



ANALYSIS

NORDEF CO: “LOVE IN A COLD CLIMATE”?

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INTRODUCTION

Nordic Defense Cooperation, or NORDEFCO, is a comprehensive framework of political and military cooperation, through which the five Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, seek to enhance their operational capabilities and further strengthen national and regional stability and security. In short, as stated in the 2009 Memorandum of Understanding on which it is based, “the aim and purpose of NORDEFCO is to strengthen the participating nations’ national defense, explore common synergies and facilitate efficient common solutions.”¹

Since its inception in 2009, this cooperation has advanced steadily and purposefully and resulted in, among other things, concrete plans for common education and training, schedules for combined and joint exercises, and purchases of interoperable equipment and materiel, which in some cases have even produced considerable savings on operations and equipment maintenance costs.

This paper provides a review of what has been done under the auspices of NORDEFCO. It attempts to answer the questions of how NORDEFCO has evolved, what kinds of activities it includes today, and what it could morph into in the future. Furthermore, the paper will take a close look at the extent to which NORDEFCO has been open to outsiders, specifically to the Baltic countries Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Finally, it will recommend areas in which Nordic-Baltic defense cooperation could be further enhanced.

¹ Nordic Agreements, *Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of Denmark and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Finland and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland and the Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of Norway and the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden on Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO)*, (Helsinki, 4 November, 2009).

1. BACKGROUND FACTORS: FROM UN PEACEKEEPING TO THE NATO OPERATION IN AFGHANISTAN

The five Nordic countries have much in common. However, as close as they were to each other in most sectors of national policy even during the most frozen years of the Cold War, they chose very different solutions to face their defense and security challenges. Three of them - Denmark, Iceland and Norway - were founding members of NATO, while Finland and Sweden, each in its own distinct fashion, proclaimed themselves to be neutral. Thus, the room for maneuver of the latter two countries on common defense and security cooperation was severely limited, while NATO membership was totally out of question.

The only exception was United Nations peacekeeping, which as early as the 1960s had come to be part and parcel of Nordic policy discussions. As all the Nordic countries were solid supporters of the UN in general and UN-mandated peacekeeping in particular, it was only natural for them to share their views and to discuss common approaches to participating in UN peacekeeping operations. That subject was also innocuous enough not to raise awkward political questions in any of the Nordic capitals.²

This situation changed rapidly after the Cold War was over. Now that the defense and security issues could come out from the cold, new fora for them could be established. As a result, in the 1990s Nordic defense cooperation was given a new lease on life by a number of common projects and new initiatives.

² For the development of the Nordic defense cooperation, see Ann-Sofie Dahl, *NORDEFCO and NATO: “Smart Defence” in the North?* (Rome: NATO Defence College, Research Paper, No.101, May 2014). See also Pauli Järvenpää, “Nordic Defence Cooperation: NORDEFCO and Beyond”, in Ann-Sofie Dahl and Pauli Järvenpää (eds.), *Northern Security and Global Politics: Nordic-Baltic Strategic Influence in a Post-Unipolar World*, (London: Routledge, 2014), 137-155.

Some of them built on existing cooperative frameworks, such as NORDAC (Nordic Armaments Cooperation) and NORDCAPS (Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Peace Support). Some others reflected Nordic efforts aimed at building up the defense capabilities of the once again independent Baltic countries: initiatives such as BALTBAT (Baltic Battalion), BALTRON (Baltic Naval Squadron), BALTNET (Baltic Air Surveillance Network), and BALTDEFCOL (Baltic Defense College) represented an opportunity to the Nordic countries to cooperate with each other while supporting the Baltic defense efforts.

Finally, there was a strong political push for the Nordic countries to deepen their cooperation. This was expressed, for example, in a comprehensive study on Nordic defense and security cooperation initiated by the Nordic Foreign Ministers and carried out by the former Norwegian Defense and Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg in 2009. This study contained 13 proposals, some of them quite far-reaching. At the same time, the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish Chiefs of Defense (CHOD) came out with their own report listing 140 possible areas of defense cooperation, of which 40 were dubbed as “low-hanging fruit”, i.e., projects that were at the verge of maturation or that could be carried out relatively quickly.³

These relatively rapid advances and concrete steps in practical defense and defense-related projects were possible because in all Nordic countries, allied and non-allied alike, Nordic cooperation was considered politically highly acceptable. Not so long ago, such cooperation would have been strictly off-limits. Now, however, it has become a new normal. This sea change has a lot to do with the two Nordic neutrals learning to cooperate with NATO through the Partnership for Peace program, which Finland and Sweden joined soon after its creation in 1994.

³ Thorvald Stoltenberg, *Nordic Cooperation on Foreign and Security Policy. Proposal Presented to the Extraordinary Meeting of Nordic Foreign Ministers in Oslo on February 9, 2009*. (Oslo: Norwegian Foreign Ministry, 2009). See also H.L. Saxi, *Nordic Defense Cooperation After the Cold War*. (Oslo: Norwegian Institute for Defense Studies, Oslo Files on Defense and Security, Number 1, March 2011).

2. THE FIRST STEPS TOWARD NORDEFECO

Thus, by the late 2000s, the ground was laid for substantive steps in Nordic defense and security cooperation. Soon a flurry of activities was under way. Building upon the three CHODs’ report, an organization called Nordic Defense Support (NORDSUP) was formed in November 2008. It also included Denmark and Iceland, making it truly all-Nordic. Furthermore, a Nordic Battle Group was established under the auspices of the budding EU cooperation in defense and security matters.⁴

The Battle Group included three Nordic nations - Sweden, Norway and Finland - as well as Estonia and Ireland. There was also cooperation in 2006 in the EUFOR operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Then, there was an agreement in the mid-2000s to assist countries in Eastern Africa in creating peacekeeping and crisis management capabilities. Furthermore, Finland, Norway and Sweden decided to cooperate in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Then, in 2006, Sweden and Finland joined forces to establish a PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team) near the city of Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan.⁵

With all these separate activities either in the planning phase or underway, in 2009 the time was getting ripe to gather all of these separate structures and activities for Nordic defense and security cooperation under one umbrella. At that point, the decision was made to merge them into a single new structure: NORDEFECO. That decision was taken by the Nordic Defense Ministers in their fall meeting in November 2009 in Helsinki. The Memorandum of Understanding, signed by the Ministers, replaced the existing structures of NORDSUP, NORDAC, and NORDCAPS.⁶

⁴ The Swedish National Audit Office, RiR 2010:20, *The Nordic Battlegroup 2008 – A Part of the EU’s Rapid Reaction Capability*. (Stockholm, 2010).

⁵ Oskari Eronen, *PRT Models in Afghanistan. Approaches to Civil-Military Integration*. (Helsinki: CMC Finland Civilian Crisis Management Studies, Volume 1: Number 5/2008).

⁶ For a short description of how NORDEFECO came about, see this author’s chapter “NORDEFECO: the birth of an

3. ARGUMENTS FOR A NEW NORDEFECO STRUCTURE

One of the most powerful arguments supporting the creation of a new structure was that a common steering and coordination mechanism for the existing Nordic structures would ensure that resources were not used for overlapping tasks. Furthermore, cooperation was based on the conviction that there is much to be gained through shared experiences, cost sharing, joint solutions and joint actions.

Moreover, one of the key characteristics of NORDEFECO is its flexible format, making it possible for the participating nations to freely choose the projects in which they wanted to participate. Consequently, NORDEFECO cooperation is open to all participants, but there is the possibility of self-differentiation. All decisions are taken by consensus, and NORDEFECO offers - in fact encourages - integration *à la carte*, which makes it possible for countries to pick and choose their projects. This means that much of the cooperation is carried out bi- or trilaterally, but not to the detriment of the others.

At the political level, NORDEFECO has an annually rotating national chairmanship. The Ministers of Defense meet regularly twice a year, as do the CHODs. The main tool for coordinating the practical work is the Defense Policy Steering Committee (PSC), which consists, depending on the country, of Directors General for Defense Policy or Deputy Permanent Secretaries of State for Defense. They have the responsibility "to steer, identify, develop, implement and monitor activities". That Committee receives its military advice from the Military Coordination Committee (MCC), which consists of flag-level officers appointed by their respective CHODs.

At the military level, the NORDEFECO work is divided into five Cooperation Areas (COPA),

which are chaired by senior military representatives (colonels or navy captains). Their main task is to coordinate actions among the nations within a particular COPA area. Recommendations for action from the COPAs form the basis for the agreements that are first scrutinized in the MCC, then forwarded to the PSC, and finally prepared by the PSC for ministerial approval.

When NORDEFECO was created, there were five COPAs to cover all action areas: Strategic Development (SD); Capabilities (CAPA); Human Resources and Education (HRE); Training and Exercises (TEX); and Operations (OPS). Chairmanships in various COPAs were set to be nationally rotated on an annual basis. In 2013, "strategic development" was morphed into "armaments". To reflect that change, the NORDEFECO structure was evaluated and reorganized. The change went into effect in 2014, when COPA/ARMA was established. Without changing the original Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regulating the cooperation, the Nordic Ministers of Defense decided to include the National Armaments Directors (NAD) and the Capability Directors (CD) as members of the PSC.⁷

4. NORDEFECO'S PERFORMANCE

In a nutshell, NORDEFECO's reason for being, its *raison d'être*, is to produce national military capabilities in a more cost-efficient way by means of multinational cooperation. What has its track record been like? How successful has cooperation been in bringing about concrete results? How open has this originally Nordic cooperation body been to the outsiders, in particular the Baltic countries Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania? And, finally, what conclusions can be drawn from the work done so far for the future defense and security cooperation in the Nordic and Baltic regions?

In the next section, this paper will take a closer look at what actually has been done in the five COPA action areas over time. The current action

organization" in Pauli Järvenpää, "Nordic Defense Cooperation: NORDEFECO and Beyond", in Ann-Sofie Dahl and Pauli Järvenpää (eds.), *Northern Security and Global Politics. Nordic-Baltic Strategic Influence in a Post-Unipolar World*. (London: Routledge, 2014), 140-142.

⁷ Ministry of Defense of Norway, *NORDEFECO Annual Report 2014* (Oslo: 2014), 3.

areas are 1. Strategic Development (called “Armaments” since 2014), 2. Capabilities, 3. Human Resources and Education, 4. Training and Exercises, and 5. Operations. Cooperation in each of these action areas will be presented in a chronological order.

4.1 COPA/STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT (SD) AND COPA/ARMAMENTS (ARMA)

COPA/SD aimed at facilitating the long-term defense cooperation between the Nordic countries in a 20-year timeframe. It was a forum for cooperation on issues related to strategic analysis and long-term defense planning, as well as research and development. COPA/SD had three permanent sub-areas: 1. strategic analysis and long-term defense planning, 2. research and technology, and 3. concept development and experimentation.⁸

One of the first tasks for the COPAs in NORDEFECO’s first year of existence was to evaluate the potential of the inherited portfolios of previous studies, projects and working groups. Prioritization, merging and termination significantly reduced the number of activities, allowing the COPAs to focus on high-potential projects while saving resources. Thus, by the end of 2010, NORDEFECO covered just 53 different studies and projects. In comparison, NORDAC, NORDCAPS, and NORDSUP accounted for a total of 117 activities in 2009.⁹

In 2010, a decision was taken to exchange staff personnel between the Swedish, Finnish and Norwegian Ministries of Defense and defense staffs. Also in that year, all the NORDEFECO participants signed a general security agreement that simplified the exchange of classified information and made working visits to each other’s military facilities easier.¹⁰

Chaired in the first rotation by Sweden, the Strategic Development COPA (COPA/SD) focused on developing a common baseline (strategic trends and other factors influencing long-term planning) so that a common

methodology for scenarios and future capability gaps could be designed. It also produced the first annual study on Afghanistan in the fall of 2010. In order to map out what was being done elsewhere, a review was commenced in 2010 to assess and consolidate present and planned research and technology cooperation in NATO and the EU (via the European Defense Agency).¹¹

Furthermore, COPA/SD charted out a technology forecast as a support tool for long-term acquisition plans. Several areas were judged to be ripe for research and technology cooperation. Feasibility studies were carried out in such fields as CBRN defense (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear), RCS (radar cross section) testing, mobile communication security, individual soldier equipment, electro-optical sensor technology (including laser, physiological and psychological traumatology), combat modeling, and strategic analysis. Quite significantly, a decision was taken in 2011 to commence a study on “Cyber Defense in Nordic Countries and Challenges of Cyber Security”. The study was led and financed by Finland, and was completed in 2012.¹²

By the end of 2013, the MCC was able to report that it had fast-tracked certain armaments projects and conducted a top-down screening process to identify activities that could lead to a number of tangible common procurement projects. Such projects included, *inter alia*, airspace surveillance data exchange, airspace surveillance radar sensors, military-grade batteries, CV90 rubber tracks, unit group rations, and small arms munitions – of which the Nordic nations currently use 15 different types. It is obvious that one should try to find opportunities to cooperate both to reduce this number and to get the benefits off economies of scale when purchasing them.¹³

In 2013, the designation “Strategic Development” was changed to “Armaments” (COPA/ARMA) to better reflect the nature of work done in that cooperation area. The focus

⁸ Ministry of Defense of Sweden, *NORDEFECO Annual Report 2011*, (Stockholm: 2012), 4.

⁹ Järvenpää, *Northern Security and Global Politics*, 144-145.

¹⁰ Järvenpää, *Northern Security and Global Politics*, 142.

¹¹ Ministry of Defense of Sweden, *NORDEFECO Annual Report 2011 (Stockholm: 2011)*, 13-14.

¹² Ministry of Defense of Sweden, *NORDEFECO Annual Report 2011 (Stockholm: 2011)*, 12.

¹³ Järvenpää, *Northern Security and Global Politics*, 147-148.

had moved from strategic long-term development to armament cooperation, and the new aim was to achieve financial, technical and industrial benefits for all participating countries within the field of acquisition and life-cycle support (ALCS). This change of focus also had to be reflected in the NORDEFCO structure. Consequently, in 2013 the structure was evaluated and reorganized, and the changes went into effect in 2014.¹⁴

In 2014, 14 working groups were operating and included experts from all Nordic countries in such areas as small arms, soldier protection, and geospatial activities. Much of the attention in COPA/ARMA was also focused on long-range air surveillance sensors and long-range precision engagement – an area in which all of the Nordic countries, including Iceland, could benefit from harmonizing requirements with a view to a possible common procurement of, for example, long-range air surveillance sensors. COPA/ARMA also identified the possibility of Denmark providing surplus equipment - including the Multiple Launcher Rocket System (MLRS), the Stinger Man-Portable Air Defense System (MANPADS), the TOW Anti-Armor System, as well as 9 mm ammunition - to Finland; the execution of the purchases was arranged by the line organizations of these two countries.¹⁵

In 2015, under the Swedish chairmanship, the participating nations offered a total of 317 inputs/projects to the COPA/ARMA screening process. After initial screening, the inputs were grouped into 123 subject areas. This resulted in a list of 85 possible cooperation areas that, in the second phase of screening process, were sent to the national line organizations (Capability Directors) for further national staffing. The screening process identified several cooperation areas as priorities for development – such as long-range air surveillance systems, small arms indoor training, tactical data links, CBRN protective masks, and unitized group rations. In addition, another 15 cooperation areas were to be handled by already existing working groups within COPA/ARMA. Such working groups are,

for example, a group on a base camp pool where a common set of base camps are in the process of being prepared; a working group focusing on examining the possibilities for common Nordic procurement of long-range air surveillance sensors; and another working group dealing with a common Nordic combat uniform.¹⁶

The Danish chairmanship in 2016 set for itself a dual objective: both launching of a number of new initiatives as well as ensuring continued progress in ongoing projects from previous NORDEFCO chairmanships.¹⁷ As to the latter, the Danes could point to 11 working groups that feature experts dealing with such concrete armament areas as CBRN protective masks, dismounted arms and ammunition, diving systems, geospatial systems, hazardous materials, NATO codification, systematic situation awareness, soldier protection, equipment and clothing, tactical data links, and unitized group rations. Six new ARMA action areas were sent to the national line organizations: maritime missile decoy systems, artillery benchmarking, night vision equipment, CV90 upgrades and MCM vessel upgrades, and 84 mm ammunition. Additionally, four possible cooperation areas are expected to be handled in existing COPA/ARMA working groups: soldier equipment and clothing, soldier digitalization, assault rifles and submarine guns, and small arms ammunition.¹⁸

4.2 COPA/CAPABILITIES (CAPA)

In the work of COPA Capabilities (COPA/CAPA), chaired by Finland during the first year of NORDEFCO's existence, the focus has been on operational effectiveness. During the spring of 2010, the individual national development plans of each participating country were reviewed, and a list of "Top Ten" capability initiatives compiled.

This list was topped by a feasibility study on air surveillance, coupled with another study on ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) for systems utilized for joint, combined and

¹⁴ See footnote 7, 7.

¹⁵ Ministry of Defence of Norway, *NORDEFCO Annual Report 2014*, (Oslo:2014), 25.

¹⁶ Ministry of Defence of Sweden, *NORDEFCO Annual Report 2015*, (Stockholm:2015), 12.

¹⁷ "Promoting Security Through Cooperation", *NORDEFCO Annual Report 2016*, (Copenhagen:2016), 8.

¹⁸ See footnote 17, 14-15.

single-service operations at operational and tactical levels. Also, a study on ground-based air defense (GBAD) solutions was launched, with the aim of investigating operational gains and cost benefits from cooperation between two or more countries on procurement, further development, use, and life-cycle support of common Nordic systems. Interestingly, these studies also looked into the possibility of common Nordic acquisition of air surveillance sensors beyond 2020.¹⁹

Early on in the work of COPA/CAPA, it was recognized that along with the projects for air surveillance and air defense, there was also a need to develop a common capability for land surveillance. Since this requires a robust information infrastructure, COPA/CAPA initiated a study covering all means of communication, such as fixed communication lines, radio and tactical data links, and satellites. Such links could support a common Nordic capability for long-range precision engagement. All these various feasibility studies were conducted by early 2012.²⁰

Furthermore, a study on unmanned aerial systems (UAS) was initiated with an overall aim of exploring the possibilities for Nordic cooperation on UAS, and with a specific requirement of investigating the chances for common procurement, life-cycle requirements, and training and education for nationally acquired systems. A study report was delivered in spring 2013.

Additionally, a study of the “Mechanized Battalion 2020” concept was initiated, exploring systems harmonization and cost benefits; after a review of the concept by the Nordic CHODs, the study was refocused and renamed as “Battalion Task Force 2020” (BNTF 2020). The study aimed at creating a generic Nordic battalion structure, formed around the main battle tank Leopard 2 and the combat vehicle CV-90, and which can be deployed either in whole or in segments, and in either national or

multinational configurations, throughout the whole spectrum of conventional conflict. A framework for a common concept and requirements for the BNTF 2020 was delivered in August 2011, and the final report published in 2013.²¹

In their “Top Ten” projects, COPA/CAPA also included two studies on mine countermeasures. The first was on the feasibility of finding a common Nordic solution against improvised explosive devices (IEDs). This was a particularly relevant study as at the time the Nordic countries were involved in the ISAF operation in Afghanistan - where many of the casualties were caused by road-side IEDs. The second study investigated the possibility of common procurement of next generation naval mine countermeasures systems (MCM). Here, however, it was concluded that further MCM studies would be conducted through NATO and the EDA. The two Nordic countries most interested in MCM work, Norway and Sweden, signed an agreement in November 2014 with the EDA; the bilateral group in NORDEFECO on MCM has now been closed.²²

Meanwhile, air surveillance continued to be defined as a very promising area for cooperation. Future cooperation may include exchange of radar data, harmonization of air command and control systems, and common procurement of active and passive sensors. Nordic Enhanced Cooperation on Air Surveillance (NORECAS) was established in 2012 as a result of a NORDEFECO initiative to consider closer cooperation in the field of air surveillance. In 2014, the MCC agreed to form a Project Owner Group with the task of transforming the NORECAS study recommendations into solid plans and actions. Work on a roadmap based on a step-by-step implementation of radar data exchange, as well as an implementation program for a common Nordic command and control (C2) system was launched in 2014. The work continued during 2015 and 2016; at the Defense Ministerial in Copenhagen on 9 November 2016, the

¹⁹ Järvenpää, *Northern Security and Global Politics*, 143-144.

²⁰ Ministry of Defence of Sweden, *NORDEFECO Annual Report 2011*, (Stockholm:2011), 18-19.

²¹ See footnote 18.

²² Ministry of Defence of Sweden, *NORDEFECO Annual Report 2011*, (Stockholm:2011), 13-14.

ministers decided to continue to work on the NORECAS agreement and agreed that NATO should be consulted. The work will be continued under the Finnish chairmanship in 2017.²³

Other current COPA/CAPA projects include Nordic Cooperation on Tactical Air Transport (NORTAT), which is designed for better utilization of the Nordic countries' air transport assets. For example, during 2015 these efforts resulted in concrete savings related to the maintenance of Danish and Norwegian C-130 aircraft. In 2016, a common booking system for planning of air transport operations was implemented.²⁴ Also that year, under the Danish chairmanship, a Technical Agreement for NORTAT was finalized and subsequently signed in November 2016 by the Air Chiefs of Denmark, Finland and Norway; Sweden's signature is expected in early 2017.

Further projects include, for example, Open Skies cooperation (Nordic cooperation in enabling reconnaissance flights over the territories of other parties to the Open Skies Treaty), small arms indoor training simulators, virtual battle space simulators, and ground-based air defense (GBAD), in which the aim is to define future needs for surface-based air defense systems for the Nordic countries.²⁵

Much work has also been devoted to developing cyber defense. Nordic cooperation in this area includes sharing of information and best practices, identifying military Computer Emergency Response Team (MILCERT) activities in the participating countries, and identifying needs and requirements for Nordic cyber defense exercises. A Nordic cyber experiment, also attended by Baltic experts, was successfully conducted in Finland in October 2014.²⁶

4.3 COPA/HUMAN RESOURCES AND EDUCATION (HRE)

COPA Human Resources and Education (HRE), with Denmark chairing, recommended in its

first report in 2010 that a Nordic center be established to develop concepts and principles on gender-competence in military operations. A driving force behind this was the all-Nordic commitment to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and subsequent UN resolutions on women, peace and security. As a concrete outcome, a Nordic Center for Gender in Military Operations was established in Sweden. Its official inauguration ceremony was held on 24 January 2012.

COPA/HRE also came up with proposals on Nordic cooperation on veteran-related issues. Such issues are increasingly important now that peace support operations have become more and more warlike, with mounting casualties. During 2012, COPA/HRE planned and coordinated the work leading up to a Nordic Veterans' Conference, which was held in Norway in November 2012. This event was followed by two more successful conferences hosted by Denmark in 2014 and Sweden in 2016. In 2013, in order to establish a common research data base on the mental health of veterans after deployment, a multicenter research database has been established and data collection begun.²⁷

Furthermore, a proposal was made to study the possibility of establishing a joint Nordic Center for Advanced Distributed Learning (ADL) to be located in Oslo, utilizing the Nordic countries' highly internet-capable environments to their advantage. However, national ambitions changed and the plans were scaled down; nations began to reconsider their commitments to the Center. As a result, in 2012 the ADL forum of experts was established, with representation from each nation's national ADL center of excellence. In May 2013, the first Nordic ADL conference was conducted in Norway with 120 representatives from 13 countries. This has come to be an annual conference that rotates among the Nordic countries.²⁸

Cooperation on foreign language studies, technical education, and vocational training was also considered, especially in areas where the

²³ Ministry of Defence of Sweden, *NORDEFECO Annual Report 2015*, (Stockholm:2015), 14.

²⁴ See footnote 21.

²⁵ See footnote 21.

²⁶ "Common Threats Shape Nordic-Baltic Cyber Cooperation", *Defense News*, December 10, 2014.

²⁷ Ministry of Defence of Finland, *NORDEFECO Annual Report 2013*, (Helsinki: 2013), 21.

²⁸ See footnote 26.

training could be focused on the repairs and maintenance of common military equipment. As to foreign language studies, in 2012-2013 seminars were arranged to teach a customized Pashto course in Sweden and a Farsi course in Denmark, reflecting the Nordic countries' military operational focus on the NATO operation in Afghanistan. English language courses in specific professional areas have also been conducted within the NORDEFCO framework.²⁹

In 2015, common Nordic interests were focused on the centers of competence that will act as hubs for cooperation. Another promising activity was the establishment of a Nordic Officer Exchange Program at the master's degree level. The first courses were opened for students in the Nordic countries' defense universities in 2016. The courses will be continued in 2017. Furthermore, an Operational Planning Guide was produced to train each Nordic nation's safety officers in the field of military in-service and occupational safety (MIOS) regarding exercises and operations, thereby increasing common Nordic understanding in this sphere. Moreover, a first medical education course in the NORDEFCO framework was conducted in March 2015.³⁰

4.4 COPA/TRAINING AND EXERCISES (TEX)

For COPA Training and Exercises (TEX), the aim is to coordinate and harmonize military training and exercise activities, as well as to produce a combined and joint five-year exercise plan. The overall aim is to achieve better training with the same resources, or to achieve the same level of training with fewer resources.

In 2010, the first COPA/TEX projects included tactical evaluation of air exercises, coordination and harmonization of naval mine counter-measures exercises, and surface-to-air live-fire exercises, as well as cooperation on naval diving exercises. The sub-working group on land training focused on Arctic training and forward air control (FAC), also known as joint terminal

attack control (JTAC), with study reports on these projects produced in the second half of 2013.³¹

Cross-border training among the Nordic air forces in the northern parts of Finland, Norway and Sweden quickly became the showcase of NORDEFCO cooperation. These exercises, held more frequently than once a week on average, have greatly contributed operational and cost benefits to these countries' air forces.

In 2012, Denmark and Sweden executed combined exercises between their air forces based on a new technical arrangement signed in November of that year (Cross Border Training South). Norway and Finland also signed this agreement and participated in the exercises for the first time in 2013. Furthermore, the 2014 NORDEFCO planning program focused on developing documentation and other necessary measures for Cross Border Training Land, Sea and Air.

A vital part of this cooperation was the Iceland Air Meet in February 2014, in which the participants were Iceland, Norway, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and the United States. Norway, Finland and Sweden sent their fighter aircraft to this training event, to which the United States and the Netherlands provided air-to-air refueling assets, while Iceland contributed Host Nation Support, including search and rescue capabilities. The success of the Iceland Air Meet further contributed to continued cooperation among the Nordic air forces.³²

Based on these highly positive experiences, NORDEFCO launched a study on the possible establishment of a demanding Northern Flag air exercise, which would be based on the Arctic Challenge air exercises. These exercises had been arranged in 2013 and 2015, but the Northern Flag exercises would be more challenging, including deeper third party involvement.

A mandate was issued at the NORDEFCO defense ministerial in November 2015 to continue developing the concept for a possible

²⁹ See footnote 26.

³⁰ Ministry of Defence of Sweden, *NORDEFCO Annual Report 2015*, (Stockholm: 2015), 16-17.

³¹ *NORDEFCO Military Coordination Committee Annual Report 2012*, 16-17.

³² Ministry of Defence of Norway, *NORDEFCO Annual Report 2014*, (Oslo:2014), 35.

2017 Northern Flag exercise. There was wide agreement that a substantial involvement of the United States will be a precondition for such an exercise.³³ At the Defense Ministerial on 9 November 2016, the ministers agreed to develop the Norwegian Arctic Challenge Exercise into a flag-level exercise on a step-by-step basis.³⁴ At the same Ministerial, the Nordic defense ministers signed a Memorandum of Understanding allowing for “Easy Access” to each other’s air, land and sea territories in peace-time.³⁵

Much attention was also paid to the work on the Alternate Landing Base (ALB) agreement. Eventually, in 2016, Denmark, Norway and Sweden signed an agreement to allow unarmed military aircraft to access each other’s air bases. Finland and Iceland are expected to sign the agreement in the near future, after which the possibility to extend the agreement to armed aircraft will be explored.³⁶

However, COPA/TEX’s highest priority in the early stages of NORDEFCO was to compile a Combined Joint Nordic Exercise Program (CJNEP), which would be open and transparent, to be shared among all the participating Nordic nations. By 2012 both CJNEP 2012 and CJNEP 2013-2017 were approved. CJNEP 2012 contained a total of 19 exercises that were open for Nordic participation, covering both single-service and joint exercises. In 2013, for the first time ever, a Combined Joint Nordic-Baltic Exercise Program 2014-2018 was completed, fully including the Baltic States, should they wish to participate.³⁷

A special program was launched under COPA/TEX in 2014. It aims at identifying and exploring if and how a Nordic Center for CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) could be established. In addition, another special program has been launched by COPA/TEX, aimed at developing coordination and standards for a military working dog community in the Nordic countries. Here, as in

so many other areas, the Nordic countries taken as separate entities have relatively limited resources in their possession - but together possess a solid base for mutually fruitful cooperation.³⁸

4.5 COPA/OPERATIONS (OPS)

The initially Swedish-led COPA Operations (OPS) focused on on-going military operations, with a special attention to Nordic cooperation in NATO’s ISAF mission in Afghanistan. The timeframe used for studies was up to two years. The focal areas chosen were Nordic cooperation on operational issues in on-going operations, logistical issues, and strategic movement and transportation.

More than in other COPAs, the work in COPA/OPS has tended to be event-driven. In order to be as flexible and agile as possible, COPA/OPS maintains a Nordic network of operational planners, facilitates close dialogue among these planners, and continuously monitors the global and regional security situations.

At the outset, within COPA/OPS, the Logistics Working Group searched for solutions in order to support the Nordic ISAF troops, while the Movement and Transportation Working Group coordinated strategic transport in and out of Afghanistan. In 2010, these working groups explored the possibility of creating a Nordic logistics hub in the Middle East, possibly in the United Arab Emirates, Oman, or Bahrain, and examined the use of railroad cargo transport to Afghanistan.³⁹

Additionally, common permanent Nordic cargo flights, using the C-17 aircraft, were planned to Mazar-e-Sharif, while the Pápa airbase in Hungary was studied as a transportation hub. Pápa was already used by a consortium of 12 nations (ten NATO members plus Finland and Sweden) to pool their resources in order to operate the C-17 aircraft for joint strategic airlift purposes. Work was also carried out to develop a Nordic movement control cell (MOVCON) in Mazar-e-Sharif by the end of

³³ Ministry of Defence of Denmark, *NORDEFCO Annual Report 2016, (Copenhagen:2016)*, 18.

³⁴ See footnote 34, 7.

³⁵ See footnote 34, 7.

³⁶ See footnote 34, 6.

³⁷ Ministry of Defence of Norway, *NORDEFCO Annual Report 2014, (Oslo: 2014)*, 35.

³⁸ Ministry of Defence of Sweden, *NORDEFCO Annual Report 2015, (Stockholm: 2015)*, 30.

³⁹ Järvenpää, *Northern Security and Global Politics*, 144-145.

2011 – which proved to be a sound operational and economic success. A feasibility study was launched to explore the possibilities for common Nordic activities in Afghanistan in that country's post-transition phase, starting in 2014-2015.⁴⁰

The logistical cooperation in Afghanistan worked so well that it came to serve as a model for Finland, Norway, and Sweden – joined by the Netherlands – for movement and transportation cooperation in the United Nations operation in Mali (MINUSMA).⁴¹

In 2014-2015, significant progress was made in planning and implementation of a secure communications system for distributing classified information. The solution, NORDEFCO Secure CIS, developed by COPA/OPS together with a Norwegian-led working group, meets technical requirements and is cost-effective. The system, which became operational in June 2016, is now in active use and handles information classified up to the level "secret". This solution enables strategic communication at the Ministry of Defense and Defense Command levels, while also enabling deeper operational coordination among the NORDEFCO countries.⁴²

5. THE FUTURE OF NORDIC DEFENSE COOPERATION

Building on the achievements outlined in the previous section, as chair of NORDEFCO this year Finland aims to "strive to enhance the Nordic defense cooperation both through fostering continuity and through new initiatives that reflect our common challenges." It also plans to initiate a discussion aimed at improving the NORDEFCO meeting and cooperation processes.⁴³

⁴⁰ Järvenpää, *Northern Security and Global Politics*, 145.

⁴¹ Signing of the Letter of Intent, NORDEFCO, 20.6.2015.

⁴² Ministry of Defence of Sweden, *NORDEFCO Annual Report 2015*, (Stockholm: 2015), 18.

⁴³ "Priorities for the Finnish NORDEFCO Chairmanship 2017", An unofficial discussion paper, Ministry of Defense of Finland, November 2016.

Continuity between chairmanships is a key to advancing on-going projects launched by previous chairmanships. Therefore, Finland promises "to give particular emphasis to carrying forward the efforts that have been taken by Denmark and other previous chairmanships in such projects as NORECS, NORTAT, ALB, Easy Access and Northern Flag." It will be also important to continue cooperation with Nordic defense industries with the intent of improving information exchange and enhancing cost effectiveness of projects. As chair, Finland also promises to support the full use of the Nordic Defense Materiel Cooperation Agreement while continuing to work on the security of supply and export control annexes.⁴⁴

Furthermore, Finland will focus on such areas as military security of supply and societal resilience. The first step will be sharing best practices and identifying possible gaps and shortfalls as well as studying key aspects of enhancing logistical preparedness – including equipment maintenance and repair as well as life-cycle management of defense systems.⁴⁵

During its chairmanship Finland also intends to continue the existing dialogue on the Nordic-Baltic security environment, utilizing the new NORDEFCO Secure CIS. There will also be a study launched in 2017 to explore the opportunities of extending the system to the Baltic countries. Finland will also "look into the possibility of conducting table top exercises within the NORDEFCO framework". Such exercises could help the participants find and highlight possible NORDEFCO strengths and weaknesses, while also shedding light on areas that need to be further developed and emphasized. Table top exercises could also be a good point of departure for starting work on the next NORDEFCO long-term vision.⁴⁶

In addition, the Nordic countries will continue their support to the Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF). In the spring of 2016, Denmark invited the management of the EASF as well as other Nordic country representatives to Copenhagen to discuss the EASF's continued

⁴⁴ See footnote 41, 1.

⁴⁵ See footnote 41, 1-2.

⁴⁶ See footnote 41, 2.

development; a Nordic visit to the region was carried out in May 2016. Based on these visits, recommendations for future Nordic support were presented at the Nordic Defense Ministers' meeting in November 2016. The main recommendation was to continue to support the EASF while focusing on stronger local ownership.⁴⁷

During 2016, the Nordic-Baltic Assistance Program (NBAP), which focuses on capacity-building, continued its work, including projects in Georgia and Ukraine. In September 2016, a declaration aimed at ensuring continued cooperation regarding defense capacity building in third countries was signed by the Nordic and Baltic countries.⁴⁸

Last but not least, under the Danish chairmanship in 2016, the Military Coordination Committee (MCC) has developed guidelines on how to engage the Nordic and Baltic countries in concrete areas of cooperation. This is something that will be strongly supported by the Finnish chairmanship in 2017.⁴⁹

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

In its relatively short existence since late 2009, NORDEFCO has turned out to be a considerable success. It has not been "love in a cold climate" as *The Economist* had it, but rather a solid forum for defense and security cooperation in areas where it has been beneficial to the participants.⁵⁰

Nordic (and wider Nordic-Baltic) cooperation in defense and security has resulted in purchases of interoperable equipment, cooperation in the use of human resources, plans for common education and training, schedules for combined and joint exercises, common participation in operations, and in some cases even considerable savings on operational costs and purchases of equipment. All this speaks volumes about the vitality of the NORDEFCO concept. From a military perspective, it has been highly useful to have NORDEFCO available

as a platform for common Nordic-Baltic discussion, planning and decision-making.

It is understandable that sovereign nations think twice before they dare to create deep interdependencies with their key military capabilities. One must be able to trust that those capabilities, pooled and shared, will be available when needed. The same goes for individual professional relationships. As a result of the work done within NORDEFCO, there are now hundreds of Nordic and Baltic military professionals and civil servants, who have learned to trust each other and who feel comfortable in continuing to work together. Moreover, the individual nations have made decisions that have required a high level of mutual trust and confidence, a level that has increased with each such decision. NORDEFCO has promoted a general culture of cooperation among the Nordic and Baltic defense establishments, which is a remarkable accomplishment in itself.

All this work comes into sharp relief now that the European security architecture has been put under tremendous pressure. The Russian illegal annexation of Crimea and its on-going aggression against Ukraine are clear violations of international law, the Helsinki Final Act, and other international agreements. In the Baltic Sea region, this increased pressure is manifesting itself, *inter alia*, in an increased number of Russian combat aircraft flights near the borders of Nordic and Baltic countries, a recurring series of incidents at sea, a rapid spike in the amount of modern long-range missiles and other military equipment brought to bear by Russia into the region, as well as a rise in the number of large and aggressive exercises being regularly conducted in areas adjacent to the Nordic and Baltic countries.

As a result, the Nordic and Baltic countries should intensify their dialogue on common interests and engage in further practical arrangements concerning the security challenges to northern Europe.

What could be the further steps for them to take?

⁴⁷ See footnote 41, 11.

⁴⁸ See footnote 41, 11.

⁴⁹ See footnote 41, 7.

⁵⁰ See footnote 1 in this paper.

6.1 ENHANCING NORDIC-BALTIC COOPERATION

NORDEFECO began as a framework of cooperation among only the Nordic countries. However, the Nordic Ministers of Defense invited their Baltic counterparts to participate in their November 2009 meeting in Helsinki. A year later, in November 2010, the Baltic experts were invited to participate in discussions on ADL (Advanced Distributed Learning), gender, and veterans' issues. In their meeting in January 2011, the Nordic-Baltic CHOD's decided to identify other possible areas of cooperation. In March 2012, for the first time ever, NORDEFECO MCC invited Baltic participation. On the agenda were discussions on logistics, veterans' issues, air transport, and Baltic militaries' participation in Nordic training and exercises. In 2014, it was noted in the NORDEFECO annual report that dialogue and cooperation were being developed with the Baltic countries on such topics as armaments, exercises, planning, and security sector reform. Finally, the 2016 annual report stated that the Military Committee has developed guidelines on how NORDEFECO should engage and develop concrete areas of cooperation in a Nordic-Baltic context.

It is recommended that all the COPA areas be opened to the Baltic countries, and a working group be established that would urgently map out concrete and practical areas for further Nordic-Baltic cooperation. It might well be that in some cases the Nordic countries are reluctant to open up their cooperation to outsiders. The Baltic countries may also not be able to join in the often rather technologically-advanced projects that NORDEFECO offers. And it might be also possible that the costs of joining in NORDEFECO projects are prohibitive for the Baltic countries. Nonetheless, given the present international security climate in the Nordic-Baltic region, one should be able and willing to use these opportunities for Nordic-Baltic cooperation to their fullest.

6.2 ENHANCED COOPERATION BEYOND NORDIC-BALTIC COOPERATION

In November 2011, the Defense Ministers and high Ministry of Defense representatives of 12 countries (Nordic and Baltic countries, Poland,

Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) met to discuss common defense and security issues as well as possible defense cooperation. The United States also participated in this meeting of northern European countries, subsequently dubbed the Northern Group.

It is recommended that an informal working group were to be promptly established comprising military and civilian representatives of the Northern Group countries and the United States with the task of charting out the current areas of these countries' interest in enhanced defense cooperation.

6.3 COOPERATION IN FURTHER ENHANCING SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

The increased number of Russian combat aircraft flights near the borders of the Nordic and Baltic countries without proper flight plans or up-to-date technical identification equipment, violations of Nordic and Baltic national borders by military aircraft, recurrent sea incidents, and threatening flights simulating air attacks against Nordic and Baltic targets have raised tensions and increased the risks of misunderstandings and the possibility of accidents in the Baltic region. Early warning of emerging situations and general situational awareness would promote stability and security in the region.

It is recommended that to better handle the situation the Western countries in the Baltic Sea basin (including Poland and Germany, as well as Norway), compile - and distribute to each other in a timely fashion - common air and sea pictures in a recognizable format. Suitable systems could be developed on the basis of both existing and emerging technical solutions. At the same time, measures should be taken to establish secure lines of communication among the participating states.

6.4 COOPERATION IN CYBER DEFENSE AND SECURITY

Threats emanating from the use of hostile cyber tools are often by their very nature cross-border threats. Therefore, cyber security

cooperation at its best includes common and shared cyber threat assessments.

It is recommended that regional Nordic-Baltic (and beyond, if possible) educational events and exercises be arranged. At these occasions, sharing information on best practices could be distributed and discussed. The NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence (CCD COE) in Tallinn is recognized as an important hub for cooperation in the area of cyber security, and its expertise should be utilized. Also, the new EU Center of Excellence for Combating Hybrid Threats - to be established in 2017 in Helsinki - should be utilized, as the aim of the Center will be to strengthen the participants' resistance to and preparation for hybrid threats by training, research and exchanging best practices.

6.5 HYBRID WARFARE

While there is no commonly agreed definition for hybrid warfare, it is widely understood that hybrid threats exploit the full spectrum of modern warfare. Therefore, it suffices to state that hybrid operations blend conventional and irregular warfare, information and propaganda operations, and cyber threats. By combining kinetic actions with subversive efforts, the aggressor in hybrid warfare intends to target the vulnerabilities of open societies, and - by mixing overt and covert operations- to avoid attribution or retribution.

It is recommended that a common Nordic-Baltic study be launched into the concept of hybrid warfare and into how Nordic and Baltic states could defend themselves against its various forms. A close relationship should be formed with the future EU Center in Helsinki, as mentioned in the previous point.

6.6 EXERCISES

The training and exercises cooperation area, COPA/TEX, has turned out to be one of the most successful action areas of NORDEFCO cooperation. In particular, cross border training between Nordic and other air forces, a study on the possible launching of a Northern Flag multinational exercise, and the compilation of the Combined Joint Nordic-Baltic Exercise Program attest to the need for and the success

of common training and exercises between the Nordic and Baltic defense forces.

It is recommended that the program of common Nordic-Baltic training and exercises be continued with a special focus on interoperability, connectivity and engagement between those countries' defense forces. It is important to also include third countries' defense forces and to utilize NATO exercises as a basis whenever feasible.

6.7 COOPERATION IN OPERATIONS

All the Nordic and Baltic countries have positive experiences of cooperating with each other in various international operations.

It is recommended that the Nordic and Baltic countries launch a common study to further explore the possibilities of coordinating their contributions to multinational formations such as the NRF and EUBG in operations conducted under the auspices of the UN, the EU, NATO or possible coalitions of the willing. Cooperation in the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) could be of particular interest.

6.8 ARCTIC STUDIES

The Arctic, or the High North, is emerging as a major region of interest in international politics. That region deserves increased attention not least from an environmental point of view. Global warming is taking place, and it is taking place, and has serious consequences for the Arctic. Moreover, there are technological advances in extraction and communications technologies that will make the High North a lucrative area for economic exploitation. Furthermore, climate change is making the region's shipping routes ever more useful as transportation routes open between the economic powerhouses of North Asia and the North Atlantic. Finally, as Russian military activities in the region attest, the Arctic region is becoming interesting from the point of view of strategic military planning and operational military deployment.

It is recommended that special attention be paid to the military aspects of the High North. There is considerable potential for an increase in military forces as well as heightened tensions in the region. The Nordic and Baltic countries

are in a unique position to provide clear-headed analyses and carry out solid policies that support the stability and security of the High North.

6.9 ARMAMENTS COOPERATION

One area for fruitful Nordic and Nordic-Baltic cooperation could be common projects of defense procurement. With largely similar needs for military equipment, these countries could reap benefits from common acquisitions, shared maintenance programs, and life-cycle support schemes. However, that area of cooperation also seems to be one where the national interests come to play perhaps more than in other areas. As a result, the historical record is at best mixed. It is often the case that the best results have been attained in bilateral acquisition programs instead of multinational ones.

It is recommended that a special effort be paid to canvassing like-minded countries – Nordic, Baltic, and even third countries – on their on-going and future defense equipment acquisition programs, in as transparent a way as possible, and in order to identify and exploit possibilities for common development, purchase, maintenance, and life-cycle programs. Special attention should be focused on radars and other situational awareness equipment, anti-tank and air defense systems, and communications, command and control equipment.

6.10 CAPACITY BUILDING AND SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

The Nordic-Baltic Assistance Program (NBAP) was established at the Nordic-Baltic Defense Ministers' meeting on 12 November 2014. The Program's objective is to develop a framework through which two or more Nordic-Baltic countries can deliver turn-key defense sector capacity building components to NATO, EU, and UN-led programs and operations.

It is recommended that reviews of the results of the Nordic East Africa and the Nordic-Baltic Somalia and Mali training assistance programs were be conducted. Guided by these reviews, a special focus should be laid to the possibility of designing and adopting rigorous further

capacity building and security sector reform programs in Georgia and Ukraine.

6.11 RESILIENCE

Resilience refers to the ability of societies to adopt measures aimed at ensuring, to the extent possible, that their vital and regular functions will not be interrupted or disrupted by any attack – whether kinetic or non-kinetic.

It is recommended that NORDEFECO, in close cooperation with the Baltic states, launch a review of the Nordic and Baltic countries current level of societal resilience and, as a matter of urgency, propose how these countries could improve it.

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