

FINLAND AS A NATO ALLY

FIRST INSIGHTS INTO FINNISH ALLIANCE POLICY

Matti Pesu / Tuomas Iso Markku



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This Finnish Foreign Policy Paper delves into Finland's emergent NATO policy, identifying and analysing its underlying factors and rationales. In addition to tracing the contours of Finland's embryonic approach towards alliance politics, the paper also aims to shed light on the alliance Finland is joining, describing both the evolution of, and recent trends in, several areas of NATO activity, and discussing what these mean for Finland.

Finland's primary objectives within NATO will stem from its geostrategic position at the intersection between the Baltic Sea region and the High North, its location in the NATO-Russia frontline, as well as its peripherality vis-à-vis Western centres of military and industrial power. Finland's aims will relate to the alliance's command and force structure and operational planning. From the Finnish perspective, NATO should have a functional command structure, as well as sufficient forces and operational plans in order to be capable of reinforcing Northern Europe and Finland. Due to its strategic location, military capabilities and niche expertise, Finland should be well-placed to promote its interests efficiently and successfully.



MATTI PESU

Leading Researcher

Finnish foreign policy, Northern European Security and NATO research programme, FIIA



TUOMAS ISO-MARKKU

Senior Research Fellow

European Union research programme, FIIA

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	4
INTRODUCTION	7
1. INCREMENTAL INTERNATIONALIZATION OF DEFENCE: FINLAND'S LONG ROAD TO NATO	9
1.1. The non-alignment era 1992–2014	9
1.2. The alignment era 2014–2022	10
1.3. The dawn of the alliance era: Why did Finland apply for NATO membership?	11
2. REBUILDING DETERRENCE AND DEFENCE: NATO IN THE POST-2022 ERA	14
3. NATO'S NORTHEASTERN FLANK: FINLAND'S POSITION ON EUROPE'S STRATEGIC MAP	16
4. ONE MEMBER IN AN ALLIANCE OF 32: NATO-RELATED DECISION-MAKING AND DIPLOMACY	18
5. HARMONIZING NATIONAL AND COLLECTIVE DEFENCE: FINLAND AND THE NATO DEFENCE PLANNING PROCESS	20
6. TOWARDS A STRUCTURED ALLIANCE: FINLAND AND NATO'S COMMAND AND FORCE STRUCTURE	23
6.1. Command structure	23
6.2. Force structure	25
7. WELL PLANNED IS HALF DONE: FINLAND AND NATO OPERATIONAL PLANNING	27
8. OFFERING PRESENCE: FINLAND AND NATO'S PEACETIME COLLECTIVE DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE MISSIONS	29
8.1. enhanced Forward Presence	29
8.2. Air Policing	30
9. QUALITY BEFORE QUANTITY: FINLAND AND MILITARY EXERCISES	31
10. INTO UNCHARTED TERRITORY: NATO'S NUCLEAR POLICY AND BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENCE	34
10.1. NATO's nuclear policy and Finland's alternatives	34
10.2. Finland and NATO missile defence	37
11. SOLIDIFYING COLLECTIVE DEFENCE: MILITARY COOPERATION WITH NATO ALLIES	38
11.1. Finland's defence cooperation prior to NATO membership	38
11.2. Finland's defence cooperation in the context of its NATO accession	40
12. CONTINUITY ABOVE ALL: NATO MEMBERSHIP AND FINLAND'S FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY	44
13. IMPORTANT, BUT LESS URGENT: NATO ALLY FINLAND'S PERSPECTIVE ON EU DEFENCE	45
14. DETERRENCE FIRST: 'NATO FINLAND'S' RUSSIA POLICY	48
15. NOT ONLY DETERRENCE: THE FINNISH APPROACH TO NATO'S ADDITIONAL CORE TASKS	50
CONCLUSIONS	52
BIBLIOGRAPHY	54

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACO	Allied Command Operations
ACT	Allied Command Transformation
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defence
CARD	Coordinated Annual Review on Defence
COE	Centre of Excellence
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DCA	Dual Capable Aircraft
DCA	Defence Cooperation Agreement
DDA	Concept for the Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic area
EDF	European Defence Fund
eFP	Enhanced Forward Presence
EI2	European Intervention Initiative
EPAA	European Phased Adaptive Approach
EU	European Union
FNC	Framework Nations Concept
GDP	Gross domestic product
GRP	Graduated Response Plan
HNS	Host Nation Support
IAMD	NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence
IMS	NATO International Military Staff
IS	NATO International Staff
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JEF	Joint Expeditionary Force
JFC	Joint Forces Command
JSEC	Joint Support and Enabling Command
KFOR	Kosovo Force
MC	NATO Military Committee
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDPP	NATO Defence Planning Process
NFIU	NATO Force Integration Unit
NORDEFECO	Nordic Defence Cooperation
NPG	Nuclear Planning Group
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

NRF	NATO Response Force
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation
PfP	Partnership for Peace
RAP	Readiness Action Plan
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SDP	Standing Defence Plan
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
SNMCMG	Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group
SNMG	Standing NATO Maritime Group
SNOWCAT	Support of Nuclear Operations with Conventional Air Tactics
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
TP-UTVA	Joint Session of the President of the Republic and the Ministerial Committee on Foreign and Security Policy
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
VJTF	Very High Readiness Joint Task Force

INTRODUCTION

THE YEAR 2022 has been a tumultuous period for European security. Russia's unprovoked assault on Ukraine in February brought large-scale interstate warfare – with its devastation and horrors – back to Europe. The West has responded forcefully to the Russian invasion by supporting Ukraine economically, supplying it with weapons, and cutting Russia off from significant parts of the international economy. For Finland, the Russian aggression marked an external shock,¹ which forced Helsinki to reconsider the very foundations of Finnish foreign and security policy. Less than three months after the outbreak of the war, on 17 May, President Sauli Niinistö officially decided that Finland would apply for NATO membership – a decision underpinned by a striking level of elite and public support.

Finland's eventual NATO membership will inaugurate a new era in Finnish foreign, security, and defence policy. For the first time in its history, Finland will become a member of a formalized military alliance. Finland's full integration into NATO's military and political structures will inevitably take time. Similarly, the formation of Finnish NATO policy will be a long process. Finland will duly begin to formulate its alliance policy when the ratification process is concluded and the country officially becomes a member of the alliance. At the same time, the basic outlines of Finland's NATO policy will also be decisively shaped by enduring factors such as Finland's geostrategic location, its defence model, the strength and capabilities of its armed forces, as well as its foreign and security policy objectives and traditions. These form the basis on which Finland will build its approach towards, and role in, NATO.

Crucially, Finland's NATO policy will not only be determined by national preferences, but also by NATO's existing policies and the views held by Finland's future allies. Helsinki has clearly expressed that upon entering NATO, it wants to find solutions that optimize Finland's own defence as a part of NATO's collective defence, and that make sense both from the national point of view and from the perspective of the whole alliance.² In practice, the process of national policy formulation will take place rather organically. As a NATO

member, Finland must express its views on the broad array of issues that feature on the alliance's agenda, thus building its NATO policy and profile bit by bit.³ In the longer term, governmental programmes, as well as foreign, security, and defence policy reports, will be the key documents for setting Finland's NATO-related objectives.

This Finnish Foreign Policy Paper delves into Finland's emergent NATO policy, identifying and analysing its underlying factors and rationales. In addition to tracing the contours of Finland's embryonic approach towards alliance politics, the paper also aims to shed light on the alliance Finland is joining, describing both the evolution of, and recent trends in, several areas of NATO activity and discussing what these mean for Finland.

To accomplish these objectives, the paper proceeds as follows. The first chapter illustrates Finland's path to NATO, recounting how the country's relationship with the alliance has developed, and explaining why it ended up applying for NATO membership. The second chapter depicts how NATO itself is evolving, portraying the alliance's ongoing transformation that started with Russia's first invasion of Ukraine in 2014, and was accelerated by Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine in February 2022.

The third chapter spells out the fundamental geostrategic factors that shape Finland's objectives as a NATO member. The fourth examines Finland's standpoints regarding NATO's collective decision-making, including its implications for the national decision-making process. In the subsequent chapters (5–11), the paper introduces several defence policy and military issues that Finland needs to take a stand on, and which will affect Finnish security and defence policy. The issues include NATO's defence planning process (Chapter 5); the evolution of the alliance's command and force structure (Chapter 6); NATO's operational planning (Chapter 7); the alliance's peacetime collective defence and deterrence missions (Chapter 8); NATO and allied military exercises (Chapter 9); NATO's nuclear and missile defence policy (Chapter 10); and defence cooperation with allies outside the alliance's structures (Chapter 11).

¹ See Hermann 1990.

² Kivinen 2022.

³ Niinistö 2022a.

The paper continues by evaluating how – or whether – NATO membership will impact Finnish foreign and security policy (Chapter 12), the country’s views on the EU’s security and defence dimension (Chapter 13), and its policy towards Russia (Chapter 14). The final chapter explores how Finland views NATO’s two additional core tasks: conflict prevention and management, as well as cooperative security.

The analysis is based on extensive research material. It not only taps into the existing literature on NATO, transatlantic relations, and European security, but also utilizes primary sources such as speeches, statements, and official documents. Furthermore, more than 40 confidential background discussions with Finnish and NATO officials, as well as policymakers and scholars from allied countries, were conducted for the purposes of the paper. The study will be the first comprehensive assessment of Finland’s NATO policy. As such, it seeks to support both policymaking and public debate regarding Finnish alliance policy. At the same time, the paper also aims at laying the foundation for further research on the multifaceted and evolving issue of Finnish NATO membership.

1. INCREMENTAL INTERNATIONALIZATION OF DEFENCE: FINLAND'S LONG ROAD TO NATO

FINLAND'S DECISION TO join NATO entails many path dependencies, which one needs to appreciate to understand the policy turn that took place in the spring of 2022. The deep relationship with the alliance, which has gradually evolved since the mid-1990s, has considerably eased Finland's membership process, not only in practical terms but also politically. However, Finland's choice to ally itself militarily was not pre-determined – far from it, in fact. Rather, it was contingent upon heightened threat perceptions – a direct result of Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine in February 2022 – as well as permissive domestic and international circumstances.

This section of the paper briefly lays out Finland's path to NATO, thereby also identifying the factors that have produced doctrinal stability on the one hand and change on the other. To understand Finland's journey towards membership in the transatlantic alliance, the section divides Finland's post-Cold War foreign and security policy into three phases: the non-alignment era, the alignment era, and the (dawning) alliance era, the last one beginning with the process that culminated in Finland's formal application for NATO membership.

1.1. The non-alignment era 1992–2014

In the early 1990s, Finland's security and defence policy was markedly national. Unlike Sweden,⁴ Finland did not boast secret military cooperation networks with NATO allies during the Cold War. Instead, the country's scant international military activities in the Cold War years were strictly limited to peacekeeping within the framework of the United Nations.⁵ However, in the 1990s Helsinki started to utilize its increased room for manoeuvre in international affairs. While sticking to a conservative defence model⁶ – focused on territorial defence and based on a system of universal male conscription – Finland took its first steps towards international defence cooperation.

In 1992, Finland decided to buy 64 F/A-18 Hornets from McDonnell Douglas. The Hornet deal

– exceptional in scale for Finland at that time⁷ – opened military-to-military ties with the United States and eventually paved the way for additional, and substantial, defence procurements from the US.⁸ In 1994, Finland joined NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme (PfP), and subsequently became a significant contributor to the alliance's crisis-management operations in the Western Balkans, both in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Kosovo.⁹ Importantly, as part of the PfP, Finland also began to adjust its defence forces to NATO standards – a prerequisite for interoperability between Finnish and allied forces.

Finland's accession to the European Union in 1995 was a vital development for the internationalization of Finland's defence policy. From early on, Finland adopted a proactive stance vis-à-vis the EU's nascent security and defence policy, advocating making crisis management the focal point of the Union's security and defence activity.¹⁰ Despite its readiness to advance the EU's security and defence policy, Finland insisted on preserving the essence of its military non-alignment. Indeed, Finland's strong support for enhancing the EU's role in crisis management partly served as a pre-emptive strategy, designed to ensure that the EU's security and defence activities would not touch upon the more sensitive matters of territorial defence.¹¹

In the early 2000s, during the negotiations on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, Finland was hesitant about including a mutual assistance clause, currently known as the Lisbon Treaty's Article 42.7, in the treaty.¹² Above all, Finland wanted to ensure that the clause in question would not entail any automatic provision of military assistance, as binding security guarantees were seen to jeopardize its non-aligned status.¹³

From the early 2000s to the early 2010s, the internationalization of Finland's defence outlook continued. The country's participation in NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) further developed its

4 See e.g., Dalsjö 2006.

5 Pesu, J. 2020.

6 For an overview of the Finnish defence model, see Ossa & Koivula 2022.

7 Enestam 1996.

8 McNamara and Saloniemi-Pasternak 2022.

9 See e.g., Pesu 2017a.

10 Palosaari 2013; Ojanen & Raik 2017.

11 Pesu et al. 2020.

12 Tuomioja 2022, 255–276.

13 Palosaari 2017.

interoperability with the alliance and brought Helsinki to NATO tables when the operation in Afghanistan was on the agenda. Finland also took part in NATO and allied military exercises. Towards the end of the 2000s, defence cooperation between the Nordic states started to gather steam as well, initially focusing primarily on finding cost-efficient security and defence solutions in a worsening economic context. A new framework for Nordic defence cooperation – NORDEFECO – was established in 2009, bringing together previously distinct cooperation formats under a common umbrella.¹⁴

In contrast to Finland's strictly nationally oriented defence outlook in the early 1990s, its defence policy in the early 2010s duly contained considerable international elements. Finland had acquired credentials in several crisis-management operations, and its capable defence forces were interoperable with NATO. Moreover, Finland was actively involved in other defence fora, such as the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) as well as NORDEFECO. Therefore, one of the most notable trends in Finnish post-Cold War defence policy was the broadened interpretation of the kind of activities that were deemed appropriate for a non-aligned state.

That said, Finland's military cooperation did not touch on the hard core of its defence policy, namely territorial defence. Finnish decision-makers, supported by a public opinion that remained sceptical of NATO membership, wanted to preserve the country's military non-alignment by maintaining territorial defence as a strictly national undertaking.¹⁵ A 'post-neutral' mindset thus underpinned Finland's policy until the early 2010s.¹⁶ Although Finland no longer pursued a Cold War-type neutrality policy and internationalized parts of its defence policy, the country still adhered to the remnants of neutrality, its military non-alignment, viewing it as an essential tool in managing its relationship with an increasingly assertive but not yet openly revisionist Russia.

Despite the post-neutral thinking, since the early 2000s, Finnish governments have explicitly stated that Finland upholds the possibility of joining NATO. This so-called 'NATO option' was a controversial but enduring part of Finland's foreign and security policy, representing the lowest common denominator between proponents and opponents of Finnish NATO membership. At the same time, it arguably also served as a soft strategic communication tool with regard to the outside world

and Russia in particular, signalling that hostile behaviour towards Finland could trigger a major change in Finland's security and defence policy posture.¹⁷

1.2. The alignment era 2014–2022

Russia's first invasion of Ukraine in 2014 led to a major – and still underappreciated – adjustment in Finland's security and defence policy. In the years following the assault, Finland significantly intensified its international military cooperation and defence partnerships. Moreover, henceforth this cooperation increasingly revolved around territorial defence. This meant that Finland together with its partners began to generate conditions for potential wartime cooperation.

Finland developed a particularly close relationship with neighbouring Sweden, with the two countries' cooperation advancing to cover "peace, crisis, and war" and extending to joint operational planning. Finland also enhanced its partnership with the US and Norway, and joined the most important 'minilateral' defence frameworks in Europe, the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force, the German-helmed Framework Nations Concept, and the French-run European Intervention Initiative (for a more detailed account of Finland's defence cooperation prior to 2022, see section 11.1). Finland's relationship with NATO rose to a new level as well, as the country became one of NATO's five Enhanced Opportunities Partners at the Wales Summit in 2014. Within the EU, Finland became a rare advocate of Article 42.7, the clause it had initially been hesitant to include in the EU treaties.¹⁸ As a sign of its changed approach towards defence cooperation, Finland also enacted a new law in 2017, which allows for the provision and reception of military assistance by combat forces.¹⁹ Furthermore, providing and receiving military assistance was added to the tasks of the Finnish Defence Forces.

The intensification of military cooperation demonstrated a de facto change in Finland's security and defence doctrine. After 2014, Finland gradually abandoned its military non-alignment and the post-neutral mindset and adopted a policy of alignment – a strategy in which a group of states coalesce and cooperate to prevent and, if necessary, counter aggression from a shared adversary without formalizing their relationship by forming an alliance.²⁰ For all practical purposes, Finland

14 Saxi 2011; Saxi 2019.

15 On the evolution of Finland's post-Cold War public NATO discourse, see Särkkä 2019.

16 Forsberg & Vaahtoranta 2001.

17 Salenius-Pasternak & Pesu 2020.

18 Iso-Markku & Pesu 2021.

19 See e.g., Pesu 2017b.

20 Synder 1997.



President Sauli Niinistö and Prime Minister Sanna Marin held a joint press conference on Finland's decision to apply for NATO membership on 15 May 2022.
 Source: Matti Porre / Office of the President of the Republic of Finland

integrated itself into the Western NATO-centred deterrence and defence system but did so without formally joining the alliance.²¹ This approach banked on the (historically valid)²² assumption that in a potential conflict with Russia, Western wartime coalitions would be based on shared interests and could therefore emerge also without the existence of formal treaties.²³

There were at least three reasons why Finland did not consider NATO membership in the post-2014 environment. First, Finland wanted to continue having functioning relations with Russia and considered this to require circumspection regarding its eastern neighbour. In other words, the majority of Finnish decision-makers did not want to unnecessarily irritate Moscow by applying for NATO membership. Secondly, and interrelatedly, Finnish policymakers were concerned about the potential escalatory effects of a NATO bid, which could have undermined the already fragile stability in the Baltic Sea region in the aftermath of Russia's first invasion

of Ukraine. Thirdly, public opinion remained strongly against NATO membership, which further dissuaded Finnish leaders from thinking about seeking additional backing from the alliance.

1.3. The dawn of the alliance era: Why did Finland apply for NATO membership?

The beginning of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on 24 February, 2022, marked a shock that eventually forced Finland to re-evaluate its security and defence policy. Less than three months after the start of Russia's armed attack, Finland decided to apply for NATO membership. The decision was based on a national deliberation process and consultations with several NATO members, including the United States. It was also preceded by a (symbolic) vote in the Finnish parliament, in which 188 out of 200 members voted in favour of Finland joining the transatlantic alliance.²⁴

21 Pesu 2022.

22 See e.g., Lanoszka 2022, 135–162.

23 Waris 2017.

24 The parliament voted between two proposals – the foreign affairs committee's suggestion to join NATO and a proposal put forward by an individual Member of Parliament against NATO membership. The decision to apply for NATO membership was the president's and government's prerogative. The Finnish parliament will eventually vote on the ratification of the North Atlantic Treaty.

Finland's choice to seek NATO accession marked the effective conclusion of Finland's brief post-2014 strategy based on alignment, signalling the country's willingness to formalize and solidify its position in the NATO-centred deterrence and defence system of the West. The decision was essentially the result of two (sets of) factors: a greatly increased perception of Russia as a military threat and a dramatic shift in public opinion in favour of joining NATO.

Russia's armed aggression affected Finnish threat perceptions in several ways. First, it showed that Russia can be willing to attack its neighbour despite the costs and risks involved.²⁵ Secondly, the outbreak of the war demonstrated that there can be very clear limits to the kind of military assistance other countries are ready to provide to a non-allied state. While supporting Ukraine in multiple ways, including by delivering weapons and training Ukrainian forces, NATO allies have so far refused to offer Ukraine direct combat support.

Thirdly, and interrelatedly, the Russian assault underscored how a state in possession of nuclear weapons can create significant room for manoeuvre when operating against a country that is not under the protection of a nuclear umbrella. Interestingly, after the start of the Russian invasion, Finland's political leadership began to openly acknowledge the country's potential vulnerability to nuclear threats.²⁶

Lastly, as part of the coercive campaign that preceded its attack on Ukraine, Russia vocally demanded that NATO should halt its eastward enlargement, and called for the alliance's withdrawal back to its Cold War borders. Finnish leaders saw the Russian demands as a direct challenge to Finland's voluntary non-allied status and Helsinki's long-standing 'NATO option' policy, considering them to seriously limit Finland's external room for manoeuvre and to challenge the key principles of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).²⁷

All in all, Russia's assault on Ukraine clearly created the impression that there was a gap in Finland's capacity to deter a potential Russian attack, which existing defence solutions – strong national military capabilities and a dense network of international defence partnerships – were unable to fill completely. In this situation, a further deepening of Finland's international defence

cooperation appeared the most viable option to remedy the identified 'deterrence deficit'.

At first, Finland's political leadership entertained two options: intensification of non-treaty-based military cooperation with Finland's closest partners, above all Sweden and the United States, or applying for NATO membership.²⁸ Surprisingly, the Finnish public expressed a clear preference for the latter. Public opinion, which for almost 30 years had been consistently against joining NATO, changed quickly and dramatically. In late February, immediately after Russia's attack, a poll published by Finnish broadcasting company Yle showed, for the first time ever, that more than 50% of Finns supported the country's NATO membership.²⁹ In mid-March, 62% of Finns viewed military alignment positively.³⁰ By early May, support for NATO membership had exceeded 75% and solidified at roughly that level.³¹

The staunch backing from the Finnish public strongly directed the country towards the NATO path. It is safe to assume that the bottom-up pressure influenced opinions at the elite level and facilitated the formation of a firm consensus in favour of applying for NATO membership among Finnish decision-makers. Importantly, given the resolute public opinion, non-membership options simply did not come across as politically feasible. As politicians were already starting to gear up for the parliamentary election in spring 2023, many were also likely to have been particularly mindful of the preferences of voters.

As a broad public and elite-level consensus on applying for NATO membership emerged, Finland's leaders were quick to communicate this to Finland's closest partner, Sweden, where the mood had not yet changed as profoundly as in Finland. The ruling Social Democrats in particular were still hesitant to re-evaluate Sweden's position. However, after realizing the inevitable trajectory of its neighbour, Sweden decided to follow suit and seek NATO membership together with Finland.³² Subsequently, the two countries coordinated the steps in their application processes as closely as possible.

From the very beginning, NATO and most allies have welcomed the Nordic duo with open arms and excitement. Only Turkey expressed clear reservations and, regrettably, has been willing to delay the accession process. However, the initial impasse was resolved at

25 Finnish Government 2022a.

26 Särkkä 2022.

27 Karppi & Vaaherumpu 2022; Finnish Government 2022a.

28 Milne 2022.

29 Koivisto 2022.

30 Kinnunen & Koivisto 2022.

31 Kinnunen 2022; Larros & Metelinen 2022.

32 See e.g., Strömberg & Nilsson 2022.

the margins of NATO's summit in Madrid at the end of June 2022, with Finland, Sweden, and Turkey signing a trilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which led to Turkey lifting its objections.³³ This allowed the alliance to make the decision at the summit to invite Helsinki and Stockholm to become members. Brief accession talks followed in July. Importantly, the invitation made Finland a NATO invitee, granting it the right to attend and address most NATO meetings, with exceptions being discussions concerning nuclear matters and the NATO aspirants themselves.

Overall, Finland's and Sweden's membership process has duly progressed at a remarkable speed. By early December 2022, only two allies – Hungary and Turkey – had not ratified the Finnish and Swedish accession protocols. Although policymakers in Helsinki and Stockholm have understandably underscored the importance of a rapid accession process, Ankara's and Budapest's hesitation has also given the Nordic aspirants valuable time to plan and resource their coming membership.

The fact that Finland had already developed a close relationship with NATO and its key allies prior to applying for membership has greatly facilitated the accession process. Briefly put, Finland already knows the alliance it is joining, and NATO and the allies know Finland. It has taken Finnish policymakers and the public decades to get used to international military cooperation. However, by the time Finland handed in its NATO application, its level of defence cooperation had already intensified to a point where the country was de facto militarily allied. Thus, the leap from non-membership to membership has never been this short – a fact that applies to Sweden as well despite its long and deeply ingrained tradition of neutrality.

From a practical standpoint, Finland's NATO-standardized and highly interoperable armed forces should make the military integration and assimilation into NATO structures (see Chapters 5–10) a relatively friction-free process. At the same time, NATO accession represents the biggest change to the Finnish defence system in Finland's post-war history.

33 Trilateral Memorandum between Finland, Sweden, and Turkey 2022.

The internationalization of Finland's defence policy: Finland's long road to NATO

Period	Activity	Partners and frameworks	Drivers of change	Drivers of continuity
Non-alignment (1992–2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant procurements from the US Participation in crisis management activities Search for cost-efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) The EU's security and defence policy NORDEFCO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evolving partnership with NATO EU membership, progress in the EU's security and defence policy Establishment of NORDEFCO Broadened interpretation of non-alignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservative defence model Post-neutral mindset Public opinion (sceptical of NATO) Policy towards Russia with a focus on reassurance
Alignment (2014–2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensive military cooperation Generation of conditions for potential wartime cooperation Preparations for receiving and providing military assistance Joint operational planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NATO's Enhanced Opportunities Partnership Bilateral partnerships (Sweden, US) Trilateral partnerships (Sweden & US, Norway & Sweden) Minilateral groups (JEF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased perception of Russia as a threat Abandonment of the post-neutral mindset, adoption of an alignment policy → Integration into the Western defence system without formal membership of NATO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public opinion (sceptical of NATO) Willingness to maintain workable relations with Russia Fears of destabilizing the Baltic Sea region
Alliance (2022–)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application for NATO membership Entry into NATO structures as invitee Continuation of close military partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NATO Bilateral, trilateral and minilateral partnerships with NATO allies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased perception of Russia as a threat Lessons from Russia's attack on Ukraine in 2022 Perceived deterrence deficit Dramatic shift in public opinion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservative defence model Established military partnerships with NATO allies

Figure 1. The internationalization of Finland's defence policy. Source: Authors' own compilation.

2. REBUILDING DETERRENCE AND DEFENCE: NATO IN THE POST-2022 ERA

FINLAND (AND SWEDEN) will join NATO at critical juncture. They will enter an alliance undergoing a major overhaul, which had already begun with Russia's first invasion of Ukraine in 2014, but which has gained a new level of dynamism and urgency because of Russia's actions in 2022. To steer itself through the process, NATO adopted a new strategic concept at its Madrid Summit at the end of June 2022. The concept, which is a key document defining NATO's tasks, purpose, and challenges, declared that "NATO will significantly strengthen [its] deterrence and defence posture to deny any potential adversary any possible opportunities for aggression", setting a trajectory for NATO's development in the coming years.⁴⁴

Against the backdrop of Russian aggression and the release of the new strategic concept, NATO's Madrid Summit has been portrayed as a watershed moment for the alliance. Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, for instance, called the summit "transformative", highlighting that the allies had agreed on "a fundamental shift" in NATO's deterrence and defence posture.⁴⁵ According to Stoltenberg, the decisions made at the summit represent the biggest overhaul of NATO's collective defence since the end of the Cold War.⁴⁶

The alliance is not facing a transformative moment for the first time in its history. In fact, NATO, established in 1949, has proved an agile and enduring military alliance.⁴⁷ It has undergone several periods of political and military-strategic adjustments – during the different phases of the Cold War, in the post-Cold War years and, most recently, after Russia's first invasion of Ukraine in 2014. These adaptations have emanated not only from the evolving security environment but also from changes in the domestic political landscapes of NATO allies.⁴⁸ The alliance's most dramatic transformation took place after the end of the Cold War when its primary focus gradually shifted from collective defence to crisis-management and expeditionary

operations outside the alliance's perimeter, most notably in Afghanistan.

The ongoing adjustment is an extension of the adaptation process that started at NATO's 2014 summit in Wales. At the Wales Summit, the alliance's traditional task – collective defence – rose to newfound prominence after a two-decade emphasis on crisis management.⁴⁹ The alliance has subsequently bolstered its deterrence and defence by enhancing its readiness, updating its command structure, and establishing multinational battlegroups on its eastern flank. Furthermore, NATO has updated the key military-strategic documents guiding the alliance's deterrence and defence activities, which has solidified the conceptual and doctrinal foundations of NATO's deterrence and defence posture. In 2019, the allies decided on a new military strategy (MC 400/4), the first threat-based, collective defence-focused strategy in 50 years.⁵⁰ This was followed by drawing up the Concept for the Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic area (DDA). A third key document, the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept, was endorsed in 2021.

Despite significant changes in its defence and deterrence posture, NATO has not returned to collective defence entirely.⁵¹ This is partly due to very practical and concrete constraints. Since the end of the Cold War in particular, NATO's European allies have underinvested in their defence capabilities. Rebuilding their armed forces will therefore take decades and hundreds of billions of euros.⁵² Thus, despite the alliance's efforts to enhance collective defence, NATO's contemporary deterrence and defence posture pales in comparison to the scale of the alliance's Cold War-era defence.⁵³

A second reason for the partiality of NATO's shift back to collective defence is that NATO lacks a unifying threat perception. Not all allies view Russia as the primary threat to their security. Members on NATO's southern flank in particular, including big European NATO allies such as France, Italy, and Spain are more

44 NATO 2022b, 6.

45 NATO 2022a.

46 Feldscher 2022.

47 Thies 2012.

48 See e.g., Ruiz-Palmer 2019; Sloan 2016; Sayle 2019.

49 See e.g., Deni 2017.

50 NATO Military Committee 1968.

51 Tardy 2021.

52 Barrie et al. 2019.

53 See e.g., Ruiz-Palmer 2019.

concerned about terrorism and the instability in the alliance's southern neighbourhood than Russian aggression.³⁴ To reconcile allies' diverging threat perceptions, NATO pursues a 360-degree approach to security, which considers both the threat posed by Russia and the less clear-cut security concerns of the southern flank allies.³⁵ The 2022 strategic concept thus highlights that NATO continues to have three core tasks: deterrence and defence; crisis prevention and management; as well as cooperative security. According to the concept, all three tasks should be thought of as complementary and as contributing to the collective defence and security of all allies, NATO's key purpose.

Despite the 360-degree approach, NATO's de facto priority since 2014 has clearly been to enhance deterrence and defence, although the diversity of threat perceptions has undermined the scope of the alliance's attempts to beef up collective defence. The decisions approved at the 2022 Madrid Summit further attest to the primacy of deterrence and defence and confirm that Russia is NATO's central security challenge. Although several allies still do not consider Russia an existential threat, the allies have jointly concluded that "The Russian Federation is the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area".³⁶

Based on this threat assessment, NATO decided to set a new baseline for its deterrence and defence posture. In Madrid, NATO committed to scaling up its current multinational battlegroups to brigade-size formations "when and where required".³⁷ To facilitate rapid reinforcement, NATO also agreed to pre-position more military equipment and stockpiles to frontline nations hosting the battlegroups.

Furthermore, and more significantly, the alliance approved the establishment of a new force model. NATO's aim is to create a pool of 800,000 troops, out of which 300,000 would be in high readiness. The high-readiness forces would again be divided into two tiers: the 100,000 troops in the first tier should be available within 10 days, and the 200,000 in the second tier within 10 to 30 days. The remaining 500,000 troops should be available in 30–180 days. Importantly, these troops will be assigned to specific defence plans. The NATO allies are currently working out the concrete details of the initiative, and the alliance will

clarify the design of the new model in July 2023 at its Vilnius Summit.³⁸

The new force model amounts to a significant change in NATO's posture. As one analyst pointed out: "For the first time all rapid reaction forces under NATO command will be committed to a deterrence and defence role and all such forces will be consolidated within one command framework."³⁹ However, the new model is also highly ambitious.⁴⁰ Although some allies, for example the United Kingdom and Germany, have already declared units for the model,⁴¹ NATO members are aware that the capability targets associated with the Madrid Summit decisions will be much higher than before.⁴² Meeting them will be a long process contingent on several factors, including economic and political developments, as well as the evolution of the Euro-Atlantic security environment. Under stringent financial circumstances in particular, allies not facing a serious military threat may not want to make significant investments in defence.

Irrespective of NATO's new ambition to bolster deterrence and defence, it is not returning to its Cold War posture with heavy deployments on the frontline. In contrast to the wishes of most allies on NATO's eastern flank, the alliance's military strategy will continue to rely heavily on reinforcements instead of the deployment of permanent forward defence formations to the frontline states.⁴³ The credibility of NATO's deterrence posture will thus depend on the availability of sufficient forces as well as the readiness to deploy them early enough to prevent any aggression against the eastern allies.

As a NATO ally, Finland should have a thorough understanding and clear vision of the ongoing adjustments in the alliance's posture. Considering that a key rationale for Finland's membership application was a perceived deterrence deficit, it will be a strong advocate for prioritizing NATO's deterrence and defence task. While Finland's stances on NATO's evolving agenda will be developed gradually, its views will inevitably reflect the country's geographic and geostrategic location.

34 See e.g., Testoni 2021. See also Haroche 2017.

35 Calmels 2020.

36 NATO 2.

37 Monaghan & Wall 2022.

38 NATO 2022d.

39 Lidle-French 2022.

40 Biscop 2022.

41 Gotkowska & Tarociński 2022.

42 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark 2022, 63–65.

43 Monaghan 2022b.

3. NATO'S NORTHEASTERN FLANK: FINLAND'S POSITION ON EUROPE'S STRATEGIC MAP

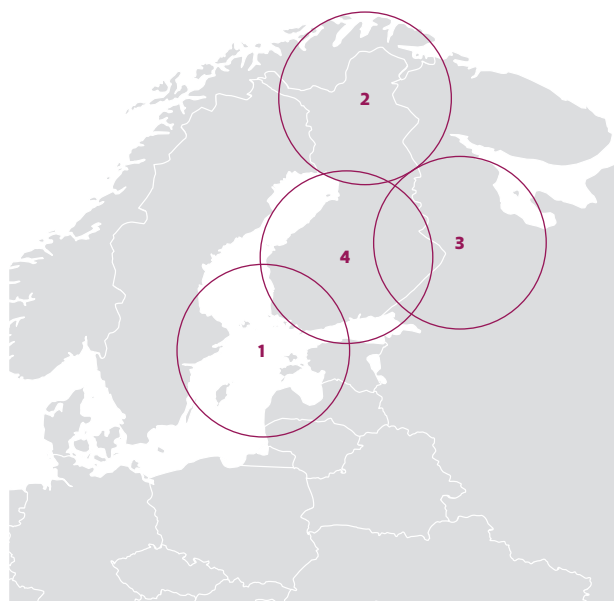


Figure 2. Geographic realities influencing Finnish NATO policy. Source: Authors' own compilation.

THE MAIN DRIVER of Finland's NATO policy – the set of interests, objectives, and tasks it pursues in the alliance – will be the country's geostrategic position. As NATO's first strategic concept from 1949 pointed out, "each nation should undertake the task, or tasks, for which it is best suited. Certain nations, because of geographic location or because of their capabilities, will appropriate specific missions."⁵⁴ This idea fits well with the prevailing thinking in Finland.

There are four geographic realities that will heavily influence Finnish NATO policy:

1. **Finland is a Baltic Sea state**, dependent on unhindered maritime traffic and with a vital interest in the territorial integrity of the Baltic states.
2. **Finland is an Arctic country**, with an important role in defending the High North land domain and, indirectly, the Northern Atlantic sealines.
3. **Finland is a frontline state**, meaning that building credible deterrence vis-à-vis Russia and ensuring

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3. **Finland is a frontline state**, meaning that building credible deterrence vis-à-vis Russia and ensuring the possibility to receive allied reinforcements will be among its key interests.

4. **Finland is peripherally located** vis-à-vis the Western reserves of military and industrial power, directing its attention towards military mobility as well as security of supply.

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First, the Baltic Sea represents a lifeline for Finnish society and the Finnish economy. Roughly 80% of Finland's exports and 90% of its imports are transported through the Baltic Sea.⁵⁵ Disruptions to maritime traffic through the Baltic Sea could therefore severely harm the Finnish economy and endanger the critical functions of its society. Furthermore, the territorial integrity of the Baltic states, and especially Estonia, is a key security interest for Finland. Tallinn, and Estonia's northern coast more broadly, are only a stone's throw away from Southern Finland, which is the most heavily populated area of the country. Thus, from Finland's perspective,

54 Mattelaer 2018, 342.

55 Luoma 2018.

NATO's ability to protect and defend the Baltic Sea and the Baltic states are vital tasks to which Finland is willing to contribute.

Second, despite not being an Arctic coastal state, Finland has a central place in the Arctic security system. Finnish Lapland is located between the Kola Peninsula, home of Russia's nuclear-capable Northern Fleet, and the Norwegian coastal regions that are crucial for defending the Northern Atlantic sealines.⁵⁶ In essence, the northern parts of Finland, Sweden, and Norway constitute a shared strategic space, and the three countries' ability to defend this space would largely determine the United States' ability to reinforce its European allies through the Northern Atlantic in the case of a conflict between Russia and NATO.

Third, Finland's long border with Russia means that it is a frontline state. As such, Finland has a strong interest in building credible deterrence vis-à-vis Russia. At the same time, Finland is also a potential recipient of allied reinforcements in a conflict scenario, meaning that the country will want to make sure that the necessary arrangements for receiving military assistance are in place. Overall, it is evident that the long border with Russia is the ultimate factor influencing Finnish national defence planning, and this fact should be reflected in NATO's thinking about Finland's role in the alliance. Importantly, Finland not only shares a long border with Russia but is also situated very close to two areas of vital strategic importance to Russia, the Saint Petersburg region and the Kola Peninsula.

Fourth, Finland's NATO policy will also be influenced by its peripherality. As pointed out, the country is highly dependent on the free flow of supplies across the Baltic Sea. Substituting the connections across the Baltic Sea would be very challenging, especially in the event of a military confrontation with Russia. Moreover, Finland – located in the northeasternmost corner of the alliance – is not easily accessible for potential reinforcements from the West, as there is neither land nor rail connection to Finland from Central or Western Europe. These realities will certainly direct Finland's attention to developing both military mobility and NATO's reinforcement plans.

All in all, Finland's and Sweden's NATO membership will make Northern Europe a coherent strategic whole. Finland's geographical location at the crossroads of the Baltic Sea and Arctic regions will seal up the non-NATO space between the alliance's eastern and northern flanks, which constitute the alliance's primary zones of friction

with Russia. Given Finland's location on the frontline, Finland will thus form "NATO's northeastern flank".⁵⁷ With Finland's and Sweden's accession, NATO's centre of gravity will move towards Europe's northern and northeastern parts.⁵⁸ Finland – with its military capabilities – will be a key player in the alliance's efforts to further develop its deterrence and defence posture in the whole Northern European theatre. The way Finland is integrated into NATO and the kind of policy it will pursue as an ally will thus have a significant impact on how NATO's deterrence and defence posture towards Russia evolves.

56 See e.g., Mikkola 2019; Christie 2022, 5–6.

57 Paukkunen & Pesu 2022.

58 Alberque & Schreer 2022.

4. ONE MEMBER IN AN ALLIANCE OF 32: NATO-RELATED DECISION-MAKING AND DIPLOMACY

UPON FINLAND'S AND Sweden's accession, NATO will be an alliance of 32 nations. Despite its civilian-based International Staff (IS) and its International Military Staff (IMS), NATO is fundamentally an organization driven by its member states. The role of the IS, headed by the Secretary General, is to facilitate allied decision-making by preparing and chairing committee meetings, drafting documents, and mediating between diverging views of the allies represented in the North Atlantic Council (NAC). The IMS, for its part, provides advice and support for the NATO Military Committee (MC), which consists of representatives of the member states' defence forces. The MC, on the other hand, is the primary source of advice to the North Atlantic Council and the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) (see Section 10.1.) on military policy and strategy. Overall, the main task of NATO's international civilian and military staff is thus to facilitate and advance the process in which the national interests and objectives of the allies are transformed into collective views.⁵⁹

All NATO allies are formally equal. A testament to this is the fact that all NATO decisions are made by consensus – a norm that is deeply rooted in the organization's ethos.⁶⁰ The only exception to the consensus rule is decision-making concerning the capability target packages allocated to each ally in NATO's Defence Planning Process (NDPP) in which the ally in question has no say, but the rest of the allies need to reach unanimity (See Chapter 5). This mode of decision-making, strictly limited to the NDPP, is known as “consensus minus one”.

Consensus decision-making means that there is no voting in NATO; consultations among allies take place until a decision is reached that is acceptable to all. Thus, consultations among the allies within NATO and between the capitals are an essential feature of the organization. Such consultations are facilitated by the fact that all allies maintain a national delegation that is physically located at NATO Headquarters in Brussels. Despite the formal equality of the NATO allies, size and power matter in alliance politics. The United States stands as *primus inter pares* within NATO, and other big states,

such as France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Turkey, have historically played a key role in alliance decision-making.⁶¹ Big member states are also the most likely outliers in NATO decision-making, occasionally willing to throw a spanner in the works to get their way in alliance politics.

Finland's entry into NATO will turn the alliance into one of the most significant multilateral forums for Helsinki. Importantly, the scope of issues that Finland needs to deal with as an ally is much broader than the agenda Finland handled during its time as a NATO partner. NATO's decisions will also have much more significant implications for Finland than before.

However, NATO membership will not bring about significant changes to the Finnish foreign and security policy decision-making system. In practice, any major NATO-related issues will be dealt with at the joint session of the President of the Republic and the Ministerial Committee on Foreign and Security Policy, known in Finnish as the “TP-UTVA”. Furthermore, there is a strong consensus in Finland that the president will be the one to represent Finland at NATO summits.

Although the president leads foreign and security policy in cooperation with the government, the Finnish parliament has a right to obtain information from the government – a constitutional prerogative applying to NATO policies as well. Furthermore, the parliament has a role in decision-making related to crisis-management operations and to offering military assistance to other countries. The government has not recognised any immediate need to amend Finnish legislation, which is already compatible with the requirements of NATO membership. However, some legislative changes may take place in the future, for example regarding the Act on the Defence Forces or area surveillance.⁶²

Policy formulation on routine foreign and security policy matters will continue to rest on tripartite coordination and consultations between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, and the Defence Forces. The increased volume of NATO issues will further underscore the role of this mechanism, as not every

59 See Schmidt 2014; Weaver 2021.

60 Michel 2014.

61 Honkanen 2002, 25–38.

62 Finnish Government 2022b, 34.

decision can – or should – be referred to the joint sessions of the president and the government. NATO makes decisions, including on military policy and strategy, at the political level – based on the advice of the Military Committee, which consists of the representatives of allied armed forces. Thus, an effective NATO policy requires a shared view on Finland’s national priorities, which should then be consistently promoted within the alliance’s political and military structures as well as in key allied capitals.

Importantly, Finland will not begin to formulate its alliance policy from scratch. Almost 30 years as a NATO partner have given the country a good overview of alliance activities. Furthermore, it has long experience operating in various multilateral organizations. On the other hand, as a NATO partner, Finland has had only a limited role in shaping NATO’s policies, along with restricted access to its documents. There are a myriad of novel issues that Helsinki needs to familiarize itself with and take a stand on. Understanding the background and history of NATO’s extensive policy portfolio, including the delicate compromises behind various decisions, will necessarily take time. Grasping the intricacies of the alliance’s politico-administrative system, informal political forums as well as its military bureaucracy also involves learning.⁶³ The concept of “alliance maturity” has been used to highlight the fact that getting to know one’s way around NATO and alliance politics takes time.⁶⁴ Both skilful diplomacy and experience are important determinants of Finland’s ability to propose initiatives and influence the outcomes of NATO politics.

Fellow NATO allies will most likely view Finland as a medium-sized power because of its geographical size and military strength. However, compared to bigger allies, Finland’s military and diplomatic resources are limited, and its geopolitical gaze is primarily regional. To maximize its influence in the alliance, Finland must understand its strengths and identify clear priorities. There are several elements that can bolster Finland’s clout in NATO.⁶⁵

First and foremost, Finland’s strategic location as well as the capabilities and strength of its armed forces should enhance the country’s political weight and afford it additional bargaining power in alliance decision-making. Moreover, Finland’s defence efforts have been underpinned by a comparably high level

of defence spending, which is an important yardstick within NATO due to the ever-present burden-sharing debates. Secondly, in past decades, Finland’s focus has uninterruptedly been on deterrence and defence, duly providing the country with valuable expertise to offer NATO in the alliance’s current efforts to rebuild its deterrence and defence posture.

Thirdly, Finland has considerable experience in matters such as resilience, civil preparedness, and Arctic warfare, which are all potential policy areas, or niches, in which Finland can wield influence and in which Finland has already managed to build a good reputation within NATO. Smaller allies in particular have often tried to find specific policy areas, in which they have taken a leading role. For instance, Estonia – home to the Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence – has excelled in cyber security, whereas Latvia has concentrated on strategic communication, hosting the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence.

Finland has several options for establishing a distinctive profile for itself. However, any potential niche must have a clear connection to military and defence matters. Furthermore, one should bear in mind that NATO Centres of Excellence (COEs)⁶⁶ are funded by the participating states. The setting up of a NATO COE in Finland, already home to Hybrid CoE, which cooperates closely with the EU and NATO, would require a significant financial contribution from Finland.

Fourthly and lastly, Finland’s multilateral diplomacy has traditionally been marked by pragmatism, bridge-building efforts, and the avoidance of bloc building. These characteristics could prove useful in NATO as well. Akin to its traditional approach to EU politics, Finland is likely to be a solution-oriented ally that seeks to cooperate with countries from across the alliance, depending on the issue in question.⁶⁷ That said, in matters of core national interest, Finland should not shy away from pursuing an assertive strategy, which may be necessary to get one’s way in a large alliance.

63 See Schmidt 2014; Krüger 2014; Mayer & Theiler 2014.

64 Forsland Widerberg 2015.

65 See Honkanen 2002.

66 COEs are international military organizations training and educating officials from NATO member and partner countries. They generally specialize in one functional area and act as subject-matter experts in their field. Today, there are 28 COEs with NATO accreditation.

67 Iso-Markku & Jokela 2014.

5. HARMONIZING NATIONAL AND COLLECTIVE DEFENCE: FINLAND AND THE NATO DEFENCE PLANNING PROCESS

THE NATO DEFENCE Planning Process (NDPP) is the primary means for the alliance to facilitate the identification, development, and delivery of the capabilities that it deems necessary to meet the objectives agreed in the strategic concept.⁶⁸ Based on jointly formulated requirements, it sets capability targets for each ally, facilitates their implementation, and assesses progress regularly. The NDPP is a vital process for NATO. It has been portrayed as the glue that “forces nations to commit themselves to a common effort”,⁶⁹ or as a tool “to bring order to chaos”.⁷⁰ In the coming years, the key objective of the NDPP is to ensure that NATO reaches the ambitious capability goals set in the new force model.

The NDPP operates on a four-year cycle – a new cycle starts in 2023 – and has five distinctive steps. First, the allies develop a political guidance document, which identifies threats and risks as well as the nature and scale of operations that NATO should be able to carry out. Secondly, these guidelines are turned into concrete requirements. Then, thirdly, these requirements are apportioned to individual allies as capability targets, which should reflect the principles of fair burden sharing and reasonableness.⁷¹ Interestingly, the NDPP follows a consensus minus one rule, which means that the allies cannot veto the commitments and capability targets that have been set for them through the NDPP. Fourth, NATO assists the allies in implementing the

targets – a step that is continuous in nature. Fifth, the allies’ performance in fulfilling their commitments is then examined and reviewed by NATO’s Defence Policy and Planning Committee.⁷²

In practice, NATO allies have had different approaches to the NDPP. Some allies have been rather comfortable with not meeting their targets.⁷³ However, there are also allies that take pride in fulfilling their commitments.⁷⁴ The same traditionally applies to the allies’ approach to defence spending, which ultimately determines their ability to deliver the capabilities that have been requested from them. In 2022, only 10 allies, a third of the alliance, lived up to the joint NATO commitment to spend 2% of their GDP on defence.⁷⁵ On the other hand, some allies attach great significance to the expenditure goal. Poland, which has steadily maintained its defence spending at 2% of GDP, has already announced its intention to increase its defence budget to 3% of GDP in 2023.⁷⁶ Generally, the most strategically vulnerable countries on NATO’s eastern flank tend to take their commitments seriously, realizing that as potential recipients of reinforcements they should not give the impression of being free riders.

Finland’s involvement in the NDPP will bring about a significant change to Finland’s national defence policy.

68 NATO n.d.

69 Mattelaer 2014, 30.

70 Deni 2020.

71 Ibid., 6–9.

72 See e.g., Michel 2014. Some national capability review overviews are publicly available. See North Atlantic Council 2020a; North Atlantic Council 2020b.

73 See e.g., Søborg Agger & Engholm Michelsen 2006.

74 Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania 2022.

75 NATO 2022e.

76 Stronell 2022.

The five steps of the NATO Defence Planning Process

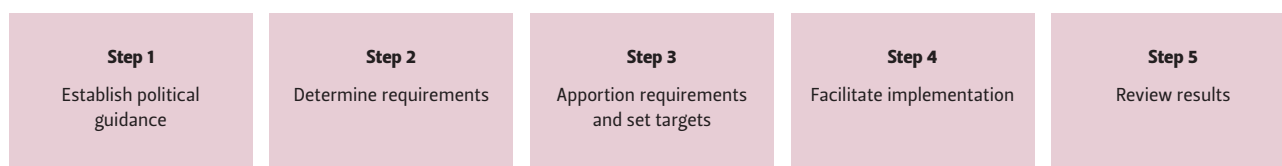


Figure 3. The five steps of the NATO Defence Planning Process.
Source: NATO 2022. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49202.htm.

So far, the Finnish defence planning process – long-term force structure and capability planning – has been markedly national with a very limited international dimension.⁷⁷ However, when joining NATO, Finland will receive regular international input into its national planning efforts. Furthermore, participation in the NDPP will also introduce an element of external accountability into the national military planning processes. In other words, as a NATO member, Finland must justify its defence policy choices to its allies on a regular basis. Importantly, the capability targets emerging from the NDPP can potentially be significant, not least in economic terms. The government’s proposal on Finland’s NATO accession acknowledges that the targets coming from the alliance may yield considerable additional costs.⁷⁸

The integration of Finland into the NDPP has already begun. Finnish and NATO officials have engaged in dialogue on Finland’s potential capability targets, and the alliance will adopt interim capability targets for Finland and Sweden at the alliance’s February 2023 defence ministerial. These targets will still build on the previous political guidance from 2019, reflecting NATO’s assessment of the security environment prior to Russia’s full-scale attack on Ukraine in February 2022. The first full target packages for Finland and Sweden will be approved in 2024 as part of the new defence planning cycle, provided that the two countries have become members of the alliance by then.

In the framework of the NDPP, NATO allies as well as the International Staff will treat Finland as a prosperous ally, thus setting the required commitments accordingly. Although the allies largely agree that Finland’s primary contribution to allied collective defence (Article 5) will be defending its own territory (Article 3) and that Finland’s role in potential collective defence activities will be a regional one, NATO will ask Finland to develop capabilities that are interoperable and that can be deployed anywhere within the alliance’s defence remit.

This concerns not only Finland’s air force and naval capabilities, which are inherently more deployable in nature, but also land forces. Due to Finland’s heavy reliance on reservists, Finnish land forces are not easily deployable to different parts of the alliance at present – specifically not at short notice. To provide an example of the kind of requests Finland may face, NATO has asked

Denmark and the Netherlands – allies roughly the same size as Finland – to develop a heavy infantry brigade of 4,000–5,000 soldiers, including the associated support and service support elements such as combat engineering, communication, intelligence, and medical services. Finland does not boast such a capability today.⁷⁹ Moreover, even major NATO allies, such as the United Kingdom or Germany, struggle to maintain such a force.

Although most capability targets emanating from the NDPP will be proportionate and likely align with Finland’s own plans and preferences, some discrepancy may emerge. As a frontline state, Finland would favour acquiring capabilities that are useful in territorial defence in Northern Europe over obtaining assets that are mobile and deployable to other theatres in Europe and beyond.⁸⁰ Without significant additional resources, building deployable capabilities, which bring limited added value to territorial defence in Finland’s own vicinity, could potentially undermine Finnish efforts to bolster other vital capabilities, such as anti-aircraft defence.

Thus, some tensions exist between the responsibilities stemming from Article 3 and Article 5, meaning self-defence and collective defence tasks, respectively. As part of its NATO policy, Finland should try to convince its allies that the missions and tasks that are most suited to it – and that best contribute to NATO’s collective defence – concern regional security.

Nevertheless, developing additional deployable and interoperable combat forces will likely be politically necessary, sensible, and militarily beneficial for Finland, even if it is unlikely that a significant number of Finnish troops would be deployed beyond Northern Europe in the event of military confrontation with Russia. Meeting NATO’s capability targets is a factor influencing an ally’s profile and status in the alliance. As a frontline state and a new ally, Finland should avoid being seen as a free rider and must pay careful attention to its expenditure and capability-related performance. If Finland decides to ignore some NATO targets, it must then most likely compensate for this in some other form.

However, the commitments related to the NDPP are less significant for a country’s NATO profile than meeting the alliance’s defence spending targets. Today, the 2% of GDP target is increasingly seen as the floor rather than the ceiling. Moreover, it is an increasingly important yardstick in assessing an ally’s contribution

77 Finnish NATO partnership and the EU’s new Coordinated Annual Review on Defence have provided limited international input into Finnish defence planning efforts.

78 The Government of Finland 2022, 42.

79 Anteroinen & Peltoniemi 2016, 398.

80 Mattelaer 2018, 350.

to NATO, particularly for the United States. Most nations on the eastern flank spend more than 2% of their GDP on defence.⁸¹ Finland's defence expenditure will be in line with the 2% baseline until 2026, when its military budget is currently expected to drop below the guideline. Not meeting the target would likely negatively affect Finland's image as a responsible and self-reliant ally.

81 NATO 2022e.

6. TOWARDS A STRUCTURED ALLIANCE: FINLAND AND NATO'S COMMAND AND FORCE STRUCTURE

6.1 Command structure

NATO'S COMMAND SYSTEM forms a critical part of the alliance. Its contemporary command structure is composed of permanent multinational headquarters at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of command. The commands are distributed geographically, and are funded by the allies. The purpose of the system is to command and control its operations, missions, and activities across all military domains.⁸²

The alliance's military structure has a long history. NATO began to build a multinational command and control system in response to the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. The most significant decision was the appointment of the first Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) – the commander of allied forces in Europe. After considerable political wrangling, the allies managed to devise an extensive command structure composed of major commanders, their subordinates, and a network of regional joint and single-service headquarters.

During the Cold War, the design of the command structure was guided by a distinct regional philosophy. The European theatre was divided into northern, central, and southern regions, each having major subordinate commands and single-service command elements. Over the course of the Cold War, the command structure underwent adaptations, which resulted from major political changes such as West Germany's NATO accession and the French withdrawal from NATO's military structures. Despite the adjustments, the regional division remained the organizing principle of the system.⁸³

The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a profound transformation in NATO's command structure. Both major and subordinate commands were either eliminated or reorganized in light of the more lenient security environment. At its 2003 summit in Prague, NATO decided on the most radical and definite change to its command structure, which “effectively ended the regional distribution of command responsibilities”.⁸⁴ Geography thus ceased to be the organizing principle in

this respect.⁸⁵ As opposed to defending allied territories, the new, leaner structure was tailored for commanding and controlling crisis-management operations beyond the borders of the alliance, as well as for driving interoperability and the improvement in the alliance's warfighting capability.

The return of collective defence to the core of NATO's agenda after Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine has led the alliance to rethink its command and control system. However, major reforms have not been carried out. Instead, the alliance has limited itself to tweaking and streamlining the post-Cold War military structure. In 2018, the allied defence ministers agreed to establish new headquarters – the Joint Forces Command (JFC) in Norfolk, Virginia, and the Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC) in Ulm, Germany. The focus of the two commands is on securing the movement of forces across the Northern Atlantic and in continental Europe, respectively.⁸⁶

To put it simply, NATO's current command structure consists of three levels. NATO has two strategic commands, Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT). The mission of ACT is to lead the development of NATO's military structures, forces, capabilities, and doctrines. For its part, ACO, commanded by SACEUR, is responsible for the planning and execution of all NATO military operations and therefore has a more prominent role in the planning and, potentially, the conduct of collective defence.

ACO has a sprawling network of headquarters. Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) is a strategic headquarters whose role is to prepare, plan, conduct, and execute NATO military operations, missions, and tasks. In addition to the strategic-level headquarters, there are three joint operational-level commands in ACO: JFC Brunssum, JFC Naples, and JFC Norfolk. These three commands plan, conduct and sustain NATO operations of different sizes and scopes. Finally, there are three tactical, single service commands under ACO for air, land, and sea operations: Headquarters Allied Air Command in Ramstein, Germany; Headquarters Allied

82 NATO 2018, 1.

83 Pedlow 2009.

84 Mattelaer 2018, 346.

85 Mattelaer 2018; Ringsmose & Rynning 2021, 151.

86 See e.g., Mehta 2018.

Allied Command Operations

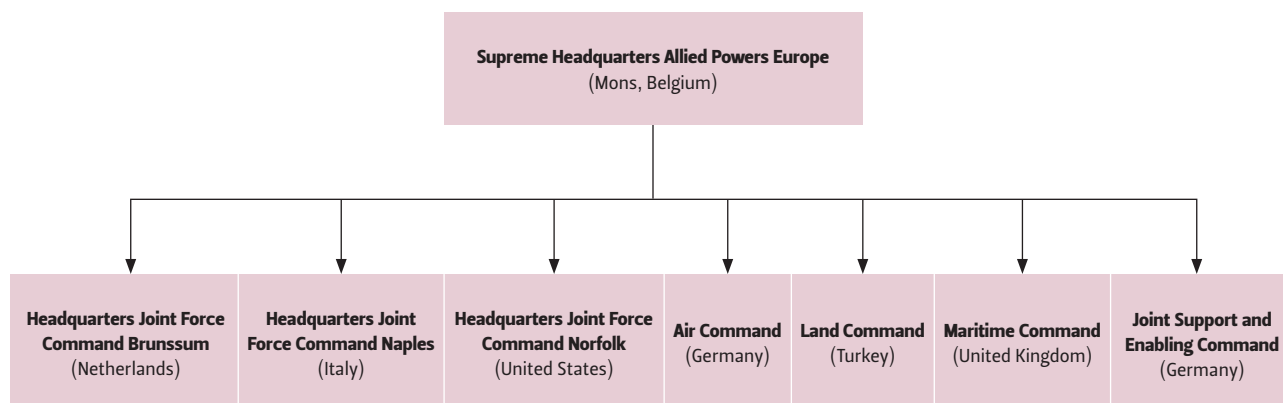


Figure 4. The NATO Command Structure: Allied Command Operations.
Source: NATO 2022. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_02/1802-Factsheet-NATO-Command-Structure_en.pdf

Land Command in Izmir, Turkey; and Headquarters Allied Maritime Command in Northwood, the United Kingdom. The task of these service-specific commands is to provide expertise and support SHAPE and the JFCs. The Maritime and Air Commands are also able to lead naval and air operations, respectively.⁸⁷

Although the current military structure reflects the needs of NATO's crisis-management era, it has developed a certain "regional awareness":⁸⁸ JFC Brunssum concentrates on Europe north of the Alps, JFC Naples is focused on the south, including the Mediterranean and the Black Sea region, and JFC Norfolk's focus is on the Atlantic. However, there is still a lack of clarity regarding their exact responsibilities and division of labour. None of NATO's commands is formally pre-designated to lead operations on the eastern flank, for example.⁸⁹ Some analysts have also pointed out that the current chain of command regarding NATO troops in the Baltic Sea region is ambiguous and has never been tested in a large-scale regional military exercise.⁹⁰ It is also notable that NATO has not established prominent headquarters on the territory of the "new member states", namely those states that have joined the alliance since the end of the Cold War.

The introduction of the new force model as announced at the Madrid Summit will push NATO to reconsider its command and control system, and the review is currently underway. Finland's and Sweden's

entry into the alliance is an additional factor that NATO must acknowledge in its deliberations. The fact is that the alliance's area of responsibility will expand considerably on the ground, in the air and at sea. The allies must agree on how command and control is arranged – or re-arranged – in Northern Europe. Experts have already put forward several ideas on how the allied military command structure could be remodelled. The suggestions range from reintroducing the Cold War-era Northern European regional command⁹¹ to establishing regional single service commands, as well as divisional headquarters as part of the force structure.⁹²

Finland's future command arrangements as a NATO member will hinge on the alliance's broader decisions. These boil down to whether NATO will thoroughly overhaul the crisis-management-era command structure, or whether the allies will content themselves with simply updating the existing system. For now, the latter option looks more likely – at least in the short term. One reason for this is that the alliance simply lacks officers who would be able to serve in multinational headquarters. Finland will nevertheless need to formulate national preferences regarding the allied command and control system both today and in the future.

The most acute question for Finland is which JFC should be responsible for planning and leading operations in Finland. This is first and foremost a military issue, and the solution should therefore reflect military logic. However, the question of Finland's (and

87 Weaver 2021, 35–100.

88 Ringsmose & Rynning 2017a, 138.

89 Aronsson et al. 2021, 54–60.

90 Szymański 2020, 23.

91 Neretnieks 2022.

92 Deni 2022; Insinna 2022.

Sweden's) place in the command and control structure has a political dimension as well, and certain NATO allies attach considerable importance to the issue. Basically, Finland has two options when it comes to its place in the alliance command and control system. It could be positioned in the area of responsibility of JFC Brunssum, a land-heavy command focusing on the eastern flank. Alternatively, Finland could be placed under the maritime-focused JFC Norfolk, which is still under development and could thus assume a stronger role in planning operations in other domains as well. Another central issue is whether the Nordic countries are placed under the same command and control system – something that the Nordic defence forces have suggested.⁹³ An additional, complementary option would be the establishment of non-NATO multinational command arrangements among the Nordic states, which would be associated with NATO's command and control structure.

The command structure question has attracted attention in Finland. Politicians have understandably entertained the idea of Finland hosting an allied headquarters. However, from Finland's perspective, the location of the potential new commands should be of secondary importance. As long as NATO has sufficient command arrangements, capacity, and expertise for operating in Northern Europe, this should satisfy Finland's immediate needs. Selecting the location of NATO's headquarters and the design of the whole command structure are highly politicized and sensitive issues.⁹⁴ As a new member state and as a frontline nation, Finland's position may be disadvantageous vis-à-vis older and geopolitically less vulnerable allies. In other words, NATO allies may regard it as risky to establish a permanent multinational headquarters in a country located in close proximity to Russia and its strategic locations. Moreover, older allies may consider it their prerogative to host command elements, and may thus fare better in alliance politics determining the structure.

6.2 Force structure

In addition to the command structure, NATO has a force structure that comprises allied national and multinational forces and headquarters placed at the alliance's disposal on a permanent or temporary basis. The troops in the force structure provide NATO with

a pool of capabilities available for its operations. The structure has different force categories, each of which has specific readiness criteria ranging from high readiness forces to forces of lower readiness and long-term build-up forces. The troops at highest readiness could be deployed within days, whereas the deployment of the long-term build-up forces could last over 180 days. The current force structure framework was established in 2001, reflecting the alliance's need for deployable, mobile, and flexible multinational forces and command-and-control capabilities for crisis-management operations.⁹⁵

The NATO Response Force (NRF) constitutes the most rapidly deployable element of the alliance's current force structure. The NRF was launched in 2002, with the aim of strengthening the alliance's readiness and responsiveness, as well as encouraging European allies to develop more deployable forces. The NRF reached its full operational capability in 2006, and before 2022 (see Chapter 7), it had only been used for operations of little military significance such as catastrophe relief.

The NRF underwent a significant change at NATO's Wales Summit in 2014. As part of its new Readiness Action Plan (RAP), NATO decided to establish the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), currently comprising approximately 20,000 soldiers, as the NRF's most rapidly deployable spearhead force. Secondly, the NRF – consisting of 40,000 rotating soldiers at less than 15 days readiness – was for the first time explicitly linked to collective defence and Article 5 operations. In practice, this has meant repeated exercises on NATO's eastern flank, as well as setting up small command and control nodes, NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU), in the Baltic states, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania to “facilitate the reception of the VJTF during a crisis”.⁹⁶ In addition to land forces, the NRF has a maritime component, which is based on the Standing NATO Maritime Groups (SNMGS) and the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Groups (SNMCMGS), as well as a combat air and air-support component.

As pointed out (Chapter 2), NATO's force structure is currently in flux. At the Madrid Summit, NATO allies agreed to establish a new, larger force model, which will modernize and constitute the backbone of its force structure. The new model, which is currently in preparation, will reflect a similar philosophy to the old structure, having forces in different readiness tiers. The

93 Swedish Armed Forces 2022.

94 Pedlow 2009, 15.

95 NATO 2015a.

96 Ringsmose & Rynning 2017b, 6.

alliance specifically aims to bolster its rapid deployment capability, striving to have around 300,000 troops at high readiness (less than 30 days).⁹⁷

As a NATO member, Finland must agree on its contribution to the emerging force structure, which will take place through the NDPP. It will be expected to provide not only deployable air and naval assets but also mobile land forces at least at a brigade level (see Chapter 5).⁹⁸ Furthermore, it will occasionally be expected to provide troops and assets for very high readiness forces and NATO's standing maritime forces (SNMG and SNMCMG). Furthermore, Finland must declare forces available for different readiness categories based on the needs and requirements coming from SHAPE. Should Finland place its forces under NATO's command for an operation one day, this will take place through a Transfer of Authority mechanism. It is worth noting that even in a large-scale conflict, a significant number of Finnish forces would likely remain under its own command, and allies could also place their forces under the national command of a fellow ally, including Finland.⁹⁹

Lastly, in terms of the command elements associated with the NATO force structure, Finland could potentially host a NATO Force Integration Unit on its territory. Having a small command node could help to facilitate the alignment of national and allied operational plans and to bring about a more seamless reinforcement process, should a need for allied military support arise. Setting up a NATO Force Integration Unit in Finland would not be very costly given their small size (approximately 40 persons).

97 NATO 2022d.

98 Anteroinen & Peltoniemi 2016, 392.

99 Anteroinen & Peltoniemi 2016, 386.

7. WELL PLANNED IS HALF DONE: FINLAND AND NATO OPERATIONAL PLANNING

ONE OF THE distinctive features of NATO has been joint allied planning for the defence of the alliance. From the outset, the alliance has developed emergency defence plans, which set out “the conventional defence missions to be executed in wartime”.¹⁰⁰ Towards the end of the Cold War, these documents were known as general defence plans. The idea was clear: every military unit assigned to the alliance had its place in the plan, entailing different reaction times. Exercises were regularly conducted in accordance with the plans that formed the basis for carrying out collective defence against possible aggression by the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact.¹⁰¹

NATO’s transformation into a crisis-management organization in the 1990s and 2000s had profound implications for allied operational planning activities. Whereas during the Cold War, the alliance prepared operations against a distinct adversary with clearly defined geographical regions, in the post-Cold War world “planners were asked to employ a capability-based approach to defence planning and to derive force requirements from hypothetical scenarios that were not restricted to specific political and geographical contexts”.¹⁰² In other words, preparing regional plans for conventional war with Russia was not seen as sensible or necessary. Rather, NATO had to prepare for scenarios playing out in unidentified locations beyond the alliance territory. This was a development that displeased new NATO allies such as Poland and the Baltic states, who were vocally demanding the alliance to draw up threat-based defence plans for their region, which NATO preliminarily did after the Russian attack on Georgia in 2008.¹⁰³

After Russia’s first invasion of Ukraine, NATO has again engaged in operational planning for conventional war with Russia. However, as analysts have pointed out, NATO does not have “an overarching and all-encompassing plan for the defence of Europe” like it had during the Cold War. Rather, NATO currently possesses a patchwork of national, multinational, and alliance plans.¹⁰⁴

Today, the NATO alliance has two planning categories: Advance Planning and Crisis Response Planning. The former “is conducted to deal with potential threats to the Alliance when identified and before they occur”, whereas the latter “addresses emerging and unexpected crises and is based on circumstances that exist at the time planning is conducted”. Advance Planning is further divided into four types: executable Standing Defence Plans (SDPs) and Graduated Response Plans (GRPs), as well as non-executable Contingency and General Contingency Plans.¹⁰⁵

When considering the defence of the alliance in case of an armed attack, both Standing Defence Plans and Graduated Response Plans are relevant. An SDP is designed to address a long-term, short or no-notice Article 5 security risk in concert with a NATO member’s national defence plans, aimed at ensuring the integrity and protection of NATO states, populations, and territory. Graduated Response Plans are developed to address existential threats to the alliance that require high responsiveness. They are ‘graduated’ in the sense of having three successive parts, of which only the first is immediately executable, based on high readiness forces. The first part is to be followed by a second part dealing with an initial set of follow-on forces, namely more substantial reinforcements, and subject to additional planning in the situation, and by a third part with additional follow-on forces.¹⁰⁶

In recent years, NATO’s focus has been on developing the GRPs. The allies approved this new concept of advance planning in 2015.¹⁰⁷ NATO has subsequently developed several GRPs, which are essentially compartmentalized defence plans for specific geographical areas such as the High North, the Baltic Sea, and the Black Sea.¹⁰⁸ Joint planning within the alliance is a political process writ large, and the GRPs themselves were the result of a political compromise between those allies that called for robust planning efforts with larger forces immediately available, and those that favoured a phased approach with more flexibility, with a lower

100 Ruiz Palmer 2019, 23.

101 Williams 2018.

102 Ringsmose & Rynning 2021, 151.

103 Traynor 2010; Zięba 2019.

104 Aronsson et al. 2021, 52.

105 NATO Standardization Office 2019.

106 Ibid.

107 NATO 2015b.

108 Ringsmose & Rynning 2017a, 134.

up-front commitment, and effectively with a weaker deterrence posture.

Importantly, unlike the Cold War general defence plans, the GRPs are not coordinated 'theatre-wide' plans. They specifically focus on different geographical regions. Furthermore, they have so far had only a limited number of NRF troops attached to them. Only looser, less detailed contingency plans for more substantial follow-on forces have been prepared.¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, in response to Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, NATO activated its operational plans and an element of the NRF for the first time. For example, based on the alliance's operational plans, the French-led rapid reaction force was deployed to Romania to reinforce NATO's defensive posture in the eastern part of the alliance.¹¹⁰

NATO's slow and incremental return to conventional war planning means that the alliance has to date made limited advance preparations for the collective defence of Northern Europe, for example. The most developed operational plans have thus far dealt with the deployment of NATO's rapid deployment capabilities, more specifically the VJTF. The plans regarding the deployment of larger follow-on forces have been sketchy up to now, and in need of elaboration.¹¹¹

With the release of the new 2019 military strategy and the Concept for Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area, NATO is slowly moving towards broader and more elaborated and integrated theatre-wide operational plans. Instead of focusing on compartmentalized regions, the new plans should give the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) more flexibility in responding to threats across NATO's theatre of operations, ranging from the Northern Atlantic along the eastern flank all the way to the Mediterranean.¹¹² Russia's second invasion of Ukraine will likely further enhance the trend towards more robust, integrated allied planning. One of the aims of the new force model is to ensure that the alliance has not only more rapidly deployable troops and assets but also more follow-on forces to carry out collective defence operations against a military aggressor.

Finland is joining an alliance which is gradually re-learning the art of operational planning for territorial defence. Interestingly, as opposed to several NATO allies, Finland has never ceased its own national planning efforts, having a solid military planning culture and

expertise – also when it comes to multidimensional operational planning. Furthermore, multinational operational planning is not an entirely new area for Finland. It has engaged in joint planning with Sweden and discussed and coordinated relevant operational plans with Norway since 2020.

As a NATO ally, Finland will express a strong interest in allied planning efforts, not only within NATO, but also between allies such as the Nordic states. In fact, furthering operational planning will be among Finland's chief objectives in NATO. Given the Finnish position as a peripheral frontline state, it is vital that NATO understands how Finland can be reinforced, what kind of forces the potential reinforcements might include, and who the reinforcers could be. Due to Finland's own strong land forces, the alliance is unlikely to allocate significant land force reinforcements to Finland. In terms of military reinforcement, Finland will most likely be interested in air support, including anti-aircraft defence, naval support (also in the broader Baltic Sea domain), surveillance and intelligence, and additional military equipment to maintain its stockpiles.

To facilitate potential joint operations on its soil, Finland must align its own national planning with allied preparations and pay special attention to its capacity for receiving, staging, and moving onward allied troops and equipment. Finnish NATO accession will also open up more opportunities for joint planning with NATO allies outside the alliance structures (see Chapter 11). Importantly, exercises would need to be conducted for national and multinational plans on a regular basis.

109 Rynning 2021, 39–41.

110 Mitchell 2022.

111 Aronsson et al 2021, 52–54.

112 Ringsmose & Rynning 2021, 157–158.

8. OFFERING PRESENCE: FINLAND AND NATO'S PEACETIME COLLECTIVE DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE MISSIONS

AS A NATO ally, Finland must decide how it is going to contribute to the maintenance of NATO's deterrence and defence posture in general, and the alliance's peacetime collective defence activities in particular. Two issues are particularly notable: Finland's approach to enhanced Forward Presence and its potential participation in NATO's Air Policing.

8.1. enhanced Forward Presence

At its Warsaw Summit in 2016, NATO decided to enhance its presence on its eastern flank by agreeing on the establishment of enhanced Forward Presence (eFP). In 2017, NATO allies deployed four multinational battalion-sized battlegroups to the Baltics states and Poland, each led by a framework nation: The United Kingdom (Estonia), Canada (Latvia), Germany (Lithuania), and the United States (Poland). The aim of the deployment of the rotational battlegroups was to reassure NATO's most exposed allies that NATO will defend them, and to provide them with combat-ready forces.

Due to the small size of the battlegroups, the battalions have often been seen as a tripwire – as an assurance that in the event of aggression, allies would deploy follow-on forces to the theatre.¹¹³ In February 2022, NATO agreed to further reinforce the four battalions as well as to deploy four additional battlegroups to Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania. At the Madrid Summit, the allies decided to scale up “the existing battlegroups to brigade-size units where and when required, underpinned by credible rapidly available reinforcements, prepositioned equipment, and enhanced command and control”.¹¹⁴

The Madrid Summit confirmed that the battlegroup format will remain the framework for NATO's presence on its eastern flank. The peacetime size of the troops will not significantly increase. Instead, the alliance will further bolster its capability to reinforce the battlegroups if the need arises. In Madrid, NATO thus essentially agreed to thicken the tripwire: while the allied presence on the

eastern flank will increase, its nature will not radically change.

In terms of the eFP, Finland faces a two-sided question. First, does it aspire to host a battlegroup on its soil? Second, will it contribute forces to one of the eight battlegroups? The answer to the first question is rather straightforward. Finland does not currently seek to host an eFP battlegroup on its territory – a view that NATO allies share. There are several reasons for this. First, during its membership process, Finland has highlighted its own military strength, its tradition of self-reliance, and its ability to take responsibility for the defence of its own area. Against this backdrop, asking for allied presence would appear illogical and incoherent.

Secondly, given Finland's existing military strength, limited NATO presence in the Finnish territory would not bring significant added value in terms of deterrence. Third, having only just applied for NATO membership, Finland's political capital within the alliance is still limited, and it should thus use it wisely. Matters related to operational planning and NATO's command and control structure, as well as deepening defence cooperation with key allies are more urgent for Finland than the issue of allied presence in the form of an eFP battlegroup, at least in the short term.

Lastly, and relatedly, even if Finland expressed its desire to host NATO troops in the country, such presence would not necessarily be obtainable. Some of the allies already feel overstretched under the current conditions, and none of the major allies has the capacity to take over further framework nation responsibilities. However, although Finland is unlikely to seek allied presence in the short term, it should not, nor is it likely to, exclude the option in the longer term, as the threat environment and NATO's deterrence and defence posture evolve.

The question regarding a potential Finnish contribution to the eFP is more complicated. NATO allies may have varying expectations regarding Finland's role. Furthermore, the political and military logics of participation may not be entirely congruent. From a military point of view, the basic philosophy of the eFP has been to tie non-eastern flank allies to the theatre. By contrast, moving troops from one flank country to another does not make much sense militarily. However, deployments

113 On enhanced Forward Presence, see e.g., Zapfe 2017; Stoicescu & Järvenpää 2019.

114 NATO 2022c.

also have a political dimension. Even if Finland's participation in the eFP would not necessarily make sense militarily, it would be a political signal of its commitment to the security of its allies. A NATO member of Finland's size could be expected to contribute 100–200 troops, potentially supported by infantry fighting vehicles or combat service and combat service support elements.¹¹⁵ Based on political and geographical factors, the most natural battlegroup for Finland to contribute to would be the one in Estonia. However, Tallinn has thus far not shown any interest in hosting a Finnish contingent. The same goes for Riga and Vilnius. Instead, officials in the Baltic states have insisted that Finnish participation would be unnecessary.¹¹⁶ The hesitancy may arise from a concern that Finland's involvement could tempt the more important and more powerful allies to reduce their presence on the eastern flank. Due to its geographic location, Finland will inevitably be part of the security developments around the Baltic Sea, whereas the presence of NATO allies from more distant parts of the Euro-Atlantic region is not a given.

Considering the lukewarm stance in the Baltic states, Finland could of course consider taking part in one of the new battlegroups in Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania. However, a deployment to any of these countries would be entirely political in nature, lacking direct military logic. However, Finland's participation will ultimately be based on NATO's collective decision, and certain allies may consider Finland's involvement in the eFP desirable or even necessary. As noted, some allies currently contributing to the battlegroups feel overstretched and regard their existing contributions as unsustainable in the longer term. These allies would thus warmly welcome the participation of a capable and willing ally.

8.2. Air Policing

In addition to taking part in the eFP, Finland could consider contributing to one or even two of NATO's Air Policing missions, which aim at safeguarding the integrity of allied airspace. Established in 1961, Air Policing is the alliance's permanent peacetime task contributing to NATO's collective defence. It is part of the alliance's broader integrated air and missile defence (IAMD) mission, which also involves NATO's ballistic missile defence (BMD) (see Section 10.2). The purpose of Air Policing

missions is for other NATO members to assist those allies that do not have the necessary means to safeguard their own airspace. Two of NATO's four Air Policing missions may be particularly relevant for Finland, namely Baltic and Icelandic Air Policing.

The Baltic Air Policing mission was established in 2004 at Šiauliai Air Base in Lithuania. In 2014, after Russia's annexation of Crimea, a second Air Policing presence was established at Ämari Air Base in Estonia. NATO allies take turns deploying to both air bases on a four-month rotational basis, most often with four fighter aircraft. Since 2004, a total of 17 member states have taken part in the mission, which often involves identifying Russian aircraft flying near NATO airspace.

Icelandic Air Policing, for its part, was initiated in 2008. As opposed to the mission in the Baltic states, Air Policing in Iceland does not entail the continuous presence of NATO allies. Rather, it involves the deployment of fighter aircraft from allied nations three times a year for three or four weeks. A total of 11 allies have contributed to the mission since its establishment.

NATO allies will likely expect Finland to take part in both missions. Given the rotational system, the contributing allies have usually taken part in the missions every two to four years. Finland boasts a sizeable air force and is located close to the Baltic states, particularly Estonia. It could potentially, and conveniently, carry out the rotation from its own air bases. If not, maintaining a four-month presence in Ämari should be rather uncomplicated. Due to the physical distance, participation in Icelandic Air Policing would be somewhat more strenuous and, above all, more costly. However, many allies may see it as natural that Finland, as a fellow Nordic country, would take part in the Icelandic mission. Interestingly, Finland has some experience of Icelandic Air Policing, having taken part in the NATO-led Iceland Fighter Meet training event as a partner country in 2014.

115 NATO 2022f.

116 Simojoki 2022.

9. QUALITY BEFORE QUANTITY: FINLAND AND MILITARY EXERCISES



A US Light infantry Company and the Guard Jaeger Regiment of the Finnish Army taking part in an exercise in Helsinki, Finland on 28 June 2022.

Source: Roni Rekoma / Lehtikuva

MILITARY EXERCISES ARE part of NATO's core activities. The alliance arranges dozens of drills and training events of different types every year, ranging from live exercises involving troops to command post and tabletop exercises simulating decision-making in conflict situations. In addition to NATO exercises, individual allies host drills with significant involvement by their fellow allies.

Military exercises serve several purposes, having both tactical-technical and political-strategic elements. On the one hand, alliance drills may aim at training staff and forces, preserving old and producing new skills, generating interoperability, and experimenting with new technologies and weapon systems. On the other hand, military exercises may also attempt to reassure allies, deter a potential adversary, or even act as a tool

of diplomacy.¹¹⁷ NATO and allied exercises serve both purposes: tactical-technical and political-strategic.¹¹⁸ They not only enhance allied warfighting skills and foster interoperability among allies, but also signal the alliance's military capabilities to potential adversaries and reassure individual allies of NATO's commitment to their security. Furthermore, they offer the alliance an opportunity to rehearse the implementation of its operational plans.

The scope, size, and frequency of NATO and allied exercises have changed considerably as the alliance has been rebuilding its deterrence and defence posture

¹¹⁷ Heuser 2018, 10.

¹¹⁸ Banka & Bussmann 2022, Kubai 2022.

since 2014.¹¹⁹ The paradigm shift has manifested in the form of larger and more frequent exercise activities, focusing on Article 5 scenarios. For example, NATO allies have carried out more exercises in the Baltic states, rehearsing the defence and reinforcement of the three states.¹²⁰ Allied training activities in the High North have also intensified. In 2018, NATO arranged its high-visibility Trident Juncture exercise in Norway. Furthermore, Norway hosts its own multinational Cold Response drill biannually, most recently in 2022. The next, larger iteration of the exercise in 2024 will be called Nordic Response.

The size, scope, and location of the exercises have occasionally been a bone of contention among NATO allies.¹²¹ One reason for the periodic disputes has been the perceived risk of Russia either genuinely misunderstanding or purposefully misconstruing the purpose of certain allied military exercises.¹²² Some NATO allies have been particularly careful not to generate situations that would run the risk of either type of problem, thus being reluctant to hold large-scale exercises close to Russia's borders. While views on the matter differ, all NATO allies remain committed to pursuing predictability, transparency, and risk reduction with Russia, including through clear communication concerning military exercises.

In the post-2014 era, the alliance has thus far conducted only a few large-scale exercises and, despite more frequent training, the alliance has not rehearsed the reinforcement of the Baltic states and Poland on a large scale. Furthermore, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic dampened the major US-led Defender 2020 exercise, which was supposed to rehearse the deployment of a significant number of American forces across the Atlantic to the European theatre, including the Baltic Sea region.¹²³ Furthermore, NATO is still in the process of improving its exercise practices.¹²⁴ The introduction of the new force model and the new associated operational plans, as well as the ambition to scale up the eFP battlegroups, will require more frequent alliance and allied drills.

It is unlikely that NATO membership will amount to a substantial *quantitative* change when it comes to Finnish participation in international military exercises.

Hosting and taking part in multinational drills focusing on conventional high-intensity warfare have been a core element of Finland's alignment policy, and hence a routine activity for the Finnish Defence Forces (see Section 2.2). Since 2014, Finland has taken part in 60–90 multinational exercises and training events, including those organized by NATO or allied nations. Foreign troops have also been involved in Finnish exercises. Upon entering NATO, Finland is unlikely to have the capacity to contribute to multinational exercises much beyond the current level. The intensification of international defence cooperation as well as the coming NATO membership have strained, and will further strain, the resources of the Finnish military.

However, Finland's accession to NATO will likely bring about a *qualitative* transformation in Finnish involvement in multinational exercises. First, Finland will take part in NATO and allied drills as an ally practising collective defence – a noteworthy change to previous policy, according to which Finland contributed as a partner not rehearsing the implementation of Article 5. Secondly, as a non-allied partner, Finland was reluctant to participate in exercises with a visible signalling or force demonstration dimension. For instance, unlike Sweden and NATO allies in Northern Europe, Finland has not allowed US strategic bombers, often used for demonstrating commitment and military potency, into its airspace, and the Finnish Air Force has not conducted joint exercises with such aircraft elsewhere. However, as a NATO ally, Finland may have to reconsider its policy regarding signalling and force demonstration. US Air Force strategic aircraft have, for instance, flown missions over all NATO allied nations in a single day.¹²⁵ The threshold for not participating in such activities will most likely be high when Finland becomes a member of the alliance. Thirdly, depending on Finland's approach to NATO nuclear policy, it will possibly contribute to exercises involving a nuclear weapons element (see Section 10.1.).

Overall, the Russian February 2022 assault as well as Finland's NATO bid have already brought about a change in how Finland communicates about its participation in multinational exercises. Before 2022, Finnish policymakers were reluctant to publicly acknowledge that international exercises have political-strategic, not only tactical-technical, elements. This changed when Finland decided to apply for NATO membership and Helsinki began to seek assurance from NATO allies. In May 2022,

119 See e.g., Aronsson & Ottosson 2020.

120 Banka & Bussman 2022.

121 Judson & Sprenger 2016.

122 Clem 2018.

123 Ploom et al. 2020.

124 Aronsson et al. 2021, 64–71.

125 NATO 2020.

Finland decided to increase its exercise and training activities with its closest partners, including the US, the UK, Norway, Sweden, Germany, and France. Most of these exercises would take place on Finnish territory. This time, policymakers openly admitted that the purpose of consolidated training cooperation and the increased presence of foreign troops in Finland was to seek support for the Finnish NATO membership process.¹²⁶ In other words, Finland sought reassurance from its future allies with the aim of deterring Russia from interfering in Finland's membership path. Thus, increased exercise activities were explicitly motivated by political-strategic factors.

Hosting multinational and even the alliance's exercises should be one of the key priorities for Finland's NATO policy. As Finland is unlikely to seek a permanent allied presence on its soil, frequent multinational exercises are a useful way to compensate for the lack of more permanent deployments in the country, significantly contributing to deterrence.¹²⁷ Furthermore, given its role as a frontline state, it is important that Finnish allies understand Finland as an operating environment, and that existing operational plans and reinforcement more generally are being rehearsed. Since 2014, Finland has significantly developed host nation support (HNS) activities, namely its ability to receive and maintain foreign troops in the country. Frequent exercises could further develop Finland's HNS capabilities, and enhance the Finnish capacity for the reception, staging, and onward movement of foreign troops in the country.

126 Ministry of Defence 2022.

127 See Friis 2021, 75.

10. INTO UNCHARTED TERRITORY: NATO'S NUCLEAR POLICY AND BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENCE

10.1. NATO's nuclear policy and Finland's alternatives

NATO HAS BEEN a nuclear alliance since its inception, and nuclear weapons have constituted the backbone of its deterrence. However, the de facto role of nuclear weapons has varied over time. From 1949 to the late 1960s, NATO's nuclear doctrine emphasized massive retaliation, which meant that to deter aggression, the alliance had to "be willing and able to respond vigorously at places and with means of its own choosing".¹²⁸ In 1968, NATO adopted a more flexible doctrine, providing increased room for conventional responses to an armed attack. The doctrine of flexible response thus "raised the threshold where the alliance might be forced to employ nuclear weapons while maintaining a calculated ambiguity regarding how and when NATO might resort to their use".¹²⁹ The doctrine of flexible response retained its relevance until the end of the Cold War, after which nuclear issues all but retreated from the forefront.

Since 2014, NATO's nuclear deterrence has slowly gained in prominence, although from a practical and doctrinal standpoint the work to reintegrate nuclear weapons into the alliance's deterrence is still far from finished. The increased significance of nuclear weapons for allied security is most evident at the rhetorical level. Whereas the alliance's 2012 Chicago Summit declaration contained scant references to nuclear deterrence,¹³⁰ the communiqués from the 2014 Wales Summit,¹³¹ and particularly the 2016 Warsaw Summit,¹³² underscored the importance of nuclear deterrence as a core element of NATO's collective defence.

The new strategic concept approved at the Madrid Summit solidified the development. It declares that "the fundamental purpose of NATO's nuclear capability is to preserve peace, prevent coercion and deter aggression". The concept underscores that "the circumstances in which NATO might have to use nuclear weapons are extremely remote". However, it also states

that the alliance "has the capabilities and resolve to impose costs on an adversary that would be unacceptable and far outweigh the benefits that any adversary could hope to achieve".¹³³

Three NATO allies have nuclear forces: the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. The main responsibility for maintaining NATO's nuclear deterrence continues to rest with the nuclear forces of the United States,¹³⁴ which, according to the Strategic Concept, "are the supreme guarantee of the security of the Alliance". The nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France "have a deterrent role of their own and contribute significantly to the overall security of the alliance".¹³⁵ This statement masks the fact that the respective nuclear weapons of the UK and France have different roles in NATO's deterrence. Whereas the UK's nuclear deterrent is assigned to the defence of NATO,¹³⁶ French nuclear weapons are not, and thus do not form part of its operational planning either.¹³⁷

Although only three allies possess atomic weapons, the non-nuclear NATO allies have been involved in the alliance's nuclear weapons politics in two primary ways: through its nuclear-sharing activities and participation in the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG). NATO's nuclear-sharing activities came into being as early as the 1950s.¹³⁸ The US deployed various types of nuclear weapon systems to Europe in the early years of that decade.¹³⁹ However, against the backdrop of the October 1957 launch of the Sputnik satellite, the United States decided to share nuclear capabilities with its NATO allies. The decision "comprised the ability of allies to launch nuclear weapons under US command, including nuclear land mines, artillery shells, short-range rockets, free-fall bombs, and intermediate-range ballistic missiles, all under the direct command of SACEUR". Importantly, "the weapons would remain under the command and control of the US, and only be released to Allies for delivery upon

128 Dulles 1954.

129 Michel 2017, 7.

130 NATO 2012.

131 NATO 2014.

132 NATO 2016.

133 NATO 2022b, 7.

134 See Kristensen & Korda 2022.

135 NATO 2022b, 8.

136 See e.g., Davis 2015.

137 See e.g., Tertrais 2020.

138 Egeland 2020, 150.

139 Ruiz-Palmer 2019, 28–29.

the command of the US President, and then under war plans directed by SACEUR".¹⁴⁰

Nuclear sharing has had three broad functions. First, it has helped restrain allied proliferation pressures. Second, it has cemented the political cohesion of the alliance by giving European allies a voice in NATO's nuclear deliberations. Third, nuclear sharing has strengthened the credibility of the alliance's deterrence by offering a broader spectrum of graduated force options, namely more alternatives, nuclear included, for responding to an armed attack.¹⁴¹

Today, nuclear sharing is limited to one weapon system: the US B61 nuclear bomb. More precisely, the United States has deployed a limited number of B61 nuclear weapons – which remain under American custody – to certain allied military bases in Europe. Several NATO allies possess certified dual-capable aircraft (DCA) that can carry these B61 weapons. The estimated number of B61s deployed to Europe varies between 150 and 200. There are five bases in Europe storing American nuclear bombs today: Kleine Brogel air base in Belgium, Volkel air base in the Netherlands, Büchel air base in Germany, and Aviano and Ghedi air bases in Italy. In addition, Incirlik base in Turkey possibly houses B61s. In addition to the United States, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey have DCAs equipped to deliver B61 bombs.¹⁴² Allies have recently carried out infrastructure modernization at nuclear-sharing airbases. Furthermore, the United States has been modernizing the B61s, and is expected to start fielding the upgraded B61-12 version to Europe in December 2022.¹⁴³

Non-nuclear allies without the DCA capability can also contribute to NATO's nuclear missions with conventional assets. In other words, they can participate in the Support of Nuclear Operations with Conventional Air Tactics (SNOWCAT) mechanism, in which allies assign certain capabilities, such as fighter aircraft, to NATO's nuclear mission. NATO's annual nuclear exercise of 2022 – Steadfast Noon – involved 14 participants,¹⁴⁴ which is indicative of the number of allies participating in nuclear-sharing and supportive missions. Allied involvement in NATO's nuclear activities is based on voluntary contributions, not on the targets coming from the NDPP. It has been estimated that seven allies

– Czechia, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Poland, and Romania – have in one way or another taken part in SNOWCAT activities.¹⁴⁵

NATO's non-nuclear allies can also contribute to the alliance's nuclear deterrence deliberations by participating in the NPG. The group, established in 1966, is NATO's senior body on nuclear matters, discussing specific policy issues associated with nuclear forces, such as the global balance of the latter and procedures for the possible use of nuclear weapons.¹⁴⁶ Importantly, the NPG provides a forum in which allies can take part in the development of NATO's nuclear policy, as well as participate in decisions on NATO's nuclear posture, irrespective of whether they are nuclear powers or not. It meets at the level of defence ministers or permanent representatives, and is supported by the High Level Group, consisting of high-level policymakers from allies. Over the years, the NPG has fundamentally acted as a forum in which the US and the UK – especially the former – have offered allies education about nuclear matters.¹⁴⁷ Only one ally, France, does not participate in the group.

When it comes to nuclear deterrence, Finland will enter uncharted waters. As a NATO member, it will be under the alliance's 'nuclear umbrella'. This means that allied nuclear weapons will deter aggression against Finland and an attack on Finland may, under extremely remote circumstances, lead to allied nuclear retaliation. This is a historic development for a nation which has thus far placed emphasis on nuclear arms control, not nuclear deterrence.

Finland's approach to nuclear arms control has been pragmatic, underscoring the significance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as recognizing the primacy of great powers in nuclear arms control efforts.¹⁴⁸ Finland has not signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) – an agreement criticized by NATO and nuclear weapon powers – and has no intention of signing it in the future. In fact, in the wake of the Russian 2022 invasion, Finnish policymakers have underlined the necessity of nuclear deterrence as a protection against potential nuclear coercion.¹⁴⁹

Upon its entry into NATO, Finland must decide what kind of role it wants to play with regard to the

140 Alberque 2022.

141 Mattelaer 2021, 125–127.

142 Kristensen 2022.

143 Bender et al. 2022.

144 NATO 2022g.

145 Kristensen 2015.

146 Michel 2017, 16.

147 Sayle 2020.

148 Juntunen 2018.

149 Särkkä 2022.

alliance's nuclear policies. Compared to other policy areas, formulating Finnish stances on nuclear issues is currently challenging because, as an invitee, Finland is still excluded from the alliance's nuclear policy.

The policy options for Finland are nevertheless rather clear. As of now, the Finnish leadership has not set any limits in terms of the scope of Finland's NATO integration, including participation in nuclear policy. Theoretically, Finland could aim at participating in NATO's nuclear-sharing activities, acquiring dual-capable aircraft, and hosting American nuclear weapons. However, the options are only theoretical and, under the current circumstances, unrealistic. Existing Finnish legislation explicitly states that the importation of nuclear explosives, as well as their manufacture, possession and detonation, are prohibited in Finland.¹⁵⁰ Some NATO allies – such as Lithuania – have similar legislation. At present, there is no discussion in Finland about changing or amending the existing laws.

Furthermore, NATO has no intention, reason, or plans to station nuclear weapons on the territories of countries that have joined the alliance since 1997. Given the proximity to Russia, the allies in Western Europe and North America in particular see deploying nuclear weapons to the eastern flank as imprudent militarily, and/or consider it to be politically provocative towards Moscow. Interestingly, Poland recently approached the United States about potentially hosting American nuclear weapons on Polish soil.¹⁵¹ In response, Washington turned down the offer, reiterating that it has no intention of deploying nuclear weapons to countries on the eastern flank.¹⁵²

All in all, Finland's participation in NATO's nuclear-sharing activities is unlikely. That does not, however, mean that Finland should adopt a unilateral, declaratory stance of not allowing nuclear weapons on its soil (in peacetime) akin to Denmark¹⁵³ and Norway,¹⁵⁴ for example. The respective Danish and Norwegian policies were borne out of different domestic landscapes and a different international environment in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Adopting similar positions would not only be anachronistic but also unnecessary for the reasons set out above.

The realistic options in terms of Finnish participation in NATO's nuclear policies vary from modest participation to more active, operational involvement. Finland

could assume a mere “planning role”¹⁵⁵ when taking part in the work of the NPG. Opting out of the planning group would not make much sense. Finland should have a voice in NATO's nuclear policy, and it must make a serious effort to understand not only the principles of NATO nuclear deterrence but also the nuclear weapon policies of the United States and the United Kingdom.

More active involvement would mean assuming an operational role in addition to participating in the NPG. In practice, this would amount to taking part in SNOWCAT and NATO's nuclear exercises. Assigning capabilities to support the alliance's nuclear missions is entirely voluntary. Understanding the sensitivities regarding nuclear deterrence, allies are unlikely to exert pressure on Finland concerning the matter. However, given Finland's military capabilities and its location in the frontline close to highly strategic Russian locations, NATO allies may privately expect Finland to contribute to SNOWCAT activities.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, NATO will put the F-35 aircraft at the centre of its nuclear policy in the coming years, as the plane is “thought to be better at penetrating air- and missile-defence networks, requiring fewer accompanying fighters”.¹⁵⁷ Finland's coming F-35 fleet will be operational towards the end of the 2020s.

From a Finnish perspective, engaging in the SNOWCAT mechanism might make military sense. As a frontline state, Finland and its airspace constitute a possible gateway for allied nuclear operations. The American B61s are gravity bombs that need to be delivered close to the attempted target before their release. Having an understanding of how such operations are conducted and playing a role in them may thus conceivably be in Finnish interests.

However, importantly, Finland's eventual role in NATO nuclear policy will neither be publicly disclosed nor result from public deliberations. Rather, its possible contributions to SNOWCAT activities, for instance, would be highly classified information, known only to a small circle of political and military leaders. In NATO, nuclear policy is an area of utmost secrecy, and the alliance communicates scantily about its nuclear activities. Finland needs to adjust its nuclear communication to NATO's collective approach.

Lastly, Finland's coming NATO membership will not be incompatible with advocating arms control. In fact,

150 Ydinenergiälaki 990/1987, §4.

151 Moskwa & Leonard 2022.

152 U.S. Department of State 2022.

153 See e.g., Vestergaard 2014.

154 See e.g., Lodgaard & Gleditsch 1977.

155 Egeland 2020, 153.

156 Alberque 2022.

157 Sprenger 2022.

several allied nations practise active arms control and even nuclear disarmament policies.¹⁵⁸ As pointed out, Finland has pragmatically supported the NPT as the cornerstone of nuclear arms control, although it has not in recent years shown considerable initiative in promoting concrete arms control proposals. Should this change and should Finland want to take a more proactive role, it would need to pay special attention to the views of the NATO allies. Against this backdrop, signing the TPNW or taking part in treaty-related activities, such as observing meetings, does not necessarily come across as a prudent policy.

10.2 Finland and NATO missile defence

Missile defence, in addition to nuclear and conventional capabilities, is the third leg of NATO's deterrence and defence posture.¹⁵⁹ It is a novel but essential element of the alliance's strategic mix. After a decade of studying the possibility of developing missile defence, the allies concluded at NATO's Lisbon 2010 Summit that "[t]he threat to NATO European populations, territory and forces posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles is increasing" and that "the Alliance will develop a missile defence capability to pursue its core task of collective defence".¹⁶⁰ In 2016, the alliance declared Initial Operational Capability of its ballistic missile defence (BMD). Full implementation of the capability is still underway.

Today, NATO BMD is a component of its integrated air and missile defence (IAMD). Missile defence capabilities are based on the voluntary contributions of member states. The United States has a leading role in the effort. Its approach to NATO BMD is called the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPA) and it consists of Aegis Ashore ballistic missile defence systems hosted by Romania (operational since 2016) and Poland (operational in 2023), as well as four multi-mission BMD-capable Aegis ships hosted by Spain. Furthermore, the United States has deployed a radar system in Turkey.¹⁶¹ Several allies also offer additional integrated air and missile defence systems such as ships or the Patriot surface-to-air missile system.

BMD has been one of the bones of contention between NATO and Russia. The alliance has insisted that the American missile defence assets in Europe are aimed at defending its allies against missile threats emanating

from elsewhere, namely from Iran.¹⁶² Moscow has not bought this argument and has been concerned that the missile defence system would undermine its own strategic deterrent. Initially, the NATO alliance and Russia intended to cooperate in missile defence matters, but the alliance suspended the project in 2014 in response to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea.¹⁶³

After 2014, Russia's stance towards the alliance's missile defence activities grew increasingly aggressive. Moscow has warned individual allies about taking part in NATO's BMD. In 2015, the Russian ambassador to Denmark threatened to aim nuclear missiles at Danish warships if it joins NATO's missile defence system.¹⁶⁴ The warnings notwithstanding, Denmark has taken steps towards playing a role in the system.¹⁶⁵ Norway, by contrast, has decided to opt out of BMD by not acquiring capabilities that would enable its participation. Reportedly, one reason for the decision has been Norway's reluctance to antagonize Russia.¹⁶⁶

BMD will be a novel area for Finland, which currently lacks ballistic missile defence capability. Furthermore, given Russia's concerns, missile defence has thus far been a politically sensitive issue in Finland and has not been comprehensively addressed in public debate or within the government. However, things are changing in this respect. The Finnish political leadership has set no limits on Finland's military integration into NATO, including the alliance's air and missile defence. In fact, participation in NATO's BMD would go some way towards helping Finland fill a crucial capability gap. More importantly, Finland is in the process of acquiring ground-based air defence high-altitude capabilities.¹⁶⁷ The remaining candidates for the procurement are two Israeli systems: Barak MX and David's Sling. Both systems can intercept missiles, including ballistic ones.

As a NATO member, Finland must decide whether it will make voluntary contributions to the alliance's BMD. The new high-altitude capability could potentially be earmarked for NATO's missile defence. Furthermore, the F-35 aircraft, with its advanced sensors, could also be used for supporting cruise and ballistic missile defence as a part of NATO's integrated air and missile defence.¹⁶⁸

158 See e.g., Egeland 2019; Plant 2019.

159 NATO 2022b, 6.

160 NATO 2010a.

161 Arms Control Association 2022.

162 Williams 2019.

163 Zadra 2014.

164 Reuters 2015.

165 Defense News 2016.

166 The Local 2019.

167 Finnish Army 2022.

168 Osborn 2021.

11. SOLIDIFYING COLLECTIVE DEFENCE: MILITARY COOPERATION WITH NATO ALLIES

MILITARY COOPERATION, BILATERALLY or within small groups of countries, has become an increasingly prevalent feature of European defence since the late 2000s and the early 2010s.¹⁶⁹ This development has been driven by several factors. Under the tense fiscal conditions of the late 2000s and the early 2010s, multinational defence cooperation primarily aimed to generate more cost-efficient defence solutions or, even more directly, to achieve savings.¹⁷⁰ However, during the 2010s, and particularly since Russia's first invasion of Ukraine in 2014, many cooperation frameworks became more prominently driven by security threats facing Europe.¹⁷¹ Finally, major political shifts, such as the UK's decision to leave the EU, have also played an important role in the developments seen in European defence.¹⁷²

Importantly, both NATO and the EU have consciously promoted defence cooperation within sub-sets of their member states, especially since the 2010s. In the EU's case, this first started under the label of pooling and sharing,¹⁷³ but the idea of creating multinational clusters is also at the heart of later initiatives like the European Defence Fund (EDF) and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).¹⁷⁴ NATO, for its part, first put forward the so-called Smart Defence Initiative, a major novelty of the 2012 Chicago Summit, which encouraged the allies to cooperate and coordinate more and better in order to develop and maintain military assets.¹⁷⁵ In the run-up to the Wales Summit in 2014, the alliance followed suit with the adoption of the Framework Nations Concept (FNC).

The FNC builds on the idea that bigger NATO members gather a group of allies around them with the aim of organizing themselves in a more coordinated and effective way.¹⁷⁶ A total of three FNC groups were formed, led by Germany, Italy, and the UK. The German-led FNC concentrates on developing and preserving key

military capabilities by advancing cooperation in multiple capability clusters and building multinational force structures, whereas the Italian FNC revolves around cooperation related to stabilization operations.¹⁷⁷ The UK-led FNC group, named the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), was first created to establish a rapidly deployable multinational intervention force,¹⁷⁸ but has since evolved into a broader politico-military framework.¹⁷⁹ Although the FNC groups are inherently linked to NATO's activities and objectives, they operate formally outside the NATO structures – and have also been open to non-NATO members.¹⁸⁰

In addition to EU and NATO initiatives, defence cooperation has also flourished outside these organizations, ranging from bilateral partnerships to minilateral groups involving a small number of states.¹⁸¹ Many of the partnerships and groups are based on geography, whereas some have a more functional focus.¹⁸²

11.1. Finland's defence cooperation prior to NATO membership

For Finland, multinational defence cooperation outside the framework of the EU and the country's partnership with NATO started to acquire increasing relevance in the latter part of the 2000s, as Nordic defence cooperation made strides. Even though the defence forces of the Nordic countries had already cooperated in many ways before, several factors, above all the challenging economic context, pushed them to deepen their cooperation.¹⁸³ This process led to the creation of NORDEF-CO as the new umbrella for Nordic defence cooperation on capabilities, armaments, human resources and education, training and exercises, as well as operations.¹⁸⁴

However, the real watershed for Finland's approach towards different forms of defence cooperation was

169 See Zandee et al. 2018; Nemeth 2022.

170 See e.g., Valasek 2011; Terlikowski 2012; Zandee et al. 2016.

171 Fägersten 2020.

172 Ibid.

173 Faleg & Giovannini 2012.

174 See e.g., Blockmans & Macchiarini Crosson 2019.

175 Terlikowski 2012.

176 Major & Mölling 2014.

177 Glatz & Zapfe 2017.

178 Ibid.

179 Monaghan 2022a.

180 See Hagström Frisell & Sjökvist 2019.

181 Nemeth 2022.

182 Zandee et al. 2016.

183 Saxi 2011; Jokela & Iso-Markku 2013.

184 Saxi 2011.

Russia's first invasion of Ukraine in 2014. The Russian aggression led to a change in Finland's perception of Russia and gradually ushered in the era of Finnish 'alignment' policy. As a result, Finland started to look for military partners in order to strengthen its national defence capability, raise the threshold for potential Russian aggression against the country, and increase the likelihood of receiving aid in the event of a conflict with Russia (see Section 1.2). Correspondingly, after 2014, Finland signed a number of different cooperation agreements (framework arrangements, letters of intent, memoranda of understanding) with a host of partners.¹⁸⁵

Finland's closest partnership developed with its Western neighbour, Sweden, to which Finland is bound by close historical ties and shared values. The partnership was further facilitated by a highly favourable public opinion as well as the two countries' non-allied status, with the latter setting them apart from their Nordic and Baltic neighbours.¹⁸⁶ An action plan for deepened defence cooperation was signed by the Finnish and Swedish defence ministers in May 2014, and a joint report by the Finnish and Swedish defence forces on possible areas of cooperation was published in January 2015. This was followed by a joint statement on deepened defence cooperation in May 2015.¹⁸⁷

After 2015, Finnish-Swedish defence cooperation progressed quickly. In 2018, a new memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Finland and Sweden was signed, stating that their cooperation aimed at "strengthening the defence capabilities of the Participants, creating prerequisites for combined joint military action and operations in all situations, and to further common interests in the defence domain, including strengthening the security of the Baltic Sea region".¹⁸⁸ To underscore the depth of the relationship, the MoU also explicitly declared that the countries' defence cooperation "covers peace, crisis and war" and that "no predetermined limits will be set on deepening the bilateral defence cooperation".¹⁸⁹

The significance of the Finnish-Swedish relationship was underlined by the fact that it developed into an interesting platform for third parties to plug into. In 2018, Finland and Sweden signed a trilateral memorandum

of understanding with the US, whose commitment to European security both countries regard as vital.¹⁹⁰ The American-Finnish-Swedish memorandum of understanding stated that the three parties aim to intensify their trilateral dialogue on defence, develop their political and military interoperability, and expand their situational awareness. Moreover, it mentions their aim to develop their capabilities and posture, improve their ability to conduct combined multilateral operations, coordinate their strategic communications, and promote constructive links between NATO and the EU.¹⁹¹

In 2020, another trilateral memorandum of understanding was signed between Finland, Sweden, and Norway. It proposed, among other items, the setting up of a trilateral strategic planning group and, even more notably, coordinating national operations plans between the three countries in areas of common concern, as well as exploring the possibility for common operations planning in certain areas.¹⁹² This is particularly relevant in the northern parts of the three countries, which constitute a shared strategic space located between the Russian Kola Peninsula and the Northern Atlantic (See Chapter 3).

In parallel with the trilateral track, Finland also deepened its relationship with both the US and Norway on a bilateral basis. A letter of intent between Finland and the US was signed in 2016, outlining an agenda that covered dialogue, exchange of information, enhancing defence capability, readiness and interoperability in the context of multilateral operations, increased training and exercises, armaments cooperation, as well as exploring opportunities to enhance Finland's cooperation with NATO.¹⁹³ Finnish-US relations also received a boost from Finland's decision in December 2021 to replace its existing fleet of F/A-18s with 64 F-35 fighter jets.¹⁹⁴

With Norway, a bilateral framework agreement was first adopted in 2018 and then updated in 2021. The bilateral agenda extends from dialogue to interoperability, from military security of supply to joint combined situational awareness, and from cyber and hybrid-related cooperation to training and exercises. As in the

185 Yle News 2018.

186 See Pesu & Iso-Markku 2020.

187 Joint Statement regarding deepened defence cooperation between Finland and Sweden.

188 Memorandum of Understanding between Finland and Sweden 2018, 3.

189 Ibid.

190 The Finnish Government's report on foreign and security policy from 2016 states that "[t]he commitment of the United States to NATO and its military presence in Europe continue to be essential to Finland's security. Cooperating with the United States, both bilaterally and within the framework of NATO, is needed for Finland's national defence".

191 Trilateral Statement of Intent among the United States, Finland, and Sweden 2018.

192 Trilateral Statement of Intent among Finland, Norway, and Sweden 2020.

193 Statement of Intent between the United States and Finland 2016.

194 McNamara & Saloniemi-Pasternak 2022.

trilateral context, the Finnish–Norwegian cooperation agenda also encompasses the coordination of national operations plans as well as the possibility for common operational planning.

Cooperation was also advanced in the framework of NORDEFECO. In November 2018, the five NORDEFECO states adopted a new political guidance document setting out their vision for 2025. The document stated that the Nordic states will improve their “defence capability in peace, crisis and conflict”.¹⁹⁵ It thus served as a testament to the increasingly convergent views of the Nordic states on the regional security environment after the Russian aggression in 2014. Moreover, it showed that the institutional divides between the five Nordic states – especially the non-NATO membership of Finland and Sweden – started to be less of a constraint for Nordic cooperation than they had previously been.¹⁹⁶

Apart from Sweden, the US and Norway, the late 2010s also saw Finland deepen its relationship with other partners. A bilateral framework arrangement between Finland and the United Kingdom had already been signed in 2016. However, the most important framework for Finnish–British cooperation quickly became the JEF, which Finland joined together with Sweden in 2017. Originally devised as an expeditionary force able to deploy wherever needed, the focus of the JEF started to increasingly shift towards Northern Europe, including the Northern Atlantic, the Arctic, and the Baltic Sea region, making it a highly relevant and interesting format from the Finnish perspective.¹⁹⁷

Alongside the JEF, Finland also joined the German-led FNC as well as the French-initiated European Intervention Initiative (EII2). These choices were mainly motivated by Finland’s willingness to tie the respective lead nations, Germany and France, to Northern European security and to instil Northern European views into these cooperation frameworks.¹⁹⁸ However, neither the German FNC nor the European Intervention Initiative developed as dynamically as the JEF, and nor were they underpinned by such regular activities.¹⁹⁹ Thus, their importance for Finland has remained limited.

11.2 Finland’s defence cooperation in the context of its NATO accession

In the immediate aftermath of Russia’s attack on Ukraine in February 2022, the general perception in Finland was that the country’s national defence, combined with the above-described dense network of defence partnerships, did not constitute a sufficient deterrent (see Section 1.3). Consequently, Finland opted to apply for NATO membership. However, Finland’s existing defence partnerships will not lose their significance with Finland’s NATO accession. On the contrary, the importance of these partnerships has been visible in the pre-accession phase and is likely to grow further when Finland formally enters the alliance.

Consultations with close bilateral partners the US and Sweden had a crucial role in the process that led to Finland’s and Sweden’s joint application for NATO membership. Similarly, the JEF has been an important forum for exchanging information and views after the start of the Russian aggression.²⁰⁰ The UK, as the lead nation of the JEF, was also quick to offer Finland and Sweden security assurances before they submitted their NATO applications. In a joint statement between the UK and Finland in May 2022, the two countries pledged to “assist each other in a variety of ways, which may include military means” should one of them suffer a disaster or an attack.²⁰¹

Finland’s defence partnerships will also maintain their relevance upon accession – both within and beyond NATO. First, it is highly likely that the countries with which Finland maintains close defence partnerships will be its primary reference group within NATO. While Finland is likely to let the issue in question determine its main partners on any given NATO issue, it is clear that Finland shares a broad set of interests with Sweden, Norway and the other Nordic countries, as well as with the JEF group as a whole.

Secondly, NATO accession changes the context in which – and the conditions under which – Finland’s partnerships evolve, as all of its closest partners will henceforth be treaty allies. Thus, defence cooperation bilaterally, trilaterally, and in minilateral groups will no longer be geared towards increasing the *likelihood* of military assistance or generating the conditions for *potential* wartime cooperation. Instead, following Finland’s entry into NATO, preparing for the provision and reception of military assistance, as well as for

195 NORDEFECO 2018.

196 Saxi 2022.

197 Pesu 2020, 33.

198 Ibid.

199 Monaghan 2022a.

200 Monaghan 2022a.

201 See United Kingdom–Finland statement 2022.



President Sauli Niinistö and Prime Minister of Sweden Magdalena Andersson participating in a press conference during the NATO Summit in Madrid on 28–30 June 2022.
 Source: Henrik Montgomery / TT / Lehtikuva

cooperation in conflict situations, will be the basis for Finland's partnerships with its NATO allies.

Upon Finland's NATO accession, its different bilateral, trilateral, and minilateral partnerships can, and should, contribute to at least four different, but mutually complementary, tasks:

1. Coordinating, organising, and executing NATO's deterrence and defence activities in the Nordic-Baltic region and beyond;
2. Strengthening and/or finetuning the concrete political and military arrangements for receiving and providing military assistance and ensuring security of supply in a conflict scenario;
3. Hedging against situations in which NATO for some reason is too slow or wholly incapable of taking decisions or action; and
4. Increasing cost-efficiency through coordination of defence planning, pooling and sharing of military assets, as well as joint development and acquisition of defence materiel.

As for the first task, different bilateral and minilateral partnerships often build the foundations for activities

in the NATO framework. For example, the composition of the multinational battlegroups that NATO has deployed to the eastern flank mostly reflect longer-term partnerships between the participating countries.²⁰² It will thus be natural for Finland to work closely together with Sweden and its other Nordic or JEF partners in coordinating, organizing, and executing NATO's deterrence activities. Moreover, the limits between what is considered a NATO activity and what is not are fluid. Whether something is done formally within the NATO framework or in another format – nationally, bilaterally, or minilaterally – is less important than the aims behind and the outcomes of the activities in question.²⁰³ As long as they are in line with the commonly agreed objectives, activities – such as training and exercises – in smaller constellations can thus make a very important contribution to NATO's work.

With regard to the second task, the regional context is of great significance. Finland is a frontline state situated close to NATO's primary zones of friction with

²⁰² Nemeth 2022.

²⁰³ See NATO 2022h.

Russia. As such, it is a potential recipient of allied reinforcements in a conflict scenario, as are its Baltic neighbours. In any conflict scenario, neighbouring countries – especially Sweden and Norway – would play a vital role as entry points and hubs for allied reinforcements.²⁰⁴ Thus, it is particularly important to make sure that the required political and military arrangements for receiving and providing military assistance, as well as ensuring security of supply, are in place and work properly in the sub-regional context. At the same time, this naturally contributes to NATO's deterrence as well.

The third point, hedging, refers to ensuring that deterrence and defence tasks can be executed even in situations in which NATO as a whole is too slow or wholly incapable of taking the necessary decisions and actions. This is a somewhat politically sensitive issue. Most allies do not want to highlight the possibility of gridlock or fragmentation within NATO, in order to prevent such a possibility from turning into a self-fulfilling prophecy. The same goes for NATO's reaction speed. If allied countries constantly voiced their concerns about the alliance's ability to act swiftly in a crisis scenario, this could quickly start to undermine its credibility and deterrence. At the same time, it is clear that policy and military planners need to take such scenarios into account. Different cyber and hybrid attacks, for example, could fall under the threshold of NATO's Article 5, making it more difficult for the alliance to react.²⁰⁵ In all such scenarios, various lower-level arrangements represent essential alternatives or complements to NATO action. For instance, the JEF, as a rapidly deployable force, has often been considered a potential first responder in a crisis situation in which NATO as a whole would not act swiftly enough.²⁰⁶

The fourth task, increasing cost-efficiency, has been a major driving force for defence cooperation during the last 10 to 15 years. Cost-efficiency refers here to the ability to make more effective use of one's military spending – for example by lowering costs through joint procurement or the pooling and sharing of military assets. However, it can also mean the possibility to jointly acquire high-end defence systems that would otherwise be out of reach for the countries involved.²⁰⁷ Despite the significance of the cost-efficiency dimension for defence cooperation, the results on this account vary widely. Major joint development and procurement

projects have often proved challenging, including in the Nordic context.²⁰⁸ Despite their strong multinational links, many European countries are still decidedly national in their thinking. On the other hand, there are also successful examples of defence cooperation. Mutual confidence, solidarity, and trust, similar strategic cultures and mindsets, shared geography and history, as well as interoperability and the same standards can all contribute positively to defence cooperation.²⁰⁹ Moreover, a smaller number of participating countries often makes cooperation easier.²¹⁰ All of this highlights the importance of established military partnerships, such as Finnish-Swedish cooperation, Nordic cooperation, and the JEF.

Apart from these more general considerations, Finland's NATO accession can also influence the individual dynamics of Finland's current military partnerships. The joint NATO accession of Finland and Sweden allows for continuing and deepening the already very advanced cooperation between the two countries. The closely coordinated membership process has further increased trust between Helsinki and Stockholm.²¹¹ Moreover, any remaining doubts about the two countries' commitment to each other's security should be resolved by their status as treaty allies.

Similarly, NATO accession builds an even more solid basis for the cooperation with Norway. Thus far, Finland's bilateral and trilateral cooperation documents with Norway have made reference to Norway's intention to “transfer command to NATO in crisis and war”, duly establishing that the cooperation would have its limits in terms of extent. Now this will no longer be necessary. Accordingly, Finland, Norway, and Sweden signed a new trilateral statement of intent on 22 November, 2022.²¹²

The extent to which the five Nordic states will deepen their cooperation under the umbrella of NORDEFCO remains to be seen. The issue is not on the immediate agenda as Finland's and Sweden's clear priority is to complete their integration into NATO first. However, there is a significant amount of untapped potential in Nordic cooperation.²¹³

When it comes to the US, Finland's NATO membership process has already had very concrete consequences

204 See Neretnieks 2022.

205 See Sari 2019; Perot 2019.

206 Monaghan 2022b.

207 Valasek 2011.

208 Saxi 2011.

209 Zandee et al. 2016.

210 Ibid.

211 See Juntunen & Pesu 2018.

212 Statement of Intent among Finland, Norway, and Sweden 2022.

213 Särkkä 2022.

Contributions of Finland's defence partnerships upon NATO accession

Upon Finland's NATO accession, Finland's defence partnerships can, and should, contribute to at least four different, but mutually complementary, tasks:

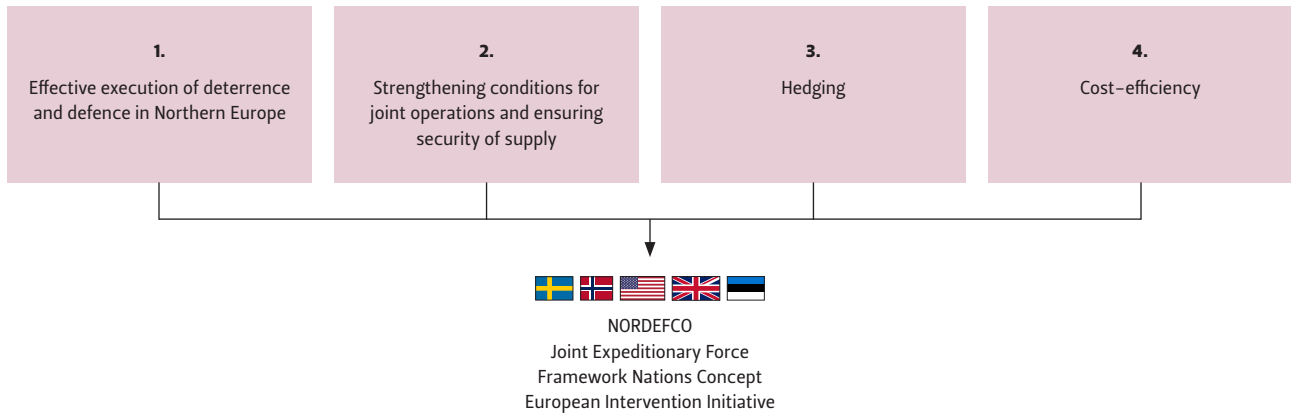


Figure 5. Contributions of Finland's defence partnerships upon NATO accession.
Source: Authors' own compilation.

for the relationship between the countries. Currently, Finland is negotiating a Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) with the US, which is to build a new basis for US–Finnish military cooperation. The DCA is a cooperation agreement that is only available to treaty allies. It covers many practical matters that are of relevance when US forces operate in Finland's territory. It can also include provisions regarding the prepositioning of US military equipment in Finland depending on whether that is something the US and Finland deem desirable. Given its focus on facilitating better American operational capacity in Finland, the DCA is therefore important both in terms of Finland's NATO membership and the bilateral defence cooperation between Finland and the US. The negotiations are expected to take at least one or two years and the final agreement needs to be approved by the Finnish parliament.

The JEF will clearly be a highly relevant framework for Finland both within and beyond NATO, and already plays an important role in executing NATO deterrence in the Baltic Sea region and Northern Europe more broadly.²¹⁴ The JEF is also of major political importance for the UK both under the NATO umbrella and in its own right. With Finland's and Sweden's NATO accession, all JEF countries will be NATO allies.

Finland's NATO accession could also have an impact on its role in the German-led FNC. As a non-NATO country, Finland has so far participated only in the FNC's capability clusters, but now it could also consider joining

the multinational formations. However, Germany's ability and willingness to exercise leadership in the FNC context remains an open question. As a result of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, Germany has decided to make a major financial investment in rebuilding its national defence capability, but whether and how that will reflect on the FNC under its leadership is not yet clear.

Finally, Finland's NATO accession could also lead to the deepening of relations with other allies with whom Finland has not cooperated extensively to date. Potential partners include Estonia in particular, but also Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.

214 Monaghan 2022b.

12. CONTINUITY ABOVE ALL: NATO MEMBERSHIP AND FINLAND'S FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

THE KEY DIMENSIONS of Finland's foreign policy – such as its relationship with Russia – have long been anchored in its EU membership. Although the Finnish entry into NATO will alter Finland's official status from a country not belonging to a military alliance to a militarily allied nation, the substance, style, or direction of Finnish foreign and security policy will not change dramatically upon accession to NATO. As formulated by President Sauli Niinistö, “NATO membership will be part of our foreign and security policy, not [the] other way round”.²¹⁵ While NATO's agenda covers a broad range of foreign policy issues, these are always discussed from a security and defence perspective. For addressing foreign policy and external relations more broadly, the European Union will remain Finland's primary institutional framework and channel of influence.²¹⁶

NATO membership in itself does not put any significant constraints on the foreign policy positions or priorities of the allies. Indeed, in terms of foreign policy approaches, the transatlantic alliance is rather heterogeneous²¹⁷ – despite its strong political dimension, NATO is, after all, first and foremost a military alliance. NATO's heterogeneity has been particularly visible in relation to Russia, with the allies representing widely different views on how to deal with Moscow. While the Russian war in Ukraine has led the allies to view Russia in a more similar way, the underlying nuances are unlikely to disappear. For example, the allies do not have a unified view on the status of the NATO–Russia Founding Act (see Chapter 14). The same goes for the allies' views on, and approaches to, the People's Republic of China. Even though the 2022 strategic concept now describes China in more critical terms, stating that China's ambitions and coercive policies challenge the allies “interests, security and values”,²¹⁸ in practice NATO members maintain very different relationships with Beijing.²¹⁹

The heterogeneity of foreign policy approaches also shows that despite its leading role within NATO, the US cannot enforce its views on other members of the

alliance. At the same time, the US does exercise influence within NATO and can try to put pressure on the alliance collectively or on individual allies.²²⁰ However, considering that Finland had already built a close political and military partnership with the US before joining NATO, the US leverage over Finland is unlikely to be substantially greater upon accession. Moreover, alliance politics allows for the possibility of rallying other allies to support one's position if there are diverging views.

Considering the points above, Finland does not foresee that NATO membership would have any major implications for its foreign policy agenda and priorities. Instead, NATO membership is viewed as a natural part of the country's aim to strengthen multilateralism and a rule-based international order.²²¹ Moreover, some of NATO's policy priorities – the alliance's emphasis on democracy, good governance, human security, and the women, peace and security agenda, as well as its growing interest in climate issues – are a natural fit with the Finnish foreign and security policy agenda.

Despite significant continuity, some degree of change is to be expected. Building on its Cold War-era role as one of the hosts of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) as well as its non-allied status, Finland has traditionally sought to play a role as a facilitator of great-power dialogue, especially between the US and Russia.²²² Examples include the 2018 Russia–United States summit between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, as well as a meeting between the chiefs of staff of the US and Russian armed forces in Vantaa in September 2021. However, Finland is unlikely to be seen by Russia as a suitable host and location for such meetings after Finland's accession to NATO. At the same time, with the current state of Finnish–Russian relations, there is unlikely to be much appetite in Finland for offering such services in any case.

215 Niinistö 2022.

216 Finnish Government 2022b, 37.

217 See e.g., Tardy 2022; Testoni 2020.

218 NATO 2022b, 5.

219 Meijer 2022.

220 Gerzhoy 2015; Rapp–Hooper 2020.

221 Finnish Government 2022b, 37.

222 See e.g., Palosaari 2013.

13. IMPORTANT, BUT LESS URGENT: NATO ALLY FINLAND'S PERSPECTIVE ON EU DEFENCE

AS A RESULT of Finland's entry into NATO, the Finnish approach to the EU's role in security and defence may also change to a certain degree. Since the EU first started crafting its security and defence policy in the late 1990s, the relationship between the EU and NATO has been both close and somewhat complicated. In the 1990s and the 2000s, NATO reoriented itself towards crisis management and expeditionary operations. At the same time, crisis management also became the focus of the EU's nascent security and defence policy. This, together with their partly overlapping memberships, created a level of inter-organizational rivalry between NATO and the EU.²²³

However, in practice, an implicit division of labour quickly emerged between the EU and NATO, with the alliance taking responsibility for crisis management operations at the higher end of the military spectrum and the EU operating at the lower end and carving itself a niche in civilian crisis management. Between 2002 and 2003, the two organizations also agreed on arrangements that enabled the EU to rely on NATO assets in operations under the Union's leadership.²²⁴ However, the resulting Berlin Plus agreements have been of limited practical value.²²⁵

In the post-2014 context, the relationship between the EU and NATO has again seen significant developments. With NATO returning to its core task of collective defence, the roles of – and consequently the division of labour between – the EU and NATO have become slightly clearer.²²⁶ Although the agenda of the EU's security and defence policy has also broadened, the Union's key security and defence documents emphasise that in matters of collective defence, NATO remains the primary framework for most EU member states.²²⁷ The EU, for its part, seeks to strengthen European security both by acting autonomously as well as by contributing to the work of NATO and cooperating with the alliance.²²⁸

With its distinct set of policies and tools, the EU can contribute to European security and defence for example by addressing security issues that blur the lines between internal and external security, such as cyber and hybrid threats as well as terrorism. Moreover, the EU uses its institutional resources, regulatory power, and financial instruments to advance European cooperation regarding defence-related research, the joint development and acquisition of military capabilities, the integration of the defence industry and markets, as well as military mobility.²²⁹ As all of these areas are of interest to NATO as well, both parties have underlined their intention to cooperate with each other and coordinate their activities more effectively. This objective was underpinned by joint declarations in 2016 and 2018 as well as by a list of 74 concrete actions relating to hybrid threats, operational cooperation, cyber security, capacity-building, defence capabilities, industry and research, as well as exercises.²³⁰

Despite widespread agreement that close cooperation between the EU and NATO is sensible and desirable, there continues to be some friction in the relationship. A persistent practical issue is the long-standing dispute between non-NATO EU member Cyprus and non-EU NATO member Turkey, which puts strict limits on the formal cooperation between the two organizations.²³¹ Even more importantly, among members of the EU and NATO, there continue to be differing views about what the exact roles of the two organizations should be like.²³² While key EU documents acknowledge NATO's primacy in collective defence, they also argue that the Union should achieve an appropriate level of strategic autonomy, that is, the ability to act independently if and when the need arises.²³³ What this means in practice is a bone of contention both among the European states as well as between European states and the US.²³⁴

The main advocate for strategic autonomy is France, which has long fostered a vision of a more independent

223 Salenius-Pasternak 2007; Tardy & Lindström 2019.

224 Salenius-Pasternak 2007.

225 Tardy & Lindström 2019.

226 *Ibid.*, 7–9.

227 European Union 2016, 20.

228 *Ibid.*

229 European Union 2022.

230 European External Action Service 2020.

231 Tardy & Lindström 2019.

232 See Tardy 2018.

233 European Union 2016.

234 Kunz 2020; Koenig 2021.

European defence. By contrast, the majority of European EU and NATO members – the eastern flank states in particular – consider NATO and continued US engagement in Europe as an indivisible part of their security, with the EU’s security and defence policy seen as being of secondary importance.²³⁵ The US has also been rather hesitant about the idea of strategic autonomy, although there has been variation between different administrations. Most recently, the Biden administration has expressed support for efforts that would increase Europeans’ ability to act.²³⁶ The US has also joined the EU-initiated military mobility project.

Finland has always been an active proponent of and participant in the EU’s security and defence policy. During the early part of its EU membership, Finland advocated making crisis management the focal point of the Union’s security and defence efforts. This was partly a pre-emptive strategy, designed to ensure that the EU’s security and defence activities would not touch upon the more sensitive matters of territorial defence, which the then post-neutral Finland considered to be off limits.²³⁷ However, in the 2010s – and especially since 2014 – Finland changed tack, supporting all efforts to broaden and deepen security and defence-related cooperation in the EU.²³⁸ Correspondingly, Finland warmly welcomed the introduction of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), European Defence Fund (EDF), and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). This view is clearly expressed in the 2021 government report on EU policy, which states that “[t]he EU must be able to bear responsibility for the security of its own area and for that of the neighbouring regions”.²³⁹ A unique feature of Finland’s EU engagement has also been the country’s strong emphasis on the significance of the EU’s mutual assistance clause, the only formal mutual assistance obligation the country has been bound to.²⁴⁰

Although Finland’s view of the EU’s security and defence dimension has been highly positive, its policy has also been driven by a considerable degree of realism and pragmatism.²⁴¹ Finland has acknowledged that most EU member states – with the notable exception of France – are not willing to significantly expand the EU’s security and defence remit, relying solely on

NATO in terms of collective defence. Thus, Finland has consistently emphasised the importance of a strong and capable NATO, and the continued US commitment to European security.²⁴² Moreover, Finland has insisted that the EU’s security and defence efforts are, and should be, complementary to what NATO does. Finland has therefore also supported increased cooperation between the EU and NATO.²⁴³

Due to its strong support for enhancing the EU’s foreign, security, and defence policy, Finland has cautiously embraced the contested concept of strategic autonomy.²⁴⁴ However, Finland has also highlighted that strategic autonomy should be understood as increased European capacity to act, benefitting both the EU and NATO, and should by no means signify a weakening of the transatlantic link.²⁴⁵ In practice, and somewhat paradoxically, the relative importance of the EU in Finland’s security and defence policy actually decreased in the latter part of the 2010s, with cooperation with Sweden, the US, Norway, NATO, and the JEF gaining in importance.²⁴⁶ This has been evident in Finland’s very limited participation in PESCO, for instance.

To some extent, this development is likely to continue after Finland’s entry into NATO. As a NATO member state, the alliance will form the focal point of Finland’s security and defence policy – and absorb significant political, administrative, and military resources. Upon Finland’s and Sweden’s accession, Finland will be one of the 23 EU member states for whom NATO is the “[...] foundation of their collective defence and the forum for its implementation”, as explicitly stated in Article 42.7. Correspondingly, the mutual defence obligations enshrined in Article 42.7 may no longer be as important for Finland as they have been thus far. However, Finland should not entirely play down the mutual assistance clause either. Due to the somewhat differing geographic scope of Article 42.7 and Article 5, the different instruments at the EU’s and NATO’s disposal as well as the potentially somewhat differing scenarios in which they can be utilised, Finland should instead focus on how the different mutual commitments can form a more coherent and mutually complementary framework.²⁴⁷

235 Kunz 2020.

236 Herszenhorn 2021.

237 Palosaari 2013; Pesu et al. 2020.

238 Iso-Markku & Pesu 2021.

239 Finnish Government 2021, 33.

240 Iso-Markku & Pesu 2021; Tiilikainen 2022.

241 Iso-Markku 2015.

242 Iso-Markku & Helwig 2021.

243 Finnish Government 2021, 34.

244 Asunmaa & Pulkkinen 2021.

245 Iso-Markku & Helwig 2021.

246 Pesu 2017; Pesu 2020.

247 See Perot 2019.

Overall, there is a sense that Finland should still continue to play an active and supportive role in developing the EU's security and defence policy in full respect for and complementary to NATO's role as Europe's primary collective defence organization. Finland's pragmatic view of European defence will continue to form a good basis for this policy. Moreover, there is a sense in Helsinki that Finland's entry into NATO will strengthen the country's credibility in matters concerning EU-NATO relations, which will continue to be of deep significance for Finland. In broader foreign and security policy matters, the EU still continues to be Finland's primary institutional framework

14. DETERRENCE FIRST: ‘NATO FINLAND’S’ RUSSIA POLICY

IN 1949, NATO was, first and foremost, established to deter Soviet aggression against Western Europe. Preventing such an attack was the core purpose of the alliance during the Cold War, although NATO’s adaptation to the détente era also brought about a second(ary) track between the Western and Eastern blocks, namely dialogue.²⁴⁸ The end of the Cold War fundamentally transformed the nature of the NATO–Russia relationship from animosity to genuinely seeking cooperation. A council between NATO and Russia was established in 2002 to provide a forum for consultations. NATO’s 2010 strategic concept was a testament to the cooperative spirit, as it declared that the alliance wants “to see a true strategic partnership between NATO and Russia”.²⁴⁹

Despite several attempts to bury the hatchet and forge a cooperative relationship, the parties failed to achieve desirable results and NATO–Russia relations deteriorated steadily.²⁵⁰ After Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO decided to suspend all practical civilian and military cooperation with Russia, while keeping open channels of political and military communication. Despite the suspension of cooperation, the NATO–Russia council met 11 times between 2014 and early 2022. In effect, the dialogue track was not completely discarded, although deterring Russia was once again the alliance’s most important task. NATO’s Warsaw Summit declaration, for example, stated that the alliance remains “open to political dialogue with Russia”.²⁵¹

Today, after Russia’s second invasion of Ukraine, NATO no longer considers Moscow a strategic partner, nor does it refer to dialogue in its communications. Rather, NATO’s strategic concept explicitly states that “the Russian Federation is the most significant and direct threat to Allies’ security”. The document further sets out the three principles of NATO’s new Russia policy:

1. Strengthening deterrence and defence for all allies.
2. Enhancing resilience against Russian coercion and supporting NATO’s partners to counter malign interference and aggression.

3. Remaining willing to keep open channels of communication with Moscow to manage and mitigate risks, prevent escalation, and increase transparency.²⁵²

NATO’s policy towards Russia thus predominantly comprises deterrence. Communication channels are kept open for escalation management, not for cooperative dialogue. The two-track framework that emerged in the 1960s is all but buried.

Russia’s armed attack against Ukraine in February 2022 has also signified a paradigm shift for Finnish–Russia relations. In fact, Finland’s Russia policy is currently in profound flux, and its bid for NATO membership is indicative of this ongoing rethinking. Simply put, Finland’s post–Second World War Russia policy has been ‘reassurance heavy’.²⁵³ In other words, to convince Russia of its defensive intentions, Finland has been ready to limit the scope of its defence policy as well as the depth of its international defence integration and cooperation. Instead, the emphasis has been placed on bilateral diplomacy as the primary tool for managing the relationship.

However, despite the significant role of reassurance in Finland’s Russia policy, the de facto role of deterrence in the policy has gradually increased, especially since the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, defence policy was clearly subordinate to the objectives of Finnish foreign policy. In other words, defence policy could not endanger Fenno–Soviet relations. The post–Cold War era and the increased room for manoeuvre (see Section 1.1) offered Finland an opportunity to significantly enhance its military capabilities without compromising its cordial relationship with Moscow.²⁵⁴ Importantly, the role of deterrence grew almost inconspicuously. Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 marked a notable shift to a more deterrence-oriented approach based not only on national measures but deep military cooperation with Western powers (see Section 1.2). The reassurance element primarily boiled

248 See e.g., Colbourn 2020.

249 NATO 2010b, 29.

250 Forsberg & Herd 2015.

251 NATO 2016.

252 NATO 2022b, 4.

253 Ries 1988, 231–238.

254 Pesu 2017a.

The three principles of NATO's new Russia policy

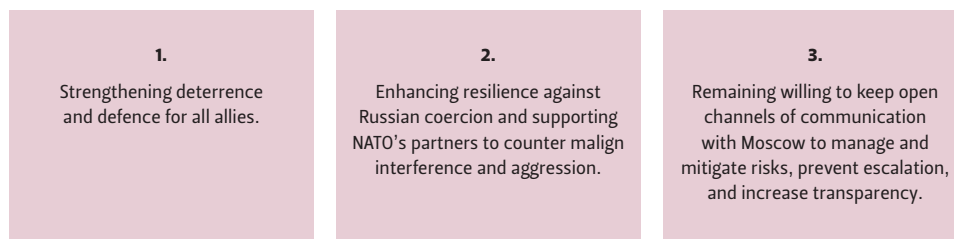


Figure 6. The three principles of NATO's new Russia policy.
Source: NATO 2022, 4.

down to the non-allied status and high-level interaction between Finnish and Russian leaders.

Eventual NATO membership will further shift the emphasis of Finland's Russia approach towards deterrence. In fact, 'NATO Finland's' Russia policy will be deterrence-heavy for the foreseeable future – an assessment shared by key policymakers.²⁵⁵ President Niinistö's remarks in August 2022 concerning Finland's relationship with Russia were striking:

*Under the prevailing circumstances, there is not much left of our earlier relationship with Russia. The trust is gone, and there is nothing in sight on which to base a new beginning. This is not the right time to build connections. On the contrary: we must very carefully reconsider any dependencies that could be used against us. Nothing must be left loose.*²⁵⁶

In his speech, Niinistö also stated that Finland "should also hold channels of discussion open for the future, even if we do not actively use them for the time being".²⁵⁷ Despite the noticeable transformation in its Russia policy, Finland has not definitively closed communication channels with Moscow.

Given the changes in Helsinki's thinking, signing up to the principles of NATO's Russia policy will be unproblematic, and the alliance's approach aligns well with the current Finnish thinking. Finland shares the view highlighting the primacy of deterrence and resilience in relation to Russia. However, most Finnish policymakers are still ready to promote escalation management

and transparency measures between allied and Russian armed forces. Although the tone of the public Russia debate is currently marked by rather hard-line views, there is a strong conviction in the Finnish national security establishment that Finland should continue to abstain from unnecessarily provocative measures and statements in relation to Russia.

Lastly, as a member, Finland needs to take a stand on the status of the 1997 NATO–Russia Founding Act – a hallmark of the post-Cold War cooperative efforts between the alliance and Russia.²⁵⁸ In the agreement, the alliance for example promised not to permanently station combat forces in new member states "in the current and foreseeable security environment".²⁵⁹ NATO allies currently disagree whether the agreement is valid or not. However, NATO does not refer to the Founding Act in its official communications, and Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has stated that the alliance is not constrained by the agreement.²⁶⁰ The alliance has not, however, officially walked back from the agreement containing NATO's self-imposed constraints on the development of its deterrence and defence posture on its eastern flank.

255 Suutarinen 2022.

256 Niinistö 2022a.

257 Ibid.

258 See e.g., Sarotte 2021, 270–273.

259 Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation 1997.

260 Mackinnon 2022.

15. NOT ONLY DETERRENCE: THE FINNISH APPROACH TO NATO'S ADDITIONAL CORE TASKS

IN ADDITION TO deterrence and defence, NATO has since 1999 had two additional core tasks. The new 2022 Strategic Concept defines them as crisis prevention and management as well as cooperative security, seeing them as “complementary to ensure the collective defence and security of all Allies”.²⁶¹ Although Finland’s primary emphasis will undoubtedly be on deterrence and defence, it should consider the importance of the other two tasks and treat them as necessary bridge-building efforts towards the allies that concentrate less on deterrence and defence. In other words, Finland should acknowledge NATO’s 360-degree approach to collective defence – the alliance’s key purpose. Finland’s future allies, especially on NATO’s southern flank, are primarily concerned about terrorism as well as conflict, fragility, and instability in the alliance’s southern neighbourhood. The tasks of crisis prevention and management and cooperative security deal with these very concerns.

NATO’s understanding of crisis prevention and management is in flux. For two decades, crisis management was practically the alliance’s primary task. NATO took over the ISAF operation in Afghanistan in 2003, making it its principal operation and effort. Despite massive contributions to and investments in Afghanistan’s security and stability, NATO’s 20-year journey in the country came to a chaotic end in August 2021, when allied and partner troops had to withdraw from the country, once again ruled by the Taliban.²⁶² Many NATO allies have also faced considerable difficulties in other crisis management operations, for example in the Sahel region, which has been a focal point of European crisis management efforts and where European NATO allies have been present in different constellations and frameworks.²⁶³ Added to this are the financial, military, and political pressures generated by the Russian aggression in Ukraine. Against this backdrop, it is understandable that NATO allies currently have a limited appetite for large-scale crisis-management operations, although the strategic concept states that the alliance will “ensure the resources, capabilities, training and command

and control arrangement to deploy and sustain... crisis-management, stabilization and counter-terrorism operations”.²⁶⁴

Finland has already shown that it takes crisis prevention and management, including counterterrorism, seriously, although the issues are not primary concerns for the country. In response to Turkey’s concerns about Finland’s attitude towards terrorism, President Niinistö has underscored how “Finland condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and works actively to prevent it” and how its “approach and deeds in fighting terrorism are already now fully aligned with the general line of NATO countries”.²⁶⁵ Finland, Sweden, and Turkey have also decided to enhance security cooperation with their relevant authorities, also concerning terrorism.

While Finland has traditionally contributed rather actively to crisis management and peacekeeping operations in various frameworks, these activities have recently played a more minor role in Finnish foreign and security policy. However, to demonstrate Finland’s commitment to NATO’s second task, Helsinki decided to almost triple its contribution to the KFOR operation in Kosovo, where Finnish soldiers have served continuously from 1999.²⁶⁶ In 2021, the Parliamentary Committee on Crisis Management gave several recommendations, calling on Finland to “continue diverse participation in crisis management operations and missions of the UN, EU, OSCE, NATO and international coalitions”.²⁶⁷

As to cooperative security, the Strategic Concept highlights NATO’s open-door policy, the importance of supporting aspiring alliance members, and the significance of EU-NATO cooperation. Furthermore, the document calls on NATO to strengthen collaboration with partners in the Indo-Pacific “to tackle cross-regional challenges and shared security interests”.²⁶⁸

The most pertinent question for Finland on the cooperative security agenda is NATO’s open-door policy. More precisely, Finland needs to take a stand on NATO

261 See e.g., Morcos & Simón 2022.

262 Larsen 2022.

263 See e.g., Petrini 2022.

264 NATO 2022b, 9.

265 Niinistö 2022b.

266 Keski-Heikkilä 2022.

267 Parliamentary Committee on Crisis Management 2020, 38.

268 NATO 2022b, 11.

enlargement, particularly regarding Ukraine's and Georgia's alliance membership. At its Bucharest Summit in 2008, NATO welcomed Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in the alliance and agreed that both countries will become members of NATO.²⁶⁹ The affirmation aside, the allies have varying views on the desirability of their membership. For Finland, the question should be rather straightforward. As a partner, Finland continuously urged NATO to adhere to its open-door policy, and eventually took advantage of the opportunity by applying for membership. Furthermore, Finland has been a stalwart supporter of EU enlargement.²⁷⁰ Judging by these factors, a supportive position on the open-door policy, as well as Ukraine's and Georgia's membership, would seem logical and coherent irrespective of the likelihood of Ukrainian or Georgian NATO membership in the near future.

²⁶⁹ NATO 2008.

²⁷⁰ See Finnish Government 2021, 30.

CONCLUSIONS

FINLAND'S PRIMARY REASON for applying for NATO membership was a perceived 'deterrence deficit' brought about by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. To fill the perceived gap, it will join an alliance that is in the process of rebuilding its deterrence and defence posture. The effort began in 2014 in the wake of Russia's first invasion of Ukraine, and it has been accelerated by the second, more brutal assault. NATO's aim to bolster deterrence and defence cuts across various political and military issues from the NDPP to command and force structure, operational planning, peacetime collective defence missions, military exercises, as well as its nuclear policy. The process of re-establishing a robust deterrence and defence posture is in the initial phase, and the trajectory and intensity of the effort hinges on various factors such as the development of the economy, alliance cohesion, and the nature of the threat environment.

Finland's primary objectives within NATO will stem from its geo-strategic position at the intersection between the Baltic Sea region and High North, its location in the NATO-Russia frontline, as well as its peripherality vis-à-vis Western centres of military and industrial power. Once in the alliance, Finland will be a deterrence-oriented ally with a Russia-centric security and defence agenda.²⁷¹ Due to its strategic location, military capabilities, and niche expertise, Finland should be well-placed to promote its interests efficiently and successfully within the alliance, although learning the intricacies of NATO decision-making will take time.

From a strategic perspective, Finland's and the alliance's interests are well aligned. Finland – with its significant military capabilities – will play an important role in deterring Russian aggression in Northern Europe. Its central contribution to NATO's collective defence will thus relate to taking care of its national defence, as well as taking part in and supporting potential NATO and allied operations in Northern Europe. This is also a role that Finland itself is willing to adopt. However, based on the alliance's 360-degree approach to collective defence, NATO allies will demand Finland to develop more deployable capabilities, particularly

in the land domain. This is not necessarily something that Finland would build for the purposes of its national defence. However, it will nevertheless be sensible and necessary from a burden-sharing point of view. That said, reconciling Finland's own and the allies' views on its role and contribution will form a central part of Finnish efforts in the alliance and may require further effort. It is conceivable that some discrepancy between Finnish and allied positions will emerge.

Finland's primary objectives within NATO will relate to the alliance's command and force structure and operational planning. From the Finnish viewpoint, NATO should have a functional command structure, as well as sufficient forces and operational plans in order to be capable of reinforcing Northern Europe and Finland if NATO's deterrence were to fail. Moreover, Finland must align its own operational plans with NATO's preparations, pay special attention to the provision of HNS, and further develop its capacity for the reception, staging, and onward movement of potential allied reinforcements. Finland's position regarding these key aspects of collective defence will fundamentally define its profile as a NATO ally.

Finland is unlikely to seek to host an eFP battlegroup on its territory. However, irrespective of its frontline status, it will likely be expected to take part in the alliance's peacetime collective defence missions, most notably the eFP and Baltic and Icelandic Air Policing. At the same time, the allies may have diverging views on how and where Finland should contribute to peacetime collective defence efforts, particularly when it comes to the eFP.

NATO's nuclear policy will be a novel issue for Finland, in which it has to build national capacity and expertise. It has pragmatic views on nuclear deterrence, and the policy area is thus unlikely to present major political difficulties for Helsinki. In terms of its participation, Finland can have either a planning or a more operational role when taking part in conventional support for NATO's nuclear missions. Allies may expect Finland to consider participating in operational activities, and engaging in SNOWCAT could make military sense. In terms of nuclear arms control, Finland's

271 Tardy 2022.

pragmatic, NPT-focused policy is compatible with NATO's approach.

When it comes to military cooperation, membership in the alliance will allow Finland to solidify and deepen collaboration with Sweden, Norway, the United States, and the United Kingdom, all of which will be among its key allies. Finland's NATO accession could also lead to the deepening of relations with other allies with whom Finland has not cooperated extensively to date. Upon Finland's accession, its defence partnerships will focus on a more effective implementation of collective defence, as well as generating alternatives for multinational operations should NATO decision-making freeze in a conflict.

Finland's entry into NATO is unlikely to bring about a significant change in its foreign policy. Some changes are expected, however. For example, Finland has traditionally sought to play a role as a facilitator of great-power dialogue, especially between the US and Russia, hosting high-level meetings between the two. With NATO accession, Finland is unlikely to be seen by Russia as a suitable host and location for such meetings. Another potential change is that Finnish advocacy of the EU's security and defence agenda may decrease somewhat, as NATO will increasingly form the focal point of Finland's security and defence policy. In terms of its relationship with Russia, Finland's increasingly deterrence-heavy Russia policy is well in line with NATO's current Russia approach, which focuses on deterrence, enhancing resilience, and keeping communication channels open.

Lastly, despite its concentration on deterrence and defence, Finland should actively contribute to NATO's additional core tasks: conflict prevention and crisis management, and cooperative security. This is particularly relevant when it comes to showing the non-deterrence-focused NATO allies on the southern flank that Finland is also attentive to their security concerns related to terrorism and the instability of NATO's southern neighbourhood.

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