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 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po  
 2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe  
 3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found  
 4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the  
 5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies  
 6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona  
 7. Conclusions  
 Fußnoten

zur Startseite

## The United States and Post Cold War Security in the Baltic Sea Region

Håken R. Nilson

### Zusammenfassung

Obwohl die Machtkonstellation im Ostseeraum nach dem Ende des Kalten Krieges einer Politik der gemeinsamen Sicherheit förderlich zu sein versprach, bestehen weiterhin Uneinigkeiten. Die neuen Trennlinien folgen dabei weder dem Muster des Kalten Krieges noch dem der Vorkriegszeit. Dieser Artikel analysiert die Bedeutung der USA für die regionale Sicherheit im Ostseeraum aus der Sicht der Staaten der Region. Dabei vertritt er die These, dass das Auseinandergehen der sicherheitspolitischen Ansichten gerade der jeweils unterschiedlichen Bewertung der Rolle der USA entspringt, die als Haupt-Seemacht überragende Präsenz zeigen, während die traditionellen Landmächte Deutschland und Russland diesen Status verloren haben.

Håken R. Nilson ist verantwortlich für das Großbritannien-Programm am Europa-Programmet, Oslo.

### 1. Introduction: The US and Post-Cold War Security in the Baltic Sea Region

Since the emergence of independent Nordic and Baltic states in the beginning of this century, their foreign and security political orientations have basically differed, despite many shared interests. In the years following World War I, they sought different allies or chose different directions of neutrality. That led them to finding themselves in dramatically different or even adverse positions during the Second World War. The post-war period started with efforts to find a common ground for security in the region. However, these efforts soon broke down under the strains of the escalating Cold War. Instead they became replaced by new, dividing security political alignments. As this situation ended around 1990, the preconditions for all to enter into security political solutions based on commonly shared interests and values were soon expected to have become as favourable as never before in this century.

Throughout history, the actions and the influence of the great powers in and around the region have been formative for the orientations and interests of the smaller regional states. The present situation is marked by a lack of exertion of influence by the two traditional land powers Russia and Germany. Neither is currently claiming strong positions in the region. The main Western maritime power, the US is now the only power that has the capacity to project its power to the entire region. The significance of the US for security in the region has thus changed profoundly, as compared to during the Cold War. The Nordic states have, on their part, increased their influence and vested interests in the Baltic States to an extent that they have not held earlier in this century, thus raising their stakes in this part of the region

NORDEUROPAforum  
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 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po  
 2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe  
 3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found  
 4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between t  
 5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies  
 6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona  
 7. Conclusions  
 Fußnoten

zur Startseite

considerably.

The analysis is limited to those states whose main security concerns are connected to the Baltic Sea. These are the three Nordic EU states, to some degree Norway, and the three Baltic States. Considering Poland and Germany, who both possess a coastline on the Baltic Sea, these are powers that are also capable of projecting power on to the region from an external position. They will therefore not be regarded as belonging to the regional subsystem in the same way as the Nordic and the Baltic States. Rather, Poland and Germany appear as strong external actors whose interests in the region relate to their interests as Central European states. The group of states that act as internal players in regional security will be termed "the regional states". Those states that may project their power on to the region on the basis of their position outside the region will be termed "external powers". Russia will, for practical reasons, be regarded as an external power in the current analysis.

In the analysis of the individual states' own perceptions about how the US is significant to their security in the Baltic Sea context, a distinction will be made between the concepts that are employed for analytical reasons (e.g. "multilateral cooperation"), and political concepts relating to the actors' own priorities and perspectives. When employing this actor oriented perspective, statements of the governments of the regional states will be commented from an analytical point of view. The analytical concepts are used to structure the discussion of the latter.

The time period that has been chosen, is roughly the period 1995–2000. By 2000, plans for a European autonomous defence appeared to have become credible enough to raise new challenges to the US as a provider of security in the region that could lead to the setting of still new priorities. The selected period provides for the availability of extensive source material, with regard to the country perspectives, primarily reports from national defence committees to the parliaments. It also limits the post-1990 period to a time when the basic assessments of the new situation had been made, and it closes the period at a moment in European relations that may set off still new substantial changes.

## 2. Three Approaches to Regional Security

In the situation that emerged in the Baltic Sea Region after the Cold War, security got a more differentiated meaning than during the Cold War bipolar situation. At that time, security was generally thought of in terms of national security political interests that were ultimately to be secured by military means. To this "realist" understanding of security was later added a different understanding, that security could be best achieved by emphasising the common nature of universal interests such as stability, democracy, institutional development. These aims were to be reached by means of a broader political and economic cooperation.

The latter approach to security combines traditional military security with broader cooperative arrangements, and is commonly termed "cooperative security".<sup>1</sup> The two approaches put different emphasis on, respectively, confrontation and consultation; deterrence and reassurance; and

NORDEUROPAforum  
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 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po
  2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe
  3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found
  4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the
  5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies
  6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona
  7. Conclusions
- Fußnoten

[zur Startseite](#)

unilateralism and interdependence, as paths to security. In Baltic Sea politics, the US seems relevant to both approaches to security. As to military security, the US is relevant mainly in its capacity as the lead country in NATO, but also with respect to bilateral arrangements. As to the "cooperative" approach, the US is relevant with respect to political and economic support to and engagement in non-military cooperative activities.

As a third approach, regional states are pursuing individual regional strategies for their security. In their individual strategies, the US can be assigned different roles. These brief references to current thinking about security have been made in order to describe different understandings. Rather than being applied here in order to offer explanations about the states and their priorities, they will be used in order to establish the analytical concepts that will structure the further discussion.

#### Military Security in the Post-Cold War Baltic Sea Region

During the 1990's, military security in the Baltic Sea context has in principle become attainable for all states through NATO either by full membership or by cooperative arrangements, or by bilateral arrangements with the USA. Military security is attainable either through a direct security guarantee, or by ways of "cooperative security". The direct security guarantee can either be pursued through collective defence, or through bilaterally agreed security guarantees. Military security by cooperative arrangements is attainable in various forms, ranging from cooperative arrangements with/within NATO, to bi- or multilateral military cooperation with various actors.

The most comprehensive arrangement for collective defence is laid in Article 5 of the North Atlantic treaty. Institutional changes in the alliance have given states in the region possibilities to make links with the alliance without entering into full membership. The Partnership for peace (PfP) arrangement was created in 1994. Within this arrangement, NATO's member states cooperate with a number of other states with the aim of increasing the ability of the NATO and Partnership countries to handle crisis management operations. In addition, in 1997 the NATO and Partnership countries established the common Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). EAPC is a political framework for PfP and a forum for consultations between NATO and the Partnership countries. Collective defence is giving way to "cooperative security".

#### The Broader Regional Cooperation: Multilateral Institutions and Regional Networks

The broader approach to regional security involves a partly different set of institutions. Multilateral organisations such as the EU, the OSCE and the UN catch the main attention of most of the regional states when seeking means to stabilise the conditions for social and economic development. The US is committed to some of the activities these organisations undertake, by means of political and financial support.

The Baltic Sea Region may in many ways be regarded as a "micro-cosmos" of the transformation of Europe from cold war division to post cold war development. The ensuing challenges have produced two basic cooperative

NORDEUROPAforum  
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 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po
2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe
3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found
4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the
5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies
6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona
7. Conclusions

#### Fußnoten

zur Startseite

strategies: the formation of an integrated Baltic Sea Region in itself, and the incorporation of this region in the larger European system of political, economic and military cooperation. As for the role of the US in this connection, Washington has issued numerous political signals about support for various policies and development paths. Outgoing from a selective approach to engagement in Baltic Sea affairs, the US has, however, rather encouraged the regional states themselves to take on responsibilities for the region.

Through active participation in regional organisations, the US has become broadly embedded in regional cooperation. This engagement has been greatly welcomed by all regional states concerned, being generally seen as a contribution to the embedding of the Nordic-Baltic area in the wider Euro-Atlantic security cooperation.<sup>2</sup>

From the European side, the European Union takes part in Baltic Sea cooperation as an organisational framework, and as a participating actor as well. It is engaged in a wide range of integrative and cooperative policies that aim to stabilise the social development of the region. The European Union is now an important framework for multilateral cooperation policies for Finland and Sweden, the non-aligned Nordic states. Also for the Baltic States, the EU has acquired similar significance, however more in terms of a realisable option for achieving a minimum of multilaterally based security, than full NATO membership.

A Council on the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) was set up in 1992, meeting bi-annually at ministerial level. This is a loose organisation with no strong mandate to take action. However, it works as a meeting place for the governments and heads of state. In addition, there is at sub-state level a vivid networking that transcends the borders within numerous cooperative activities. Regional cooperation at state level has got its prime institutional expression in the CBSS.

#### Strategies for regional influence

The withdrawal of the traditional land power Russia, together with a sensitive and cautious approach of Germany<sup>3</sup> and the moderate interest among the Atlantic powers for Baltic Sea affairs, has greatly changed the conditions for the Nordic states as actors in the Baltic Sea region. During most of the past two centuries, the Nordic countries have largely been subject to great power dominance in the region. A majority of them chose defensive alliances with these powers respectively, and to little extent played active roles in regional security politics in their own capacities. For the Baltic States, possibilities to integrate with the Nordic states at all, first came back within reach during the 1990's. These possibilities have been tried exploited by them as leverage for closer relations with NATO.

Currently, there seems to be more room for the regional states to play roles in Baltic Sea security in their capacities as individual state actors in regional politics. However, most of them have only to a small degree responded to the new opportunities. Their priorities have either been to seek continued or new great power protection, or to pursue varieties of their policy orientations of the past. The only clear exception to this is Denmark, who quite early in

NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po  
 2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe  
 3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found  
 4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the  
 5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies  
 6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona  
 7. Conclusions  
 Fußnoten

zur Startseite

the 1990's began to exploit the new opportunities to play a more active role as a regional player in security affairs.<sup>4</sup> In a situation where there still seems to be a large room for active pursuance of national ambitions, the significance of the US for their security may be different, depending on the kind of security that is sought and in what context, and it may also be relative to other sources of security.

### 3. Different Perspectives on the Significance of the US

Depending on which of the three approaches to regional security that apply, the US may play different roles in regional security. In addition, the regional states may diverge in the role they prefer that the US play. Four different perceptions of what role the US should play in regional security will be discussed below.

#### Provider of a direct security guarantee

The eastward expansion of NATO, together with the partnership arrangements that the non-member regional states have all entered into, turns the Baltic Sea more into a "NATO sea".<sup>5</sup> NATO's expansion has been carried out against strong expression of discontent from Russia, in spite of a wide range of measures aiming at appeasing and including Russia in certain NATO structures. It has proved difficult to gain Russia's confidence for the Western powers' assertion that the challenge is to include Russia in cooperative security arrangements for the region. Consequently, the states in the region more or less continue to consider Russia as a potential threat, thus making the US relevant as a possible provider of direct security guarantees.

#### Balancing the regional land powers

Since the end of the Napoleonic wars, the smaller countries in the Baltic Sea region, notably the Nordic states, have been components of a "sub-regional state system within the European concerts of great powers".<sup>6</sup> As such, they have largely been recipients of security provided through alliances with external great powers. Through the Cold War, this was true to some degree even for the neutral states Finland and Sweden, who respectively either arranged its neutrality in accordance with the interests of one of the external powers, or made hidden arrangements with external powers, that were concealed from official neutrality.

NATO's expansion may change the perspectives of the regional states on where security may be acquired. By the entry of Poland into the alliance, the Central European component of Baltic Sea security could be anticipated to grow in importance, and most likely develop around Poland and Germany. Balancing of the German land power will therefore be required both for the regional states, as well as from the viewpoint of the maritime powers and Russia as well.

In military security, the US has a role to play for all regional states, however to different extents and in different forms. It is the only external actor capable of projecting power onto the entire region. In this capacity, the US is able to counterbalance other powers competing in the region. A counterbalancing role that is meaningful to the regional states would be that



NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po  
 2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe  
 3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found  
 4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the  
 5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies  
 6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona  
 7. Conclusions  
 Fußnoten

zur Startseite

of balancing German and Russian interests in the region, even if neither of them presently hold strong political ambitions or are capable to project significant power onto the region themselves.

In the perspective that has been drawn up above, the US may be strategically important to the smaller states as a balancer between the land powers. Through its NATO membership, Germany remains militarily integrated, thus abating traditional needs for establishing its own security arrangements in the region. By the presence of the alliance, possible Russian ambitions about re-establishing its former interest spheres, are contained.

#### Participant in broader regional cooperation

The US may have different significance to the regional states in this context than in the context of military security. The regional Baltic Sea cooperation is as well an entirely different setting, in which the regional states have slightly different strategic aims for attracting Washington's attention. Especially Norway with its concern for the Northern areas on the one hand, and the Baltic States on the other, seem to differ most clearly from the three other Nordic states in this respect.

#### Military protection as a foundation for regional ambitions

The significance of the US differs depending on the particular ambitions the states hold in the regional competition. It appears as if for two countries only, Finland and Norway, the US has about the same kind of significance as an equaliser of potential influence exerted by the two main land powers, Germany and Russia. For the other regional states, the US appears, as has been seen, important in more diverse ways.

Support for regional states' ambitions would mean to provide capabilities for a regional state to pursue goals and strategies that would not be attainable without such support. For the regional states, such capabilities would basically refer to binding security guarantees. None of the regional states have followed up the American encouragement to take on any particular responsibilities for regional security. Only Denmark seems to have benefited to any considerable extent from the possibilities that thus became open for advancing a more active role in Baltic Sea security. In such respect, the US seems to be of only moderate significance to the other states.

Interestingly, no other state has neither supported nor seriously challenged Denmark. Rather on the contrary, Sweden was in a position to develop regional leadership as it was encouraged to respond to the signals from Washington, but the Swedish government appears to have refrained from pursuing such an option. Sweden's position outside NATO may have deprived it of a sufficient framework for asserting a regional role effectively. Instead, Sweden's social democratic government has in a more general language reiterated the importance of retaining the region in the transatlantic security system. In line with this, there is a strong support for the participation of the US in regional institutions, aiming at counteracting the development of "closed institutions" that could lead to "security political regionalisation".<sup>7</sup>

NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po  
 2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe  
 3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found  
 4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the  
 5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies  
 6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona  
 7. Conclusions  
 Fußnoten

zur Startseite

The regional states may thus have different preferences, or leanings, with regard to their preferences for a role for the US in regional security. Their respective leanings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Significance of the US in regional security, by country

US a support for regional ambitions and counterweight to the land powers	US a balancer of the regional land powers	US a guarantor of national independence
Denmark	Sweden Finland	The Baltic States Norway

The table shows that the traditional pattern of diverging foreign and security political orientations among the regional states seems to have survived the Cold War. However, the current pattern has developed along other lines than it had before 1990. In the next section, the post Cold War strategic situation that has developed for each of the states, will be discussed as a background for the way the current pattern has developed.

#### 4. The post Cold War strategic situation of the regional states

The Nordic and the Baltic states are all searching for a new basis for security in the region. The kind of arrangements they regard as desirable, possible and feasible outgo from the way they view their changed security environment in the region. In the following, their respective perspectives will be commented.

##### Denmark: The front line that moved East

What has first of all affected Denmark's geopolitical position in the region is that the old East-West frontline has moved away from Denmark's immediate vicinity at the Baltic Sea inlets, and to the Eastern end of the Baltic Sea. At the same time, no other confrontation lines have replaced it in the region. This has left Denmark in a new kind of situation as compared with the preceding 100 years, in which various degrees of foreign military threat to Danish territory was the structuring factor in Denmark's security policy.<sup>8</sup> Reflecting the new situation, the Danish Government's Defence Commission states in its report to Parliament that it does not see any "direct conventional military threats to Denmark's security" estimated to appear within a 10 year perspective outgoing from 1997.<sup>9</sup>

From having rather passively sought collective security in NATO in the position of a frontline state, the Danish government's line of policy has changed into playing an active role in security matters in its own capacity<sup>10</sup>, from a position well behind the NATO frontier. In this connection, the former "Nordic track"<sup>11</sup> in Danish foreign policy has become replaced by a "Nordic-Baltic" track.<sup>12</sup> According to government statements, the leading security political objective has become "stabilization" of the post-Cold War pattern in the Nordic-Baltic sub-region.<sup>13</sup>

These changes have by many been interpreted as motivated by ambitions of becoming a lead actor in regional security.<sup>14</sup> A logical requirement has been the application of military assets as important instruments of foreign policy.<sup>15</sup>

NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po
  2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe
  3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found
  4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the
  5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies
  6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona
  7. Conclusions
- Fußnoten

[zur Startseite](#)

Such assets include active participation in NATO operations outside NATO's area, defence cooperation with the Baltic states, and participation in regional NATO arrangements, most notably the Danish-German-Polish NATO corps.<sup>16</sup> The new, more active role is to be played within the framework of NATO, together with relevant NATO actors, primarily Poland and Germany, and in close partnership with the US.

#### Finland: Permanently on the border

Even though Finland's immediate security environment has changed radically, the Finnish government's main security political concerns in many ways remain similar to those of the Cold War. Paradoxically, however, the policy response has been that of a thorough restructuring of the foreign and security policy. The reason for this is of course, that though Russia remains a particular concern due to the long common border, the geopolitical context is otherwise largely new.

During the Cold War years, the most serious threat was conceived as Finland's territory becoming exploited in a great power confrontation. Whereas this risk is now seen as having diminished, the Finnish government's opinion is that Europe's Northern sea, air and land areas continue to maintain their strategic significance for Russia and the relations between the great powers.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, as Russia's formerly forward positions in the Baltic Sea have been abandoned (with the exception of Kaliningrad), the strategic importance of Russia's naval forces in the Gulf of Finland has increased relatively.<sup>18</sup>

Along with these changes, the front-line between Russia and the West has moved eastward, closer to Finland. This means that the prime areas of instability in the Baltic Sea region to a greater extent than during the Cold War are close to Finland. While NATO's possibilities for action in the region have been expanded eastwards, Russia's have contracted correspondingly. At the same time, Russian military forces are now concentrated stronger in Finland's immediate vicinity. The Western border areas remain of vital importance to Russia both economically and militarily. A serious aspect of this is the relatively increased importance of nuclear weapons due to the deterioration of Russia's conventional forces, which paradoxically may make Finland's military situation become more sensitive the more relaxed the overall security situation in the region becomes.<sup>19</sup>

#### Sweden: Closer to the "instability zone"

Also Sweden's geopolitical position has moved closer to the "zone of instability" in the eastern Baltic Sea region, as well as to the new potential confrontation line between East and West. However, Sweden's security has become less affected by this than Finland's. Three factors stand now as focal points for the Swedish ministry of foreign affairs' assessments of Sweden's security in the Baltic Sea region: Russia, Poland and the Baltic States.<sup>20</sup>

The first of these factors is that Russia is no longer considered a direct threat to Sweden's territorial integrity, but rather a threat to stability in the Eastern Baltic Sea Region. An assessment that Russia continues to



NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po
  2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe
  3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found
  4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the
  5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies
  6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona
  7. Conclusions
- Fußnoten

zur Startseite

emphasise "special interests" in the Baltic States has led to the conclusion that there is a danger of confrontational incidents in the Eastern Baltic Sea.<sup>21</sup> The second factor is that the strategic situation to the south of Sweden has greatly improved. Poland's membership in NATO implies a new strategic situation immediately south of Sweden, and Germany has got a large new allied state at its Eastern border.

The third factor has to do with how the strategic situation of the three Baltic States could affect Finland, and thereby Sweden. Apart from constituting a large part of the "instability zone" in the eastern Baltic, they affect Sweden's security in more indirect ways. Since Estonia has a direct strategic significance for Finland by way of its vicinity to the Helsinki area, a threat to Finland here would worsen Finland's capacity to defend its Eastern border. For such reasons, a threat to a Baltic State, and to Estonia in particular, could be thus motivate a quick Finnish move towards NATO membership. Direct threats to the Baltic states could also be met with Western attempts to restrict Russian logistical links at the Baltic Sea outlets or at Kaliningrad. Such incidents would certainly increase tensions in Sweden's near environment.

#### Norway: An Atlantic state in the Baltic Sea Region

The Baltic Sea region basically affects Norway's security through its location at the inlets to the Baltic Sea. Historically, this has motivated every Norwegian government since 1814 to seeking avoid war with the maritime powers. In the present situation, with no acute confrontation between the maritime powers and any of the land powers, Norway's strategic situation in the region has improved. It is rather the Eastern parts and the connections with Northern security issues that are of prime concern.

Due to the strong Norwegian security concerns in the Northern areas, Baltic Sea security in the traditional Norwegian foreign political perspective is seen as connected to Northern security – as a means of raising the awareness of Norway's allies and Nordic neighbours of Norwegian security concerns in the north. Instability in the relations between the Baltic States and Russia would have immediate impact on Norway's security.

Sweden and Finland's joining the European Union are important developments that are considered to greatly affect Norway's strategic situation both in the Baltic and the Northern areas.<sup>22</sup> The memberships of Finland and Sweden create a new foundation for Nordic cooperation, and for cooperation between the Nordic and the Baltic states. Since Sweden and Finland have involved themselves far more with the security political cooperation in Europe, the Nordic dimension in Norway's security and defence policies have become more important. The connections that Sweden, Finland and the Baltic States have established with NATO have offered Norway a possibility to cooperate with them and the US within a common security political framework.

In addition to these more basic post-Cold War security problem, Norway's situation is conceived as being constituted by the decreased significance of Norwegian land territory for the defence of Western Europe. In order to avoid reduced alliance attention, contributions to core NATO activities such

NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po
  2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati
  3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found
  4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the
  5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies
  6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona
  7. Conclusions
- Fußnoten

zur Startseite

as crisis management operations have been regarded as strategic means. On the other hand, the situation in the Northern areas call for a security guarantee for Norway of a traditional kind. Norway has thus become one of the few members of the alliance that still emphasises the concept of collective defence for the Alliance, and is increasingly considering bilateral cooperation with the US as well as other central allies.<sup>23</sup>

#### The Baltic States: Between the Nordic community and the larger West

Among the many challenges facing the three Baltic States, fear of Russian military aggression has ranked on top of the "hierarchy of threats". Other possible threats to the state as well as the possibilities for subversive activities on the part of the large Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia, have been connected to the perceived threat.<sup>24</sup> Confusion and insecurity about the possibilities for the Baltic States to enter the EU and NATO as full members has further added to the insecurity about what kind of protection these countries actually might expect from the outside world.

In their search for protection by states and organisations in their Western environment, the Baltic States have approached the Nordic countries just as they have approached EU, NATO, individual European powers, and the US. The Nordic response has been both accommodating and limited. On the part of military support, the Nordic states have contributed with a broad range of supportive means, such as donations of (often obsolete but still working) military and infrastructural hardware, training and education, and other kinds of cooperative schemes.

Even though the Nordic states have taken the lead in assisting the Baltics, they have set clear limitations. Whatever support and assistance there is given, it should specifically aim at, and be restricted to, strengthening of the sovereignty of the Baltic states, their ability to enforce their sovereignty by their own means<sup>25</sup>, and enhancing their ability to participate in international operations. In military affairs, cooperation with the Nordic states is aimed at enabling the Baltic states to take part in international activities such as peacekeeping and Partnership for Peace activities. While the main thrust is laid upon Nordic-Baltic cooperation, the Baltic states have become connected to larger powers through these arrangements. For example, the Baltic battalion, BALTBAT, was established and trained by the Nordic states and the United Kingdom. The Nordic-Polish brigade deployed in the IFOR force in Bosnia in 1996 contained contributions from the Baltic states.

The Nordic states may in this way have wanted to share their responsibilities with partners of more weight in European security. The result for the Baltic states seems to be that they have ended up in a middle position between Nordic and European/Atlantic connections in which neither have been willing to take on the kind of responsibilities that the Baltic states have been aiming at.

The recent entry of Poland into NATO has instigated one of the Baltic states, Lithuania, to seek closer security political relations with Poland and Germany, an orientation that is less to be expected on the part of Estonia and Latvia. The result so far is, that whereas the two latter states appear as

NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po  
 2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe  
 3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found  
 4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the  
 5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies  
 6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona  
 7. Conclusions  
 Fußnoten

zur Startseite

comparatively closer to the community of Nordic states in security matters, the former might turn itself more towards Central Europe. The development of the Baltic States' security political orientations during the 1990's may in this way illustrate their strategic position as somewhat in an empty space between the Nordic states and the West.

As seen in the previous section, the strategic situation has changed in both absolute and relative terms for all the regional states during the post Cold War years. Their changed strategic situation gives rise to revision or renewal of old security political priorities.

## 5. Security Political Priorities

The way these relate to the three principal approaches to security, mentioned in section 2, will be the issue in this section.

### Military Security through alliance commitment

Collective defence and cooperative security are both aspects of military security. All the regional states, with the possible exception of Denmark, seem to give priority to either one over the other.

Finland and Sweden, as well as the Baltic States, build their main military security foundations on national defence in combination with cooperative security arrangements in the region. The traditional Finnish security political solution was to stay out of alliances and maintain an independent, strong national defence. During the 1990s, cooperative activities, even with NATO, became added. In the program of the Finnish government that was elected in March 1999, the term "alliance freedom" was omitted.<sup>26</sup> This step logically increases the space for expanding the scope of military security arrangements, if so desired. The question remains, however, of where to seek firm security guarantees. Currently, Finland's position still seems to be composed of a Western orientation mainly through EU and Nordic-Baltic engagements on the one hand, and the maintenance of a good relationship with Russia on the other, meaning a continuation of alliance freedom<sup>27</sup>, but now on a new, multilateral basis.

Neutrality was defined differently in Finland and Sweden during the Cold War. Afterwards, their governments seem to assess the significance of NATO and the transatlantic links of the Baltic Sea Region somewhat differently. The Finnish government moved faster to carry out a complete redefinition of its priorities than that of Sweden, who has longer been sticking to the notion of "neutrality" as a guiding principle for its foreign policy. Entering a direct alliance with the US still proves a difficult choice for both, however, given foreign political concerns (Finland) or domestic political ones (Sweden). At the same time, there are signs that there is a desire for a closer connection to NATO at political level in both countries. For example, Finland's participation in PfP and its near compliance with NATO's interoperability criteria, appear to have been undertaken also with a view to preparedness for receiving Western military assistance.<sup>28</sup> Sweden, like Finland having moved into PfP, continues, however, to appear as more uncertain about its further intentions regarding NATO. A likely explanation could be that taking actions that would be in danger of becoming interpreted

NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po
2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe
3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found
4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the
5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies
6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona
7. Conclusions

#### Fußnoten

zur Startseite

as contrary to Russian interests, would endanger the Finnish and Swedish long-term policy of staying out of conflicts and pursuing regional stability.<sup>29</sup>

NATO's stronger emphasis on "cooperative security" to supplement the traditional collective defence may have made the alliance more interesting and less problematic for Finland and Sweden. Basically, however, the Finnish government seems to prefer to maintain Finland's alliance freedom in combination with a strong national territorial defence.

On the part of Sweden, fresh signals have been given in repeated statements that the government sees the transatlantic link as an important component of regional security. In the Swedish as well as in the Finnish government's perspective, US presence in the Baltic Sea Region is wanted in particular as a means of maintaining links to the Central European region. They both reject the idea that security in Europe should become decoupled, something which would leave them with greater responsibilities in the Nordic/Baltic context. Both countries emphasise the necessity of US participation for NATO to be able to fulfill its role as a stabilising element in European and Baltic Sea security.<sup>30</sup>

The Swedish government has also made it clear that it favours a broad US participation in a wide range of Baltic Sea regional institutions, as additional means of counteracting security political decoupling of the Nordic-Baltic area.<sup>31</sup> This could mean that a further multilateralisation of Baltic Sea security relations beyond regional institutional politics, is the long-term objective for Finland's as well as for Sweden's government.<sup>32</sup> In this perspective, it could be a concern to counteract e.g. the development of a NATO sub-region becoming formed around Germany together with Poland and Denmark.

The current Swedish military security foundation appears as a loose combination of a radically reduced national defence and continued neutrality on the one hand, and participation in the cooperative schemes with NATO, on the other. This arrangement leaves Sweden with a certain room of manoeuvre in regional affairs, while at the same time carrying with it a possible implicit security guarantee from the alliance, as well as important transatlantic links.

The Baltic States, on their part, have long sought military security solutions by membership in NATO and by bilateral US guarantees. However, the only realistic option so far has been to enter into various bilateral arrangements with NATO and with the Nordic countries. Consequently, their range of realisable options is limited by external factors. While some form of direct security guarantee remains the preferred option, cooperative security remains as the maximum attainable possibility.

A major concern for the Danish government would be to avoid a situation that leaves large room for European great powers to engage in Baltic Sea regional affairs. Consequently, the Baltic Sea region has to be kept tightly connected to NATO structures. To this end, Denmark supports full membership in NATO and EU of the three Baltic States, as well as a high degree of military integration of Russia in cooperative structures.<sup>33</sup>

NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po
  2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe
  3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found
  4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the
  5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies
  6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona
  7. Conclusions
- Fußnoten

[zur Startseite](#)

The importance of the US to Danish security policy has therefore not diminished. Partnership with the US in regional security affairs continues as a cornerstone in Denmark's regional security policy. Its military security priorities combines cooperative security as a means of strengthening Denmark's influence in regional security with a traditional security guarantee through the membership in the alliance. Together, they are meant to work as a security political balancing of German influence in Denmark's security political environment.

Concerning the Norwegian government's security political priorities for the Baltic Sea, these appear as the clear exception from the commonplace patterns of multilateralism and alliance commitment. The Norwegian government's primary priority still emphasises collective defence, which in spite of a heated debate continues to rank clearly over cooperative security. Also, the way the emphasis is put on the transatlantic link is different. Again, the Danish emphasis on the US as a support for wider regional policies makes an illustrating contrast to Norwegian priorities of maintaining an American security political guarantee of a more traditional Cold War type.

#### Broader multilateral security cooperation

Both with regard to the EU and to the US, the priorities of the regional states diverge. The main patterns of priorities concerning the EU in regional multilateral cooperation, is a diverted attention to the Northern areas and the Baltic Sea Region on the part of Finland and Norway, and a concentration on the Baltic Sea proper on the part of Denmark and Sweden. Concerning the Baltic States, these seem to form a converging group in the sense that the EU has somewhat become a forced priority in lack of credible access to firmer security arrangements.

With regard to the US, priorities diverge along a different pattern. From the point of view of the Finnish and Swedish governments, dialogue must be maintained between all states in the region, and military alliances should play no major role.<sup>34</sup> This plays into their common view that security in the region must be indivisible – hence, alliances that would alienate Russia from the other states in the region, will not be favoured. Instead, a strong EU that promotes trade and integration and involves Russia, along with regional cooperation that includes Russia on an equal basis, such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States, is supportive to Finnish and Swedish priorities.

Denmark, Sweden and Finland are acting within the same institutional frameworks, in their capacity as full EU members. However, there are differences in security political concerns that they pursue in the EU context. The main difference seems to be between Finnish concerns on the one hand, and Swedish and Danish concerns on the other. For the purpose of drawing EU attention to the Baltic Sea Region and further north, the "Northern Dimension" of the EU was launched by Finland in 1997. This is an initiative calling for stronger EU participation in practical cooperation, thus extending EU's focus upon Northwest Russia.

The Swedish and Danish governments pay less attention to the Northern areas than to the "Baltic Sea region proper". Both countries' governments have, along with that of Finland, advocated EU membership for the three



NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po
2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe
3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found
4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the
5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies
6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona
7. Conclusions

Fußnoten

zur Startseite

Baltic States. In the Baltic Sea context, it is the Swedish government's view that the EU will have security political significance as well.<sup>35</sup> The EU could therefore rank well above the engagement of the US as an arena for the Swedish government's policies for stabilising the region. On the part of Denmark, while fully integrated in NATO, the Danish government would tend to see the role of the EU in the region more as a supplement to the security that Denmark is granted by the USA.

Non-EU member Norway seems to parallel Finland in sharing concern for the engagement of the EU in Northern affairs. However, also in this case there are divergences, while the converging concerns are paradoxically promoted through competing projects – the Northern Dimension and the Barents Region. This is again related to the NATO question. One of the Norwegian government's motives for launching the Barents Region initiative in 1992 was to build a multilateral arrangement that could soften the diminishing attention that the alliance was already giving to the area – in case Norway would not become a member of the EU.<sup>36</sup> It is strategically important for Norway to exert influence in regional security politics also in the multilateral cooperation area, for the purpose of being able to mesh into processes in the region in which the EU is among the major participants. Although the EU is out of reach as a policy arena, its accessibility for Norwegian policy inputs to regional security usually goes via the Nordic EU states.

The Finnish government has signalled that it considers the EU as a major provider of multilateral cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. With regard to the Northern Dimensions initiative, Finnish diplomacy seems to have outdistanced Sweden and Denmark considerably with a consistent, proactive policy at EU level for its immediate security environment. The gains in security that are perceived to come out of this, are twofold: to engage Russia in the larger European political process, and to contribute to a cross-border process of consultation and negotiation between all states in the Baltic Sea Region – as well as in the Barents Region.<sup>37</sup>

The Swedish and Danish governments, in comparison, seem to downplay the EU for regional purposes, emphasising Baltic Sea regional cooperation as well as OSCE policies for the purpose of regional multilateral cooperation instead. In the priorities of these two countries, the EU appears more as an important framework for the stabilisation of the Baltic states and Russia, than as an explicit arena for their own roles in Baltic Sea politics.

The Baltic states, while still applicant countries to the EU, have through government statements signalled that they regard the EU as being of secondary importance to the military security guarantees that could be offered by NATO.<sup>38</sup> However, through the application and negotiation process with the EU, fundamental developments in their legislative and administrative systems have been carried out, which are also necessary to ensure eligibility for membership in NATO.

The pattern of multilateral cooperation priorities among the regional states thus seems to follow two main lines. The first is to stronger emphasise the participation of the US as a partner in regional multilateral cooperation. This line is followed by Denmark and Sweden, as well as the three Baltic states. The Danish and Swedish priorities in this regard could be understood in view

NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po  
 2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe  
 3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found  
 4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the  
 5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies  
 6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona  
 7. Conclusions  
 Fußnoten

zur Startseite

of Washington's encouraging of them to take a greater deal of the responsibility for regional security.

The other line is to put less emphasis to the US as an actor in Baltic Sea multilateral cooperation. Norway and Finland, with their governments paying particular regard to the Northern areas, tend to pursue this line. For these two states it has become important to exploit the various arenas that offer viable opportunities to link together regional politics in the northern areas and the Baltic Sea region. For that purpose, the EU and regional cooperation seem to rank somewhat higher among their priorities than what seems to be the case for Danish and Swedish priorities.

#### Competing political strategies for regional influence

In the more relaxed, but also more unpredictable security environment in Europe at large, the room for manoeuvre in security affairs has increased for the regional states. At the same time, the uncertainty about the implications of each other's choices has increased. The main response so far has been to abstain from taking on individual responsibilities for regional security. The motivation behind only modestly exploiting the new room to manoeuvre appears to be twofold – to refrain from formulating conflicting positions, and to avoid the connections to the transatlantic security system becoming too loose.

Maintaining a US engagement in regional security therefore seems to rank as a common interest superior to regional competition. However, certain competition has still grown out of the relaxation of the earlier great power restraint upon the regional states, however without the transatlantic connections having been put at risk. Instead, they rather seem to become more or less cleverly exploited. In particular, the Danish government's strategy of "regional activism" distinguishes Denmark from the other regional states. The Norwegian government, on its part, holds low ambitions along such lines, but has strong interests in using Baltic Sea Regional security to raise awareness about the Northern areas.

In Finland's regional security policy, there are two main strategic objectives: To pay due attention to Russian concerns, and to counteract de-coupling of the Baltic Sea region from the larger European security structures. These concerns determine Finland's regional strategy for hard and multilateral cooperation in the region. Finland's regional strategy appears as generally cautious, with a concentration upon the country's close environment. The emphasis on military means as a foreign policy instrument is played down in this particular context, relative to the emphasis that is laid on cooperation in non-military sectors. Military cooperation has, however, both a regional aim of securing Finland's southern coast, and a more overall aim of multilateralised relations.

Sweden's regional ambitions appear as more modest than those of Denmark, mainly aiming at the stabilisation of the Eastern Baltic Sea. Together with the inclusive attitude to Russia, Sweden's stakes in regional multilateral cooperation have increased relative to military security solutions. A major demonstration of this was the Swedish government's initiative to establish the CBSS in 1992. Extensive involvement in a wide range of

NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

Textanfang

Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po
  2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe
  3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found
  4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the
  5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies
  6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona
  7. Conclusions
- Fußnoten

[zur Startseite](#)

intergovernmental and supranational institutions has followed subsequently. This fits well into the government's preference for multilateralised relations also in the security political field. Not that "hard" security is seen as inferior to regional cooperation, but rather that Sweden's strategic position currently speaks for more multilateralised frameworks for its security in the region.

While still lacking any significant group of spokesmen within NATO for full membership in the alliance, a pattern common to the Baltic states seems presently to be to rely on future EU membership, Nordic cooperation and a bilateral understanding with the US as a combined basis for security. From the actions they have taken throughout the 90's, it would be fair to describe their perspectives as, paradoxically, fully on the Atlantic dimension, while their currently most viable possibilities are found in the regional and European multilateral cooperation context.

The discussion undertaken in this section indicates that the security political priorities of the regional states in many ways differ with respect to all three approaches to security. The relationship between priorities and principal approaches are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Security political priorities as related to three approaches to regional security

	Regional military security	Multilateral cooperation	National regional strategies
Denmark	Cooperative security supported by NATO guarantee	Baltic Sea regional cooperation with EU and US participation	Active player in regional security, linking to transatlantic security.
Sweden	Cooperative security as a means of multilateralisation	Baltic Sea regional cooperation with EU and US participation	Linking regional security to transatlantic security
Norway	Collective defence guarantee	EU by way of the Nordics	Baltic Sea regional cooperation linked to Barents regional cooperation.
Finland	Cooperative security as a means of multilateralisation	EU central, regional cooperation additional	Safeguard the Gulf of Finland, multilateralisation through EU
Baltic States	Cooperative security, collective defence or direct guarantee optional	Baltic Sea regional cooperation, EU membership optional	Integration with the Nordic states (exc. Lithuania)

Tables 1 and 2 indicate two distinct tendencies. First, Finland and Sweden largely seem to converge over commitment to multilateralisation of regional security related affairs. Secondly, Denmark and Norway tend to converge over alliance commitment in military security affairs, and over commitment to the EU and regional cooperation. These two tendencies transcend the three approaches to regional security. The perspective of the Baltic states largely converges with the Danish and Norwegian perspectives on the importance of

NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

Textanfang

Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po  
 2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe  
 3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found  
 4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the  
 5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies  
 6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona  
 7. Conclusions  
 Fußnoten

zur Startseite

the Western alliance for their security.

Crossing the two main tendencies, there is a variety of converging and diverging priorities, which pay different regard to the significance of the US. While, for example, it is important to Denmark as a basis for national security policies in the region, for Norway the US is more important as a guarantor of direct security than as a partner or support in regional politics. An attempt to explain this pattern of convergence and divergence, will be made in the following.

## 6. Converging and diverging perspectives on the significance of the US

Whereas there are notable differences between the perspectives held by the regional states, there are also important points of convergence, for example on cooperative security as a commonly shared priority with regard to attaining regional military security (perhaps with the exception of Norway). It may be somewhat surprising that even in a situation in which the Baltic Sea Region at the time is to a large extent relieved of divisions in great power interest spheres, and in which the regional states seem to share the perception that the US is wanted as a provider of regional security, differences occur with respect to its significance in this capacity.

In light of this, the last issue to be addressed will be some factors that may account for the converging and diverging perspectives that have been observed. There are three factors that account for converging perspectives across the board:

### Russia as the main potential threat to regional security and stability

This perception of Russia appears to be shared by the governments of all the regional states. However, their individual perception of to which degree and in what respect Russia constitutes for them respectively, may differ somewhat. In some cases, the emphasis is on Russia as a traditional assertive great power, which at any given time could begin to conduct aggressive policies. In other cases, the trouble that may arise out of a destabilised, dissolving Russian state is emphasised. All states share both threat perceptions, but emphasise them differently.

What seems to strongest account for such divergence, is their respective post-cold war strategic situation. Divergence on this issue may quickly lead to diverging perspectives on the US. On the other hand, Russia as a general security problem, and also as the major security problem, creates the basic assumption which is shared by all the states in question, namely that the US necessarily must be involved in regional security.

Only the US is capable of projecting power in the entire region

Ensuring the engagement of a US that is capable of balancing the two land powers Russia and Germany appears as a basic priority for the governments of all the states in question. Such a counterbalancing role demands some kind of responsibility of the US for regional security. Even if

NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po  
 2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe  
 3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found  
 4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the  
 5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies  
 6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona  
 7. Conclusions  
 Fußnoten

zur Startseite

not all the regional states themselves strive for full NATO membership, it appears as if leadership in the alliance well makes up for a certain regional responsibility.

The US is the only power capable of projecting power that may cause Russia to abstain from possible pursuance of its geopolitical interest policies in the region. In the present situation, the lack of such a power could move the balance in favour of the "German land power". As a global power, the US is capable to balance Germany through the alliance. Consequently, alliance membership for regional states provides for an opportunity to align German influence through partnership policies with both the land power and the maritime power.

#### The region's connection to the Euro-Atlantic security structure

At present, the region is somewhat three-fourths integrated in the Euro-Atlantic security structure, most of the states being either fully in the EU or in NATO, or partly in both. Still lacking is a precisely defined place for the Baltic States, as well as stable and integrative relations between Russia and Belarus and the Euro-Atlantic community.

There is a strong concern for all the regional states that the region at least remains, or even becomes more integrated, in the Western structures. On this, all the regional states converge. The present transatlantic security structure provides both for a balance of Russia in the traditional security political sense, as well as for a confinement of Germany in multilateral institutions that absorbs German influence. During the last decade, the growing integration of the region in transatlantic structures has granted most regional states increased diplomatic freedom of action.

Converging perspectives on these more principal issues, may at the same time cover up diverging perspectives that may partly have their offspring in problems connected to the same issues, or to other ones. It is possible to suggest three such diverging issues:

#### Russia as a security challenge

Russia appears to play a role, this time as its character as a challenge to the security of the regional states is concerned.

Each state's particular post-Cold War strategic situation accounts for different views of Russia as a security problem. Sweden and Finland, whose strategic situation improved greatly during the last decade, have also come relatively closer up to the area of instability adjacent to Russia's border in the region. For them, it is the presence of the US as an actor in regional security that is important, rather than the US as a direct guarantor. Their closeness to Russia and their somewhat equal emphasis on Russia as a stability threat and a potential offensive threat accounts for that. In relation to the basic security concerns of Finland and Sweden, the US works best when engaged in regional affairs, but only as a remote lead nation in the transatlantic security system.

In the case of Norway, there are some similarities with the Finnish and



NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

#### Textanfang

#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po  
 2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe  
 3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found  
 4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the  
 5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies  
 6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona  
 7. Conclusions  
 Fußnoten

zur Startseite

Swedish postures. However, the security challenge that Russia raises to Norway is not primarily located in the Baltic Sea region proper, but further north, where the relationship is extremely asymmetric. It is therefore in Norway's interest that the US offers a credible security guarantee. Related to the Baltic Sea region proper, the Norwegian perspective resembles more the Finnish and Swedish, seeing further integration of the region in the transatlantic security structure as the preferred development.

Special cases are Denmark and the Baltic States. The improvement of Denmark's strategic position made it more relevant to stress the stability aspect of Russia, and thus seek security from the US in connection with the improvement of Denmark's position in regional security politics. The Baltic States' strong urge for direct US guarantees implies a wish for the USA to enter into regional security as an active player.

#### NATO's eastward expansion

This issue seems to create the same pattern of divergence as the former. While somewhat problematic for Sweden and Finland, the eastward expansion of the alliance improves Denmark's immediate strategic situation. On the other hand, it also creates a stronger German element in regional security, thus increasing the need for Denmark to maintain a close partnership with the US. Close ties with the US are, likewise, important in relation to basic Norwegian concerns. The issue at stake in this case is, however, to maintain the attention of the alliance to Norway's particular security problems in the North. Among the Baltic states, Lithuania has begun to become oriented more towards Poland and Germany. Estonia and Latvia thus become even more peripheral to NATO, a development that indicates a pattern of stronger Lithuanian reliance on the Central European component of NATO, and stronger Estonian/Latvian strive for direct protection from the USA.

#### National ambitions for regional security

As discussed above, these concerns tend to separate Denmark, Sweden and Finland, Norway and the three Baltic states respectively. For Denmark, US support for its regional security strategies is essential. For Finland, Norway and Sweden it is, in comparison, sufficient that the US remains a partner, though a distant one, in regional security. As for the Baltic states, their ambitions to become Western allies seems to require a more direct role for the US as a lead actor in regional security. The kind of protection sought by the governments of these states implies a readiness on the part of the US to interfere directly on their behalf in case the perceived Russian threat should materialise.

#### 7. Conclusions

Also under the present conditions of low levels of threat and strong common cooperation processes, it has been possible to observe clearly diverging security political orientations between the regional states. In other respects, views converge, thus working to moderate differences. However, the picture of converging and diverging orientations is not entirely clear. It becomes complicated by a continuing reformulation of government policies, at the time

NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

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#### Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po  
 2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe  
 3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found  
 4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the  
 5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies  
 6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona  
 7. Conclusions  
 Fußnoten

zur Startseite

being most notably in Finland and Sweden, as well as continuing changes in important elements of the overall security structure. Perspectives seem to converge with regard to US attention to the region and active engagement in regional affairs as necessary for regional security. Likewise, there seems to be agreement that a US conviction that the region remains linked to the Euro-Atlantic security structures, is being upheld.

It is when each states' individual purpose of US presence for its own security is concerned, that divergences begin to arise. In particular, it appears as if the states' strategic situation as related to Russia and NATO in different ways create the basic preconditions. After 1990, these factors also seem to have provided the main ground for the formulation of each state's particular security political ambitions, as well as for the emphasis they put on military security in the traditional sense, respectively broader multilateral cooperation.

Concerning the countries separately, there is a certain pattern of divergence. The way Danish perceptions have been formed, the US is demanded both as a provider of direct security as well as a politico-military support for its own regional security policies, while Finnish and Swedish concerns go in the direction of regional presence of the US rather than direct guarantees to themselves. In the Norwegian perspective and in those of the Baltic States, especially Estonia and Latvia, on the other hand, US presence tends to be demanded for the purpose of direct security, however on considerably different grounds.

The analysis that has been undertaken indicates that divergences have continued to persist between the regional states in spite of the new conditions that emerged after 1990. The end of the Cold War put the regional states in new strategic situations, in which all demand some kind of engagement by the US in regional affairs, but in diverging ways in order to suit their respective needs. Even if the region in post Cold War Europe has not become subject to firm divisions between the Western maritime powers and the regional land powers, the preconditions for a common ground for regional security do not seem fully present. The presence of the Western maritime powers in Baltic Sea Region outweighs that of the land powers, but this has not so far led to entirely common security political orientations by the regional states.

1 Evans, Gareth: "Cooperative security and intrastate Conflict". In: Foreign Policy. 96 (1994), 3–20, as quoted in: Lewis J. Carafiello and Nico Vertongen: "Removing the Last Wall: Rethinking the Baltic Security Concept". In: Arteus, Gunnar and Atis Lejins: Baltic Security. Looking Towards the 21st Century. Riga/ Stockholm 1998, 216.

2 See i.e. "Förändrad omvärld – omdannat försvar". In: Ds departmensserien 1999:2, Stockholm 1999, 80.

3 Krohn, Axel and Gunnar Arteus: „German and Danish Relations after 1945: Solved Problems, Different Views and Close Cooperation". In: Arteus, Gunnar and Bertel Heurlin (eds.): German and Danish Security

NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

Textanfang

Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po
2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe
3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found
4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the
5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies
6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona
7. Conclusions

Fußnoten

zur Startseite

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4 Heurlin, Bertel: "Actual and Future Danish Defence and Security  
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5 Huldt, Bo: „Introduction“. In: Arteus, Lejins 1998, see footnote 1, 9.

6 Bingen, Jon and Kate H. Bundt: „Norden i det europeiske  
 statssystem“. In: Bingen, Jon and Rutger Lindahl (eds.): Nordiske  
 skjebnevalg? Oslo 1994, 21.

7 Ds 1999:2, see footnote 2, 80.

8 „Dansk og europæisk sikkerhed“. In: Det Sikkerheds- og  
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9 Report from the Defence Commission: Fremtidens Forsvar: Beretning  
 fra Forsvarskommissionen af 1997. København 1997, 7.

10 Heurlin 1995, see footnote 4, 90.

11 SNU 1995, see footnote 8, 27–37.

12 Heurlin 1995, see footnote 4, 90–91.

13 Report 1997, see footnote 9, 11.

14 Mouritzen, Hans: „Danmark i Østersøen. Afslutning og perspektiver.“  
 In: Christiansen, Lisbet and Jesper S. Thomsen: Danmark i  
 Østersøregionen. København 1998 (Dansk Udenrigspolitisk Institut,  
 DUPI), 140.

15 For example, as Heurlin (Heurlin 1995, see footnote 4, 97) points out  
 as abroad illustration: "...one of the main objectives of the Danish  
 defence policy: with military means, soft as well as hard – to maintain  
 and advance the stability in the Baltic Sea area. This includes military  
 cooperation, military integration, democratisation, political transparency,  
 and mutual trust through common activities"

16 SNU 1995, see footnote 8, 41.

17 „Säkerheten i en föränderlig värld. Finlands säkerhetspolitiska  
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18 Ibid., 45.

19 „Säkerhetsutvecklingen i Europa och Finlands försvar." In:  
 Statsrådets redogörelse till riksdagen 173.1997. (SRR) Helsinki 1997,  
 36–38, 42.

20 Ds 1998:9, see footnote 2, 129.

21 Ds 1998:9, see footnote 2, 58.

22 With the Norwegian Armed Forces into year 2000: a summary of

NORDEUROPAforum  
 Zeitschrift für Politik,  
 Wirtschaft und Kultur  
 ISSN 1863639X  
 2/2000  
 10. Jahrgang (3. der N.F.)  
 Seiten 35-60

Textanfang

Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction: The US and Po
2. Three Approaches to Regiona  
 Military Security in the Post-  
 The Broader Regional Cooperati  
 Strategies for regional influe
3. Different Perspectives on t  
 Provider of a direct security  
 Balancing the regional land po  
 Participant in broader regiona  
 Military protection as a found
4. The post Cold War strategic  
 Denmark: The front line that m  
 Finland: Permanently on the bo  
 Sweden: Closer to the "instabi  
 Norway: An Atlantic state in t  
 The Baltic States: Between the
5. Security Political Prioriti  
 Military Security through alli  
 Broader multilateral security  
 Competing political strategies
6. Converging and diverging pe  
 Russia as the main potential t  
 Only the US is capable of proj  
 The region's connection to the  
 Russia as a security challenge  
 NATO's eastward expansion  
 National ambitions for regiona
7. Conclusions

Fußnoten

zur Startseite

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23 Ibid., 25.

24 Kaufman, Stuart J.: “The Baltic States in Post-Cold War US Strategy”. In: Hansen, Birthe and Bertil Heurlin (eds.): The Baltic States in World Politics. Richmond (UK) 1998, 56.

25 see Archer, Clive: “Nordic Involvement in the Baltic States Security”. In: European Security. 3 (1998), 50–51.

26 In the new government's program, the term “alliance freedom and independent defence” became replaced by “credible defence”.

27 Ries, Tomas: “Finland and Security the Day After” In: Finnish Institute of International Affairs (eds.): Northern Dimensions. Chronology of Finnish Foreign Policy 1997. Helsinki 1998.

28 Ries, Tomas: “In from the Cold: Finland’s security political course after the Cold War”. In: Debating Nordic Security 1999. Oslo 1999, 10.

29 See Austin, Daniel F. C: “NATO expansion to Northern Europe”. In: European Security. 1 (1999), 81, 84.

30 See e.g. SRR 1997, see footnote 19, 25.

31 Ds 1999:2, see footnote 2, 80.

32 SRR 1997, see footnote 19, 25; Ds 1999:2, see footnote 2, 78.

33 On the basis of the recommendations of the Defence Commission, see Fremtidens Forsvar: Beretning fra Forsvarskommissionen af 1997. København 1997, 10–13 (the short version). See also footnote 19.

34 Austin 1999, see footnote 29, 86.

35 Ds 1999:2, see footnote 2, 78.

36 This motive was not stated publicly at the time by the Norwegian government, but was widely accepted as one important security political motive. There was a wide range of motives connected to the “Barents Project”, not least regional political motives. All during the Cold War, defence and regional political motives were closely connected when concerning Northern Norway, as the many military installations in the area sustained a large number of local communities. The “Barents Project” sought partly to replace the defence underpinnings with economic relations with Northwest Russia.

37 Austin 1999, see footnote 29, 86-87.

38 Ibid., 87.