Baltic Sea, as well as Sweden and Finland, share a common interest in the security and stability of the Baltic Sea Region.”⁵⁹ Moreover, due to “Denmark’s geopolitical position and the changing conditions”, the government emphasizes its ambition to expand Denmark’s active security policy role “[...] through strengthened Nordic cooperation and cooperation with our other allies in the Baltic Sea Region, including the planned contribution to NATO’s enhanced forward presence in the Baltic countries”.⁶⁰ As far as the Arctic region is concerned, this topic remains high on the list of priorities in Danish foreign policy. Denmark has a national interest in the region due to Greenland. Overall, even Denmark has become more interested in Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation due to the recent developments in the region. However, unlike in the case of Finland, Norway and Sweden, Russia is still not regarded as the central factor in Danish security and defence policy.⁶¹

2.6 New dynamics affecting Nordic foreign and security policy

To summarise, it can be said that for non-NATO members Finland and Sweden, the new strategic context has been an incentive to expand and strengthen their foreign, security and

⁵⁸ Bailes 2016.

⁵⁹ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark 2017, 15.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ See Mellander & Mouritzen 2016.

defence policy networks, including their bilateral cooperation and the Nordic format. However, and perhaps most notably, the two countries have also sought ever-closer cooperation with NATO. Both joined NATO's Enhanced Opportunities Partners programme at the Wales summit in 2014. Moreover, they have been invited by NATO to attend meetings dealing specifically with the security situation in the Nordic-Baltic region, thus giving rise to the so-called '28+2' format.

In view of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, the growing willingness of Finland and Sweden to engage with NATO has differing consequences. For Finland and Sweden, the Nordic format now offers a further, increasingly important access point to NATO discussions. They would welcome further Nordic coordination in NATO matters in order to have strong support within the alliance and to be able to promote issues that are of most interest to them, including the use of the 28+2 format. However, the Nordic NATO members do not share this view entirely. While they see Finland and Sweden's strengthening relationship with NATO as a very positive development, they are also wary of blurring the divide between NATO membership and non-membership. That is why their readiness to expand Nordic coordination in NATO matters has its limits.

Alongside NATO, both Finland and Sweden have deepened their bilateral ties with the United States. Also in this context, Helsinki and Stockholm see the value of the Nordic frame. In both countries, there is an interest in turning the 'N5+US' format into a more permanent constellation. This could be particularly helpful due to the current uncertainty concerning the US foreign and security policy and the need to establish ties with a new – and radically different – administration. The other Nordics are more hesitant. While it is acknowledged in Denmark and Norway that the Nordics would gain more visibility in Washington together than they do individually, the Danes and the Norwegians also consider that they would benefit less than Finland and Sweden, as they already have strong bilateral bonds with the US. Managing their relations with the US in the context of the N5+US framework would mean that the US would most likely pay less attention to its bilateral relations with the Nordic countries.

At the same time, the uncertainties surrounding the US foreign and security policy posture under President Trump have also forced even the Nordic NATO members to re-evaluate their relationship with the US and other key actors. However, Denmark in particular seems to react to the change in US leadership by investing even more in the transatlantic partnership, and the country's interest in Nordic cooperation continues to be limited. Norway, on the other hand, has signalled a certain willingness to build closer relations with individual European allies as well as to promote cooperation between the EU and NATO. In this context, the usefulness of the Nordic format for Norway might increase, as it has traditionally represented, and continues to represent, a very important channel for Norway to receive information about developments in the EU. However, NATO's role as the backbone of Norway's security and defence policy remains unquestioned.

The EU is currently undergoing significant developments as well. The prospect of Brexit has led to questions about the future relationship between the EU and the United Kingdom as well as the direction of the post-Brexit EU. Both processes present important questions for the Nordic states, but their implications for Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation remain unclear. When it comes to the United Kingdom, all of the Nordics have an interest in maintaining close relations. The 'N5+1' and other formats, such as the Northern Group and the Northern Future Forum, could serve as instruments for managing relations with the UK in the future.

As for the dynamics within the EU, Finland in particular has high hopes pinned on the EU's security and defence policy, which has recently taken interesting and important steps forward. Although Sweden has been more hesitant, its interest has also grown recently as a result of the challenges of the transatlantic relationship. In the event that the developments in the EU pick up speed, this might mean that both Finland and Sweden, currently the most Nordic-minded states, would invest even more in the EU. On the other hand, more radical developments within the EU could also underline the value of having a Nordic voice in the Union, generating interest in closer Nordic coordination on EU policies. Indeed, different regional groups seem to be very important in the EU, as member states seek new allies in view of the UK exit and the shifting power balance within the Union.⁶²

The Nordics' views on the future of Nordic cooperation are also shaped by their own diverging strategic priorities. Traditionally, Finland has had to pay particular attention to its relationship with Russia, while Sweden turned its attention across the Baltic Sea to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; Norway has the Arctic in its sights, and Denmark has upheld a global outlook in order to strengthen its partnership with the United States. Although the changing strategic context in the Nordic-Baltic region has meant that all Nordics now consider Russia and regional security as central issues, differences still remain. For instance, Sweden's commitment to the Baltic countries means that it would like to expand the involvement of the Baltic trio in Nordic cooperation. In practice, Sweden would like to deal with many issues in the NB8 format rather than in the N5 format. Finland, however, remains a firm proponent of the N5 format. This is partly related to the fact that the idea of taking responsibility for the security of the Baltic states remains a controversial one in Finland. As for Norway, it tends to put Arctic issues on the Nordic agenda, but does not see the N5 as a central format for dealing with Arctic affairs.

Finally, during recent years the informal sphere of foreign, security and defence policy has developed into one of the most important and dynamic areas of Nordic cooperation. As a result, the formal Nordic institutions have become increasingly interested in foreign and security policy matters, partly because they have seen their own role in the Nordic setting diminish and now seek renewed relevance.⁶³ This growing interest of the formal institutions in foreign and security policy matters was most recently echoed by the Nordic Council, which adopted a new international strategy in 2017, urging the Nordic governments to cooperate more closely on foreign policy. Similarly, the Secretariat to the Nordic Council of Ministers is already engaged in projects with a clear foreign policy dimension and would be ready to extend its role. However, as argued previously, there seems to be a broad consensus among the Nordic foreign ministries that Nordic foreign and security policy should remain informal, flexible and pragmatic. There is a fear that the integration of this policy field into the remit of the NCM – or even the greater involvement of the NCM – could lead to increased bureaucracy and reduced effectiveness.⁶⁴

⁶² Lang & von Ondarza 2018.

⁶³ Opitz & Etzold 2018.

⁶⁴ See also Strang 2013, 38.

3. PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT: PRACTICES, GAPS AND POTENTIAL FOR NORDIC FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY COOPERATION

- The agenda for Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation is broad and flexible, yet also reactive and fragmented.

Nordic cooperation has to adjust to the political and institutional requirements of NATO and the EU, but this should not exclude taking common Nordic interests into consideration and promoting them.

- The linkage and coordination between institutionalised Nordic cooperation and informal foreign policy cooperation is weak. Stronger coordination could contribute to a strengthening of the Nordic position as a whole, but a clear message throughout Nordic MFAs is that no formal structures are sought in the Nordic foreign policy cooperation.
- Nordic countries have significant potential for a stronger Nordic voice, especially in multilateral fora. Yet there are challenges. Nordic cooperation is often regarded as a supplement to the Nordic states' individual multilateral efforts. EU cooperation lacks a strong tradition and Arctic questions are driven by varying national interests. New openings are more likely in areas detached from national core interests.
- The bilateral component of Nordic cooperation has increased in importance in recent years, particularly due to intensifying cooperation between Finland and Sweden. Bilateral relations are considered to be complementary to the multilateral structures of Nordic cooperation.

3.1 A broad and flexible, but fragmented agenda

Formal agenda-setting

As Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation takes place at a number of different levels and in multiple formats, it is difficult to gain a comprehensive overview of the Nordic agenda. Indeed, the agenda is in large part defined by the setting within which the cooperation takes place. For instance, the Nordic cooperation agenda within the UN structures is likely to be very different from the agenda of an NB8 meeting.

When it comes to the N5 cooperation, the formal responsibility for setting the agenda lies in the hands of the country holding the annually rotating presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers, as this country also chairs the foreign and security policy cooperation for one year. However, although the presidency country publishes a programme for its term, foreign and security policy matters are not dealt with in that document.⁶⁵ Instead, the foreign and security policy cooperation is kept separate from the rest of the Nordic agenda. No separate

⁶⁵ Sweden holds the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2018. The order in which the presidency rotates between the five Nordic states is as follows: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Iceland. The programmes of the current and previous presidencies can be found at <http://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council-of-ministers/regeringssamarbejdet/presidency-of-the-nordic-council-of-ministers>.

'presidency programme' is drafted for the foreign and security policy cooperation either. Nevertheless, the chair is responsible for coordinating Nordic meetings for one year and has the opportunity to set their agenda, even though practitioners emphasise that all Nordics can put forward their own ideas.

A very general long-term agenda for Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation was outlined by the Nordic foreign ministers in a joint statement adopted in February 2014. The statement, bearing the subheading 'building security in a comprehensive manner', highlighted the Nordic states' comprehensive approach to security as a central component of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. Issues emphasised in the document included crisis prevention and resolution, crisis management, sustainability, combatting climate change, as well as the importance of countering terrorism, organised crime, trafficking and cyber-attacks. Based on this comprehensive agenda, the statement also made some proposals on areas where the Nordic states should deepen their cooperation, mentioning, among other things, civilian and military crisis management, defence, multilateral institutions, sustainable development, climate policy, Arctic issues, cyber security, as well as human rights and the rule of law. However, in practice, this long-term agenda has been overtaken by the changes in the Nordic states' strategic environment after the Ukraine crisis, which have pushed the Nordic states to concentrate on issues of regional security.

Of the recent chairships, Finland made an attempt to introduce a more permanent (written) agenda for the foreign and security policy cooperation, introducing the idea of a 'living document' of priorities that could be updated by the coordinating states depending on their needs. However, the idea received only lukewarm support from some of the Nordic states, even though Norway picked up individual issues mentioned in the document during its term as the chair of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. It seems that the Nordic states are currently unwilling to agree on a more concrete, detailed or permanent set of priorities.

Thus far, there have been only limited attempts to coordinate the agendas of the institutionalised Nordic cooperation and the informal foreign and security policy cooperation. Such coordination would be necessary in order to ensure that the agendas and priorities of the two sides are fully complementary and, where possible, that they support each other. This would be particularly important with regard to issues and issue areas that are dealt with in the framework of both formal Nordic cooperation and the informal foreign and security policy cooperation. Such cross-cutting topics include, among others, energy and energy security; migration; questions cutting across the lines of internal and external security (such as terrorism and violent extremism); as well as a broad array of EU issues. Moreover, the secretariat to the NCM already plays a considerable role in managing relations with Russia and China, although these areas also clearly belong to the remit of the informal foreign and security policy cooperation.

With regard to other formats in which the Nordics cooperate, the NB8 cooperation works in a similar way to the N5 cooperation. This means that one of the eight states has the responsibility for coordinating the NB8 cooperation for one year, before the task is taken over by the next state. Unlike in the N5 cooperation, the countries coordinating the NB8 cooperation publish a broad platform for their term at the helm of this cooperation. Norway, which acted as the coordinating country in 2017, listed two sets of priorities, with one covering regional issues and the other covering issues of broader strategic importance. The first list included regional security, hybrid and resilience issues, energy security and markets, the EU's Eastern Partnership and the synergies between NB8, N5, NB6 and the Nordic Council of Ministers. The second included transatlantic relations, the future of the EU, Russia, UN issues

and terrorism.⁶⁶ Latvia's priorities in 2016 were strengthening security in the region (energy security, strategic communication, cyber security, combatting hybrid threats) and supporting the EU's Eastern Partnership.⁶⁷ Again, there is little evidence of explicit coordination between the agendas of the different formats, including the N5, NB8, Northern Group, e-PINE and the N5+V4. The participants of the Nordic meetings themselves admit that it is sometimes difficult to decide which topics should be dealt with in which format.

Formation of the agenda

Overall, the Nordic foreign and security policy agenda is described as flexible, providing ample room for the participants to bring in their own ideas if they so wish. Officials seem to argue that no topic should be excluded from the Nordic agenda beforehand. In practice, the Nordic cooperation agenda has in recent years been largely shaped by external developments. The most important of these have been the annexation of Ukraine, the Russian aggression in Eastern Ukraine and the changing security situation in the Nordic-Baltic region, which now finds itself at the forefront of the political confrontation between Russia and the western community of states and has witnessed increasing military activity. As a result, the Nordic foreign and security policy agenda has very much turned towards issues of hard security in the Nordic-Baltic region. Thus, among the key topics of Nordic foreign ministers' meetings since 2014 have been the Ukraine crisis, Russia's foreign and security policy posture, as well as the security situation around the Baltic Sea.

The only other topic to receive a similar level of attention was the refugee/migration crisis, which at its height in autumn 2015 had an effect on most Nordic states and also led to political tensions between them, most notably between Denmark and Sweden. An ad hoc meeting between the Nordic foreign ministers was organised to address the issue of migration.

Apart from these major topics, the Nordic foreign ministers have also dealt with other topical international issues such as the war in Syria, Russia's role in that war or the trends in transatlantic relations. As a consequence of the election of President Donald Trump, there was a plan to organise an ad hoc meeting of foreign ministers to discuss transatlantic relations, but the meeting was called off at the last minute. The cancellation reflects the lack of consensus and coordination between the Nordic states when it comes to dealing with the new US administration. Issues of regional security and the transatlantic relationship have also been central in the discussions at the lower levels of Nordic foreign and security policy.

The implications of the Ukraine crisis and Russia's foreign policy for regional security have been extensively addressed in the context of NB8 cooperation as well. Overall, NB8 cooperation has in the past been more security- and defence-oriented than N5 cooperation, but the agendas of the two formats have become more similar as the focus of the N5 has also turned to issues of regional security.

As for Nordic cooperation on institutional platforms, the agenda for this cooperation is to a large degree defined by developments within that institution. For example, at the UN, Nordic cooperation responds to the most topical issues on the UN agenda. At the same time,

⁶⁶ Co-operation among the Baltic and Nordic countries, see e.g.

<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/policy/baltic-sea-region/co-operation-among-the-baltic-and-nordic-countries>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

especially within the UN, the Nordics themselves have also tried to be active in pushing issues of particular importance to them onto the UN agenda.

Problematic issues and preferential agenda items

Although the Nordic states signal readiness to deal with any topic in the Nordic setting, this does not mean that their views would always be compatible. However, the divergence of views is not necessarily seen as a problem, as the output of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation is seldom very concrete. Instead of seeking to formulate common positions or coordinate policies, the Nordic states mostly content themselves with exchanging views on and informing each other about topical issues. Of course, a shared analysis of the situation at hand is the first step towards closer coordination. Moreover, the exchange of information and views is valuable even if the Nordics disagree on some issues, as it ensures that they know and understand each other's positions.

When it comes to issues where the views of the Nordics differ, their policy on Russia is mentioned by officials as one of the primary examples. There is a particularly notable contrast between Finnish pragmatism vis-à-vis Russia and Sweden's more 'idealist' and value-driven approach. Norway and Denmark can be situated somewhere between these two poles. However, in the new strategic context prevailing in the Nordic-Baltic region, the views of the Nordic states on Russia have been rather similar. Hence, the traditional differences between the Nordic states mainly manifest themselves as differences of style rather than as differences of the content of their policies.

Disarmament policy is another topic where there are considerable differences between the Nordic states. This is partly related to their different institutional affiliations, with the NATO membership of Denmark, Iceland and Norway considerably reducing the room for manoeuvre of these states in questions of nuclear disarmament. However, differences have also emerged between Finland and Sweden with regard to the newly agreed Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. While Finland acted in line with NATO member countries, not participating in the negotiations concerning the treaty, Sweden actively supported the process. However, Sweden has so far refrained from signing the treaty due to intra-government disagreements regarding the implications of signing vis-à-vis its defence cooperation.

The positions of the Nordic states with regard to the development of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy also differ considerably. This is, again, partly related to their different institutional affiliations. In addition to non-EU member states Norway and Iceland, EU member state Denmark also follows developments in the EU's security and defence policy from the outside due to its formal opt-out that was negotiated in the 1990s. At the same time, despite being a non-member state, Norway has sought opportunities in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy, having taken part in the Nordic Battlegroup as well as in individual CSDP operations in the past. However, Norway is wary of any potential duplications between the EU's security and defence policy and NATO. By contrast, Finland, as a non-NATO member state, has a much greater interest in developing the EU's defence dimension, with the current government deeming it one of the most crucial areas of EU policy. Sweden, on the other hand, has been more hesitant towards the EU's security and defence policy. However, as a result of the recent turbulence in the transatlantic relations, its position may be gradually changing. Nevertheless, the different views of the Nordic states often make it difficult to formulate any shared positions to be advanced vis-à-vis the EU. One aspect, where the potential for greater Nordic coordination does exist, is EU-NATO cooperation, which has recently been highlighted by both Finland and Norway.

Further topics on which the Nordic states have taken different views include the Middle East peace process, with both Iceland and Sweden officially recognising the state of Palestine. Another traditionally controversial area is trade, where the Nordic states share similar views, but often compete with one another. The differences between the Nordic states demonstrate that further-reaching policy coordination and the formulation of common positions would be difficult even among the N5 group.

Because of their somewhat differing strategic priorities and orientations, the Nordic states also have preferred agenda items, which might not be equally important for all of them. A prominent example is Norway's strong interest in the High North, which it sees as central in terms of its security. While Norway might occasionally push this issue onto the Nordic agenda, the Norwegian view is that Nordic cooperation is primarily about the Nordic-Baltic region and this is unlikely to change. Hence, the N5 cooperation does not represent the preferred forum for Norway for discussing this matter. Sweden's particular interests are related to the Baltic states as well as the EU's Eastern Dimension, which it initiated together with Poland. Similarly, Denmark has a strong interest in the Baltic states and in enhancing cooperation between the Nordic states, the Baltic states, and the United States. Finland is very interested in hybrid issues as well as EU-NATO cooperation.

Overall, the officials from the Nordic states seem satisfied with the current Nordic agenda, which has shifted towards issues of regional security, but is flexible enough to accommodate almost any topical question that the Nordics want to discuss among themselves. There is no strong drive towards a more permanent or long-term agenda for Nordic cooperation despite the Finnish attempt to introduce a 'living document' listing priority areas and objectives. The participants highlight the value of jointly analysing recent developments, especially regarding questions directly touching upon the Nordic-Baltic region or Europe more generally. At the same time, the agenda at the level of the foreign ministers might not adequately reflect the agenda in more specialised settings of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, including the cooperation on UN issues and in the area of development policy. There is clearly more need and room for coordination between the informal and formal side of Nordic cooperation, as well as between the different formats in which the Nordics cooperate with each other and with external partners.

3.2 Institutional complexities?

Multi-layered pattern of Nordic cooperation

Institutional complexities in Nordic cooperation on foreign and security policy can be roughly divided into two categories. On the one hand, national foreign policy choices and subsequent differences in institutional affiliations impose some formal and informal constraints on the nature and functioning of the cooperation. On the other hand, the multi-layered pattern of Nordic cooperation – the existence of formal and informal structures as well as a variety of different platforms – blur the overall picture.

With regard to the implications of the Nordic states' institutional affiliations, most of these stem from their (differing) ties with the EU and NATO. Thus, the Nordic EU members take part in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, which involves concrete policy goals that, in essence, limit the Nordic states' room for manoeuvre and the kind of efforts that can be made in the framework of Nordic foreign policy cooperation. For example, if the EU imposes sanctions as part of its approach towards a certain country or entity, the Nordic EU members are committed to playing by the rules that the EU policy sets out. However, the institutional limits may also be more informal in nature. Even if the EU does not have a common position on a particular issue, the Nordic EU member states may feel that formulating a Nordic position on the issue in question is not a good idea, as it could preclude the emergence of an EU consensus later. Similarly, adopting a Nordic approach towards an issue or issue area could encourage other member states to act in mini-lateral settings as well, thereby weakening the chances of achieving a common EU front, and going against the long-term interests of the Nordic EU member states.

In security and defence policy, NATO is often the dividing line. The Nordic NATO members are cautious about any steps that would weaken NATO's unity, the credibility of Article 5 and the line between NATO membership and non-membership. Nordic cooperation in foreign and security policy has to adjust itself to the limits that the larger institutional affiliations define. As the Nordics have had to deal with each other's different institutional affiliations for a long time, practitioners mostly regard these as routine issues. At the same time, this does not make them any less significant from the point of view of Nordic cooperation. Nevertheless, there are many areas and much potential for Nordic cooperation in between and beyond the institutional limits. Such cooperation is facilitated by the trend within NATO towards increasing cooperation with non-members as well as by the intensifying cooperation between the EU and NATO as organisations. Within the EU, there has also been significant interest in regional cooperation, and the Brexit vote has also increased the importance of different coalitions and groupings, many of which are regional in nature. At the same time, the Brexit vote has, however, also underlined the need to maintain the EU's unity.

The institutional-informal divide

Although Nordic cooperation both in the formal framework of the Nordic institutions and in the informal framework(s) between the Nordic MFAs is well-established, the Nordic states have not established strong coordination between these two frameworks. Instead, the formal and informal cooperation constitute separate entities. The MFA officials involved in the informal side of the cooperation do not see the lack of formal structures as a problem. On the contrary, a pronounced message from all four capitals seems to be that there is no interest in any

formalisation of the current practices and structures of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. Most importantly, officials are wary of the idea of integrating foreign and security policy activities into the NCM framework. The current structures are seen as sufficient and the 'un-institutional' nature of the cooperation is perceived as a benefit. By contrast, integrating the foreign and security policy cooperation into the NCM framework would in the view of the Nordic MFAs lead to extra work, increased bureaucracy as well as lack of efficiency and flexibility, duly taking the shine off the benefits that the current informal system entails. One reason for the reluctance might be the working method. The NCM is a consensus-based organization requiring all five member states to work along the same lines – a method that has considerable value in some questions, but does not chime with the pragmatic and flexible character of the N5 cooperation, which is built on the idea that the Nordic states can disagree and do not necessarily have to agree on a common position. Moreover, unlike the fixed NCM structure, the informal nature of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation allows the Nordics to work in any constellation of 2–5 states. Similarly informal, albeit more structured, the defence cooperation under the NORDEFECO umbrella is also based on a flexible approach.

The Secretariat to the NCM, on the other hand, has a certain ambition to enlarge its involvement regarding foreign affairs. The NCM aspiration is to gain more political relevance through having a say in 'high politics', such as foreign and security policy, which has developed into one of the most important and dynamic areas of Nordic cooperation. Correspondingly, the idea of associating both the Nordic prime ministers and the Nordic foreign ministers more closely with the work of the NCM has been one of the proposals discussed in the context of the ongoing reform process within the NCM.⁶⁸ From the NCM perspective, systematic contact would strengthen the Nordic position as a whole.⁶⁹ This makes sense, as the NCM is already involved in many activities with international aspects, unavoidably overlapping with the N5 agenda at least to some extent. Current examples of this include the growing Chinese interest towards the Nordic region. In mid-2017, the NCM agreed to deepen cooperation with China in areas such as sustainable growth and clean energy sources. Although these Sino-Nordic activities are currently coordinated through the NCM and clearly belong, at least partly, to its remit, they are certainly in the interests of the N5 as well.

One concrete and substantial difference between the formal and informal frameworks of Nordic cooperation is budget formation. The NCM activities are funded through a joint Nordic budget, whereas informal N5 work is funded through national MFA budgets. One key argument supporting more institutionalised foreign and security policy cooperation leans on the budgetary issue. The NCM has a budget of its own and could therefore give Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation added financial weight. Moreover, the NCM has considerable administrative resources and networks outside the Nordic region, having established offices in the Baltic states and information offices in Germany and Russia. These networks might serve a purpose in outreach activities and create synergies in broader Nordic-Baltic cooperation.

⁶⁸ Opitz, Christian & Etzold, Tobias 2018, 4.

⁶⁹ Norden 2016, 2.

Broader regional cooperative frameworks

As argued above, Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation is dispersed around a range of formats (N5, NORDEF, NB8, e-PINE, NB8+V4, Northern Group) and platforms (UN, EU, Council of Europe, IMF, World Bank etc.), and is therefore both complex and fragmented. The different frameworks are a combination of formal, informal as well as established institutional settings. The need to act in a range of networks and on a number of different platforms requires considerable administrative resources, involving different parts of the Nordic administrations, both horizontally and vertically. Moreover, as argued in the previous and following sections, the existence of several partially overlapping formats for cooperation also poses challenges in terms of agenda-setting and strategic leadership.

When it comes to the NB8, the scope of the Nordic-Baltic cooperation has deepened. External circumstances have re-established a common focus and driven the NB8 to engage in closer activities in terms of foreign affairs and security, with the NB8 providing an important informal framework for meetings and dialogue for questions of regional interest. However, not all Nordic countries are equally interested in the Nordic-Baltic dimension. Sweden and Denmark have pushed for the integration of the Baltic states into Nordic cooperation structures more strongly than the others have. Sweden, in particular, sees engaging with the Baltic states as highly important in strategic terms. The Swedish perspective emphasizes that any conflict involving the Baltic states would have direct implications for Sweden as well. Sweden sees the Baltic Sea and the Baltic states as a direct continuation of its security environment. From Finland and Norway, there has not been as heavy a push in favour of extending or deepening the NB8 framework. At the same time, both Norway and Finland see the Nordic-Baltic dialogue and cooperation as a valuable contribution to the security of the region.

The structures of Nordic-Baltic cooperation are also affected by the divide between the institutionalised and informal side of Nordic cooperation. The involvement of the Baltic countries in enlarged Nordic cooperation is increasingly in the interests of the NCM as well. The NC and the NCM work closely with their Baltic counterparts, the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers. The NCM has set up offices in each Baltic capital and has the capacity to promote concrete initiatives in the area. An example of a successful and prominent project is the ongoing NCM-funded project to support Russian-language media production for the Russian-speaking minorities living in the Baltic states, thereby reducing the influence of the Russian state-led media.⁷⁰ The extent to which the project has been coordinated with the Nordic and Baltic MFAs remains unclear, despite the obvious overlaps and potential synergies.

Apart from issues of coordination, the existence of several frameworks for Nordic cooperation is bound up with more meetings, more agenda items to handle and thus more preparatory work in the capitals. Nevertheless, the prevalent view in the Nordic capitals seems to be that the broad but fragmented structure is not a source of too many complexities, despite the number of meetings it causes. It seems that all of the levels and frameworks are seen as valuable in their own right. Whether there would be a need to streamline or review some structures for efficiency is not articulated clearly. However, this might also reflect the fact that any radical reform of the existing structures is not seen as feasible.

⁷⁰ Norden 2017, Continued Nordic support for the development of Russian-language media in the Baltic countries, 20 July 2017.

In 2018, Sweden took over the chairship of the NCM, duly heading the informal N5 cooperation as well. Importantly, Sweden's chairship will also coincide with its term as the coordinator of the NB8 and its chairships in the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. The fragmentation of the cooperation structures is acknowledged by Sweden, which has stated that its ambition is to find points of contact between all the formats and thereby enhance and boost the cooperation horizontally in the near future.⁷¹ Sweden is also the only Nordic country where the portfolio of minister for Nordic cooperation belongs to the portfolio of the foreign minister, which could prove useful for coordinating the informal and the institutional forms of Nordic cooperation. However, the steps that Sweden aims to take in order to overcome the fragmentation of the cooperation structures have not been spelled out in any detail. In practice, this might prove very difficult.

A range of frameworks also co-exists in the area of security and defence cooperation. The overlapping agendas all touch upon Baltic Sea security and regional stability. In geographic terms, the focus has morphed from the core group of the five Nordics to cover enhanced partnership with the Baltic states and eventually broader Northern Europe in the constellation called the Northern Group. These formats hold regular defence ministerial meetings, most recently in Helsinki in November 2017 in conjunction with the NORDEFECO defence ministers' meeting. The NB8 defence cooperation (or NORDEFECO-Baltic defence cooperation) has highlighted collaboration in cyber security. The main value of the Northern Group, on the other hand, lies in general networking and political consultation.⁷² Moreover, it is an important platform for the two non-NATO members of the group, Finland and Sweden, as an access point to information.

⁷¹ Government of Sweden 1 November 2017, Press release, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven presented the Swedish programme for the 2018 Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

⁷² See e.g. Dahl & Järvenpää 2014.

3.3 Cooperation without leadership?

No Nordic leader

Leadership, or the lack thereof, is not an issue that would have received extensive attention in Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. Among the five Nordic states, none has clearly established itself as a leader when it comes to Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. In theory, Sweden is the Nordic country with the most significant political weight and resources, and acted as a kind of “Nordic locomotive” for much of the latter part of the 20th century.⁷³ Moreover, Sweden is centrally located – not only in terms of geography, but also with regard to the network of bilateral relations within the Nordic region, being the most important Nordic partner for Denmark, Finland and Norway, thereby constituting a regional hub.⁷⁴ However, an explicit attempt by Sweden or any other Nordic state to act as the leader of Nordic cooperation would be unlikely to meet with much approval among the other Nordic states, as there are historical and long-standing jealousies between the Nordic states, and Nordic cooperation is based on the idea of equality.⁷⁵ Hence, instead of cooperating under the leadership of one state, the Nordics have been argued to approach many issue areas through ‘parallel action’.⁷⁶ The term refers to a relationship that is defined by both cooperation and competition. According to this interpretation, the Nordics’ shared values, comparable resource bases and similar (but not equal) interests make them natural partners, but also spur rivalry for political prestige. At best, the element of competition can create a sense of “constructive jealousy”. This means that the inter-Nordic rivalry acts as a source of inspiration and “as an incentive for sharing good practices and avoiding bad ones”.⁷⁷ At worst, competition and jealousy can lead to narrow-mindedness, which hinders meaningful and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Although no Nordic state would be accepted as a permanent leader of Nordic cooperation, informal leadership may be possible with regard to the individual issue areas. Sweden, in particular, sees itself as the Nordic leader when it comes to the Baltic states and Baltic issues, although Denmark has also played a significant role in this regard. In practice, both Sweden and Denmark have promoted the idea of extending and intensifying Nordic-Baltic cooperation. Norway and Denmark, on the other hand, would be potential leaders in issues concerning the Arctic. However, Norway in particular does not see the N5 as the primary format for dealing with Arctic matters. Finland, on the other hand, has recently attached considerable weight to the issue of hybrid threats, thereby establishing itself as a possible leader in this area. Thus, while the emergence of one of the Nordics as a permanent leader of Nordic cooperation seems both unlikely and even undesirable, the Nordic states could try to find a way to take advantage of their slightly differing expertise and interests in the sense of constructive jealousy.

Some form of formal leadership in the N5 cooperation is provided by the country that holds the presidency of the Council of Ministers, as this country also chairs the informal foreign and security policy cooperation and officially sets its agenda. However, the role of the chair is not very pronounced in foreign and security policy cooperation, and very little information has been provided by the participants about how the different chairs approach this task. Impulses

⁷³ Strang 2016, 7.

⁷⁴ See Forsberg 2013, 1179.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Mouritzen 1997; Mouritzen 1999.

⁷⁷ Korhonen 2011, 15.

for Nordic cooperation could also be provided by the formal Nordic institutions: both the secretariat to the NCM and the NC see themselves as having the task of proposing new initiatives and driving the Nordic agenda. However, as their role in Nordic foreign and security policy is rather marginal – and likely to remain so – their opportunities to do so in terms of foreign and security policy cooperation are very limited.

Limited political guidance

The foreign ministers form the highest level/layer of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation and thus have a formal leadership position. Their meetings are prepared by the political directors of the Nordic foreign ministries, who hold regular meetings of their own, as well as desk officers responsible for Nordic cooperation. Nordic cooperation also extends to other levels and units of the foreign ministries. However, the relationship between the individual levels of cooperation is rather unclear, despite the hierarchies within the Nordic ministries of foreign affairs themselves. Although the foreign ministers form the highest level and act as the 'motors' of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, their meetings mostly focus on the exchange of views and information regarding topical issues. The foreign ministers as a collective therefore provide little explicit political guidance for the lower levels of cooperation, meaning that there is no top-down structure in Nordic foreign and policy cooperation. This may be particularly notable in issue areas that receive less attention from the highest political level, such as UN issues or cooperation on other institutional platforms, such as the Council of Europe. While one of the approximately three meetings of the foreign ministers takes place in conjunction with the UN General Assembly in New York, the foreign ministers as a collective have little time to give guidelines for steering Nordic cooperation at the UN. Hence, it is mostly up to the individual ministers and ministries to provide clear instructions to guide Nordic cooperation at the lower administrative levels. Whether and to what extent this takes place in UN issues or other issue areas is difficult to assess.

In addition to the lack of an explicit top-down structure, there also seem to be no clear bottom-up dynamics. Unlike in the EU, where the most problematic issues are gradually elevated from the level of working groups and permanent representatives to the level of ministers and even heads of state and government, there is no similar practice within Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. At the same time, this may not be as important in the Nordic setting as it is within the EU, since the output of Nordic cooperation is very different from that of the Union, mostly focusing on exchanging views and information.

Another factor explaining the lack of clear leadership structures is the fragmented nature of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation: the cooperation extends to so many levels, formats and platforms that there are few, if any, actors with a comprehensive view of the whole field. The foreign ministers do not have the time to deal with the different levels, formats and platforms, and the political directors and desk officers responsible for Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation cannot cover the whole field either.

3.4 The multilateral context: How to strengthen the Nordic voice?

In theory, the Nordic countries collectively constitute a plausible regional and global actor in many respects: Economically, the combined Nordic GDP is significant. Militarily, the aggregate capabilities are considerable. Nordic foreign aid in total is notable. Therefore, the potential leverage to have a stronger Nordic voice in a multilateral context exists. Yet it is not only these numerical statistics that play a role. The shared value-base that the Nordics emphasise is mostly the point of departure for reinforcing the Nordic brand in multilateral arenas. Nordic countries are strong in terms of softer power. They have a long tradition in promoting democracy, the rule of law and gender equality, as well as providing expertise in mediating international conflicts. The question here is how to seek more global influence as a region and use the assets that the Nordic 'brand' possesses.

The Nordic countries participate in a wide range of international organisations and institutions, including the EU, NATO, the UN, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the Arctic Council. Not all of the Nordic countries participate in all of the institutions in an equal manner, but they all have a relationship or contact with all of the organizations to some extent. As argued previously, the Nordic countries often discuss their respective views beforehand in order to prepare for important sessions or decision-making processes within multilateral fora. However, the extent to which they do so varies from one platform to another. Moreover, in most cases, the Nordic states primarily represent themselves and the Nordic dimension comes second. Nordic cooperation is thus a supplement to any multilateral cooperation in which the Nordic countries participate. Overall, enhancing the common influence seems to be easiest in settings that are detached from the topics that are closest to the national core interests and security policy solutions of the Nordic states. At the same time, such issues naturally receive less attention from the Nordic foreign policy leaderships. Whenever cooperation touches upon issues that are handled within NATO, loyalty to the alliance overrides any Nordic activities and information. Whether a certain topic crosses this line often depends on the extent to which it is concerned with Article 5. Regarding the EU, the implications for cooperation may be even more significant, as EU membership touches upon all aspects of foreign policy.

For these reasons, the UN is likely to continue to be the most favourable multilateral forum for Nordic cooperation. All of the Nordics see the value of a common Nordic effort in the UN and recognize the resulting benefits. The Nordic brand has been particularly advantageous in the UN. However, the success of the brand or the values that it is based on should not be taken for granted. Changes at the global level may make the Nordic brand less marketable internationally. Countries that have a strong standing in the UN are not necessarily ready to adhere to the same set of values as the Nordics. Such a development, however, further underlines the need to maintain the promotion of values as a Nordic priority.

Currently, both global and regional events, like the foreign policy course of the Trump administration and Brexit, have created uncertainty about the direction of events in the near future. This uncertainty also translates into multilateral structures, putting many cooperative developments on hold. This is seen within the UN and also recognised in the traditionally well-functioning Nordic UN cooperation. The Nordic UN administrations have therefore striven to find concrete topics to put forward for the UN agenda. However, under these difficult circumstances, Nordic UN cooperation would benefit from a more strategic approach, more effective political guidance and a stronger link between the political and operational levels.

Currently, the Nordic foreign ministers as a group provide little political guidance for Nordic cooperation within the UN or any other multilateral format. It seems that the Nordic UN administrations work rather independently and are somewhat detached from the higher level of Nordic foreign policy cooperation, and are therefore dependent on national political guidance. For the time being, it appears that in the UN framework it is easier for the Nordics to continue to highlight areas where the Nordic countries have traditionally been strong, such as conflict prevention, resolution and peacekeeping.

The Arctic often comes up as an area which has the potential for developing Nordic cooperation. This seems natural given that five of the eight Arctic countries in the world are Nordic countries. Moreover, the significance of the Arctic region is growing both globally and geopolitically. However, in the Nordic countries, Arctic policies are highly driven by varying national interests, which is likely to make Nordic cooperation in the Arctic Council relatively modest. Norway is concerned with the High North from a security political perspective. Finland and Sweden also focus on the High North, but their emphasis is more on environmental issues. Denmark, by contrast, is mainly concerned about the Polar Arctic, as it is of considerable importance for its autonomous regions, Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Denmark tries to accommodate the Greenlandic position as far as possible in its Arctic policy, which leads to policies that often run counter to Finnish and Swedish environmental pursuits, for instance, as Denmark wants to preserve the Greenlandic right to its natural resources, like oil.

Arctic issues are sometimes included as a topic in N5 foreign ministers' meetings, but more concrete cooperation between the Nordics is scarce, given the differences. In addition, many Arctic questions are coordinated in ministries that are not involved in Nordic foreign policy cooperation (e.g. the ministries of the environment or economy). Within the institutional structures, the NCM is the primary channel for coordinating general Nordic cooperation regarding Arctic questions at state level.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Stępień & Koivurova 2017, 26–27.

3.5 Bilateralism as a challenge for Nordic unity?

Bilateral relations between individual Nordic states

Nordic cooperation in the N5 format is supplemented by the bilateral relations between individual Nordic states. In recent years, the bilateral component has received increasing attention due to the intensifying cooperation between Finland and Sweden. This cooperation is particularly important in the area of defence, but also extends to foreign and security policy. For instance, there is an exchange scheme for MFA officials between Helsinki and Stockholm. There is also parliamentary cooperation, such as joint meetings between the defence committees of the Finnish and Swedish parliaments. Moreover, the Finnish and Swedish foreign ministers, as well as civil servants, have undertaken joint trips to third countries – exemplified by the joint visit by foreign ministers Soini and Wallström to Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo in October 2017 – and there seems to be strong interest, especially on the Finnish side, to extend this practice. The cooperation between Finland and Sweden is facilitated by the similar institutional affiliations of the two countries, their political, economic and cultural links as well as strong mutual commitment.

Close bilateral relations also exist between the other Nordic states. Sweden and Norway have a close relationship, although it was for some years burdened by the unsuccessful defence procurement deal involving Archer artillery systems. However, this issue now seems to be resolved. Sweden and Denmark have also deepened their bilateral cooperation, for example in the area of defence. The full extent of bilateral cooperation between the Nordic states is very hard to measure, as it can take a variety of different forms.

Although bilateral relationships exclude the other Nordic states and might, furthermore, mean that the states in question invest less in Nordic cooperation more broadly, the intensifying cooperation between individual Nordic states is not seen as problematic by any of the participants. Instead, bilateralism is generally considered to be fully complementary with the broader structures of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. Moreover, stronger bilateral relations are seen as potentially forming the basis for closer cooperation among all five Nordics. This logic is particularly pronounced in the area of defence. NORDEF is based on the idea that cooperation does not need to include all five Nordic states. Instead, it can be advanced bi- or tri-laterally, with the other states maintaining an option to opt in if they see the cooperation as beneficial for them. Indeed, there has been an increasing shift in Nordic defence cooperation towards bilateralism. Similar pragmatic thinking about bilateral relationships also seems to concern Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation more broadly. While strong bilateral relationships can indeed strengthen the ties among the Nordic countries more broadly, there are currently no mechanisms to translate the best practices developed in one bilateral relationship into other bilateral relationships or the Nordic framework more broadly. All in all, there is also little awareness of the implications that deepening bilateral ties can have for the Nordic framework as a whole.

The bilateral relations between the Nordic states and non-Nordic partners are also potentially important from the point of view of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. On the one hand, a country with close relations with a non-Nordic partner can act as a central access point for the other Nordic countries to that country. On the other hand, having a close bilateral relationship with a non-Nordic country may also imply that the Nordic state in question is less interested in and ready for Nordic cooperation on issues related to that country. In the Nordic setting, particularly the bilateral relations of Denmark and Norway with the US limit the readiness of those states to coordinate their policies towards the states in question within the

Nordic framework, as this would most likely limit their chances of engaging with the US bilaterally.

4. NORDIC DEFENCE COOPERATION

- Current trends in defence have the potential to lower the threshold for deeper Nordic cooperation on defence. These include the move from softer to harder security as well as the shift from an expeditionary to a territorial focus. At the same time, the developments also bring the traditional dividing lines between the Nordic countries to the fore.
- In Nordic defence cooperation, the shift to hard security leads to efforts aimed at developing territorial defence capabilities within the NORDEFECO framework.
- The divide between NATO members and non-members is very prominent in defence cooperation. This divide is reinforced by the fact that Nordic defence cooperation is developing from all-Nordic towards bilateral arrangements, with the Finnish-Swedish cooperation being particularly prominent.
- A difference exists between the political leaderships and military administrations when it comes to how defence cooperation is being assessed. Criticism has been harder in military circles, although the cooperation continues to be appreciated. There is an increasing need for deeper cooperation, but institutional limits prevent rapid progress.
- In order to enhance Nordic defence cooperation, current working methods could be streamlined further, but with an emphasis on avoiding the creation of any new permanent structures or processes. The current institutional system is seen to provide a good framework for enhanced activities.

Nordic defence cooperation is a separate area of cooperation that is similarly informal or 'un-institutional', yet characteristically more structured than the N5 cooperation in foreign policy. This chapter examines policy-level defence cooperation including ministerial and administrative cooperation, and will provide an overview of current developments within the NORDEFECO framework.

The Nordic states have different defence and security political solutions, but a largely shared security environment. The informal nature of Nordic defence cooperation enables enough flexibility for the countries to interact despite their different security policy solutions. Traditionally, the format of the defence cooperation has largely been based on dialogue and information sharing. In operative terms, the cooperation has mostly developed within the framework of international peacekeeping and crisis management operations. However, since 2014, the trend in defence policy has shifted from expeditionary operations to territorial and collective defence-type capabilities. Correspondingly, the geographic focus of this cooperation has also shifted from expeditionary operations abroad to the Baltic Sea region. This creates opportunities for streamlining Nordic defence policy goals, thus lowering the threshold for deeper Nordic cooperation. At the same time, it also brings the traditional dividing lines between the Nordic countries to the fore.

4.1 Defence cooperation: political level

In practice, the political side of Nordic defence cooperation consists of regular meetings between the Nordic Ministers of Defence and MoD officials at all levels. Policy directors and

national armaments directors in particular are involved in Nordic affairs. Thematic visits to other Nordic countries also take place at all levels. Nordic defence ministers and policy directors follow and discuss regional security challenges in the Baltic Sea area, the North Atlantic and the High North. Currently, the dialogue between Nordic colleagues is facilitated by the new secure communication system between the Nordic countries.⁷⁹

Specific defence policy issues are also addressed and coordinated to some extent in broader multilateral frameworks (i.e. arms control at the UN; Arctic issues at the EU and the Arctic Council; cyber at the EU and in NATO; security assessments at the EU and NATO). The Nordic defence ministers see Nordic defence cooperation as complementary to efforts in other international contexts such as the UN, NATO and the EU.⁸⁰

In terms of broader regional cooperation, the Baltic countries are increasingly engaged in Nordic defence cooperation. The Nordic countries have supported the build-up of the defence capabilities of the Baltic states since the early 1990s. Denmark had a special role in this as the only Baltic Sea country inside NATO, which meant that Denmark could advocate Baltic NATO memberships from within the organization (which initially proved to be an uphill struggle). This paved the way for broader Nordic-Baltic cooperation. Today, the NB8 defence ministers hold joint meetings annually. In 2016, the Danish chairship supported the creation of guidelines on how to engage and develop concrete areas of enhanced cooperation in the Nordic-Baltic context. A follow-up to this Nordic-Baltic Declaration has been developed by NORDEFECO's Military Coordination Committee. Furthermore, a declaration concerning the Nordic-Baltic Assistance Programme (NBAP) was signed and will ensure continued Nordic-Baltic cooperation on defence capacity-building in third countries.⁸¹

Nordic defence cooperation also engages with third parties. As far as the broader security environment is concerned, the guidelines on how to support other countries in conducting their defence reforms have been updated. Over the years, the Nordic countries have supported defence reforms in the Baltic and Balkan countries, for example, as well as Ukraine and Georgia. In Georgia and Ukraine, the Nordic countries have been particularly active in projects that support capacity-building efforts in the defence sector. Projects have also been implemented in locations further afield, like the Eastern African Peace and Security Architecture, which has supported capacity-building in Eastern African countries since 2009.⁸²

The United States is the most important partner for all Nordic countries. More defence-related cooperation with the US, both bilaterally and in the N5+1 format, is highly welcomed by all Nordic representatives. For example, US Secretary of Defence James Mattis came to visit the Nordic defence ministers in a Northern Group defence ministerial meeting in Helsinki in November 2017. Simultaneously, Finland hosted a trilateral meeting for the US, Finland and Sweden to discuss defence cooperation.

4.2 Defence cooperation: military level

The vast majority of military cooperation between the Nordic countries is covered by NORDEFECO arrangements, in one way or another. It comprises a cooperative effort taking

⁷⁹ Nordefco, Annual Report 2016, 3.

⁸⁰ Nordic defence minister statement, 4 December 2013.

⁸¹ There are currently three ongoing projects. See Nordefco Annual report 2017.

⁸² Nordefco Annual Report 2016, 7. See also <http://www.fmn.dk/eng/allabout/Pages/nordic-defence-cooperation-nordefco.aspx>.

place at many levels of both the military administration and the operative level. In 2009, the predecessors of NORDEFECO (NORDAC on armaments, NORDCAPS on training and exercises, NORDSUP on defence capabilities) and related groups and committees were merged under the umbrella of NORDEFECO. The 2009 Memorandum of Understanding on Nordic Defence Cooperation states that the purpose and objective of the cooperation is to strengthen the Nordic countries' national defence, explore common synergies and facilitate efficient common solutions. This is deemed to activate Nordic cooperation and closer security dialogue, thereby contributing to regional and global peace and security at the same time. The practical objective was to minimize overlapping tasks through common steering and coordination, such as the coordination of logistics in the context of the ISAF operation in Afghanistan.

Regardless of the different NATO affiliations, the Nordic militaries can often appear very similar at first glance. However, there has been growing awareness that some basic military activities are quite different. One of the most significant differences is long-term defence planning. Not only the formal processes, products and structures, but also the fundamental planning factors, such as the states' strategic environment, military requirements and allocation of resources, vary tremendously. Against this backdrop, NORDEFECO's main aim to support members to maintain military capabilities through cooperation in areas of support, procurement and planning, is even more challenging.⁸³

4.3 NORDEFECO practice: structures and agenda

The chairship of NORDEFECO rotates between the four Nordic countries on an annual basis. The chair country is in charge of setting the agenda each year. At the highest political level, NORDEFECO is run by the Nordic defence ministers. They hold meetings in the NORDEFECO framework twice a year. The purpose of these meetings is primarily to exchange information and knowledge and to discuss cooperation arrangements. Chiefs of Defence meet more frequently, as they are in charge of the operative side of the cooperation.

Despite the changing leadership, there is continuity in terms of the agenda. Commonly shared goals for every chairship agenda include, inter alia, enhancing cooperation, strengthening non-bureaucratic working methods and introducing a systematic and structured hand-over of tasks. Institutional continuity is maintained through follow-up discussions on regional security challenges and related activities. Possibilities for coordinated contributions to international military missions and operations are explored throughout chairships, as well as joint projects within military education.

NORDEFECO's work and agenda is developed through one-year plans and long-term plans. The presiding country presents its own one-year plan, which is then discussed at the political and military level. However, this process has been criticised for causing unnecessary bureaucracy, additional workload, delays and complications.

The current long-term plan for implementation, the *Vision 2020*, was adopted in December 2013. The vision acts as the basis of political guidance for NORDEFECO. It lays out the

⁸³ Håkenstad & Knus Larsen 2012, 8–10, 75.

common will to develop cooperation further by stating that “*we envision an enhanced political and military dialogue on security and defence issues and actively seek for new possibilities for cooperation*”.⁸⁴ The Vision can be supplemented with additional decisions taken at the political level. For example, since March 2014, when the occupation of Crimea took place, the deteriorating security environment has demanded an updated vision. Renewal of the NORDEFECO vision until 2025 is currently underway, and is to be presented at the NORDEFECO ministerial meeting in autumn 2018. Political guidance and objectives for both NORDEFECO and national military level activities are translated into the Action Plan 2015–18 provided by the MCC. These include relations between the cooperation areas (COPA) and the corresponding functions and responsibilities in the national line organizations, which are responsible for implementation. This also facilitates the follow-up of activities between the Nordic countries in order to establish necessary coordination and synchronization, if so agreed.⁸⁵

In terms of structure, the military level of NORDEFECO is divided into five Cooperation Areas,⁸⁶ which are subordinate to the Military Coordination Committee (MCC). The political side of the NORDEFECO structure consists of the Policy Steering Committee (PSC), providing practical coordination and top-level political guidance through the Ministers of Defence. The COPAs are staffed with senior representatives from each country, and they hold the relevant national decision-making authority and appropriate mandate to fulfil the tasks. The main task of the COPA personnel is to coordinate Nordic views within their focus area. The COPAs can decide to establish working groups for specific activities, which will then report their results and recommendations back to the COPAs in question. The work and results of the COPAs feed into and contribute to the decisions made at the higher levels of the MCC and the PSC.⁸⁷

Taken together, the COPAs cover the whole defence force spectrum. Depending on the topic of the COPA, they work with different time perspectives. For instance, the COPA Capabilities considers the future, up to 20 years ahead, whereas the COPA Operations deals with issues here and now, as its major subject is Nordic cooperation within ongoing operations abroad. Each area aims at identifying the potential for cooperation based on common needs and mutual benefits, with a view to reducing total costs and promoting effectiveness. Lists of prioritized activities contain initiatives perceived as providing the greatest potential for cooperation, such as better utilization of the Nordic air space and air transport assets (NORTAT), clarifying the costs, benefits, consequences and legal aspects of countries' common use of Norwegian base-camp materiel, sharing Nordic countries' mobile engineer capabilities, or the wider use of cyber defence assets and simulators.

4.4 From all-Nordic to bilateral

A key principle of NORDEFECO cooperation is its flexible approach, which means that not all members have to participate in all areas of cooperation. Projects can be launched and are

⁸⁴ Nordic Defence Cooperation 2020.

⁸⁵ NORDEF MCC Action Plan 2015–2018. For guidelines, see Guidelines for NORDEFECO Military Level Operating Procedures (GUNOP).

⁸⁶ The five Cooperation Areas (COPAs) are⁸⁶: Capabilities (COPA CAPA); Human Resources & Education (COPA HR&E); Training & Exercises (COPA TR&EX); Operations (COPA OPS); Armaments (COPA ARMA).

⁸⁷ Nordefeco homepage at <http://www.nordefco.org/The-Cooperation-Areas>, accessed 4 Sep 2017.

often carried out bi- or tri-laterally. All of the countries nevertheless receive information about ongoing initiatives and are invited to participate in existing areas of cooperation.

The flexibility is certainly an asset. However, the divide with regard to the differing NATO affiliations within NORDEFECO directs the development into two parallel lanes, reinforcing the division between the Nordic allied countries on the one hand, and the non-allied on the other. This is part of the motivation for the Finnish-Swedish bilateral linkage in defence cooperation, which has strengthened in recent years. To some extent, this divide might challenge NORDEFECO's effectivity as a multilateral framework. After all, bilateral cooperation is often stronger and easier than engaging all of the members.

The Finnish-Swedish bilateral relationship in defence cooperation started in 2009 on the initiative of the Swedish defence administration. It has coexisted simultaneously with general NORDEFECO cooperation. The two administrations began to survey possibilities for deeper cooperation.⁸⁸ This closer linkage has been reinforced by the non-allied nature of the two countries compared to the rest of the NORDEFECO group. The bilateral lane has, in this case, allowed faster and more profound progress compared to general NORDEFECO cooperation.

More recently, Sweden and Denmark have engaged in closer bilateral military burden-sharing. This is considered significant in Sweden, as Denmark is a NATO member. The treaty between the countries improves information-sharing and allows them to use each other's military infrastructure.⁸⁹

4.5 Assessment – grounds for deepening the cooperation?

There are political, instrumental as well as practical constraints when it comes to deepening Nordic defence cooperation. The institutional question of NATO membership is the principle impediment. However, here the emphasis is put on more practical constraints. As the NORDEFECO structure is divided into the political and military level, it can also be assessed through these attributes. At the political level, we can take a look at the Nordic countries' respective views on Nordic defence cooperation and its prospects. At the military level, the focus is directed towards the practical achievements of the cooperation and the extent to which the overall performance meets NORDEFECO's objectives.

NORDEFECO has been criticized, especially in its early stage, as being heavy in structure, but weak in outcome.⁹⁰ This probably contributed to the unequal level of involvement by the Nordic states. During the early NORDEFECO years, Denmark, for example, was accused of a lack of interest, as the Danish chief of defence was absent from regular NORDEFECO meetings.⁹¹ Iceland does not have armed forces and has therefore been more distant from NORDEFECO's key group to begin with. Although the economic stimulus through pooling and sharing was an initial push-factor for NORDEFECO, the materiel cooperation has turned out to be difficult and, to a large extent, unsuccessful. There have been several attempts at joint

⁸⁸ Pesu 2017, 101.

⁸⁹ Government of Sweden 14 Jan 2016; Defense News 21 Jan 2016, Sweden and Denmark reach bilateral defense agreement.

⁹⁰ See e.g. Archer & Joenniemi 2015, 146.

⁹¹ Ibid. 146.

procurements, but the projects have been turbulent. A notable example was the Swedish-Norwegian arrangement regarding the Archer artillery systems, from which Norway pulled out, thereby cancelling its participation. Although it was stated on the Norwegian side that the reason for this was technical, the collapse of the project left a feeling of distrust between the neighbouring countries for a longer period.⁹² On a more positive note, this field is still developing. For example, the recent joint procurement of combat uniforms appears promising.

There seems to be a paradoxical difference in how the highest political level conveys Nordic defence cooperation in ministerial statements and speeches on the one hand, and how officials involved in this cooperation assess it on the other. Criticism towards defence cooperation has been hard in military circles, where it has been slated for ineffective decision-making, additional bureaucracy, unpredictability and the unnecessary duplication of already existing policies, programmes and processes. Moreover, as differences in legislations and structures make political decision-making among the Nordics difficult even in peacetime, the chances of the Nordic states cooperating in times of crisis has also been questioned.

As is the case with Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, the interest in Nordic defence cooperation has clearly increased in every Nordic country in recent years. However, there is still no political will to enhance military cooperation at the operational level – regardless of the events in Ukraine and their implications for regional security. Thus, the most common sentiment in military spheres is that the momentum in Nordic defence cooperation has been lost and there is not enough Nordic-wide political commitment to doing more together. After closing ISAF in Afghanistan late 2014, there have been no large-scale operations with bigger contributions and expanding logistics. This has resulted in diminishing expenses and a lower level of ambition for cost-effectiveness within the militaries. Hence, in practice there has been less interest and need for cooperation in terms of international operations.

Regarding ways to organize Nordic cooperation, a widely shared understanding among the defence and military leaderships is that the fewer new structures there are, the better it is for the cooperation. In other words, no permanent structures, new processes or personnel are seen as necessary. The system of a rotational lead-nation as a working method is widely regarded as effective and efficient enough. However, the current informal working methods and ad-hoc structures could be streamlined further. For this purpose, Finland initiated discussions for reviewing NORDEFECO's meetings and cooperation processes during its presidency in 2017.⁹³ A new NORDEFECO vision will be formulated during the current Norwegian presidency with the aim of enhanced cooperation. It remains to be seen to what extent it will affect the current structure.

Military-level cooperation is partly at a routine level and tangible results are achieved with a low profile using national programmes and processes. The most significant achievements are made mostly in the field of training and exercises. The long tradition of jointly contributing to peacekeeping instead of taking separate actions is respected and will continue. In order to deepen the cooperation further, the overall focus should be transferred to areas of readiness and operational issues. In terms of materiel cooperation, several procurement projects are making steady progress, aiming at higher interoperability and better capabilities for crisis management operations. Earlier, defence cooperation focused on two areas – crisis

⁹² Friis & Garberg Bredesen 2017.

⁹³ Järvenpää 2017, 10.

management operations and the procurement of materiel. The ongoing projects⁹⁴ and new initiatives follow this traditional dual track, but there is currently an additional element with a new focus on territorial defence. Lower-level processes such as standardization of procurement as well as training and exercises are proceeding in line with NATO demands.

Finland's primary interest in NORDEFECO cooperation lies in developing more profound interoperability and enhancing territorial security. The Finnish chairship in 2017 aimed at the continuity of ongoing projects and promoting the set objectives for NORDEFECO.⁹⁵ In addition to these, Finland promoted the concept of comprehensive security. The specialisms that the Finnish chairship brought to the NORDEFECO agenda were security of supply and societal resilience. The objective was to broaden Nordic cooperation to cover areas at the interface of civilian and military security.

Norway emphasizes information-sharing and open security dialogue in its current NORDEFECO chairship of 2018. As new priorities on the agenda, Norway has taken up developing knowledge on autonomous and unmanned aerial systems (UAS/UAV), drones and space.⁹⁶ Similarly to Denmark, for Norway the most significant added value of Nordic defence cooperation lies in information-sharing. For both of these countries, it is clearly emphasized that increased Nordic defence and security cooperation must not happen at the expense of commitments to NATO.

Danish interest towards the NORDEFECO framework has increased, but Denmark does not support any deeper defence integration or common defence planning among the NORDEFECO states. Denmark regards Nordic defence cooperation as important, as long as it is based on a pragmatic and practical approach.⁹⁷ Denmark held the NORDEFECO chairship in 2016, also aimed at ensuring the continuity of ongoing projects as well as launching a number of new initiatives.

Sweden held the NORDEFECO chairship in 2015. Sweden then emphasized establishing secure communication as one of the top priorities. Other issues on Swedish agenda were contingency and readiness planning and coordination in international operations⁹⁸. Sweden also actively highlighted the importance of developing Nordic-Baltic defence cooperation and dialogue.

In sum, the legacy of Nordic military cooperation has stemmed from positive experiences since the 1950s. This legacy will be maintained, but the new focus on territorial defence and related issues is gaining ground, creating new demands for cooperation in hard security. Due to the deteriorating security situation in the Nordic-Baltic region, enhanced cooperation on issues such as territorial defence and military deterrence is highly valued. This is a new agenda issue, which was excluded from Nordic defence cooperation prior to the illegal occupation of Crimea in February 2014.

Rather controversially, the perceived limitations for deeper cooperation are related to hard security as well. These could include common situational awareness, the exchange of classified information, and operational planning, together with related exercises and the prepositioning of wartime materiel in another country. The true dividing line exists between

⁹⁴ All of which were reiterated as continuing by Minister of Defence Jussi Niinistö in his speech on 12 Sep 2017.

⁹⁵ For the Finnish chairship, see NORDEFECO Annual Report 2017.

⁹⁶ Government of Norway, press release, 2 January 2018.

⁹⁷ Hjort Frederiksen 2017, 29.

⁹⁸ NORDEFECO Annual Report 2015, 7.

the allied and non-allied Nordic states. This divide is recognizable, but neither clarified nor profoundly defined. Therefore, institutional limits prevent rapid progress. However, some of the interviewees regarded these areas as having the potential for deeper cooperation if security requirements were met (e.g. technical solutions for information systems between allied and non-allied armed forces).

In general, Nordic defence cooperation is very much at a routine level, and tangible work to meet the aims of Nordic cooperation is carried out within the national structures and organizations. Consequently, there is no compulsion for permanent structures and resources for implementation. As far as defence cooperation is concerned, the current system suffices for enhanced activities as well. In short, the focus should be on areas and issues directly related to territorial defence and military capabilities, including training and exercises. This also indicates that procurement and acquisition have a great deal of potential for improvement, pending political and domestic priorities. The main obstacle to a commonly shared Nordic procurement programme is the national defence industries and their interests, which are strongly directed by politicians.

5. CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS A STRONGER NORDIC VOICE IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

- Nordic countries possess a significant power potential that should not be underestimated. However, the Nordics should be bolder in marketing Nordic achievements and unity, thereby taking advantage of the fact that they are already seen as a very tight unit externally, even though they may be highly aware of their differences internally.
- Formulating and promoting issues of common interest within the EU and NATO should be a priority in Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, acknowledging that the EU and NATO continue to be their primary frameworks for international engagement.
- The Nordics should adopt a dual-track approach to ensure full use of their cooperation potential. This would mean maintaining the informal nature of the foreign and security policy cooperation while agreeing upon a number of concrete policy priorities and a joint implementation plan to advance them.
- The Nordics should also enhance concrete policy content and continuity by setting up Nordic task forces to plan and oversee priority projects for permanent or ad hoc needs.
- The Nordics could also create mechanisms that would facilitate the emergence of a Nordic consensus on the assessment of their shared security environment, thereby providing a clearer and more solid political starting point for Nordic security and defence policy cooperation.
- Finally, the Nordics should try to identify and promote good practices and lessons learned from bilateral endeavours in order for them to be used in other Nordic frameworks

There are many reasons to expect a coherent and coordinated Nordic approach to a multitude of issues in the international arena. Nordic countries are united both through their societal values and geopolitical position. As Northern small or middle-size powers, their international position and influence benefit essentially from joint positions and action. Due to their significant economic output, successful societal model and respected tradition of international mediation and peacekeeping there is a joint power potential within the Nordic countries that should not be underestimated. Furthermore, Nordic cooperation is decidedly uncontroversial and enjoys a solid legitimacy among the Nordic populations.

This report studied how this power potential is used and the kind of hurdles that obstruct a more concerted Nordic action in foreign and security policy. The hurdles are political, institutional and cultural. When the Nordic brand in international relations is quite clear and coherent externally, the different historical traditions and identities come to the fore internally. The statement according to which the further away from the Nordic region one is, the better the Nordic foreign policy cooperation functions, is highly descriptive of the situation.

The study in hand confirms the key conditions for further enhancement of Nordic cooperation in foreign and security policy. Due to historical experiences and identities, the Nordic

community is important but still does not form the primary political community for any of the Nordic countries. It is rather seen to complement the main “alliances”, which in the case of Denmark, Norway and Iceland is NATO, and in the case of Finland and Sweden the EU. Irrespective of the commonality of values and geopolitical interests among the Nordic states, Nordic cooperation has to adjust to the political and institutional requirements of NATO and the EU.

Adherence to different alliances does not mean that common Nordic interests could not be taken into account and promoted by the Nordic members of the respective two alliances, NATO and the EU. This is what happens, but there are limits to it as it is by no means supposed to challenge the broader consensus-building in the EU or NATO. It is obvious that the possibilities for influencing the EU and NATO as common arenas for European and transatlantic policy-making remain underused from the point of view of common Nordic interests. Major decisions in the EU and NATO concerning their policy priorities or strategic approaches, for instance, do affect the whole Nordic community irrespective of the Nordic states’ affiliation with the organisations. The preparation of such decisions should therefore be prioritized on the Nordic agenda and be linked with more thorough information-sharing and policy coordination. Broader Nordic-Baltic cooperation could duly strengthen these efforts to influence the EU and NATO. Could more efficient Nordic (and Nordic-Baltic) coordination lead to a more proactive policy by the respective Nordic members of the EU and NATO with regard to questions of shared Nordic interests?

Another key condition of Nordic cooperation in foreign and security policy – linked to its character in complementing primary alliances – is its informal nature. The only exception to this can be found within Nordic defence cooperation, where the set-up is more formal. Informality means that there is no single institutionalized framework for foreign policy cooperation, nor is there any systematic planning or a coherent set of policy instruments. What is equally missing is overall strategic leadership, which would define the key Nordic priorities and interests for this cooperation in the longer perspective.

Nordic cooperation takes place in a variety of different contexts, starting from dense contacts between individual civil servants and policymakers, and covering a whole range of multilateral fora, both with an entirely Nordic character (N5) and larger formats (NB8, e-PINE, N5+V4 and Northern Group). Informality is highly valued as it enables the formation of a fully needs-based agenda. The Nordic meetings can address issues of topical concern and interest. Informality also means that there is no need to decide whether Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation should include the Nordic states with or without the Balts, as an enlarged Nordic community would be in the interests of many but not all.

Informality is clearly perceived to be an asset for Nordic foreign policy cooperation, but it is also a reason for the highly *reactive* nature of this cooperation. Without any joint policy-planning capability, the Nordic agenda can hardly contain more systematic and long-term efforts to influence the political environment in a more proactive manner. In order to lead to more concrete outcomes, Nordic foreign policy cooperation should also have clear foci, which seems to be at odds with its needs-based agenda-setting.

To ensure full use of the Nordic potential, Nordic foreign policy cooperation should adopt a dual-track approach. Within the general framework of informality, it should still be possible to agree on a number of concrete policy priorities and adopt a joint implementation plan for advancing them. In order to safeguard both the legitimacy and high political character of these joint projects, their planning and implementation should stay within the Nordic foreign

ministries by taking the form of a joint Nordic task force. These priority projects could contain a common Nordic initiative or effort within a multilateral institution or be more targeted towards the immediate Nordic-Baltic environment. The projects should fully respect the Nordic commitments within EU and NATO contexts. These kinds of priority projects would enhance both the concrete content and continuity of the Nordic foreign policy agenda, but without challenging its informal character.

A third cornerstone of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation can be found in its institutional complexity. The form of cooperation varies concerning its participatory structure and level and there is a lot of overlap between the various forms. The informal foreign and security policy cooperation and the more institutionalized defence cooperation take place in separate realms with obviously little interaction existing between them. In addition to the multilateral forms of cooperation, a range of systematic forms of bilateral relationships exist, with each of them having their own background and goal-setting.

Even if there is no possibility of significantly streamlining and simplifying the arenas for Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, an effort should still be made to strengthen synergies between its different forms. First, Nordic defence cooperation should be better anchored in a more systematically pursued Nordic consensus concerning the developments in its strategic environment and the emerging threats. This is a section that is currently missing from the extensive cooperation agenda. All of the Nordic countries produce such an analysis separately, in the framework of their white books of security and defence, which also have linkages to the corresponding strategic documents produced by the EU and NATO.

A Nordic consensus on the strategic environment could be elaborated, for instance by reviewing the separate Nordic documents and identifying converging and differing elements in their analysis. The review could bring together the ministries of foreign affairs and defence at different levels with the process and outcome of the debate, providing a more solid common political starting point for Nordic defence cooperation both in the NORDEFECO framework and in the bilateral format.

Other types of synergies between the different forms of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation should also be enhanced. One question to be answered deals with the added value that existing bilateral relationships might provide for the broader Nordic framework if efficiently used. Are the good practices emerging within a particular bilateral relationship efficiently presented in the multilateral Nordic context in order to possibly be used in another bilateral context? Existing bilateral practices extend from the exchange of civil servants to joint political visits to third countries, and further to different forms of operational cooperation between various branches of the armed forces.

Finally, one question that needs to be studied further is the discrepancy that exists between the external conception about Nordic unity in international relations, and the more divided and fragmented situation internally, where differences in policy content and the value of Nordic cooperation both come to the fore. If the external view is much more coherent than the internal reality suggests, could it possibly be enhanced, and also be more efficiently utilized without major changes being made to the internal system of policy coordination?

The pragmatic Nordic political culture is free of political symbols and a political rhetoric typical of great powers. The forms or outcomes of Nordic foreign policy cooperation are rarely celebrated with attention-grabbing headlines or references to strong Nordic unity or loyalty. Among the very few recent exceptions to this modest outlook was the Nordic solidarity declaration, which was nonetheless cautious in tone.

This raises the question of whether the Nordic countries should change this low-key style and start marketing the Nordic achievements, including unity and numerous common goals in foreign and security policy, much more visibly than what is currently the case. The conceptions that exist about Nordic unity could also be utilized for the purposes of stronger communication about the common values underpinning this unity, and about the goals into which they translate at the international level.

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