NORDIC FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY 2020

Climate Change, Hybrid & Cyber Threats and Challenges to the Multilateral, Rules-Based World Order

Proposals, July 2020

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INTRODUCTION

On 2 December 2019, the Icelandic Minister for Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Nordic Foreign Ministers, tasked me to write a report on Nordic Foreign and Security Policy in the same spirit as the one Thorvald Stoltenberg delivered in February 2009. My work took into account the establishment of Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO) in November 2009.

The mandate stipulated three tasks:

- addressing global climate change
- addressing hybrid threats and cyber issues
- strengthening and reforming multilateralism and the rules-based international order.

An Addendum to the report includes the following short sections: The Nordic Context, Cooperative Networks, and The Geopolitical Context. Moreover, putting the report into context with the COVID-19 pandemic was unavoidable as it is bound to affect Nordic and international cooperation in the near and distant future.

I was instructed to avoid duplication concerning ongoing Nordic cooperation and asked to relate existing cooperation to the new proposals. Moreover, the new proposals should concentrate on the added value of joint Nordic cooperation in the respective subject areas. The report should be brief and concise, structured around a limited set of themes and with concrete policy recommendations for possible joint action.

While gathering materials for the report, Jóna Sólveig Elínardóttir, director of the International Security and Defence Cooperation Department at the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and I were well received in all the Nordic capitals as well as Washington DC where we got the US outlook on the Nordic foreign and security situation. We met with Nordic politicians, diplomats, experts, and academics in the fields of international relations, politics, climate change as well as both civil and military security. In short, in all our discussions, in over 80 meetings, we sensed great and sincere interest in strengthening Nordic cooperation in the field of foreign and security policy.

It was of special value to visit research institutes in the Nordic capitals. These included the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) and the Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO), the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), and the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI) in Stockholm, the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA) and Hybrid Centre of Excellence in Helsinki, and representatives of the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) and Centre for Resolution of International Conflicts (CRIC) in Copenhagen. In Copenhagen, we also met with representatives from the Danish Foreign Policy Society, the United Nations Association, and the UNDP's Nordic Representation. While all these actors have their viewpoint, together they form a network that should be cultivated to facilitate a common analytical basis for Nordic foreign and security policy and its promotion within the Nordic countries and to the broader world.

To assist and advise us, the respective ministries appointed a reference group composed of Jørgen Gammelgaard and Louise Riis Andersen from Denmark, Matti Pesu and Pilvi-Sisko Vierros-Villeneuve from Finland, Diljá Mist Einarsdóttir and Ólafur Stephensen from Iceland, Karsten

Friis and Torunn L. Tryggestad from Norway, and Annika Markovic and Laila Naraghi from Sweden. I am most grateful for all the assistance and advice we got. The outcome is my sole responsibility.

Since the Stoltenberg Report, the depth and scope of Nordic foreign policy cooperation have continued to broaden. The Nordic countries have made great progress in the field of security and defence, both as a group (NORDEFCO) and bilaterally, responding to the changes in the security environment in our region. Even though their participation in international bodies varies, the Nordics continue to seek ever closer cooperation on these matters. Three are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); three are European Union (EU) member states, and all are members of the Arctic Council. States outside the region, however, often look to the Nordics as one international entity.

At our very first meeting in Oslo, people voiced that there was growing international demand and need for Nordic liberal democratic values and soft solutions. Nordic cooperation is an interesting model in Europe and for the rest of the world, and it is clear that there is considerable untapped potential to take the cooperation to a new level in the three areas that the mandate covers.

Encouragement for the Nordics to build on and expand the Nordic Brand, therefore, underpins the entire report. This process includes taking the lead in and developing comprehensive cooperative measures that can serve as a model for international responses to the growing challenges of our time, including climate change, hybrid and cyber threats, and the crisis of multilateralism.

If this report enhances Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation, it will be a step towards a brighter future.

Reykjavík, 1 July 2020

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GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century and a global concern. It will affect stability, prosperity, and security in every part of the world and influence migration and refugee patterns both regionally and globally. It is a challenge that only global collaborative action can effectively address and is therefore already a central foreign and security policy priority for the Nordic countries. Many of the traditional foreign policy tools, including development cooperation and trade, can be further employed to successfully assist and encourage other countries and actors to increase their actions in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Increased Nordic engagements in this field can potentially raise global climate ambitions, accelerate the global green transition, and ensure increased funding and focus on climate change actions and Paris Alignment. Three issues stand out as particularly relevant for future Nordic collaboration: green energy, the Arctic, and migration.

Green Energy

In 2019, Nordic leaders agreed to make the Nordic Region the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. In doing so, they decided to deliver collectively on their respective commitments under the Paris Agreement on climate change as well as under the climate parts of the EU's climate and energy framework.

This vision should be extended to a shared focus on making the COVID-19 recovery responses green and ensuring that the economic recovery does not worsen the climate crisis. The Nordic countries therefore need to work together to build back better and greener. COVID-19's dramatic shock to the global energy system was not in the cards during the rapporteur's visits to the Nordic capitals. The question at the time was whether there was support for a Nordic, collaborative effort to increase the role of renewables and improve energy efficiency in other regions.

The Nordics have developed unique cooperation on energy. This cooperation is a solid foundation for sustainable and secure energy supply in the region. All the capitals express interest in leading the way in the global green transition. To make it a common foreign policy goal is a worthwhile challenge. This brings added-value not only to the Nordic region but also to Nordic foreign policy initiatives and should be seen both as a part of development programs and an international research and business opportunity.

The Arctic

The Nordics are five out of the eight members of the Arctic Council and have a crucial role to play in this part of the world, where security dynamics are worsening due to rising rivalry between the great powers. As small Arctic

states, the Nordics share a strong interest in maintaining the Arctic as a zone of cooperation and joint problem solving.

All six working groups of the Arctic Council deal with the effects of climate change, albeit in different ways. The Nordic countries see the Arctic Council as the primary focus for Arctic cooperation and will continue to address important issues like climate change and sustainable development in this forum. International Arctic conferences held in the High North (e.g. Arctic Circle in Reykjavik, Arctic Frontiers in Tromsø and Rovaniemi Arctic Spirit) have become an important forum for climate change discussions. These initiatives are useful to map out international opportunities and are used to coordinate common Nordic efforts in order to engage experts and private stakeholders in key discussions on climate change.

In discussions on climate change, the Arctic is always high on the agenda, as is the need to closely follow the impact of diminishing sea ice. Rising temperatures have resulted in new sea routes opening up and opportunities for resource exploitation. Further risks include new undersea fibre optic cables, increased climate-related natural disasters in the Nordics, such as wildfires and risks to biodiversity, all of which can be more effectively addressed through Nordic collective coordination and action. It is obvious that all this activity demands more security awareness, and the Nordic countries will need to continue and even increase their efforts to secure the Arctic as a low-tension area.

According to climate researchers, warmer climate increases the risks of both floods and more extreme droughts. The latter, in turn, increases the risk of forest fires, as the forest fires that raged in Sweden and Norway in the summer of 2018 showed. Today, the Nordics work mostly independently on preventing serious fires. The Nordic Council has suggested that the Nordic countries may benefit greatly from increased collaboration on fire prevention and has called for Nordic governments to evaluate the possibilities for a Nordic fleet of firefighting aircraft as well as a Nordic strategy for fire prevention. This should be taken into consideration, while also taking note of the work already being done within the European Civil Protection Mechanism and the NATO Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), of which all Nordics are members.

Migration

While it is well-established that climate change makes many places unliveable and forces people to leave their homes, it will not necessarily lead to more migration to Europe. Most people are displaced within their own country or seek refuge in neighbouring states. The Nordics should see it as their role to minimise the negative impacts of climate change on livelihoods, prosperity, and equality within the communities most affected by climate change. In this context the longstanding special Nordic foreign policy and development ties with some African nations are important.

In both the Global North and the Global South, the issue of climate change must be dealt with as a serious comprehensive foreign and security policy challenge.

1. Cooperation on climate through an enhanced common policy

A common Nordic policy approach to climate change should be developed in order to strengthen Nordic climate action globally. It should take into account climate diplomacy, in a broad sense, as well as the linkage between foreign, security, and development policy and financing.

Stronger Nordic cooperation on climate diplomacy would be useful when addressing the issue of climate change in the global arena and in bilateral conversations with strategically important countries, including large emitters. The Nordic countries should collaborate more on raising the issue of climate change and green transition in bilateral conversations with third countries of strategic importance in relation to the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG7 on ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

Public funding will be insufficient in financing the global green transition. To further increase the ambition and scale of climate action, the Nordics should lead by example in accelerating private funding for green transition worldwide by jointly engaging their pension funds and institutional investors in providing critical support to the transition to low-emission, climate-resilient economies in other world regions. This would build on the successful experiences of Nordic pension funds, which already lead the way with ambitious, climate-related investment goals, extensive disclosure on their portfolio's climate alignment, and proven investment models. Sweden has for instance supported climate-smart investments in developing countries, and Denmark has promoted public-private co-investment funds, i.a., for increased investments in sustainable development, including in developing countries.

Within the field of development, an ambitious Nordic framework on the greening of the Multilateral Development Banks' (MDB) engagements could be used to push for action on the MDBs' own commitment to align their operations with the Paris Agreement – a commitment the MDBs are currently working jointly on. The commitments should reflect how the Multilateral Development Banks engage with individual countries, e.g., when assisting client countries to develop more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Currently, there is no definite consensus among shareholders on the Multilateral Development Banks' optimal approach to these issues. A coordinated Nordic push could influence this development, in particular given the track record of the Nordic countries.

The Nordics have frequently been recognized for influencing the direction of institutions like the World Bank, where they share a seat with the Baltics, to a degree that goes beyond their actual share of votes. This has been done by moving topics from the periphery to the centre stage.

To unleash the potential for Nordic cooperation in this important area, the proposal is to establish an enhanced common Nordic policy approach to climate, bringing the above work strands together in a coherent Nordic approach.

2. Climate Security and Development

A common Nordic Climate Security and Development Policy should be developed. Efforts should be combined by pooling resources and focusing development aid and conflict resolution measures on vulnerable and unstable states affected by climate change.

Climate change is exacerbating existing challenges of conflict and instability in the area of security. While the nexus of climate, conflict, and security is gaining increased political attention, there is still need to advance understanding of this trend and build support for strengthening the UN's capacities in the sphere of climate and security. The Nordic countries are all engaged in the climate-security field, but a joint understanding and approach would increase the Nordic countries' influence on current policy debates, e.g., within the UN Security Council.

Responding to climate change-related security threats and their impact on the Nordic region requires coordinated action beyond the region. The Nordics should lead the way in developing a truly cross-sectoral policy approach to addressing the multifaceted problems and security challenges caused by global climate change.

Their strong and positive reputation for addressing climate change, contributing development aid, engaging in conflict prevention and mediation, and promoting democratic institutions and human rights, supports Nordic leadership in this field.

Building resilience in vulnerable and unstable countries is necessary to protect those most exposed against the negative effects of climate change. The most fragile countries usually depend heavily on agriculture, have a recent history of conflict, and a high level of political exclusion.

Nordic foreign policy aims within relevant international organizations should support climate resilience in developing countries where the security risk potential, due to climate change, is greatest. In doing so, the Nordic countries contribute meaningfully to limiting the risks of climate-related violent outbreaks, food crises and large-scale displacement of populations.

Their common approach should focus on building state capacity to address climate-related risks, such as floods and droughts, thus increasing state legitimacy and reducing risks of social upheaval. This would improve social resilience and increase economic security.

Priority should be given to conflict prevention and conflict resolution measures leading to necessary institutional reforms in states with high climate exposure, high fragility, and instability.

Promotion of public-private partnerships supporting development of alternative livelihoods in these countries should have priority, focusing on innovation and necessary infrastructure projects, such as ensuring access to clean water and energy security.

Moreover, the Nordics should lead the way in developing adequate international agreements to tackle the problems the world will inevitably face due to climate change. Examples include international rules governing those forced to abandon their homes due to climate change and the already stretched international humanitarian and crisis response systems.

The empowerment of women and girls is key for successful implementation of these proposals.

3. Public-private cluster for targeted energy transition projects

A Nordic public-private energy cluster should identify suitable partner regions internationally, with a high fossil fuel component, to work towards necessary energy transition and sustainable development. The work would rely on a sustainability protocol similar to what has been worked out for hydropower and geothermal projects internationally.

All the Nordic countries have expressed ambitious goals for energy transition and CO2 sequestration in order to become carbon neutral in 2050. Given that the Nordics maintain stable, political consensus on the issue, they will have the technology and economic strength to live up to these goals in the long term. The Nordic countries' climate ambitions are important to show leadership and demonstrate best practices on how the goals of the Paris Agreement can be reached. Further, it is important to showcase and enable the proper instruments to delink economic growth and increased energy consumption to ensure that large parts of the rest of the world will be able to reach the same targets while simultaneously increasing sustainable welfare and maintaining political stability. In fact, in many regions one or more coal power plants are providing electricity that is the primus motor in new industries and economic growth.

The Nordic countries together possess a large set of technologies and experience that other regions can use as multiple-component solutions to engineer transitions from fossil energy to clean energy, while at the same time addressing sustainability and social issues, like employment, by gradually shifting employment from brown to green jobs.

Nordic leading-edge technologies in the fields of hydropower and geothermal energy, wind, solar, nuclear, biofuels and energy efficiency allow for the introduction of Nordic integrated energy solutions, which take care of both the generation of renewable energy and the interconnection of regions. Moreover, the Nordics have established advanced heating and cooling networks providing optimum energy quality management. This strong position of the Nordics as frontrunners in the field of clean energy solutions is further supported by a strong Research and Development sector. It, combined with a strong industrial sector, would embrace challenges from the wider world. This would pave the way for even stronger public-private partnerships.

New ground-breaking Nordic technologies, such as heat pump applications, new generations of network solutions for distribution, carbon capture and storage technologies, such as the CarbFix method, and clean energy solutions for communication and transport on land and sea, are examples of opportunities to make the most of the Nordic Brand in generating export revenues, while at the same time contributing to solving the challenges of climate change.

The proposal here is to form a Nordic public-private cluster of institutes and companies, backed by the Nordic governments and Nordic and international funding and financing organisations. This cluster would seek suitable partner regions internationally, with a high fossil fuel component, to work towards necessary energy transition and sustainable development. This cluster would build on the Nordic countries' strength of close cross-sector collaboration. Especially in this area, there is untapped potential in advancing models of public-private collaboration globally. Examples, such as the Swedish Leadership for Sustainable Development, Swedish Investors for Sustainable Development as well as the climate partnerships

Wind generators in the arctic tundra. Norway, the island of Smola.

between the Danish Government and the private sector, could be raised on a global level to inspire and spur action.

The choice of region(s) would depend on the probability of success and where Nordic expertise and technologies would be especially competitive. The work would rely on a sustainability protocol similar to what has been worked out for hydropower and geothermal projects internationally. The Nordic institutes on research and innovation should be involved in the initial phase of the project. It would be relevant to clarifying possible synergies with ongoing work in the Nordic Council of Ministers.

4. Common approach to Chinese Arctic Involvement

The Nordic countries should develop a common Nordic analysis, policy, and approach to Chinese Arctic involvement and pursue it within relevant regional networks to which they are all parties.

Climate change, coupled with growing tensions in international relations over the last decade, has led to big power rivalry in the Arctic between the United States, Russia, and China. The Nordics comprise five out of the eight Arctic states and therefore have a strong common voice, e.g., within the Arctic Council. A 2019 update assessment issued by the Arctic Council's Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme working group highlights that (1), the region continues to warm at a rate more than twice that of the global mean; (2) the annual surface air temperatures over the last five years have exceeded those of any year since 1900, and (3) the volume of Arctic sea ice in the month of September has declined 75% since 1979. The implications of this trend are global and political.

Amidst these drastic changes to the Arctic climate and environment, China is emerging as a global power and has defined itself as a "near-Arctic state". The overall Chinese strategic interests are access to Arctic resources and sea routes as well as increased influence on Arctic issues. China is increasing its bilateral cooperation with the Arctic states through active economic, social, and scientific engagement in the region, including polar research.

China's presence and strategic interest in the Arctic will have security policy implications. So far, Chinese military activity in the Arctic has been very limited. However, the Chinese military has now begun to strengthen its knowledge of the Arctic.

Since 1999, the Chinese have conducted numerous Arctic expeditions. They built their first research base, the Yellow River Station, on Svalbard Island in 2004. China has officially included the Arctic sea routes in its 2017 grand development strategy, the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI). China re-emphasised this in its 2018 white paper on "China's Arctic Policy", outlining its interests as a major stakeholder in the Arctic. In 2018, China and Iceland jointly inaugurated the Arctic Science Observatory in northern Iceland, originally intended for observations of the northern lights. Later its research scope expanded. Plans have been presented for opening a Chinese research station in Greenland as well as a satellite receiver station.

All Arctic states agree that the UN Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is the legal framework within which states should solve legal disputes regarding ocean governance. In the South China Sea, China makes maritime claims which contradict UNCLOS, although ratified by China. Such actions must be kept out of the Arctic.

Several actors' broad interest in the Arctic underlines the importance of well-functioning, multilateral cooperation, where the Arctic states must assume responsibility and play a key role in the interests of the Arctic environment and its societies. The Nordics should aim to formulate a common Nordic policy facilitating partnership with states that share similar views on the implications of increased Chinese Arctic involvement.

It is therefore proposed that the Nordic countries develop a common Nordic analysis, policy and approach to Chinese Arctic involvement and pursue it within relevant regional networks to which they are all parties, i.e., within the Arctic Council, Council of Europe, Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation (BEAC) and Northern Dimension.

5. Climate change mitigation and marine research

Climate change seriously impacts the oceans. Pooling marine research resources, both human resources, research vessels and other equipment, enables the Nordics to develop state-of-the-art knowledge on the impact of climate change on their surrounding oceans.

The oceans, which cover around 70% of the Earth's surface, contain over 97% of all water on Earth and produce half of all our oxygen. They also act as our planet's chief climate regulator. In fact, more than 90% of the warming on the Earth over the past 50 years has occurred in the ocean. All Nordic countries have acknowledged and flagged internationally the importance of the oceans for both human and planetary well-being and have emphasised the importance of restoring and protecting the well-being of the marine environment. Moreover, all have underscored the serious impacts of climate change on the world's oceans and, conversely, its importance to their health in the battle against the negative impact of climate change.

The Nordics, which are all Arctic states, all witness the dramatic effects of global climate change on the oceans in the region. Rising ocean temperatures and increased acidification directly affect developments in the Arctic where sea ice is melting, and marine ecosystems are changing, which in turn has effects in the North Atlantic and beyond. These developments also have widespread social and economic effects in the Arctic relating to, e.g., the opening up of new sea routes, increased access to natural resources, increased tourism, and changes in marine biodiversity. Climate change is also having extensive effects on conditions in the Baltic Sea, as well as on its habitants. While some species might benefit from climate change, most of its effects are predicted to be negative.

To better understand the climate-induced changes in the temperature and chemistry of our oceans and their consequences, it is proposed that the Nordic countries pool their marine research resources, both human resources, research vessels and other equipment. This will enable the production of state-of-the-art knowledge on the impact of climate change on the oceans surrounding the Nordics. In addition to increasing awareness of what could be done to respond to the effects of climate change on the oceans, as well as how to address challenges and utilise possible opportunities, this would enable the Nordics to better protect their common interests and advance their common policies within international organizations.
It is also proposed that the results of this collaboration be made available on open source platforms to advance international knowledge on the matter. Moreover, it is proposed that the Nordic countries seek collaboration in this field with private actors as well as small-island states that are showing growing leadership in response to the marine impact on climate change.

HYBRID THREATS AND CYBER ISSUES

Hybrid threats, including cyber-attacks and disinformation/influence operations, pose a serious and increasing challenge to the Nordic countries. By taking advantage of the vulnerabilities of democratic and open societies, hybrid threat actors undermine Nordic security, prosperity, and values. Hybrid threats are ambiguous and designed to allow deniability. Therefore, it is difficult, but even more important, to address them. In all the capitals, interlocutors emphasized that the Nordics could meet these challenges more effectively together.

While countering cyber-attacks and other hybrid threats is first and foremost a national responsibility, the Nordic countries must work closer together to keep up with ever more determined and sophisticated adversaries. Without duplicating existing structures and means of cooperation, such as NORDEFCO, there is potential for strengthened Nordic cooperation on several aspects of hybrid threats and cyber issues.

The importance of multilateral cooperation of like-minded states in fighting cyber and hybrid threats is undisputed. All Nordic countries recognize the importance of The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE) in Helsinki, which supports participating states' individual and collective efforts to enhance their capabilities, resilience, and preparedness to counter hybrid threats. Hybrid CoE is a bridge between the EU and NATO. The Nordics, except for Iceland, are active members of the Centre. The Nordics equally recognize the importance of the work of the EU STRATCOM.

There are three key terms often used in connection with hybrid threats: *situational awareness, resilience, and deterrence*. Going beyond this, developing *countermeasures* against aggression, is increasingly needed.

Cyber has been described as an abstract realm with its high-speed communication lines, data collections and processing capabilities. The results of these virtual world processes are felt when they hit the real world. Hybrid warfare happens in the real and the virtual world. The real-world's segment is in principle well observed and understood, while the virtual segment operates stealthily in the invisible world of computers and networks until it shows effects in the real world.

State and non-state actors deploy hybrid means to challenge countries and institutions that they see as a threats, opponents or competitors to their interests and goals. The range of methods and activities is wide, including: espionage; influencing information; meddling in elections; intellectual property theft; exploiting logistical weaknesses like energy supply pipelines; economic and trade-related blackmail; undermining international institutions by rendering rules ineffective; terrorism or increasing the sense of insecurity; threatening civilian air traffic, maritime communications, energy cables and causing maritime incidents.

Strong arguments have pointed out that one should actually not talk about "hybrid threats"

but rather “hybrid warfare” as at least some Nordic countries are under constant attack. It is of utmost importance to share experiences, not only to learn from one another but also to better realize whether there is a pattern to irregularities that might be part of a larger, strategic hybrid action directed against some or all of the Nordic countries. Being up to speed when it comes to tactical and technological trends in the field is crucial. While attribution is a national responsibility, multinational solidarity is a vital part of hybrid and cyber deterrence. The Nordic countries should join hands in condemning those conducting hybrid warfare where part of the game is to deny any culpability.

The two state actors most often mentioned as posing a threat to the Nordics in this regard are Russia and China. These states have developed effective subversive means that go much further in weakening their targets than fake news and disinformation do. Such means have been used before to prepare the ground for illegal annexation, as seen in the Crimea in the spring of 2014. That event represented a swift culmination of prolonged Russian efforts to destabilise Ukraine. Russia’s denial of any responsibility characterised the aftermath. Apart from the illegal incursion in the South China Sea, China conducts lower key hybrid operations than Russia. Social engineering and economic espionage are Chinese trademarks having social, economic, and financial aims, mirrored in their efforts to gain access through strategic investments and research projects. It is important to conduct foreign investment screening with special emphasis on security, i.a. in 5G systems and critical infrastructure. The leading role of Nordic companies like Ericsson and Nokia in this field is often highlighted as important for ensuring a high-tech competition edge.

As all countermeasures are sensitive and can lead to reprisals, the multinational aspect of hybrid and cyber defensive measures make a crucial difference. It would be of great value if the Nordics developed common Nordic situational awareness. The ideas of greater collaboration on investment screening through an increased exchange of information and a Nordic Cyber Security Stamp are also to be considered in this context.

The total defence concept is highly relevant in hybrid defence as it covers both civilian and military security. The defence sector depends on civilian digital infrastructures and services. Hybrid security challenges in the civilian sector therefore also affect the military sector. In worst case scenarios, hybrid attacks on, for example, civilian infrastructure may challenge a state‘s ability to safeguard national security.

Private companies own and operate the majority of Nordic critical digital infrastructure. Commercial, non-state actors make important decisions related to the development of cyberspace. This, therefore, limits the role of public authorities in the development of cyberspace, which in turn calls for extensive public-private partnerships. The necessity of these partnerships is recognised in all Nordic capitals. The duty of companies and individuals together with states is to do their utmost to guarantee their citizens’ security in this environment. None of this is possible without close international collaboration and exchange of information to increase situational awareness.

6. Common understanding of Hybrid Threats

To develop greater hybrid situational awareness, Nordic countries should work towards a common conceptual and political understanding of the key hybrid threats facing them, both individually and collectively.

In their cooperation, the Nordics benefit from their common history, shared sets of principles, norms and values, and the high-level of trust characterising their homogenous societies. Experience with COVID-19 has underscored the need for increased cooperation to counter hybrid threats and ensure that autocratic states do not win the global narrative.

Hybrid threats and attacks threaten peace, social cohesion, and security in the region. To defend their societies and promote democratic values, the Nordic countries should also strive for proactive communication in the EU and NATO, highlighting the successes and solidarity of these institutions. The fact that hybrid threat activities are conducted primarily outside the military domain demands increased cross-sectoral, i.e., political, civilian, and military as well as multinational cooperation. In this era of below-threshold conflicts that increasingly strain the principles of democracy, rule of law, and human rights, democratic states, such as the Nordics, must be able to constantly perform in-depth analysis of specific hybrid challenges. Informed national and Nordic strategies are needed, as well as clusters of actors, to formulate and implement these strategies.

Knowledge and know-how regarding hybrid threats and hybrid warfare must increase at all levels of society. Political, civilian, and military decision makers need to become more knowledgeable of the disruptive potential of new technological trends. The Nordic countries should apply all necessary instruments of power to effectively counter hybrid threats. Whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches are needed. They require effective multinational cooperation and coordination to amplify and support them. All the Nordics, starting with the politicians, need to have the same view on the nature of the threat and what is at stake before they can act together.

It is therefore proposed that the Nordics, guided by their common norms and values and taking note of the work being done in the EU and NATO, develop a common conceptual and political understanding of the key hybrid threats and potential future threats facing them, both individually and collectively. This would enable the Nordic countries to develop greater hybrid situational awareness and facilitate the process of mandating the relevant national authorities to monitor and detect anomalies, which in turn helps them set up early warning systems. Moreover, this would create the necessary ground for common deterrence strategies as well as the means for national security services to effectively respond to hybrid aggressions, thus moving beyond resilience and deterrence and instead disrupting or preventing the aggressor from taking further hybrid action.

Finally, the Nordic Ministers of Defence have established secure lines of communication, which proved useful during the COVID-19 pandemic, these secure lines should be extended to cover the Nordic Ministries of Foreign Affairs in order to facilitate discussions about joint responses to hybrid threats.

7. Pandemia preparedness

Drawing on the experiences of Nordic cooperation in tackling COVID-19, the Nordic countries should reconsider their cooperation on total defence in order to better prepare for future pandemics.

Hybrid threats are highly relevant in the context of pandemics like COVID-19. The World Health Organization (WHO) underscored that we face not only a pandemic, but also a global "infodemic". Both the EU and NATO have pointed to disinformation activities by Russia and China during COVID-19. Moreover, hospitals as well as pharmaceutical companies, medical-research organisations, and universities have experienced increased pressure from hackers who, during the crisis, have scaled up cyber-attacks against the health sector. The role of civilian authorities in dealing with this threat is crucial.

The Nordic healthcare systems' guarantee of medical service for all is a highly positive trademark for the Nordic Brand. Due to COVID-19, the demand for health and genetic data based on tests has skyrocketed globally. This could be categorized as a hybrid threat when companies, often state-connected, compile biometric data, such as DNA samples, from individuals all over the globe. In this regard, attention has been drawn to BGI (formerly the Beijing Genomics Institute), a leading Chinese gene sequencing and biomedical firm, which has distributed more than 10 million COVID-19 tests to over 80 countries worldwide.

It is the role of data protection agencies and total or civil defence institutions to analyse and take measures against threats of this kind. However, as pandemics are a global threat, it is of great value for countries with similar health systems and traditions to work closely together internationally to deter those who might want to exploit their highly developed systems.

During the COVID-19 crisis the Nordic Ministers of Foreign Affairs had teleconferences where common Nordic efforts were discussed, e.g., on how to assist Nordic citizens stranded abroad due to the pandemic. Reciprocal assistance was granted both through Nordic embassies as well as with highly valuable contributions of Nordic consular services all over the world. Moreover, comprehensive coordination and information exchange, related to repatriation of Nordic citizens, took place on capital level. COVID-19 also revealed a need for increased Nordic cooperation and a lessons-learned process in areas beyond hybrid threats, such as consular services.

Drawing on these experiences of Nordic cooperation in tackling COVID-19, it is proposed that the Nordic countries reconsider their cooperation on total defence in a way that complements the work of the EU and NATO, in order to better prepare for future pandemics. This depends on the relevant national authorities coming up with a common system of analysis, an early warning system, integrated contingency planning and finally unified Nordic action. Such a framework might later serve as a model for a Nordic governmental and societal approach in times of major crises.

Moreover, a study should be initiated on a Nordic system for security of supply in the health sector. It should explore what joint means the countries have to acquire and produce essential medicine in major crises. It should explore the possibility of setting up a Nordic pharmacy for rare medicine, which would involve a Nordic preparedness storage facility for critical medicinal products and devices.

This holistic regional approach would be promoted within international bodies as an example of how transparent international cooperation can successfully tackle enormous challenges like pandemics.

8. Democratic and rules-based cyberspace

An integrated public-private cooperative arrangement between Nordic governments and private companies should be used to promote a democratic digital future and common Nordic values of free speech, privacy, free market, and transparency.

The Nordic countries should be at the forefront in the battle for democratic and transparent cyberspace, both in leading by example and through active, strategic international advocacy. This can be furthered by an integrated public-private cooperative arrangement, where Nordic governments and private companies work together to promote a democratic digital future. This would entail structured dialogue between Nordic governments and private companies to promote a democratic and rules-based order in cyberspace as well as a strategic promotion of Nordic digital solutions.

This cooperation should provide impetus for common active and strategic international advocacy by the Nordics within multilateral governance bodies such as the UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) and Open Ended Working Group (OEWG). Innovative approaches, led by Nordic companies and based on common Nordic values of free speech, privacy, free market, and transparency should form the basis of the Nordics' argument for a democratic and rules-based order in the digital space.

Another aim should also be to support the development of expertise and private initiatives within competitive fields, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and quantum computing to develop international credibility. Through increased investments and collaboration in these fields, the Nordic countries could obtain the international influence needed to promote ICT-standards that conform to liberal and democratic values.

However, closer collaboration between the Nordics should also entail standing together when Nordic countries or companies are threatened or attacked. This requires the willingness to expose malign and coercive information activities of states or other actors as well as safeguarding and publicly supporting both Nordic research communities and independent media.

In their effort to promote democratic governance and respect for human rights in cyberspace, the Nordics should actively seek support from like-minded countries, traditional partners, and potential partners, both states and companies, in their advocacy, finding mutually beneficial arrangements to underpin such partnerships. The proposal is to establish an integrated public-private cooperative arrangement, where Nordic governments and private companies work together to promote a democratic digital future. This should be underpinned by a cluster approach with leading Nordic companies in this field, such as the one being proposed regarding Nordic efforts to approach global climate change with the Nordic energy sector. This would support the efforts of the Nordics in safeguarding liberal, democratic principles of the rules-based world order.

9. Initiative on new technologies and defence against cyber threats

The Nordic governments should consult on an integrated policy, both internally and on a Nordic level, to prepare for imminent technological developments and resulting societal transformations. The Nordics should therefore engage in a strategic dialogue on new technologies in the fields of, e.g., wireless network technology (5G/6G), AI, quantum computing and blockchain technology.

Defence against hybrid threats and hacking is now an integral part of national security, which has to be dealt with by both civilian and military means. The focus is at present on 5G, but 6G is just around the corner and it is timely for Nordic governments to prepare for more technological changes by consulting on an integrated policy both internally and on a multinational level.

In May 2018, the Nordic prime ministers asked the Nordic digitalisation ministers to take the lead to ensure that the Nordic region becomes the first and best interconnected 5G region in the world. There is a crucial foreign and security policy aspect to deal with when implementing the prime ministers' declaration. Referring to the prime ministers' request, it is proposed that all Nordic governments coordinate their 5G policies, and that the foreign ministers respond to big power pressure in this field as a new security reality.

In October 2019, the Nordic Council unanimously adopted a new strategy on societal security. It includes a specific proposal on cybersecurity, stating that cyber threats are an increasingly serious problem. It spelled out that not only do the Nordics have everything to gain by standing united in tackling new cyber challenges, but a strengthened joint Nordic international collaboration would be of great significance.

In the societal security strategy, the Nordic governments are urged to extend the Nordic-Baltic collaboration on cybersecurity to include continuous sharing of assessments on threats in the cyber field. The Nordic countries are encouraged to ensure, as far as possible, that those of them outside the EU or NATO will have access to collaboration on cybersecurity in these organisations. Lastly, it is proposed that the inclusion of cybersecurity should be a key part of the joint Nordic transatlantic dialogue on security policy. The Nordic Council's policy on societal security thus reflects concerns that should be dealt with by Nordic foreign ministers as is also made clear in the mandate for this report. The ministers have an important role to play not only to secure multinational cooperation in this field but also to educate the public about the new international and, in many ways, the stealth dimension added to modern daily life by new technologies – dimensions that need to be secured and defended.

There are numerous opportunities for public-private Nordic dialogue and initiatives on cyber issues. New fora are not needed, but governments should support active participation in initiatives, such as Nordic IT Security, Cyber Security Nordic, and Nordic Cyber Series.

The Nordic countries have taken important steps and plan to bridge the gap between actual IT security capabilities and the scale of threats. Hostile state and non-state actors in cyberspace are multiplying, and there is a common Nordic concern that additional risks for companies and society will be brought about by the introduction of the new technologies, such as 5G, demanding collaboration and knowledge sharing not only at the national level but also on the Nordic and international one.

With this in mind, it is therefore also proposed that the Nordics engage in a strategic dialogue on new technologies, such as wireless network technology (5G/6G), AI, quantum computing and blockchain technology. Such an initiative would be a good example of how Nordic cooperation can strengthen each country in its response to conflicting diplomatic and political pressures from the great powers.

MULTILATERALISM AND THE RULES-BASED WORLD ORDER

The Nordic countries are deeply concerned by the diminishing trust in multilateralism when it is most needed to solve complex and transboundary global challenges. They, like other smaller countries, rely heavily on respect for and the functioning of the rules-based international system. Its disruption also undermines the core principles that the Nordics share, such as democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. Free international trade and travel are basic features of modern liberal democracies.

The Nordic Brand and the Nordics' long-standing reputations as committed multilateralists provide them with a strong voice in debates on the future multilateral landscape. Nordic cooperation is in line with the Alliance for Multilateralism, and there is still potential to set new aims and take the cooperation further.

The narrative on supporting and promoting multilateralism to deal with crises is under increased pressure, also in the Nordic countries. Some maintain that globalisation and open borders create vulnerabilities to viruses and other threats; each country has first to take care of its own. However, the facts remain. Climate change, global inequalities, globalized terrorism, the digital revolution and, most recently, the coronavirus pandemic disregard borders and can only be dealt with collectively.

Promoting multilateralism and a rules-based world order is even more relevant and pressing now than when the mandate to write this report was given. Discussions of the issue in all the Nordic capitals makes it obvious that the Norwegian White Paper of 2019 on multilateral cooperation constitutes a strong basis for not only Norway but all the Nordic countries. Solutions found and formulated by the Nordics can and should be introduced and actively promoted within the broader international framework, in a way that appeals to a broader audience.

At stake is an institutional order that celebrates its 75th anniversary this year. Since 1945, an elaborative set of common rules and mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution has been built. The systems rest on state

sovereignty, international solidarity as well as liberal values, such as individual rights and liberties, rule of law, democracy, open market-based economies, and free trade. At the core of this rules-based international system, where right prevails over might, are a range of institutions, such as the UN, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which all remain essential to maintaining the rules and facilitating peaceful cooperation and conflict resolution between states.

The liberal world order was never truly global, but the United States had the strength, authority and will to sustain it. The shifting global power balances raise question marks about the future of this order. The US is more inward looking than ever since the end of World War II and is increasingly withdrawing from multilateral fora. The United Kingdom, a key partner for the Nordics in the field of foreign and security policy, is taking a new international course with Brexit. In the European Union, a fundamental discussion on the core values of liberal democracies is taking place. Within the Council of Europe, Russia's membership has been called into question due to its disregard of basic human rights. And contrary to what so many had hoped, China retains a different mind-set than liberal democracies.

Even before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing protectionist policies of many states and the Sino-US trade war had led to a decrease in international trade and investment and disrupted global supply chains. The protectionist response to the pandemic and the economic crisis that followed, where states take measures to increase "self-reliance", are likely to prolong and deepen the crisis.

Trade wars and protectionist policies threaten not only economic prosperity but also peace and security. An economic downturn can push unstable, poorer states or regions into even more turmoil. The economies of the US and China are still very interdependent. A further decoupling of the world's two largest economies can contribute to escalation of strategic distrust, with wide-ranging implications for international security. For the Nordics, having been committed to the established rules-based world order for the last seven decades, the situation today is a great challenge. The proposals mainly aim at finding and utilizing the best tools available to promote Nordic core values worldwide in a modern and peaceful manner.

10. Reform and modernisation of multilateral organisations

The Nordics should seek partnerships with like-minded countries across regional groups to reform multilateral organisations, on all levels and from within, including efforts to make the governance structures more representative.

Efficiency, transparency, and representativeness are key elements in ensuring that multilateral organisations remain relevant, legitimate, and effective. The Nordic countries are all strong proponents of strong multilateral organisations and should join forces in their efforts to reform multilateral organisations (UN, development banks, etc.) from within and on all levels of the organisations as well as supporting efforts to make the governance structures more representative. By joining forces, the Nordic countries could take the lead, speak with one voice and encourage like-minded and new partner countries to join their efforts.

The Nordics can also play an important role in advancing reforms through their financing of multilateral organisations. The financial situation in the UN is critical as an increasing number of member states are not paying their contributions or not paying on time. This constitutes a serious liquidity problem for the UN, which threatens the organisation's flexibility and ability to fulfil its mandate and respond to emerging crises, such as the COVID-19 crisis, in a timely manner.

The Nordics should seek partnerships with like-minded countries across regional groups to illuminate the financial challenges and to encourage more member states to live up to their financial obligations. Solving the current UN budget crisis is closely linked to the reform efforts, as sufficient resources are vital to ensure a relevant and efficient UN.

11. Common Nordic Diplomacy

In a coordinated effort to strengthen and successfully reform multilateralism and the rules-based international order, the Nordics should formulate a common strategy for the collective strengthening of diplomatic networks, focus on Nordic expertise and pool resources in the multilateral fora.

The Nordics share common values, shaped by their common origins, history, and geography. Sustainability and environmental protection; creativity and innovation; openness and transparency; compassion and gender equality; and trust, also known as the Nordic Gold. The Nordics are also very inter-competitive. And inter-Nordic competition on who does best within the region when it comes to, e.g., sustainability, social prosperity, equality, and creativity has also gained the region its reputation. The Nordic Model is renowned for its inclusive approach to society and for laying the groundwork for the prosperity in the region. In international diplomacy, this should be increasingly used to the Nordics' common advantage, while remaining mindful of avoiding Nordic boasting.

The Nordic countries already collaborate extensively throughout the world and within international, multilateral institutions. The advantages of this are undisputed. The Nordics have more leverage together and thus generate greater impact when acting together. Their collective credibility and strength in areas, such as climate change, conflict prevention, peace mediation and gender equality, provide ample opportunities for increased and deepened Nordic diplomatic and practical cooperation. Cultivating it will advance common Nordic interests, such as promoting the importance of effective multilateralism, safeguarding the rules-based world order, and advocating a Nordic approach to tackling global climate change.

Through coordinated efforts to strengthen and successfully reform multilateralism and the rules-based international order, the Nordics should formulate a common strategy for the collective strengthening of networks of states that the Nordics can work with to advance their common agenda. This would entail both strengthening links within existing networks, such as the Nordic Africa Initiative and Small Island Developing States, as well as working towards building new networks.

Moreover, efforts should focus on areas where the Nordics have expertise and credibility. In this context, the Nordics can benefit from pooling resources, focusing their efforts into their respective fields of strength, thus allowing the countries to free resources to then work towards taking the lead in areas of common Nordic interest. Further, based on consultations, the Nordics could join forces and delegate authority in negotiations and delivery of statements, thus allowing one country to speak on behalf of all five countries. The Nordics have good experience with this related, e.g., to the UN Security Council; both in terms of supporting one another's candidacy for non-permanent seats and on giving statements there. In this way, the Nordic countries are able to use their resources more effectively in advancing common values, priorities, and interests in multilateral day-to-day work and negotiations.

12. Enhanced role of Diplomatic Missions

Combining forces, the Nordics should set a new standard for diplomatic missions by emphasizing teamwork and increased cooperation. By pooling all relevant resources, the missions can elevate their impact in the international arena.

Nordic diplomatic missions around the world cooperate in many ways on promoting policies and providing consular service to Nordic citizens in times of need, as was seen with the coordinated response to the COVID-19-pandemic. Moreover, the co-location of the Nordic embassies in Berlin is highly valued and in Ottawa, the Nordic embassies have designed a model for co-operation which they call the Nordic Diplomatic Toolbox. There are other examples of fruitful cooperation and division of labour between Nordic diplomatic missions. This should be listed and made public.

Diplomatic missions play an important role in advancing Nordic interests in relation to foreign and security policies. New technological trends are bound to affect the role of diplomatic missions either bilaterally or multilaterally. To be relevant in a fast-changing world and have an impact through the promotion of Nordic core values, it is as important to create trust and respect within individual countries as well as in the international arena. By combining forces, the Nordics could set a new standard by emphasising teamwork between Nordic missions and increased cooperation with Nordic research institutions, chambers of commerce, business promotion networks, civil society (NGOs) and cultural promotion agencies. By pooling all relevant resources, the missions can elevate their impact in international politics. This was seen recently when Norway gained a seat in the UN Security Council.

13. Strengthening foreign and security policy research and analysis

Citizens' and leaders' increased interest in Nordic foreign and security policy should be matched by corresponding initiatives to strengthen exchanges between researchers in relevant fields. Research cooperation between Nordic foreign policy institutes should be encouraged, accompanied by sufficient funding for cross-national research projects, and programs on Nordic foreign and security policy.

Investing in research builds important, relevant, and long-lasting knowledge, expertise, and networks. Research co-operation will provide necessary systematic data collection, data analysis and comparative studies on global developments affecting our region, such as nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament and add to our understanding of the possibilities and challenges facing the Nordics in foreign and security policy.

Recent developments, such as the collapse of the INF Treaty, and questions about the future of Open Skies are a cause for concern among Northern Europeans to a varying degree. Growing great-power competition and the associated return of nuclear deterrence have profound implications for Northern Europe in general and the Nordic-Baltic countries in particular. The changed security landscape has already emphasized the importance of the Arctic. Control of strategic locations of the Arctic region is crucial for both NATO's and Russia's defence. A Nordic view on trends and issues of this magnitude must be based on solid common research.

Increased research cooperation would improve our understanding of the costs and benefits of common actions, as well as provide increased knowledge of important Nordic differences and similarities in the foreign policy domain. Investing in strong, innovative, and relevant research, is also likely to improve and support the public and professional debate in the Nordic countries and increase the awareness and understanding of Nordic foreign and security policies internationally.

To ensure the success of such an initiative, sufficient and sustained funding must be secured. Today, there is no "Nordic Foreign Policy Institute", nor is there a dedicated program for "Nordic Foreign and Security Policy" within Nordforsk. One option is to fund and establish a dedicated program within the framework of Nordforsk. Another would be to strengthen the Nordic profile by significantly reinforcing the existing cooperation among the Nordic foreign policy institutes visited when preparing this report. These already have some established cooperation in the form of staff exchanges and common publications.

Notably, in early 2019, five Nordic foreign policy institutes, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), the Institute of International Affairs at the University of Iceland (IIA), the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), and the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI), accepted an invitation from the Nordic foreign ministers to assess how Nordic cooperation had developed in the wake of the Stoltenberg Report. Their reassessment, "10 years on: Reassessing the Stoltenberg Report on Nordic Cooperation," was published in May 2019.

The proposal is to establish an Advisory Council comprising representatives from the N5 that could frame the initiative and ease communication and cooperation between research and practitioners. One could suggest having a five-year program, covering all Nordic countries, costing around 10 million DKK per year.

14. Digital promotion of the Nordic Brand and core values

The Nordics should capitalize on digital communications in organizing conferences, engaging on social media with texts and videos and mobilizing support both at home and abroad for their core values. Specialists in the PR-field and IT should be consulted and invited to take part in a coordinated effort to promote the Nordic Brand.

The Nordic countries are firm supporters and promoters of normative and value-based multilateral agendas like human rights, including LGBTI rights and gender equality, sexual and reproductive health, and rights as well as inclusiveness and participation of women and civil society. All these values are under growing pressure in multilateral fora.

Promoting these fundamental rights and values should be an integral part of the common Nordic approach, wherever appropriate. At the same time, rethinking the Nordic strategy on advancing this policy is unavoidable. When big powers want to (re-)interpret the constitutional rules of multinational agencies to their liking, it is high time for smaller states to join forces and forge new alliances with unexpected partners and adopt new ways of engaging with civil society.

The Nordics all focus strongly on humanitarian principles, needs-based approaches, and centrality of protection. They are also strong advocates of multi-year, flexible and un-earmarked funding in line with the Grand Bargain and the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship. In addition, they all consistently advocate life-saving efforts to prevent, mitigate, and respond to sexual- and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises.

To advance common Nordic views, the proposal is to make better use of the Nordic Brand internationally, especially within the UN framework. The Nordics have been described as small states, but giant multilateralists. They generally enjoy a good reputation in the multilateral field but have perhaps not yet fully benefited from the Nordic Brand.

One of the lessons of the coronavirus pandemic is the important role of digital communication. This lesson may have lasting effects on best practices in promoting brands and core values globally. The Nordics should capitalize on this in organizing conferences, engaging on social media with texts and videos and mobilizing support both at home and abroad for their core values. Specialists in the PR-field and IT should be consulted and invited to take part in a coordinated effort to promote the Nordic Brand.

ADDENDUM

The Nordic Context

A Nordic Council of Ministers' (NCM) poll in 2017 revealed that there is widespread public support for Nordic cooperation in all the Nordic countries. A little over 90% of those asked agreed that Nordic cooperation was either important or very important – just under 60% feel that it is very important.

Interestingly, when asked what the most important field for Nordic cooperation was, security (and defence) was at the top, which shows the high level of public interest in increasing Nordic regional cooperation when it comes to foreign and security matters.

At the beginning of our work I had the pleasure to attend the Danish Nordic Council delegation's Genforeningen 100th anniversary conference, celebrating Denmark's Reunion with Southern Jutland. The conference covered, amongst other things, the failures and successes of Nordic cooperation, looking back at the misfortunes of the Scandinavian Defence Union negotiations in the late 1940s, and the Nordic Economic Union (NORDEK) negotiations in the 1960s. The 2009 Stoltenberg Report, however, was considered a success not least because it sparked extensive debates in the Nordic countries.

A meeting with the Nordic Council Presidium was a reminder of how important it is to safeguard the Nordic Model with its social structure and democratic governance. Moreover, it acknowledged that the concept of the Arctic as a low-tension area is under pressure, although it remains the ambition; that Development Cooperation is a Nordic hallmark; that the Nordics need to think about Total Defence; and that they must emphasize European cooperation within Schengen, Frontex and Europol. Moreover, the Nordics should build on the positive experience of the colocation of Nordic embassies in Berlin and look towards ways to green their militaries as the Danish army is doing.

The Nordic Council of Minister's Secretariat in Copenhagen was also one of the first places I visited when preparing this report even though Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation (the so called N5) takes place outside the Council's traditional framework and is therefore not directly dealt with by the NCM's Secretariat. The N5 Chairmanship follows the NCM Chairmanship, with the secretariat in the chairmanship ministry.

These initial meetings underscored the importance of taking a more holistic approach to Nordic foreign and security policy so that it reflects an increasingly complex foreign and security policy environment. They confirmed one of the lessons I drew from my seven years as Minister of Culture, the importance of Nordic cultural cooperation at an international level. This field should not be neglected as it has broad appeal and can be useful in advancing Nordic foreign policy. A good example is the 2000 Viking exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution, which caught the attention of the first couple, Bill and Hillary Clinton, and opened the doors of the White House to the Nordic Heads of State.

Cooperative Networks

The Nordics enjoy access to extensive foreign and security policy cooperative networks. They extend far beyond the Nordic Five (N5) networks. Moreover, the positive attitude towards the Nordic Brand brings both opportunities and responsibilities.

These are some of the important networks where the Nordics already cooperate:
All Nordics are members of the United Nations and its organizations, where they cooperate extensively. Within the IMF and the World Bank, they cooperate closely with the Baltic States. They are all members of the Arctic Council, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), and the Northern Dimension with the European Union and Russia, regarding cross-border and external policies geographically covering North-West Russia, the Baltic Sea, and the Arctic regions, including the Barents Region.

Three Nordic countries, Denmark, Iceland and Norway, are members of NATO. Sweden and Finland are militarily non-aligned but they are partners in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme. Three of the Nordics are EU Member States, and with Iceland and Norway, they all are members of the European Economic Area (EEA).

The Nordic Ministers for Foreign Affairs (N5) meet 2-3 times a year, i.e., at a spring or summer meeting, in relation to the Nordic Council's annual meeting and at a yearly meeting with the African Ministers for Foreign Affairs. When needed, they also meet on an ad hoc basis, often on short notice. During the COVID-19 crisis, for instance, they met much more frequently by video conference.

The Nordic and Baltic Ministers for Foreign Affairs (NB8) meet twice a year, in the summer or fall and then in spring or summer, along with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs from the Visegrad4 Group (NB8+V4). The NB8 states and the UK have worked within what is called the Northern Future Forum, but this forum is currently dormant (since 2016). The NB8 states work with the USA within the Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe (e-PINE) format, but the Nordics also work separately with the US in the N5+1 format. The Nordics have also had two N5+1 meetings with the US and one N5+1 State Leaders meeting with India, Nordic-India Summit.

In cooperation with other states, groups of states as well as with private and civil society actors, using existing networks and possibly through the development of new networks, the Nordics must build confidence and trust without diverting from their core values and principles.

The Geopolitical Context

The emergence of China as a major economic, political and military actor in international affairs and its claim for special status as a "Near-Arctic State" as well as the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 are defining factors when describing and debating the Nordic security environment since the Stoltenberg Report and the establishment of NORDEFCO in 2009.

The Nordic countries have met the situation through solidarity and enhanced defence cooperation. Their aim is to strengthen cohesion while also maintaining the transatlantic link. However, increased cooperation on the civilian front is needed to meet today's diverse challenges.

Our frank and open discussions in preparing this report have revealed that the Nordics share a common strategic view and are prepared to express their commitment, for example through participation in exercises planned by NATO.

The common Nordic strategic view on Russia is clearly expressed in the Baltic. The enhanced Finnish and Swedish partnerships with NATO and bilateral military agreements with the US, in addition to NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) in the three Baltic states and Poland, have led to stability. The situation is more fluid in the Arctic and the North Atlantic for the time being. Russia invests heavily in new modern capabilities, including new nuclear capabilities in the Arctic. They have also adjusted their doctrines in the region with heavier reliance on medium and long-range missiles.

The effects of climate change, including the opening up of shipping routes north of Russia and increased access to natural resources, add to the complexity of the situation. Russia is, however, dealing with the same problems as the Soviets during the Cold War, i.e., having no means to compete with the West. They are also under heavy strain due to economic sanctions. To get as much as possible in the shortest possible time, they have therefore turned to China for financing and trade in oil and gas.

The GIUK-gap

In the 1960s, NATO drew a defence line over what has since been known as the Greenland–Iceland–United Kingdom (GIUK) Gap. During the Cold War, by means of anti-submarine warfare (ASW), the aim was to detect Soviet submarines creeping south and towards the eastern coast of North America. The US naval base in Keflavik, Iceland, was a crucial ASW post and the westernmost corner of the Nordic security balance.

The geography today is the same, and recently, after nearly three decades of low tension, the GIUK Gap has re-emerged as one of NATO's major strategic maritime concerns. Technological advances have, on the other hand, led to a shift in military interest that now reaches farther north than before.

In the 1980s the US formulated a forward maritime strategy to get closer to the Soviet Northern Fleet, rather than meet them in the GIUK-gap. The Soviet Union and its fleet collapsed, and NATO and the US lost interest in the North Atlantic as a strategic space.

The US closed its naval base in Keflavik in 2006 after 55 years of operations. The Icelandic Coast Guard is now responsible for operational

defence tasks in Iceland as well as host nation support for all Allied visiting forces operating in Iceland, i.a. during NATO's air policing operations. Since 2015, US and NATO interest in ASW operations from Iceland has been growing.

In 2011, the US Atlantic fleet, the Second Fleet, was deactivated as the potential military threat posed by Russia was regarded as minimal. The fleet was reactivated in 2018.

Great Power Politics moving into the Arctic

The US has rejected Beijing's claims to be a "Near-Arctic State." US officials widely state worries about Chinese and Russian intent in the Arctic. For instance, Kenneth J. Braithwaite, who served as US ambassador to Norway until he was sworn in as Secretary of the Navy on 29 May 2020, said on that occasion: "The Chinese and Russians are everywhere, especially the Chinese. You would be alarmed at the amount of Chinese activity off the coast of Norway." Statesmen and officials in the Nordic region do not seem to entirely share these worries even though there is understanding of the US position.

In an interview with *High North News* in May 2020, the Norwegian foreign ministry's State Secretary, Audun Halvorsen, rejected the notion that China represents a threat to the Arctic: "We observe tendencies to increasing big power rivalry globally. The Arctic, however, is not at the centre of events in this picture. Chinese activity in the region is still limited. The High North is still characterized by low tension and predictability." Norway did not perceive China to be a threat to NATO, but that the alliance nevertheless needed to take note of China's increasing role in the international arena.

In June 2020, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's secretary general, warned in an interview with *Die Welt am Sonntag* that "China is coming ever closer to Europe's doorstep" and stressed that "NATO allies must face this challenge together."

In an article in *Defense News* in December 2019, Norway's defence minister, Frank Bakke-Jensen, stressed the strategic importance of Norway's location: "The aim is low tension, transparency, predictability and good neighborly relations in the High North. We want to continue this policy – to secure peace and stability in the region."

In *Defense News* in May 2020, Swedish defence minister, Peter Hultqvist, welcomed the reactivation of the US Second fleet and also referred to low tension in the region: "The Arctic remains an area of low tension in an international perspective. However, we must stay clear-headed about Russia's willingness to use military power against sovereign states to pursue political goals, as we have seen recently in modern times." He moreover referred to the Russian military build-up in the Arctic and its effects on the security situation in the broader region, i.e., in the North Atlantic Ocean and in and around the Barents Sea.

These wider effects of increased Russian activity in the Arctic on the security situation in the broader region are also recognized by the Finnish defence minister, Antti Kaikkonen. In *Defense News* in late 2019, Kaikkonen referred to the importance of the trans-Atlantic bond and of bilateral defence cooperation with both the United States and Sweden, which in the last few years had developed and matured rapidly, creating a solid foundation for meeting future defence requirements: "The challenges we face are serious and complex. Our response requires both the ability to act and seamless trans-Atlantic cooperation. I believe that Europe and the United States continue to need each other in the future."

The views presented in these articles reveal a sincere will to keep the Arctic free of great power rivalry, but at the same time, preparations are being made if things should move in the opposite direction. In order to deter this, the

Nordics have welcomed increased engagement from and cooperation with the US in the High North.

Recent developments

Whether the Arctic will continue to be a low-tension area remains to be seen.

In August 2019, a total of 30 Russian naval vessels took part in what Norwegian top military leaders called "a very complex operation." An exercise to block NATO's access to the Baltic Sea, North Sea and Norwegian Sea, thereby closing off the Scandinavian Peninsula.

In early May 2020, a "surface action group" of two American destroyers, a nuclear submarine, a support ship and a long-range maritime patrol aircraft, plus a British frigate, practised their anti-submarine skills in the Norwegian Sea. Two destroyers, the frigate and the support ship then headed further north and east into the Barents Sea. They conducted an exercise there for some days before departing on 8 May 2020. This was the first time since the mid-eighties that such an exercise had taken place.

Moreover, the U.S. Air Force normally participates in the bi-annual exercise Arctic Challenge, where Norway, Sweden, and Finland train together in the skies over northern Scandinavia. On 20 May 2020, however, US Air Force B-1B bombers flew, for the first time ever, over Sweden for training. Two B-1B bombers flew a 23-hour non-stop round trip from South Dakota to northern Europe for training with allies. This was just one of the recent flights of US long-range bombers to the High North. The flights may be part of a new normal.

In June 2020, the Danish Institute of International Studies (DIIS) published a report on security policy dynamics in the Arctic, great power rivalry, and the necessity to coordinate policy within the Kingdom of Denmark (i.e., Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands). The authors advise that Denmark should seek middle ground, engaging constructively with its US ally, while at the same time seeking to de-escalate tensions in the region. As the Arctic Council does not deal with security matters, the authors suggest the establishment of a new forum for the Arctic states to discuss security issues.

Overall, the Nordic countries are faced with a new, fluid, and challenging security landscape characterized by unpredictability, volatility, and great power competition. This altered strategic environment means that the Nordics need to constantly review their common international position and role in securing an enduring, prosperous, and peaceful existence for their citizens. Doing this will require them to secure a meaningful role in the strife for multilateralism and the rules-based world order, in tackling the challenges of climate change and in effectively addressing hybrid and cyber threats, both of which are being employed by states and non-state actors to undermine the multilateral system and the rules-based world order. In a geopolitical context, it is of utmost importance for all the Nordic countries to keep NATO and the EU interested in their security concerns.

The Nordic Brand, and the credibility it endows, is key in this regard. In their dealings with the great powers, the Nordics possess more credibility as a block than any one of them does individually. A prerequisite for credibility is knowledge as well as a willingness to both propose innovative solutions and lead by example. The Nordics have all the potential needed to assume a greater common role in the international arena, promoting liberal, democratic norms and values, which have indeed secured their positions among the most prosperous states in the world. Doing this would be in their interest.