

DETERRENCE IN THE NORDIC-BALTIC REGION: THE ROLE OF THE NORDIC COUNTRIES TOGETHER WITH THE U.S. ARMY

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This monograph examines enhanced roles for Finland and Sweden as contributors to the efforts of the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to forge a credible deterrence policy in the Nordic-Baltic region. The impact of these enhanced roles on the requirement for a U.S. military presence in the region could have both strategic and operational implications and might reduce the U.S.-Europe capabilities gap and enable fairer defense burden-sharing within the Euro-Atlantic community.

Over the last decade, there have been three security trends that have worsened the security situation in the region: all European states have drastically downscaled their defense capabilities, the United States has shifted its focus away from Europe, and Russia has enhanced its capabilities and exhibited the political will to use force to promote its interests. In response, the United States and NATO have stressed that they are fully committed to defending all allied countries, particularly the Baltic States and Poland. However, these statements must be backed up by military resources and a credible deterrence posture that is respected by potential adversaries.

A consensus on the requirement for territorial defense is forming within NATO and allied nations. A visible and robust military presence in the region is an essential element of the credibility of deterrence. With the limited resources available for a commitment by all partners, including the United States, creative means must be found to maximize the deterrent potential of national forces through greater and deeper international cooperation and coordination. Consequently, transforming and restoring member-state and allied capabilities is of paramount importance.

In the short term, exercises on the present level and further cooperation within the region help achieve the aim of a more credible deterrence posture. Enhancing specific aspects of partnership militarily with nonaligned Finland and Sweden would improve the prospects for meeting these challenges. Both of these Nordic partner countries deeply engaged not only in military cooperation with NATO collectively but also on a bilateral basis with the United States and regional allies such as Norway.

However, these three Nordic countries have widely disparate military capabilities, affecting interoperability and prospects for defense cooperation:

- Norway focuses on its collective responsibilities within NATO and invests accordingly in maritime military capabilities.
- Finland, bordering strategically important Russian military areas, is searching for reliable and capable partners for deeper defense cooperation. Finnish military capabilities are primarily land-heavy, reflecting its geographical position.
- Sweden is currently transforming the focus of its system back to territorial defense with additional capabilities.
- Regardless of dissimilarities in defense concepts and capabilities, common ground exists due to the recognition of a shared security environment and similarities of threats.

Likewise, the U.S. Army shares similar responsibilities—to defend the territorial integrity and sovereignty of allies in the region. This monograph illustrates possible avenues for enhancing defense cooperation with specific and actionable proposals. This monograph also identifies some of the limits of

defense cooperation and partnership. The role of the U.S. Army is assigned a special level of importance with respect to deterrence and striving for stability based on credible deterrence in the region.

While national defense authorities are already strengthening the synergies of military capabilities, lengthy political processes can proceed concurrently. The prerequisite that the U.S. pledge to uphold regional security is of sufficient plausibility to convince regional partners that if this security arrangement is challenged, the U.S. commitment will prevail. This monograph includes efficient and actionable proposals for specific measures to this end.

This monograph, completed in late 2018, broadens the scope and analysis of the issues discussed in the Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press monograph, *Breaking the Nordic Defense Deadlock*, published in 2015.

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