

ZDZISŁAW ŚLIWA  
EUGENIUSZ CIEŚLAK

ADDRESSING RUSSIAN THREAT.  
CHANGES TO DEFENCE POLICIES OF THE NORDIC STATES  
AFTER 2014

INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War had a strong impact on the perception of security among the majority of nations, causing a widespread revision of approach to preservation of military capacities. The general trend was a reduction of armed forces and military budget, focusing on the economy and the prosperity of nations rather than defence and resilience capacities. The second decade of the twenty first century caused a strong shift in security perceptions that recognise that it is no longer given and conventionally perceived threats, along with those described and hybrid, that are still close to national and European borders. The aggressive Russian use of military power, supported by hybrid tools in its neighbourhood, namely in Georgia, Ukraine, and Belarus, paralleled by its military build-up in the Arctic verified these changes in the security perception in Europe. It has concerned the five Nordic nations, which recognized their vulnerability toward conventional and non-conventional warfare tools used by the Russian Federation. The Nordic nations are similar in their democratic values, respect to law, limited corruption, limited minorities, and shared history, which supports cooperation. The reaction was revision of national defence concepts, closing ranks within international organizations and the desire to unite efforts bilaterally and regionally within NORDEFECO. The terms

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Dr hab. ZDZISŁAW ŚLIWA — Baltic Defence College; adres do korespondencji: BALTDEFECOL, 12 Riia St., 51010 Tartu, Estonia; e-mail: [zdzislaw.sliwa@baltdefcol.org](mailto:zdzislaw.sliwa@baltdefcol.org); ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5653-2941>.

Dr hab. EUGENIUSZ CIEŚLAK — Baltic Defence College; adres do korespondencji: BALTDEFECOL, 12 Riia St., 51010 Tartu, Estonia; e-mail: [eugeniusz.cieslak@baltdefcol.org](mailto:eugeniusz.cieslak@baltdefcol.org); ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6476-3643>.

territorial defence, resilience, resistance, host nation support, and threat assessment were back to governmental dictionaries that recognised the need to prepare entire societies for crisis and war.

While national preparations form a solid basis for total defence in every Nordic nation, the need and desire for international security and defence cooperation became more obvious. The close security and defence relations between the Nordic nations were highlighted by signing of the “Nordic Defence Cooperation Vision 2025” on 13 November 2018 (NORDEFECO, 2018). The vision acknowledged the fact that the Nordic countries have different security policy affiliations but face the same challenges and must therefore strive for close, effective, and cost-efficient cooperation to strengthen their national defence and capability to take joint action. The Nordic countries confirmed that they would maintain close security and defence policy dialogue and strengthen cooperation in defence in times of peace, crisis, and conflict. In 2018, Finland, Sweden, and the United States signed the “Trilateral Statement of Intent” to deepen defence cooperation, complement bilateral cooperation, and create synergies between them (Finland, 2018). The parties to the agreement recognized the need to extend trilateral defence relationship and cooperation supplementing bilateral relations and those within NATO, the EU, and NORDEFECO.

The substantial changes to the security environment after Russian aggression against Ukraine and an illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 encouraged a significant reorientation of defence policies of the Nordic nations. This may have serious consequences for the future of security in the Baltic Sea region and to some extent even for the security of transatlantic region. The paper aims to study and compare the defence policies of the Nordic states facing the evolving security situation, which could directly impact their sovereignty and prosperity. The research aims to identify the similarities and differences in the approaches taken by the Nordic states in addressing security and defence concerns after 2014. The scope of research is limited developments in defence policies of the Nordic states that directly relate to an increased threat of Russia since 2014. As implementation of recently adopted defence policies vary among the Nordic states, it is too early to judge national achievements related to armed forces modernization. Therefore, where possible, modernization plans of armed forces are discussed, but the level of details depends on availability of information and advances in defence procurement. The paper is based on qualitative research using the case study method for comparative studies of the five Nordic nations: Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland. The desk research of academic sources developed by academia,

think tanks, and available online sources is supported by analysis of publicly available official documents, including national defence policies, strategies, and reports. This research method involves utilization of quantitative data based on existing sources allowing validation of collected information. The article discusses specific aspects of defence policies of every Nordic state with the focus on the period after 2014. The conclusion of the article is devoted to conceptualizing unique features of the Nordic approach to defence.

### 1. SWEDEN—REBUILDING TOTAL DEFENCE

Russian aggression against Ukraine and increased tensions in Europe and the Arctic resulted in visible adjustments to Sweden's defence policy. The defence bill adopted in 2015 focused on a significant increase of armed forces' warfighting capabilities as part of the total Swedish defence concept. *Sweden's Defence Policy 2016–2020*, based on broad political consensus, reflected the need to preserve national sovereignty, rights, interests, and protection of fundamental values. It highlighted the requirement for international defence and security cooperation. The defence policy called for Nordic and Baltic cooperation to strengthen regional security. However, it also directly called for a transatlantic link as a key for security of Europe (*Sweden's Defence Policy 2016 to 2020*, 2015, p. 2). Sweden's defence policy discussed emerging threats such as hybrid warfare, psychological operations, and the cyber domain. Bearing those threats in mind, the role of the Swedish Defence Intelligence Authorities and the Home Guard were emphasized. The period of 2016-2020 was meant to implement a more comprehensive solution in the field of the total defence concept merging military and civil defence. Total defence was to be based on "common planning guidelines, from the government to appropriate authorities" (*Sweden's Defence Policy 2016 to 2020*, 2015, p. 3). Swedish approach did not focus on military effort only. Preparations for total defence have included preparatory actions for societal resistance starting from the Swedish Parliament down to lowest administrative levels. The coordination efforts for total defence have been undertaken by the Swedish Armed Forces and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency to develop needed capabilities and enhance mutual coordination. To support the development of total defence solutions, the Swedish government allocated SEK 25 billion up to 2020 with SEK 1.3 bln specifically devoted to civil defence (Government Offices of Sweden, 2018). The remilitarisation of the Gotland Island as a strategic location

in the Baltic Sea may serve as a symbol of the military build-up to address evolving military threats. It was an outcome of presenting the reinforcements of Gotland's defences as a special priority along with anti-submarine capabilities.

New geostrategic realities and deteriorating security in the wider Baltic Sea region was addressed in the "National Security Strategy" adopted in 2017. As Prime Minister Stefan Löfven observed the strategy was clear on national interests and Sweden's approach to security and our broader security efforts (Prime Minister's Office [Sweden], 2017, p. 3). The strategy called for a continuous and active involvement to enhance security in the broader sense. While an armed military attack directly targeting Sweden was assessed as unlikely, the security strategy of 2017 acknowledged that the deteriorating security situation requires increasing Sweden's defence capability" (Prime Minister's Office [Sweden], 2017, p. 17). The strategy highlighted the importance of the total defence concept, based on a comprehensive approach involving all vital national resources in a balanced and synchronised effort. At the same time, Sweden supports European Strategic Autonomy by recognizing the need to cooperate with the European Union and taking more responsibility by this organization to protect own security (Prime Minister's Office [Sweden], 2017, p. 12). Recently, Sweden has become "highly NATO-standardised through active cooperation" (Deen et al., 2020) and pragmatically sees the specific roles and initiatives to be followed by the EU and NATO, which should not be duplicated.

The recent strategic document on Sweden's defence is the "Total Defence 2021–2025" concept. The concept calls for development of capabilities to face an unknown future. The total defence concept paints a grim picture of the deteriorating security situation in Sweden's neighbourhood and in Europe. More important, this concept does not rule out an armed attack against Sweden referring, among others, to Russian military aggression in Georgia and Ukraine. (Regeringskanliet, 2020, p. 1). Therefore, Sweden intends to promote security solidarity with EU members (and the UK) and Nordic nations, expecting the same from its partners. Sweden's total defence will include a "joint operational planning with Finland and coordination of operational planning with Denmark, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States and NATO" (Regeringskanliet, 2020, p. 3). The total defence efforts between 2021 and 2025 will observe the principles of comprehensive use of all available national means, military, and civil defence capabilities to conduct orchestrated operations, deterrence, and societal resilience. The budget of EUR 8.9 billion by 2025 presents a 45 percent increase compared with 2020 and 95 percent increase compared with 2015.

The scope of activities aimed at development of capabilities needed for total defence needs time for implementation.

Sweden plans to increase the number of army brigades from two to four, triple the number of artillery and introduce medium range air defence Patriot missile systems. Naval assets such as new submarines and upgraded surface combatants are supposed to reinforce Sweden's capability to defend against conventional threats in the Baltic Sea Region. New military and civil defence forces are planned to achieve full readiness before 2030. The planning and implementation of total defence concept in Sweden is based on a pragmatic approach avoiding hasty, uncoordinated decisions. It will allow for required capabilities, which realistically meets the total defence concept requirements. One must observe realistic timing in Sweden's actions related to total defence. The "Total Defence 2021–2025" concept identifies such tasks for respective military services and Home Guard in specific timeframes. At the same time, a specific part of the concept discusses enhancing civil defence involving the whole of society (Regeringskansliet, 2020, pp. 4-8; Government of Sweden, 2020). The key factor of the Swedish approach is that the defence concept is to be substantially supported by the allocation of funds to underpin both military and civilian defence. It is a very complex approach as military capabilities are to be enhanced by stronger society's resilience based on a comprehensive approach to national defence and inclusion of all the ministries covering a range of societal functions.

The Swedish government secured a proper budget along with an intent to increase the armed forces wartime organization from 60 thousand to 90 thousand members, to procure new submarines, to expand the corvette fleet, and to acquire modern platforms for the army and air force. All those efforts will significantly reinforce national defence capabilities (Nikel, 2020). In 2017 Sweden reintroduced a gender-neutral conscription that lasts between 4 to 11 months depending on respective service and branch. It decided so as result of the deteriorating security situation only seven years later after it was abandoned in 2010. To underpin the number of combat-ready personnel, 8 thousand conscripts will undergo basic military training annually until 2025 (Ministry of Defence, 2020). One important aspect allows predicting that the total defence concept will be implemented. It is the essence of Swedish democracy characterised by consensus and a strong tradition of getting all political parties committed and coming to a collective decision (Drent, Meijnders, 2015).

## 2. FINLAND—SELF-RELIANCE AS THE KEY TO NATIONAL DEFENCE

Finland has been historically the most experienced Nordic nation in terms of total defence. While Russian aggression against Ukraine was a turning point for the security of the transatlantic region, it was of no surprise to Finland. The threat perception was highlighted in the “Long-term Challenges of Defence” within the Parliament of Finland Report in 2014, recognising strained relations between NATO and Russia. When discussing cooperation, the report mentioned some reservations such as dependency on allies and partners. The Finnish Government acknowledged that “while defence cooperation is essential for developing Finland’s capabilities, it does not imply any military security guarantees” (Parliament of Finland, 2014, p. 3). The war in Ukraine resulted in an assessment that “Finland may, indirectly or directly, become involved in conflicts in its immediate vicinity, or in international operations” (Parliament of Finland, 2014, p. 7). Specific attention was given to further development of national defence capabilities and modern weapon systems procurement supported by proper financing. This was to ensure achievement of the desired capabilities in the 2020s and keep them reliable until the 2040s. As a non-NATO member, Finland focused on the European Union as a contributor to national security. It was expressed decisively by President Niinistö, who stated, “The EU is hardly a true union if it does not play its part in ensuring the security of its own citizens” (Matti et al., 2020, p. 20). Such a statement is linked with history and lack of international support to Finland during the Winter War and the realisation that the country alone cannot stand full-scale conventional Russian aggression.

The recognition of the evolution of the deteriorating international environment was underlined in “Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy,” highlighting the uncertainty factor already influencing the nation directly or indirectly. The narrative used in the report was explicit. Russia was recognised as the nation most ready to use “a wide range of military and non-military instruments in advancing its interests.” Because of that, it was assumed that the threat of using military forces against Finland could not be excluded (Prime Minister’s Office, 2016, pp. 11-12). The government report emphasised rules-based international cooperation as an important factor in preserving independence. The role of Sweden and the Nordics was mentioned along with the importance of the NATO Open Door Policy as an option not excluded at some point in the future.

The *Government's Defence Report* published in 2017, focused on Finland's defence systems' capabilities to face a changing security environment and the evolving nature of war. It was recognised that the military capabilities at hand in 2017 were adequate within all the services of the armed forces (Prime Minister's Office [Finland], 2017, pp. 11-13). Finland's role as a non-allied country was seen in the context of the growing importance of defence cooperation. The Finnish government recognized however that such cooperation did not provide "any security guarantees to Finland akin to those given to a member of a military alliance" (Prime Minister's Office [Finland], 2017, p. 16). Finland sees the importance and value of continuing NATO's Enhanced Opportunity Programme (EOP) and the 28 (NATO) +2 (Finland & Sweden) initiative. Sweden was recognised as a country with special status to strengthen security both in bilateral relations and within the Baltic Sea region.

The build-up of Finland's military capabilities after 2014 focused on defeating large enemy ground operations. While such capabilities claimed to have been achieved by the Army, there are plans to sustain and improve them into the 2030s and 2040s. Finnish Army plans to acquire new armoured personnel carriers and upgrade its infantry fighting vehicles. Significant efforts are aimed at improving ISTAR capability by introducing UAVs. Artillery units are planned to be more mobile and possess increased range exceeding that of 80 kilometres offered by MLRS systems. The Finnish Navy tries to enhance its surface and anti-submarine warfare capabilities by introducing new frigates, long-range surface to ship missile systems, mines and torpedoes. The Finnish Air Force is set to select a new generation of multirole fighters to replace ageing F-18s. Some efforts are being made to introduce new medium range surface to air missile systems to reinforce Finland's air defence.

There is strong support for Finnish homeland defence based on commonly understood principles of the "whole-of-government," and "whole-of-society" approaches. It involves all military and civilian authorities to participate actively during crisis and war, which is legally founded by the readiness act and in the state of defence act, which would come into in case of a crisis" (Chivvis, 2016, p. 201). The national resilience and readiness are key and those are supported by conscription, allowing Finland to possess combat ready reserves available in short notice to join the armed forces. Some 18 thousand reservists a year conduct refreshing training to increase reserve numbers up to 280 thousand troops. It is linked with laws and regulations in place ensuring dedication of people and equipment from the civilian sector to be used for defence purposes. Finland has extensive experience in this aspect. The national

defence planning assumes that the enemy will initially face the resistance of local force and border guard, which will hinder aggression by attacking enemy forces' flanks and lines of communication (Tillotson, 1993, p. 276). Those delaying operations and the wearing down of enemy troops is expected to deny the enemy seizing key terrain and infrastructure. An important factor enabling Finnish total defence is the fact that the nation preserved some Cold War infrastructure like shelters for civilians or stocks of food, fuel, and water for civil defence purposes.

The lack of progress in building European Union military capabilities acts as a stimulus for bilateral defence cooperation with Sweden and the United States. Finland also continues cooperation and partnership with NATO within various exercises and initiatives. Nevertheless, the concept of reliance on own capabilities, deeply rooted in national identity, plays a role in Finland's total defence efforts, causing the nation to invest in defence and enhance the nation's resilience potential. The spirit of the Winter War is a part of Finnish national heritage, influencing the perception of national security, which always relies first on the population's dedication and comprehensive national preparations during peacetime (Himberg, 2019).

### 3. NORWAY—BACK TO THE TOTAL DEFENCE ARRANGEMENTS

Before 2014, Norway saw some stabilization of relations with Russia, which resulted in cooperation in the Arctic Council and the Barents Sea borders delimitations dispute resolved in 2010. However, the situation after Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 reversed this trend. Russian military build-up in Arctic, the Norwegian area of vital interests, and suspicions of Russia practicing drills to seize Svalbard during strategic exercise Zapad 2017 (Stormark, 2017) made Norway revise its national defence policy. The Norwegian geostrategic location makes it important for active support to the security of the NATO northern flank. On 17 April 2020, the Norwegian Ministry of Defence released the "Long Term Defence Plan" dedicated to further development of the armed forces as "more joint, robust, interoperable, resilient, and ready force" (Norwegian Ministry of Defence, 2020, p. 2). The plan has supported the continuity of implementation of the total defence concept merging civilian and military capabilities. Norway intends to enhance its civil-military interoperability nationally to improve defence, resilience, and societal preparedness. At the same time, there is a desire to be more capable of cooperating



with partners in the Nordic area and beyond (SLD.info, 2020). The Norwegian approach to the total defence concept is driven by evolution of threats, geo-strategic location, and national interests, especially those in the Arctic. The allocation of 2 percent of the GDP by 2028 (NOK16.5 billion/USD 1.6 billion) will secure funds for investments into Norway's defence along three lines of effort: national defence, the NATO collective defence, and bilateral support and reinforcement arrangements with close allies (SLD.info, 2020, p. 4).

As Russian military threat to Norway relates mainly to the High North, and is posed primarily by the Russian Northern Fleet the modernization plans favour naval and air assets. Among combat platforms procurements, the Norwegian Navy plans to upgrade four frigates, buy four new submarines, and commission three new Coast Guard vessels. The Air Force will replace maritime patrol aircraft with P-8 Poseidon, and the air defence systems will be upgraded. Next, F-16s will be replaced by 52 F-35s (Merritt, 2020). The threat of land invasion has been taken into account by ensuring higher firepower, better sustainability, and high readiness of army units. Operational units of the Army will be supported by modernized and better equipped Home Guard with forward staged weapons, ammunition, and other supplies. The Norwegian armed forces include Home Guard divided into 11 territorial districts with some 40 thousand soldiers, 10 percent of which are part of rapid reaction forces. The nation preserves twelve months conscription followed by refreshing training. From 2015, conscription in Norway was extended to women. The total defence concept was fully incorporated into Exercise "Trident Juncture 18" including the verification of cooperation between the Norwegian Armed Forces and the Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection (DSB), as well as testing arrangements for Host Nation Support (SHAPE, no date). The cooperation with partners and within NATO is constantly enhanced by other exercises as "Cold Response 2020", BALTOPS in the Baltics, and the EU by deploying troops for "Operation Atalanta" or EU Battle Groups.

The national defence of Norway is founded on a whole-of-government approach. There are plans to enhance and harmonize civil-military cooperation. This includes contingency planning, crisis management, and consequence management across the entire crisis spectrum from peace to security policy crisis and armed conflict (Norwegian Ministry of Defence, 2020, p. 16). Consequently, all available national resources are to be mobilized to face crisis or war and the whole-of-society effort is part of defence and resilience. The overall national readiness presented within doctrines and exercises is a deterrence factor. It should be highlighted that the Norwegian total defence concept developed

and maintained during the Cold War allowed for requisition and support from a wide range of civilian resources and activities to support armed forces. Whilst the armed forces could not keep the required number of trucks, construction engines, helicopters, and material, including food and fuel in peacetime, everything was prepared, down to the individual item, to be put at the military disposal once it would be politically decided. The same applied for services, strategic transport, shipping, and communications. After the Cold War ended, these preparations were discontinued. However, recent years have seen a renaissance of these past practices, which are again to be implemented to reinforce Norway's capabilities for total defence. It may take some time to revive the levels of preparedness, as Karsten Friis explained that Norway "tends to prioritise welfare over warfare" (Friis, 2018, p. 136), and social security is more important than defence.

#### 4. DENMARK—CONTRIBUTING TO FORWARD DEFENCE

Threats posed by Russian actions after 2014 influenced Danish defence policy requiring attention to both NATO's Eastern Flank and the Arctic. In November 2018, Denmark released *Foreign and Security Policy Strategy 2019–2020* highlighting the growing unpredictability of the changing global order. The deteriorating security environment has been seen in the context of the degradation of the United States from a global leadership position in some areas, China's drive to influence global norms and values, and finally, Russian aggressive conduct (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2018, pp. 8-9). In 2018, Denmark assessed that Russia had no interest in risking a military confrontation with NATO, but at the same time, it opposed the rules-based world order (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2018, pp. 12-13). Russia was seen also in the context of its military activities in the Arctic. These developments in the security environment made Denmark concerned about security in the Baltic Sea region and the North Atlantic. Because of that, Denmark decided to support NATO initiatives, including the enhanced Forward Presence and to contribute to the multinational Division Headquarters in Latvia. These commitments were based on national interest and the clear awareness that the worsening security situation would impact Denmark security and prosperity, which relied on exports and investments.

The 2018-2023 Danish Defence Agreement covers many aspects of defence policy. One of its important elements was the decision to enhance the military budget to 1.5 percent of the GDP in 2023, allowing the procurement of modern weapon systems. Denmark plans to have an infantry brigade ready by 2024, and the Navy will improve anti-submarine warfare capabilities. Air operations capability is another area of concern to be approached by replacing F-16s with F-35s by 2026. The 20 thousand strong armed forces are supported by the Danish Home Guard (DHG), counting 550 active duty and 14,5 thousand volunteers in peacetime structures plus some 30 thousand in reserve. The DHG tasks are mainly related to homeland security and facilitation of the host nation support functions. Denmark has preserved conscription, mostly voluntary, with liability between four and twelve months. The unity of military and civilian preparedness is founded by a clear structure for civil preparedness, where responsibilities are clearly assigned. Denmark has introduced several sector-specific programmes related to total defence. A cross-government body has been established to ensure coordination of civil preparedness (NATO, 2020, p. 5). The nation invests in armed forces to contribute to NATO collective defence, but it has limited combat units' expeditionary capability to deploy troops. As James Wither observed, Denmark "does not describe its defence policy in total defence terms" (Wither, 2020, p. 63) and it refers mainly to peacetime and crisis. NATO and reliable transatlantic relations remain a cornerstone of Danish defence policy. This policy supports both preserving and build-up of the US engagement in Europe. Like other Nordic nations, there are differences among parties in many aspects, but the defence policy is an area "with relatively high level of consensus" (Larsen, 2020, p. 10) in Denmark, allowing long-term planning in all defence related aspects.

##### 5. ICELAND—SUPPORTING ALLIED DEFENCE WITHOUT HAVING ARMED FORCES

Compared to other Nordic states, Iceland is seen as a small nation without armed forces, possessing only limited capabilities to monitor national exclusive maritime zone using the coast guard. It is a nation that in general relies on allies and partners to ensure its national sovereignty, which is linked with economic interests. Iceland is a member of NATO, but it is determined to use peaceful solutions in security domain as declared when the nation took presidency of the Arctic Council in 2019. In respect to the Arctic, it was highlighted in the context

of national interests within presidency theme “Together towards a Sustainable Arctic” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, 2019). Until 2006, Iceland relied on the US troops stationed there, and after their withdrawal, the security policy was revised. In 2014, the report on national security policy for Iceland was released focusing on foreign policy, defence policy and civil protection. In defence related recommendations, it stated that “U.S. alliance, Iceland’s NATO membership and Icelandic involvement in NATO’s work should continue, together with the Allied air policing exercises based at Keflavik” based on dedicating civilian resources, mainly for search and rescue (Bailes, Ólafsson, 2014, p. 6). Nevertheless, security and defence issues were given rather low priority as the national agenda was still dominated by economic and social problems and public spending cuts (Bailes, Ólafsson, 2014, p. 8).

In 2016 the Parliament of Iceland released a resolution, which addressed key national security policy issues. The resolution presented concerns about the Arctic and named NATO membership as key pillar in defence (Parliament of Iceland, 2016, pp. 1-2) along with a bilateral defence agreement with the United States signed in 1951 and revised in 2017 (The Office of the United States Trade Representative, 1951). Iceland recognized the need for a close cooperation with the Nordic countries and the requirement to possess defence infrastructure for national and international commitments. In 2017, Iceland established the National Security Council to coordinate all security related aspects. Iceland’s Coast Guard controls the NATO Iceland Air Defence System and a NATO Control and Reporting Centre along with hosting exercises. In 2016, Iceland approved the operations of US Navy P-8 Poseidon maritime-patrol aircraft (IISS, 24 February 2021, p. 114). The protection of the airspace is periodically conducted by NATO nations within ‘Icelandic Air Policing’ by allied fighter aircraft periodically deployed to Keflavik Air Base. Iceland fully relies on allied nations’ contribution to its security having no national defence capabilities to face any conventional threat but is prepared to secure national economic interest within variety of international organizations. Being a NATO member, it has only a political voice in the organizational matters, but the consensus-based decision-making make the nation equal to others.

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## CONCLUSIONS

The common threat perception and unpredictability of Russian actions after 2014 have affected the defence policies of all Nordic states. Recognizing the multidimensional nature of threats, the Nordic states adopted defence policies that combined a build-up of national military capabilities and international security and defence cooperation. National responses to the Russian threat translated into defence policies that took into account basic factors, such as the state's geographic location, its membership to political-military alliances or other forms of multilateral and bilateral security and defence cooperation. While the Nordic states were active in international peace and crisis response operations around the world prior to 2014, Russian aggression against Ukraine added a sense of urgency to their efforts aimed at military deterrence and defence. Nordic states sharing borders with Russia have reinvigorated the concepts of total defence and started development of military capabilities needed to defend against conventional aggression. The nature of the military threat posed to specific regions and states resulted in putting a premium on the development of different capabilities. Finland's defence policy has focused on deterring and defeating a large scale ground invasion against its territory, while Norway oriented against maritime threat in the Arctic and Northern Atlantic Ocean. The threat of territorially oriented aggression within the Baltic Sea Region also influenced Sweden's defence policy. Although Denmark did not fear territorial aggression of Russia, it decided to increase its contributions to military security of the Baltic states and Baltic Sea Region along with increasing its capabilities in the Arctic. Territorial defence has been playing an increasingly important role in the defence policies of the Nordic states after 2014. However, the emphasis put on territorial defence capabilities differed among the Nordic states. Increased levels of conscription have served as a means for reinforcing defence capabilities by all Nordic states.

International security and defence cooperation has become an important part of the defence policies of the Nordic states after 2014. The Russian threat reinvigorated defence commitments by NATO member states. Norway increased its role in security and defence of NATO Northern Flank. Denmark has contributed to NATO's enhanced Forward presence in the Baltic Sea Region and increased its capabilities in the Arctic. Iceland has increased host nation support to allied military activities in the Northern Atlantic Ocean. At the same time Sweden and Finland increased the scope of cooperation with NATO creating conditions for host nation support and assuring interoperability with allied forces. Bilateral defence cooperation with the United States has become another

hallmark of the defence policies of the Nordic states for both NATO Nordic members as well as Sweden and Finland. Increased threat posed by Russian behaviour and activities after 2014 reinvigorated regional security and defence cooperation within NORDEFCO and under bilateral arrangements.

An important factor of the defence policies of the Nordic states after 2014 has been the consensus among political parties to have commonly agreed, or at least understood, perceptions of building national capabilities to face threats. It allows for the long-term planning of national defence reorganization along with procurement of weapon systems. Nordic states are known for their pragmatic assessments that decisions taken today will have significant future implications, reinforcing capabilities to face conventional and unconventional threats. The Nordic states are making an effort to integrate civil defence with the armed forces for emergency preparedness as an important component of resilience during wartime. It is supported by involvement of all the levels of national administration—private companies along with education of society. The Nordic nations are making an effort to improve division of responsibility between civil and military components in support of total defence concepts.

Reorientation of national defence policies of the Nordic states toward conventional defence after 2014, resulted in changes to procurement decisions. Military capabilities optimized for a high intensity conflict proved costly requiring allocation of funds and time to close the existing gaps. The procurement of new weapon systems will be driven by national geographical interests and self-defence requirements followed by contribution to NATO, in the case of Norway and Denmark, or cooperation with partners in the case of Sweden and Finland.

The defence policies of the Nordic states adopted in response to Russian aggressive activities after 2014 continue to put emphasis on development of reserve personnel, which could be mobilized in a short time allowing them to react to threats in crisis and war. Building up reserves is seen in the defence policies of the Nordic states as an element of deterrence by denial and a part of the total defence approach. It is linked with preservation of conscription as an element of preparing their societies within total defence concepts. Nevertheless, the Nordic states struggle to reach the desired number of conscripts because of aging societies, which is a generic trend, and quality of physical and psychological preparedness of young generation to military training. The social support is underpinned by defence education in respective nations, which is among others contribution to society resilience toward information warfare and disinformation.

Reliance on national capabilities forms a cornerstone of defence policies of the Nordic states. The overall approach of the Nordic states toward defence

is closely linked to the idea of developing individual national capabilities to resist an armed attack first and then contributing to collective capacities or benefiting from them. This approach is linked to historical experience. The Nordic states understand that they possess limited resources and abilities to face possible Russian aggression. Therefore, the concept of total, comprehensive defence is important for the Nordic states. The defence policies adopted in response to threats posed by Russian aggressive actions after 2014 prove that the Nordic states take this issue very seriously, and the preparations for territorially oriented defence are here to stay for a longer period.

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ADDRESSING RUSSIAN THREAT.  
CHANGES TO DEFENCE POLICIES OF THE NORDIC STATES AFTER 2014

Summary

The substantial deterioration of the security environment after Russian aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 was a catalyst for significant changes in the Nordic states' approach to security and defence. Common perceptions of the Russian threat focused defence policies of the Nordic states around rebuilding total defence capabilities, which would combine military and civilian efforts. Besides these efforts to reinforce national capacity to defend against an armed attack, the Nordic states increased regional security and defence cooperation, along with cooperation with NATO, the EU and the United States. The article explores the developments in defence policies of the Nordic states that were a result of changes in the security environment caused by Russian aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. It tries to discuss differences in national threat assessment, and then compare and contrast unique national approaches to defence policies that were adopted by the Nordic states. The conclusion conceptualizes unique features of the Nordic approach to defence stemming from the common threat to their security.

**Keywords:** Nordic states; defence; total defence; defence cooperation; Russia 2014-.

REAKCJA NA ZAGROŻENIE ZE STRONY ROSJI.  
ZMIANY W POLITYCE OBRONNEJ PAŃSTW NORDYCKICH PO 2014 ROKU

Streszczenie

Negatywne zmiany w euroatlantyckim środowisku bezpieczeństwa po rosyjskiej agresji na Ukrainę i bezprawnej aneksji Krymu w 2014 r. stały się katalizatorem istotnych zmian w podejściu państw nordyckich do bezpieczeństwa i obronności. Artykuł jest próbą syntetycznej oceny zmian w polityce obronnej państw nordyckich będących bezpośrednią reakcją na wzrost zagrożenia ze strony Rosji po roku 2014. W artykule porównano podstawowe założenia polityk obrony państw nordyckich, w tym oceny zagrożeń, koncepcje rozwoju sił zbrojnych i zdolności operacyjnych. W analizie uwzględniono działania podejmowane w wymiarze narodowych oraz międzynarodową współpracę obronną państw nordyckich.

**Słowa kluczowe:** państwa nordyckie; obrona; obrona totalna; współpraca obronna; Rosja 2014-.