

# Need to Have or Nice to Have? Nordic Cooperation, NATO and the EU in Norwegian Foreign, Security and Defence Policy

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## Abstract

Nordic-ness and Nordic values clearly are embedded in Norway's conception of its foreign policy role. Nordic cooperation is also important for seeking information about EU policies for non-EU country Norway. While supporting and participating in Nordic Defence Cooperation, Norway's NATO-membership has trumped its relations with the Nordic countries as well as with the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy. A stronger policy of self-interest facilitated by its petroleum economy has also moved Norway further away from traditional Nordic peacekeeping and towards status seeking vis-à-vis key European allies. To what extent may recent global and regional political and strategic developments forge a Nordic «turn» in Norwegian foreign and security policy? What has Nordic cooperation to offer in terms of security and international status for Norway? The Norwegian case suggests that in the field of security and defence, Nordic cooperation is «nice to have» and more important than earlier but not necessary.

Keywords: Security, defence, CSDP, NATO, Nordic, Norway

## Introduction

Multiple European crises in recent years, such as the economic crisis, Brexit and the rise of anti-EU populist parties have cast doubts about the future of the European integration project.<sup>1</sup> In addition, repeated terrorist attacks against Europe and Russian aggression in Ukraine have brought territorial security back on Europe's agenda. While the EU response is to revitalize its defence dimension, NATO has returned to collective defence. At the same time, a controversial U.S. President has put the credibility of the collective security guarantee into question. This situation of strategic uncertainty has also instigated renewed interest in Nordic foreign, security and defence cooperation among Nordic states, especially in non-NATO members Sweden and Finland (Ojanen & Tapio 2018, Brommesson 2018). One assumption would be that Nordic cooperation adds an extra layer of security cooperation, in addition to NATO and the EU, that is attractive in times of uncertainty. To what extent is this Nordic «turn» also observable in and what's in it for non-EU NATO-member Norway?

The degree of interest and engagement in Nordic security and defence cooperation differ considerably between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Inspired by Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein (1996), the degree of Nordic-ness in Norwegian foreign and security policy can be examined along two axes; one concerning the degree of cultural and institutional density of the Nordic environment, and one concerning the relationship between the actors and the environment and, more specifically, how important the Nordic environment is for 'the construction of the units' (here states), or vice versa. Based on various combinations of how

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they score along these two axes – high/low degree – the Nordics can be placed in a four-by-four table (see Brommesson 2018, this special issue). In the upper left quadrant, we have Denmark, who understand the Nordic environment as having a low degree of cultural density (e.g. shared norms, identity) and who conceive of the Nordic environment as having little impact on the construction of Danish foreign policy (see Wivel 2018). States who envision the Nordic environment as having a high degree of cultural density and a high impact on the construction of their foreign policies are found in the lower right quadrant (Sweden, Finland, see Brommesson 2018; Ojanen and Tapio 2018). Regarding Norway, this article argues that Nordic values and norms are embedded in its conception of its foreign policy role and mission, and Norway often votes with the Nordic bloc in multilateral institutions and participates in the Nordic institutions and Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFECO). At the same time, Nordic cooperation has only marginally shaped its security and defence policy, compared to other institutional environments within that field, such as the transatlantic/NATO and the European/EU, placing in in the upper right quadrant of the model (together with Iceland).

While a study of the construction of the Norwegian state is beyond the scope and interest of this article, studying how Norway conceives of the Nordic environment and expresses its role in relation to it, including to its fellow Nordic countries, is possible. With this in view, the article starts with exploring Nordic foreign policy as a hub and arena, before examining various aspects of Nordic defence and security cooperation and, finally, how the new strategic environment may impact on Nordic cooperation. The analysis draws on open primary sources (e.g. documents, speeches, websites) and secondary sources (e.g. scholarly publications, policy reports, Op. Eds.), complemented with in-debt personal interviews with Norwegian, EU and NATO officials.<sup>2</sup>

### **Nordic foreign policy cooperation - arena and hub**

What can Nordic security cooperation bring to the table for Norway that NATO and the EU cannot? Nordic-ness is inherent in Norway's foreign policy identity and in how it pursues its policies globally. Norway strongly supports the Nordic cosmopolitan values and focus on international solidarity regarding economic distribution, workers and women's rights, climate and environmental issues, peacebuilding, and a rules-based global order (Græger 2011b). Furthermore, Norway gives priority to meetings in Nordic institutions, such as the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Assembly (Government platform 2013), and the regular informal Nordic foreign policy dialogue, which also includes the Baltic states. The Nordics seek to coordinate their positions before meetings in the UN (where there is a Nordic caucus), the World Bank or other multilateral organizations, but any such coordination would always take the different memberships in and commitments to NATO and the EU, as well as non-alignment into account. For instance, Norway's NATO-commitments trumped its otherwise support for the typically Nordic position on nuclear disarmament, and it did not sign the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty (whereas e.g. Finland is more positive).

In response to the deteriorated strategic situation in Europe since the Ukraine crisis, the Nordic foreign policy and security dialogue has not only been stepped up but changed fundamentally, government sources claim. Security policy is now frequently on the agenda of Nordic meetings, including «hard core» topics, and the density of bilateral consultations at all levels has increased.<sup>3</sup> The Nordic hub also functions as a platform for organizing meetings with other

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<sup>2</sup> Interviews were conducted in Oslo in November-December 2017 and January 2018. I also draw on interviews made in Brussels (in NATO, EEAS, Norwegian delegation to the European Union) in December 2014 and January 2015 for a related project.

<sup>3</sup> Interview, MFA and MOD, December 2017.

states or constellations of states, such as the Nordic-US meetings and Nordic-Baltic-US meetings at the level of junior ministers and bureaucrats since 2014.<sup>4</sup> Nordic branding – marketing the Nordics as a unit internationally – is also part of the Nordic International Strategy for 2018-2022 (Nordisk Råd 2018).<sup>5</sup> For Norway, Nordic cooperation represents a particularly important arena for approaching the EU, which we now turn to.

### *Norway's Nordic back-channel to the EU*

The Nordics have different memberships of and alignments with NATO and the EU, which also impacts on Nordic cooperation. Having declined EU-membership through popular vote twice, in 1972 (when Denmark voted yes to EU-membership) and 1994 (when Sweden and Finland voted yes to EU-membership), standing on the outside of the EU has become normal for Norway. Norway has however close economic and also political ties with the union through the EEA agreement<sup>6</sup>, Schengen-cooperation, and bilateral cooperation agreements. In the security and defence area, Norway's participates in the EU satellite centre (2001), the EU's civil and military crisis management operations (Framework agreement, 2004), the EU's rapid reaction force - the Nordic EU Battle Group (2005) and in the European Defence Agency (associated member, 2006). Available strategies vis-à-vis the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) have nevertheless been extremely limited.

At the political level, Norway's action space is largely defined by meeting formats at ministerial or state secretary level that form part of the EU's foreign policy dialogue and information exchange with third countries. The 2009 Lisbon Treaty removed the formats for information sharing and consultation with third countries introduced by the Nice Treaty in 2001. While these were to be substituted with new ones, for no specific reason this has not (yet) materialized, deteriorating Norway's already marginalized position.<sup>7</sup> For Norwegian ministers of foreign affairs and of defence, who constantly feel Norway's lack of relevance and importance in the EU, travelling to Brussels to be informed about initiatives and decisions already adopted by the EU without having a say, has been unattractive (Græger 2007).<sup>8</sup> Despite this, Norway has supported almost all EU foreign policy resolutions over the years (Sjursen 2008). As summarized by two former Europe ministers, Norway seeks as close relations with the EU within security and defence as possible (Bakke-Jensen and Røsland 2017, see also Haugevik & Græger 2017). In practice, in the foreign and security area Norway's diplomacy vis-à-vis the EU has largely and increasingly relied on informal bilateral ties with selected European states like Britain, Germany and Poland as well as the Nordics (Græger 2016a; Haugevik 2017; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017).

The EU is always on the agenda of Nordic meetings, at all levels, both to promote each other's interests and coordinate positions vis à vis the union, where possible. This goes for areas where the Nordics participate (e.g. the internal market) and specific issues (e.g. the political developments in Poland and Hungary, and Brexit). Norwegian authorities have stressed the utility of the Nordic states' EU-delegations in Brussels as a hub for coordinating Nordic EU-policies.<sup>9</sup> For Norway, the Nordic arena is an important back-channel to the EU, where the Nordic EU-members regularly share «inside» EU-information and EU-members' national positions with Norway (Græger 2002, 2016a). NATO is to some extent also a hub for

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<sup>4</sup> Interviews, MFA, January 2018.

<sup>5</sup> As part of this strategy, Nordic Innovation Offices exist in New York and California, and some Nordic embassies are co-located (e.g. Berlin) or fully (e.g. Myanmar) or partly integrated (e.g. Kabul, Dhaka, Luanda).

<sup>6</sup> Norway signed the European Economic Agreement in 1994.

<sup>7</sup> Interview, MoD, November 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Interview, Brussels, January 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Interview MFA, December 2017.

approaching the EU-members in NATO (22 until Britain leaves the union), sharing information about relevant positions, initiatives and processes and where Denmark (despite its opt-outs from the CSDP) and NATO-partners Finland and Sweden are particularly important to Norway. In return, Norway passes on NATO-information to Finland and Sweden as far as possible.

Thus, with a strong sense of Nordic cultural belonging and support for Nordic norms, and interest in using the Nordic institutions for coordinating *foreign policy* positions and as a back channel to the EU, Norway scores high on both axes in the model mentioned above, potentially placing the country in the lower right corner. However, within defence and security, as we shall see, Nordic cooperation has been but a supplement, placing it in the upper right corner.

### **Nordic security and defence policy**

The past decade, Nordic cooperation has advanced considerably within security and defence. This was first and foremost a response to the financial crisis that hit Europe in 2007/2008, negatively affecting states' ability to develop capabilities, as well as the European defence industry. In Europe, cutting costs and filling capability gaps together led to initiatives, such as the EU's Pooling and Sharing and NATO's Smart Defence and Framework Nation Concept. At the Nordic level, a joint study by the Norwegian and Swedish Chiefs of Defence in 2007 suggested a strengthening of Nordic defence cooperation to support both countries' defence structures (Diesen and Syrén 2007; see also Diesen 2016). This led to the Nordic Supportive Defence Structure (NORDSUP) in 2008, aimed at strengthening operative capabilities and cost-effective solutions, and was later supported with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

Former Foreign Minister of Norway Thorvald Stoltenberg's report from 2009 was a milestone in the creation of a permanent structure for defence cooperation at the Nordic level, the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFECO). Under NORDEFECO, the Nordics meet at the level of Defence Ministers (Policy Steering Committee), civil servants, the MoD Director of defence material, military staff (Military Coordination Committee) and subordinate staff to engage in political consultations, force generation, as well as force deployment (Stoltenberg 2009). However, NORDEFECO is not a command structure, meaning that cooperation activities are run by regular national chains of command, and a specific agreement defines the lead nation (or framework concept) for each activity.<sup>10</sup> At the military level, Nordic cooperation include Operations, Armaments, Capabilities, Human Resources, Education, Training and Exercises, and the next sections look more closely at Norway's engagement in some of these.

#### ***Operations: Peacekeeping and military operations***

Nordic force deployment to operations is not new. During the Cold War, the Nordics often coordinated their approaches and contributions to UN-missions, including deployment of joint contributions (Saxi 2011). For instance, Norway and Denmark coordinated parts of their troop contributions (DaNor-batallion) to the first armed UN mission – the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in Gaza in 1956. In 1963, Nordic cooperation was formalized in The Nordic cooperation group on military UN issues (NORDSAMFN), which became an important arena for practical defence cooperation, until replaced by the Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support (NORCAPS) in 1997. In the 1990s, Nordic battalions were deployed to the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and to the NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) (Nordbatt) in the Western Balkans. Both common and national interests as well as selection

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.nordefco.org/the-basics-about-nordefco>

criteria that favoured a «select group of small and middle-sized states», made it logical to support UN-peacekeeping (Jacobsen 2006).

While the Nordics did cooperate in the ISAF-operation in Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom and the fight against terrorism gradually moved Norway away from the Nordic peacekeeping model and towards a «troops-for-status strategy» (Græger 2015). This move reflected two things: Norway's fast-growing petroleum economy, and strong commitment to NATO. Its financial situation allowed Norway to place itself in a preferable position as a partner and ally by offering relevant military and other contributions to international operations, favouring important NATO-operations or coalitions of the willing (ibid.). Although Norway has not yet met the NATO target of spending 2 per cent of GDP on defence, the government intends «to move in the direction of» doing so within 2024, with a defence plan for 2017-2020 that represented a substantial increase in the total expenditure (Ministry of Defence 2017, 2016). In 2015 the country ranked sixth worldwide on defence spending per capita, ahead of Britain and France (SIPRI 2015). Spending some 1.56 per cent of GDP on defence in 2017, the Norwegian defence budget (55 bill. NOK in 2018) is almost twice that of Denmark and Finland, and considerably bigger than that of Sweden (but Denmark will increase defence spending considerably in the next five years). This policy of self-interest and search for international status, especially vis-à-vis European allies is nevertheless also visible in Sweden and Denmark, with Danish military activism and support of US international policies standing out among the three (Kristensen and Larsen 2017; Wivel 2018).

The Nordics have also coordinated contributions to EU-operations and capability building, such as the EU Battle Groups (EUBG). Norway joined the then Swedish-led Nordic EUBG in 2005, despite considerable political skepticism in Parliament (Græger 2007), and has been on call three times (with 150 personnel in 2008 and 2011, and 70 in 2015). Insofar as the EUBGs have not been used by the EU, being part of them has not provided opportunities for status-seeking or access to the CSDP. Norway also put its rapid reaction forces at the EU's disposal already in 2000 and has participated in the EU force generating conferences, force catalogues and EU-led operations where possible, as part of a «troops for influence» strategy (Græger 2002).<sup>11</sup> However, third country participation is by invitation only and the EU has occasionally turned down Norway's request to participate. In 2017, the government nevertheless suggested a «cautious strengthening» of Norway's contributions to EU civil and military crisis management capabilities, including anti-radicalization- and integration measures (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017). As of 2018, Norway has no militaries deployed to EU-operations.

### *Armaments, procurement and capability cooperation*

To support joint initiatives and cooperation within armaments, procurement and capability development, which goes back to the Cold War, the Nordic Armament Cooperation was established in 1994 (Saxi 2011). However, defence procurement and defence industrial projects are still very much a national concern. Nordic cooperation in this area never «took off», due to competition between Swedish and Norwegian manufacturers, whereas Norwegian and Finnish defence industries have been more complementary.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the Norwegian defence industry is eager to join the European Defence Industrial Development Program, whereas

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<sup>11</sup> Norway has contributed to FYROM and Bosnia & Herzegovina under «Berlin Plus», and to the EU-operation in the Gulf of Aden. For a list of Norwegian contributions, see <https://itjenestefornorge.no/operasjoner>

<sup>12</sup> Interviews, MFA and MoD, January 2018.

Sweden and Finland are concerned about the competition for their defence industries and about their non-alignment status (Tigner 2017; Ojanen and Tapio 2018).

However, coordination of Nordic views vis à vis the EU and the European Commission has been fruitful within the framework of the Joint Nordic Defence Industry Cooperation Group, which has existed since 2012 (Forsvar- og sikkerhetsindustriens forening 2015). This is important, as the Commission has taken on an increasingly important role within this area the past years (DeVore 2015: 177, 183; European Commission 2015), although the member-states' sensitivity towards increasing the EU's control regarding defence planning and the development of strategic military assets varies a lot (Batóra 2009).<sup>13</sup> The EDA's role has expanded over the years, too, both in terms of staff (appr. 150 in 2017) and funds allocated by the member-states to the general budget (31 bill. Euro in 2017) and various programmes (Barrinha 2015). Norway participates in research and certain cooperation activities including at the level of the MoD Director of defence in the European Defence Agency (EDA) since 2006 (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2016: 11). While Norway is not represented at the Steering Board (at the level of defence ministers), which adopts the annual general budget and work programme, projects, and new initiatives, its associated EDA-membership is presented as a success story at home.<sup>14</sup> Because of its EDA-association, Norway – as the only non-EU country – has participated in capability development projects under the EU Preparatory Action on Defence Research since 2017.

Norway's defence procurement and capability development policies have nevertheless been firmly embedded in cooperation with NATO-allies. Larger procurement projects include the purchase of Spanish manufactured frigates and American manufactured F-16s before that. In 2008, Parliament approved the principle decision to replace Norway's 52 F-16 fighter planes with 57 Joint Strike Fighter (F-35 Lightning II) planes. The first three training aircrafts arrived on 3 November 2017, with the remaining planes being ready by 2020. Like with the F-16s, Norway purchased the US plane (manufactured by Lockheed Martin) instead of the European (Eurofighter) or Swedish (Jas Gripen) alternatives. When meeting heavy critique, not least from Sweden, the Norwegian government emphasized the excellence of the F-35s in surveillance tasks in the High North as well as in combat (e.g. stealth capabilities). Buying the US plane was not as much a token of a lukewarm interest in Nordic procurement cooperation as a signal of Norway's a desire to maintain close political relations with the US (Græger 2015). However, Norway's withdrawal from recent procurement processes with Swedish manufacturers (e.g. the Archer artillery project and purchase of military trucks) and the decision to buy German and French, not Swedish submarines have created tensions and revealed differences in Norwegian and Swedish administrative cultures, management etc. (Friis & Bredesen 2017), also confirms Norway's prioritization of projects with NATO-members.

Beyond Nordic, EU and NATO frameworks, the Nordic and Baltic states participate in multilateral defence cooperation, such as the British initiated Northern Group. This is a forum, where also Poland, Germany and the Netherlands are members, for informal discussions on common defence and security issues, and to explore opportunities for cooperation.

### ***Solidarity but not collective defence***

Collective defence is not part of Nordic cooperation. Sweden's proposition of a neutral Nordic Defence Union in 1948 collapsed in 1949 when Norway and Denmark learned that only members of the Atlantic Pact would qualify for receiving US military support (and probably

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<sup>13</sup> Interviews with EDA official and EEAS diplomat, January 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Interviews in Brussels (January 2015, November 2014), and in MoD (November 2017).

also economic reconstruction aid), and joined NATO. Quite boldly, the Stoltenberg report (2009) also proposed a Nordic solidarity clause, which was adopted by the Nordic foreign ministers in Helsinki in 2011. A new pillar in Nordic cooperation, the solidarity clause stated that the Nordics shall meet foreign and security policy challenges and potential risks, such as human disasters, cyber security and terrorist attacks «in a spirit of solidarity».<sup>15</sup> While these threats have certainly become more relevant since 2011, along with «hybrid threats», the solidarity clause does not equal collective defence. Norway's security is firmly anchored in NATO's binding guarantee of mutual security in the Atlantic Treaty (Article 5), which reinforces the promise of support in times of crisis, having turned down.

As an Atlantic coastal state with strong historical ties to the West, Norway has historically sought protection from Western powers, particularly Britain and later the US (Skogrand 2004). During the Cold War, having a close bilateral relationship with the US was recognised as providing extra reassurance of the collective security guarantee. The Norwegian Armed Forces were dimensioned to deny an attacker the possibility of invading Norwegian territory or, if invaded, of putting up resistance for 48 hours until Western allies could come to Norway's assistance. Preparing for receiving such assistance by having allied exercises and pre-positioning of US military equipment and training of US Marines on Norwegian soil and being an active member of NATO remain the cornerstone of Norway's security and defence policy today (Ministry of Defence 2015: 14).

Despite a main pillar in Norwegian security and defence policy, the transatlantic relationship has come under pressure with President Trump, and some Norwegian politicians have proposed that Norway should reconsider it entirely (Solhjell 2017). However, the government's emphasis on the need to maintain the transatlantic bonds and, in fact, further develop Norway's security policy cooperation with the US has been approved by Parliament (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017). This signals a continuation of the long lines in Norwegian foreign and security policy during the entire post-WW2 era, where the Atlanticist orientation has trumped Norway's relations with the Nordic countries as well as with the EU (Græger and Haugevik 2009).

While presently not on the agenda, the Nordic solidarity clause might come more upfront if strategic insecurity in the Nordic neighbourhood worsens. Norway would most likely be strategically affected by negative developments (e.g. foreign aggression) against Sweden and/or Finland or in the Baltic Sea. The question of drawing the lines of Nordic cooperation involving the Nordic EU and NATO members, should a crisis situation occur, remains challenging, however.<sup>16</sup> The clear distinction between the activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers and those of NORDEFECO also reflects this (Prime Minister's Office 2017).

### **Strategic uncertainty as cooperation multiplier?**

Whereas economic incentives were the key driver for the creation of NORDEFECO, shared regional security concerns are driving current cooperation. Intensified Russian military activity in Norway's neighbourhood since 2007, the tripling of Russian overflights with heavy strategic bombers during 2013-2014 (The Armed Forces 2015: 15), and the Ukraine crisis gradually has changed Norway's attitude towards Nordic cooperation somewhat. In addition, concrete episodes in the region, including Russian incursions into the territorial waters of other Nordic states such as the submarine incident in Sweden in October 2014 (Matlé and Corvaja 2015),

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<sup>15</sup> [https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/norden\\_enige/id637871/](https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/norden_enige/id637871/)

<sup>16</sup> Interviews, MFA and MoD, January 2018.

and the Russian military exercise in 2015 where a rapid intervention in the islands of Åland (Finland), Gotland (Sweden), Bornholm (Denmark) and Northern Norway was the primary scenario (Lucas 2015) have contributed to a renewed interest in Nordic defence cooperation. Increasingly, the Nordic (and Baltic) region is seen as one strategic space by states in the region as well as by allies, as reflected in NATO exercises in the region and NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania, which Norway participates in.<sup>17</sup>

One example of a joint Nordic response to the return of geopolitics and regional strategic developments is the «Easy Access» NORDEFMOU signed in 2016, facilitating force deployment access to the signing countries (also building on the Alternate Landing Base agreement between Denmark, Sweden and Norway) (Breitenbach et al. 2017: 8; NORDEFMOU Annual Report 2016: 10). Other examples include cooperation to secure communication links between Defence Ministries and between Defence Commands, and a MOU on Nordic Cooperation for Air Surveillance Information Exchange from November 2017 (Reuters 2017). Common situational awareness, enhanced exchange of analyses about security, open dialogue and mutual trust all reflect a greater willingness and desire to make use of the Nordic framework.<sup>18</sup>

Another cooperation multiplier for the Nordics could be EU-NATO cooperation, which has been stepped up considerably since the Ukraine crisis. This cooperation was formalized with the «Berlin Plus» Agreement (2002), which provides the EU with access to NATO assets when the Alliance does not want to engage itself (EU and NATO 2002). The Agreed Framework (2003) also created meeting arenas and cooperation formats aimed at facilitating EU-NATO consultations, capability- and operational cooperation. Since 2005, however, EU-NATO cooperation has been more about deconflicting and avoiding duplication, than about common projects, due to the political conflict between Cyprus and Turkey that is blocking formal cooperation (Smith et al. 2017).<sup>19</sup> Likewise, the formats for including non-EU NATO countries that contribute to EU-led operations under Berlin Plus - mainly to ensure that they receive relevant operational information and may participate in discussion about operational concerns in the committee of contributors, have not worked in practice (Græger 2007, 2016a).

The joint declaration by Jens Stoltenberg, Donal Tusk and Jean-Claude Juncker adopted at the NATO Washington summit in July 2016 signaled a change for the better by proposing strengthened EU-NATO cooperation in areas such as operations, cyber security, defence capabilities, industrial cooperation, exercises, countering hybrid threats, and capacity building in Eastern and Southern partner countries (NATO 2016; EU and NATO 2016).<sup>20</sup> Since then, the EU and NATO have met frequently at various institutional levels to oversee these initiatives and ensure the implementation of 42 concrete proposals for cooperation and coordination. Three other areas of cooperation have been added, too: the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq, the promotion of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, as well as military mobility (of forces) – presented as the new potential «flagship for NATO-EU cooperation» (Natowatch 2017). Several of these areas have been particularly central for the

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<sup>17</sup> [https://kariuomene.kam.lt/en/e\\_f\\_p.html](https://kariuomene.kam.lt/en/e_f_p.html); see also [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_136388.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136388.htm).

<sup>18</sup> Interviews, MFA and MoD, January 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Turkey wants but is not warranted a security agreement with the EU and has not been offered associated EDA-membership (both are blocked by Cyprus). Cyprus does not want membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) and, accordingly, lacks access to NATO-documents.

<sup>20</sup> Informal cooperation already exists in some of these areas through “technical” agreements (e.g. the Technical Arrangement on Cyber Defence between NATO's Computer Incident Response Capability and the EU's Computer Emergency Response Team, and the technical agreement on chains of responsibility in Kosovo). NATO also supports individual EU-countries and Frontex in fighting human trafficking in the Aegean Sea, and the EU's Operation Sophia in the Central Mediterranean since 2015 (Græger 2016b).



Nordics and for Norway, and a revitalized EU-NATO relationship could provide an arena for enhanced information sharing and coordination among the Nordics, given their different memberships of the two organizations.

## Conclusion

How has Norway been affected by the Nordic «turn» in foreign, security and defence policy, and what does Nordic cooperation have to offer? Addressing this question, the article has discussed Norway's relations with NATO, the EU and Nordic cooperation. The analysis showed that the Nordic hub has been important for coordinating Norway's contributions to international operations (especially UN-peacekeeping and the EU Battle Groups), certain aspects of defence cooperation (Norwegian decision-makers regard NORDEFECO as a success), and for seeking information about EU policies and individual EU-countries' positions on issues of relevance to Norway, as well as for coordinating Nordic political positions towards the EU whenever possible. Norway's action space vis-à-vis the CSDP is limited compared to Sweden and Finland's status and involvement in NATO, making Nordic cooperation an important arena to compensate for the negative impacts of Norway's «outsider» status. The story of Norway and the CSDP has been one of disappointments and setbacks, with EU-frameworks for consulting third countries that gradually have been emptied of substance. One exception is capability development and defence industrial cooperation, where Norway is involved in research and certain other activities as an associated EDA-member.

However, while Norwegian decision-makers and the Norwegian defence industry see opportunities for engaging with the European Defence Fund, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and other recent EU initiatives, Sweden and Finland are more hesitant, reducing the potential for a common Nordic approach. A realization of PESCO in the framework of a so-called two-speed Europe in defence «is now a real prospect» (Tigner 2017). However, closer defence integration may reduce third countries' action space, instead affirming Norway's ties with NATO as well as with the Nordics. Furthermore, when Britain is leaving the union it is likely to tilt the internal balance in NATO, because some 80 percent of NATO defence spending post-Brexit will come from and three of the four battlegroups that NATO has deployed to Eastern Europe will be led by non-EU Allies (Natowatch 2017).<sup>21</sup> For Norway, Britain's new role may direct the focus towards the contributions from non-EU NATO allies, and potentially also strengthen the transatlantic relationship. While both are favourable for Norway, they might render the Nordic option less attractive for Norway. A reinvigorated NATO-EU relationship might however become a Nordic cooperation multiplier by providing an additional arena for coordination and promotion of joint policies between non-EU country Norway, non-CSDP country Denmark and non-NATO countries Sweden and Finland.

Returning to the four-fold model presented at the beginning of this article, Norway's foreign policy scores high on both axes, due to its strong sense of Nordic cultural identity and view of the Nordic environment as important for its foreign policy. While this puts the country in the lower right quadrant, within *defence and security* policy, which this article has focused on, the Nordic environment has not shaped Norwegian policy at any length, confirming the country's place in the upper right quadrant. As the discussion has shown, Nordic cooperation is «nice to have» but not necessary. When push comes to shove, the transatlantic bonds and NATO remain the preferred arena both for safeguarding Norwegian security and for international status-seeking. Norway's programme for its NORDEFECO chairmanship in 2018 is modest,

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<sup>21</sup> See also [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_148840.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_148840.htm)

emphasizing a continuation of the security policy dialogue, information exchange and practical cooperation.<sup>22</sup> A more insecure strategic neighbourhood, concerns about NATO's collective security guarantee with the present US administration, and closer NATO-alignment in Sweden and Finland have however rendered Nordic cooperation more attractive and also more important to Norway.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/norge-overtar-formannskapet-i-det-nordiske-forsvarssamarbeidet/id2583334>

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