

ONE FOR ALL, ALL FOR ONE

NEW NORDIC DEFENCE POLICY?



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ANP 2009:764

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ISBN 978-92-893-1951-5

Editors: Michael Funch and Jesper Schou-Knuden

Editorial board: The Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers'

Communications Department

Idea and concept: Michael Funch and Jesper Schou-Knudsen

Print: Scanprint a/s, Århus

Design: Mar Mar Co.

Illustration: Lars Vegas Nielsen

Edition of: 3000

Printed on environmentally friendly paper.

This publication can be ordered at www.norden.org/order

Other Nordic publications are available at www.norden.org/publications

Printed in Denmark

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FOREWORD

Haldór Ásgrímsson, Secretary General, Nordic Council of Ministers

Jan-Erik Enestam, Director, Nordic Council

In summer 2008, the Nordic governments commissioned former Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Thorvald Stoltenberg to prepare proposals for closer co-operation on foreign and security policy in an era when the global security situation is in a state of almost perpetual flux. Since it was submitted to the foreign ministers on 9 February 2009, the Stoltenberg Report has been the subject of a great deal of lively discussion.

As part of that debate, the Nordic Council and Council of Ministers invited top politicians, past and present, from the five countries to present their views in Yearbook 2009 – "One for all, all for one – New Nordic defence policy?"

The politicians were interviewed by top foreign correspondents. Their conversations revolve around the Stoltenberg Report, which provides a glimpse of how the foreign policy map of the future may pan out.

Nordic co-operation has clearly changed in recent years, and is now much more outward-looking and flexible than ever before. This flexibility also makes it a useful tool with which to approach the challenges faced in the northernmost parts of the Region.

Stoltenberg stresses in his preface that fundamental changes are taking place in Nordic co-operation and that the potential exists for new forms of partnership. In one of the more controversial proposals, he suggests the introduction of a Nordic musketeer oath – a declaration of solidarity in line with the existing obligations to which several of the countries have already signed up, e.g. in NATO and the EU.

But are we ready to take such a step in the Nordic Region?

What will emerge from the debate about more wide-ranging partnership on foreign and security policy remains to be seen. However, the interviews in Yearbook 2009 offer hints as to the potential shape of future collaboration. They may indicate the direction in which we are heading – towards closer Nordic integration, towards other alliances, or perhaps towards both?

Regardless of the framework within which defence, security and foreign-policy issues are addressed, there will undoubtedly be a need for a Nordic dimension, as this book so amply underlines.



Former Norwegian foreign and defence minister Thorvald Stoltenberg submitted a report to the Nordic prime ministers in February 2009. Commissioned by the Region's foreign ministers, it contained 13 proposals for a more wide-ranging partnership on foreign and security policy.

Stoltenberg's article describes some of the thinking behind the project, which has given rise to lively debate throughout the Region and served as the starting point for the rest of the interviews in the Nordic Council and Council of Ministers Yearbook 2009.

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"If foreign policy and security policy become part of the vocabulary of Nordic co-operation, then that co-operation will be more relevant to our relations with the outside world. The new Nordic co-operation will not only strengthen the Region itself, but will also look at the ways in which the Nordic countries can contribute at international level."

"With the end of the Cold War, new possibilities opened up for Nordic co-operation."

Thorvald Stoltenberg

Did the end of the Cold War mark the beginning of a new era for Nordic co-operation? Is traditional Nordic co-operation being weakened even as brand-new opportunities are opening up? Are we capable of grasping new opportunities?

In June last year, the five Nordic foreign ministers commissioned me to draw up a report on Nordic co-operation on foreign and security policy. I submitted that report in February 2009. I do not intend to repeat the 13 proposals contained in the report verbatim in this article. The report was over 30 pages long, and I suspect that those who are involved in the debate will make the time to read it in its entirety.

I will instead use this opportunity to talk a little about the thinking behind the report, and use its proposals to illustrate that thinking.

The commission on behalf of the foreign ministers provided me with an ideal opportunity to think through the questions mentioned above, and I would like to start this article with an answer: Yes, I believe something fundamental is happening to Nordic co-operation. While much of traditional Nordic co-operation will be phased out, openings will also be created for new forms of partnership.

The type of Nordic co-operation with which my generation grew up was, in many ways, introverted. It was a partnership between the Nordic societies, and to a lesser extent a partnership between governments. It involved thousands of stakeholders from a large number of organisations – from trade unions and political youth organisations to the most obscure of special-interest groups. It was democratic, broad and popular. And that was what we liked about it.

Nowadays, that traditional Nordic co-operation is losing ground to European partnerships. In the 1950s we were European pioneers. The Nordic Region introduced a passport union and a common labour market long before the European Union. It's not like that anymore.

This trend really took off following the end of the Cold War. Finland joined Denmark in the European Union, to which Iceland and Norway were linked through EEA agreements. The EU became the main engine for drawing up regulations and guidelines, particularly in the economic sphere. Many of the issues on which the Nordic countries had been unable to reach agreement were now dealt with at European level by EFTA and the EU. Today, we see how Europe has become a more important arena than the Nordic Region, including for those of us who live in the Nordic countries.

At the same time as European partnership is superseding traditional Nordic co-operation, new opportunities for partnerships are opening up in the Region, e.g. for co-operation on security and foreign policy.

This is a new development. In the wake of the collapse of negotiations on a Nordic defence union in 1948/49, the countries opted for different security solutions. As a result, all questions related to military co-operation or security policy were removed from the formal Nordic agenda. It was, in short, inconceivable that the Nordic countries could openly co-operate on questions related to security, police and military matters. I clearly remember from my time as Defence Minister, and later as Foreign Minister, how we were extremely cautious about raising such questions. In 1992, in my role as Minister of Foreign Affairs, I chose to make a statement on foreign policy to the Nordic Council. That was something completely new at the time.

Of course, this does not mean that Nordic co-operation was not important to the security of our countries during this period. On the contrary, it had an important role to play in developments in the Region's security situation. Finland is a good example of this. In the inter-war period, many Norwegians considered Finland to be a Baltic state, in line with Estonia and Latvia. However, this changed during the Cold War, not least because the Finns became actively involved in Nordic co-operation. There are other examples of how Nordic co-operation contributed to the stability of the Region.

With the end of the Cold War, new possibilities opened up for Nordic co-operation, but it is not enough for new opportunities to present themselves. We also need to grasp them. The important first step on security policy was taken last June, when the five Nordic foreign ministers agreed to commission a study of Nordic co-operation on foreign and security policy.

The five foreign ministers were not alone in envisaging new opportunities. The Nordic defence chiefs were quick to see the potential in Nordic co-operation on military matters. Unlike the foreign ministers, whose thinking was political, the military commanders' ideas were entirely based on financial considerations.

The defence chiefs asked whether small countries like those in the Nordic Region would still be able to afford to maintain a modern defence capability. Modern defence technology is increasingly expensive, so the size of military units has to be reduced. This in turn could lead to both the units and their professional support staff becoming so small that there is no longer any point in maintaining them. They would fall below the level of critical mass.

It might be useful to illustrate this point. Norway currently has six submarines, Sweden five. At some point, they will have to be replaced by new ones, which will be a heavy financial burden – it means having to procure new vessels as well as

simulators in which to train the crews. At this point we can either follow the Danish example and simply do away with submarines entirely, or Norway and Sweden can work together on procurement, training and maintenance. The latter option may make it possible to maintain a submarine capability.

This illustrates a wider trend, in which small countries, followed later by larger ones, will be faced with a choice – enter into military partnership with their neighbours or abandon a modern defence capability, with all the potential political consequences that may entail. This was the logic underpinning the decision by the Norwegian and Swedish defence chiefs, and later their Finnish colleague, to come out in favour of Nordic military co-operation. The defence chiefs' decision was also an important motivating factor when the foreign ministers decided to study the potential for Nordic co-operation on foreign and security policy. The defence chiefs were an important source of inspiration for me personally, too. I realised that wide-ranging co-operation on defence would push security-policy co-operation up the Nordic agenda. Similarly, co-operation on security policy would stimulate Nordic defence co-operation.

My general starting point is that the Nordic countries must assume collective responsibility for their own security. Only in this way can they safeguard their own interests and guarantee regional stability in Northern Europe.

In practice, this means that the Nordic countries must assume greater collective responsibility for their immediate neighbours. I have no fear of the Nordic countries being subjected to military attack, but I do think they have an interest in contributing to building confidence and actively highlighting their presence in the adjacent areas. In this way, we can help to create stability in our own neighbourhood, and prevent these areas from being considered somebody else's sphere of interest – i.e. an area in which others have acquired rights by custom and practice.

This desire for the Nordic countries to take collective responsibility for stability in the adjacent areas is not new. Its origins lay in the developments that followed the end of the Cold War. In 1992, Norway launched Barents co-operation. Within this partnership, great emphasis was placed on involving the other Nordic countries, resulting in cross-border partnerships between the Nordic Region and Russia in the far north. We made a joint contribution to building confidence on a former front line between two Cold War military alliances.

Baltic Sea co-operation and Nordic involvement in the Baltic States in the 1990s are both good examples of how the Nordic countries have taken challenges in the adjacent areas seriously. Both Iceland and Norway play an active role in this work, despite the fact that they can hardly be described as Baltic Sea states.

I think that this Nordic involvement in the adjacent areas in the east and south must now be extended to the seas to the west and north. In my report, I outline

several tangible proposals on this subject. In my opinion, one of the most important is that the Nordic countries assume joint responsibility for air surveillance over Iceland.

The starting point for this proposal was the Americans' withdrawal from Keflavik in 2006, which all signs suggest is a permanent move. A few days later, Russian bombers began regular patrols around the island. These aircraft stayed outside Icelandic airspace, so did nothing wrong, but the Icelanders were uncomfortable about the fact that they were expected just to get used to this new situation.

Of course, I see no risk of a military attack on Iceland – that is not the issue here. The point is that Russia's presence around Iceland should not be so dominant that other countries start to consider it to be an area in which Russia enjoys special status, and where Russian interests must, therefore, be given particular emphasis. Nordic air surveillance over Iceland would allow us to initiate a trend in which the Nordic countries assume collective responsibility for our airspace.

In my view, it is in the interests of all of the Nordic countries that there is a marked Nordic presence in the waters around the Region. During the Cold War, we did not want the Baltic to be deemed a Russian 'inland sea'. Similarly, we do not want any major power to enjoy special status in Nordic waters today.

We are talking about vast oceans here, which are becoming ever more vast as a result of melting ice. The opening of new transport routes between the Pacific and the Atlantic, via the Arctic, will make the area increasingly important. It would not be easy for a single Nordic country to guarantee a presence and carry out surveillance – it requires them to work together and combine their resources.

If the outside world is to take seriously our rights and our responsibilities as coastal states, we need to know what is going on in these areas. The first task is, therefore, to find out what is actually happening. This is a task we must approach together. In Norway, we have recently initiated efforts to build up an integrated sea surveillance system (BarentsWatch). I have suggested that Iceland and Denmark be invited to join, and that a similar system be developed for the Baltic. This Nordic system can also serve as a pioneer in the EU, and may form the seed of a future integrated European marine surveillance system.

Just as Nordic air surveillance over Iceland may be the first step towards assuming joint responsibility for our own airspace, BarentsWatch can be the first step towards the Nordic countries assuming responsibility for the adjacent marine areas. I also suggest that, during a later phase, coastguard vessels from the Nordic countries should make regular joint patrols. In addition, I think that we need to consider developing Nordic amphibious forces that are capable of operating in those waters, and which even have their own Arctic capability. This would provide us with Nordic instruments that have both a practical and, above

all, a political/symbolic function. In other words, they would be a tangible expression of Nordic solidarity.

The security and foreign policy co-operation that I propose takes the form of a collaboration between Nordic governments on Nordic issues, rather than one in which the countries formulate joint views on problems and conflicts in other parts of the world. I am not suggesting that security co-operation should be introverted. If foreign policy and security policy become part of the vocabulary of Nordic co-operation, then that co-operation will be more relevant to our relations with the outside world. The new Nordic co-operation will not only strengthen the Region itself, but will also look at the ways in which the Nordic countries can contribute at international level.

The Nordic countries have a long tradition of involvement in peace-keeping missions, particularly under the auspices of the United Nations, e.g. via the Multinational Standby High Readiness Brigade for United Nations Operations (SHIRBRIG), which was disbanded after the UN failed to make use of it. However, it would be a mistake if the Nordic countries were to refuse to supply troops to the UN again because of that. I have, therefore, taken up the baton, and looked more closely at the resources that are likely to be needed by the United Nations and the international community in the years to come, as well as the ways in which the Nordic countries are specially placed to contribute.

After a great deal of discussion, especially with people in UN circles, I have reached the conclusion that there will be a need for stabilisation forces that can be deployed with a UN mandate in states striven by severe internal unrest or similar critical situations. These kind of situations require military forces to establish peace and stability before civilians can be sent in to carry out humanitarian work, rebuild social institutions (e.g. the police, the judicial system, prisons, election observers, etc.) and distribute aid.

Both military and civilian resources are therefore required. This is nothing new. What is new is that we have become more aware of the need for military forces and civilian organisations to be trained together so that they will work well together. Afghanistan illustrates the importance of this, and it is vital that we draw on the lessons learned there.

Many believe that the Nordic countries are particularly well equipped to instigate this interaction. Our extensive experience of co-operation, and perhaps our culture in general, means we are well versed in this kind of collaboration. But even the Nordic countries may find it difficult to reconcile humanitarian organisations and military culture during international operations. Still, I say that the Nordic countries should combine our resources and set up a Nordic stabilisation force based on four components: military; humanitarian; nation-building; and aid.

As previously mentioned, I do not intend to run through all 13 of my suggestions. Nevertheless, I wish to look at one further proposal that has come to the fore during the debate. I suggested that the Nordic governments formulate a declaration of Nordic solidarity. This would be a declaration of political will, stating that we are prepared to assist each other in times of crisis. There is another reason why we should gradually develop solidarity declarations of this type on security policy. It would be difficult to co-operate on developing Nordic military capabilities if we have not first clarified at policy level how they will be deployed in a crisis situation.

Sceptical voices have been raised against such a declaration, even before there has been any discussion about what it should contain. Some believe that the NATO nations must restrict themselves to the guarantee members have among themselves, but I believe that there is nothing to hinder multiple declarations of solidarity with different countries. For example, nobody finds it unnatural that the United States formulates declarations of solidarity with several countries and groups of countries.

Another frequent argument against the report is that Nordic co-operation is incompatible with EU or NATO membership. It is thought that Nordic security co-operation simply cannot be combined with the EU and NATO if some of the Region's countries are not members of either or both of those organisations.

In organisations with a large (and increasing) membership, it is almost inevitable that member states will talk to some countries more than others. In the EU, this has led to the Mediterranean countries discussing mutual co-operation. The same goes for the countries around the Baltic Sea, as well as, in some contexts, the Eastern European member states. A similar trend has been identified within NATO, albeit not as strong. This trend is related to the fact that interests vary. If an organisation has enough members, it is well nigh impossible to prevent regional groupings from evolving.

In addition, we see that both the EU and NATO have an extensive network of agreements with third countries (NATO alone has about 80 such agreements). These two factors help to legitimise closer political co-operation between the Nordic countries.

But what about the difficulties? What factors militate against Nordic co-operation on security and foreign policy?

Our traditional attitude towards security presents many obstacles. During the 1990s, it was not always easy to get the Icelanders and Norwegians to realise that what was happening in the Baltic also affected their safety.

With the report, I aimed to draw a new mental map for security in the Nordic

Region, one which leaves behind the remnants of the Cold War that still inform the current debate. I think that this new map has great potential. It shows, for example, that Finland and Sweden are demonstrating an interest in Arctic issues.

Yet we must be realistic. It may be difficult to get all of the Nordic countries to agree to the new proposals. That is why I believe that two or three countries should adopt the proposals now, and let the others join in when they think the time is ripe.

I believe that the most important aspect of my proposals is that they have initiated a process. It may be that this will lead to completely different arrangements than those I have proposed, but the first step is to engage in an open and free exchange of opinions. This is one reason why this edition of the Nordic Yearbook is particularly important.

THORVALD STOLTENBERG

Oslo, 28 October 2009

THORVALD STOLTENBERG was born in 1931. He served as Minister of Defence 1979–1981 and Minister of Foreign Affairs 1987–1989 and again 1990–1993. He was the Norwegian ambassador to the UN 1989–1990 and UN High Commissioner for Refugees 1990–1993. In 1993, he was made UN Special Envoy to the former Yugoslavia. From 1996 to 1999 he served as ambassador to Denmark, and from 1999 to 3rd October 2008 he was President of the Norwegian Red Cross. Stoltenberg is the only person ever to have served as foreign minister on three separate occasions in Norway.

Stoltenberg, Knut Frydenlund and Johan Jorgen Holst were the architects of the Labour Party's foreign policy line 1976–1994. His son, Jens Stoltenberg (born 1959), has been Prime Minister of Norway since 2005.



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“I’ll say it out loud: forget all about a mini-NATO. That idea died along with the idea of a Nordic defence alliance, way back when Stauning said he wouldn’t be the Region’s chained dog.”

“Not everything has been settled in the Arctic. It can be a dangerous place, as portrayed in the Sean Connery movie *Hunt for Red October*.”

UFFE ELLEMANN-JENSEN

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Mette Fugl interviews Denmark's former Minister of
Foreign Affairs, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen

The dark, grey autumn has almost completely obscured the view of Sweden from Uffe Ellemann-Jensen's cosy, Danish living room. But we can just glimpse the Sound – in turmoil. It's more than 20 years since the Wall fell. Inspired by the celebrations in Berlin and the euphoria I felt back then, I can't help but ask, 'You don't actually sit here and keep an eye out for enemy submarines any more, do you?'

'You never know,' the former Minister of Foreign Affairs responds. He hesitates, adds 'Maybe not.'

It turns out that the word 'maybe' takes up very little space in Ellemann-Jensen's conscious universe. He's not exactly tongue-tied, even when we ask whether the sense of brotherhood in the Region is genuine. Is the Nordic sense of affinity and shared values more than mere nostalgia?

'For me, there's something very special about all things Nordic,' he says. 'I'm never happier than when travelling around the Region in the summer. Only the onset of winter tempts me to venture further afield in search of warmer climes. I read Nordic literature in the original languages, except for Finnish and Icelandic. I feel a closer bond with Nordic politicians than with other Europeans. It's a very close, emotional relationship. Yes, we're different. But then again, not all Danes are the same either.'

So it isn't taboo for you to talk about Nordic security and defence policy?

'No. I've argued in favour of it for years. But – and this is an important point – you have to understand that the key to a closer Nordic working relationship lies within the wider frameworks of NATO and the EU. If it's to be meaningful, Finland and Sweden will have to join NATO, and Iceland and Norway will have to join the EU. And Denmark has to drop the absurd opt-outs we cling to in the EU – especially the military one.

You might say that the Nordic countries currently operate with different security solutions. Certain formalities make partnership difficult, but we're moving in the same direction. A prime example is the Nordic Battle Group set up inside the EU.

Sweden, Finland, some of the Baltic states and neutral Ireland are all involved. But Denmark? Conspicuous by its absence, which really shows just how crazy the defence opt-out is.'

What do you find particularly inspiring in the Stoltenberg Report? And do any of the proposals make you want to dig in your heels?

'He's right that the whole Nordic area is assuming greater geo-political significance. And because of that, it's vital that we move closer to each other. To cite just a single example, he hits the bull's eye when it comes to the Arctic. We have in place a declaration that the Arctic rim states must adhere to international law and justice. The Russians agreed to this, and that's fine. But, inevitably, different perceptions have emerged of how UN maritime law should be interpreted. Were a security-policy vacuum to arise, the consequences could be dramatic – very dramatic. The Nordic countries must work together to prevent this ever happening.

Denmark and Norway need to work hand in hand, with solid support from Iceland, Sweden and Finland. And we definitely need to enter into a close dialogue with our NATO partners, such as Canada and the USA. We need to make sure that existing border disputes are resolved within the international legal system, just like when Denmark and Norway, quietly and peacefully, settled the East Greenland question in The Hague prior to World War Two. That's the way to do it. To put it bluntly, the problem arises when you have to deal with countries like Russia. To the Russians, international politics is a zero-sum game. So the challenge for the Nordic Region is to robustly defend the concept of solving problems within a legal framework. Some would say that we should avoid any arms build-up in the Arctic. Yes, but there shouldn't be a vacuum either. And when you see Russian bombers operating so close to Norway, Iceland and Estonia, it underlines the need for the Nordic Region to stand together. Not everything has been settled in the Arctic. It can be a dangerous place, as portrayed in the Sean Connery movie *Hunt for Red October*.'

Another passing submarine? Again? A ghost of the Cold War? Thorvald Stoltenberg asks in his introduction whether the end of the Cold War was the beginning of a new era for Nordic co-operation. Uffe, are you still a Cold Warrior?

'That's the usual reaction. But I'm a realist. I must, slightly sarcastically, point out that it would be disrespectful towards Russia if we were just to claim everything is fine, despite its attempts at provocation with flights and military exercises. We can't just nod our heads when the Russians indulge in stunts such as diverting natural gas pipelines around countries as a way of exerting pressure on them. What they're doing is incredibly expensive. It would be cheaper to repair the land-based pipelines. You see, I accord them respect by reiterating that we won't put up with certain things. They shouldn't attempt to divide us. And they shouldn't

meddle in the alliances that independent European states wish to enter into.'

Shouldn't the Nordic Region see Russia as a partner rather than an enemy?

'I wouldn't describe Russia as an enemy. But there's no room for so-called spheres of interest in contemporary Europe. No matter what size they are, countries have common rights and shared responsibilities – but the Russians don't play by the rules. In our own neighbourhood, in the Baltic States and Ukraine, Russia is clearly trying to create spheres of interest, even though the Baltic republics are in NATO and the EU. Those countries in particular should be drawn into co-operation with the Nordic countries. A massive Nordic effort is needed here. Stoltenberg makes reference to co-operation on peacekeeping deployments. We must help these countries to democratise and develop their own defence provisions.

The big task for the Nordic Region is to stand together and exert pressure on NATO to draw up the kind of contingency plans that covered Denmark during the Cold War. In other words, plans for the substantial deployment of troops and reinforcements. I think the Baltic countries need this today. The Nordic Region can and must work together to get NATO to promote security and stability in countries that have historically had every reason to be terrified of Russian provocation. It makes us all stronger when Nordic voices are raised to challenge the naïveté about Russia that is, unfortunately, all too common. The same applies to discussions about energy policy. Nordic waters are important transport routes for Russian energy supplies, especially natural gas. For example, take the pipeline on the Baltic seabed, which, for reasons unknown, Denmark was the first country to give the green light to. Russia has been clever at corrupting – and you're welcome to use that word – Western politicians, including one former German Chancellor. This project has given the Russians the opportunity to play divide and conquer, using energy as their weapon. We in the Nordic Region need to stand together and push the EU to establish a common energy policy and a common internal market for natural gas, in order to prevent small countries in the Eastern and Baltic states being played off against the rest of us.'

At present, we're not all members of the same bodies. Do you think we will end up united in NATO and the EU, and that the Nordic countries will play an important role within these frameworks? Is it a good idea to build analyses on wishful thinking?

'I think it will happen at some point. I've teased my old friend Stoltenberg that I interpreted his report as a solid old European's attempt to achieve something that would have come about all by itself, had Norway voted differently in the past. It's what he himself had hoped for. His proposal is an honourable attempt to bypass the formal obstacles.'

Apropos wishful thinking, what's your view of Thorvald's reasoning on the joint Nordic solidarity statement?

'He's completely wrong. I find it very hard to see the need for it for when we already have Article 5 of the NATO Charter. It wouldn't get us anywhere. Anyway, I belong to the Nordic tribe, and I don't really think we need that kind of solemn declaration. Here in the Nordic Region, we know where we stand with each other. Here, a man is a man and his word is his word.

I'll say it out loud: forget all about a mini-NATO. That idea died along with the idea of a Nordic defence alliance, way back when Stauning said he wouldn't be the Region's chained dog.'

Stauning also said that a Nordic defence alliance ran the risk of arousing suspicion elsewhere.

'Yes, and he was referring to Germany. I know who he'd have in mind these days. It'll be impossible to build a positive partnership with the Russians if we just tell them what they want to hear. In fact, I think that they'll have more respect for us if we tell them what we really think. We must make it clear to them that they need us – and we need them.'

Part of this whole exercise is also about thinking ahead to 2049, NATO's centenary. How do things look in your crystal ball?

Ellemann-Jensen holds an uncharacteristic pause for thought. He looks out of the window. We still can't make out Sweden. Finally, he says, 'By then I'll be 108.' I invite him to my 100th birthday party the same year. He thanks me and threatens to turn up, because we'll probably both live to well over a hundred, before getting serious again.

'By then tremendous shifts in power will have taken place at global level. It'll be a world in which the West – particularly Europe – will lag behind, relatively speaking. In the last few years, we've seen Asia assuming greater and greater importance, and this process is accelerating, particularly in India and China. Western values, which we often naively believe are the envy of the world, will no longer play as pivotal a role in world affairs. All things being equal, we can expect to exert a little less influence on how the world evolves. I don't know if we in Europe are capable of changing the direction in which things are moving, but it's in our interests to at least try. One answer to this would be closer co-operation at European level. Here, the Nordic countries again have something to offer. By working more closely together at Nordic level, we can maximise our impact. I stress once again, however, that it has to happen within a larger framework. We must act together within the EU and NATO.'

UFFE ELLEMANN-JENSEN was minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark from 1982–1993. He was leader of the Danish Liberal Party (Venstre) from 1984–1998 and President of the European Liberals (ELDR) from 1995–2000. Uffe Ellemann-Jensen holds a master's degree in Political Economy at the University of Copenhagen.

After leaving parliament in 2001, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen has divided his time between international activities, as an activist board member in Danish and international companies, and writing. He has authored several books on economics and politics and his *Impressions – not Memoirs* became an instant bestseller in Denmark.

METTE FUGL is a journalist employed by the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR) Radio News as a foreign correspondent in Brussels. One of the leading journalists of her generation, she has turned her talents to almost every type of reporting.

Fugl also covers serious foreign affairs for DR TV news, reporting from Brussels, where she has specialised in EU and NATO issues since 1992.

Are We the Only Normal Ones Here?, a joint account of their lives and work, was published by Fugl and fellow journalist Karen Thisted in 2008.

“Even if the EU and NATO have outlived their usefulness in 40 years, the same doomsday scenario does not go for the UN.”

“Only an iron hand can control a giant. Once it loosens its grip, diversity soon takes over.”

ELISABETH REHN

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Yrsa Gröne interviews Finland's former Minister of Defence

Elisabeth Rehn

YRSA GRÖNE: *On the September day when Finland's former defence minister, Elisabeth Rehn – the world's first female defence minister – and I sit down to begin our journey into the Nordic future, the ice still lies thick around the Arctic. But we have been charged with the task of journeying into the unknown and travelling 40 years into the future.*

ELISABETH REHN: 'By then the EU is likely to be a spent force. But the feeling of nationality will have grown stronger, although it may be different in character and be based on the borders of larger regional units than the countries we have today, says Elisabeth Rehn. But Finland will still be Finland, and Åland will still have its status,' she adds.

It is easy to follow her line of thinking. One only has to look at the example of the Soviet Union. When a state or a federation grows far too big, more and more compromises are made, but there is growing dissatisfaction because no-one is really satisfied with anything any more. Only an iron hand can control a giant. Once it loosens its grip, diversity soon takes over.

Elisabeth Rehn considers peace to be the main argument for the entire existence of the EU. Consistent with this, the Union's approach is to extend its embrace to the whole of Europe. This may work for a while as a way of bringing together the countries of Europe that belonged to various blocks for so long. But it is not without problems. In its eagerness to embrace Europe, the EU turned a blind eye when it came to the membership of Romania and Bulgaria, for example.

SOLIDARITY CLAUSE PROBLEMATIC

What about NATO?

'I think that NATO will face the same fate as the EU. I tend to think that loose, regional forms of co-operation will replace the Atlantic alliance. The Nordic Region will be one such region, with co-operation that extends to the military domain.'

But Elisabeth Rehn does not believe in joint Nordic defence. Decision-making would become far too difficult. The declaration of solidarity that Stoltenberg is calling for in his report is also problematic. To start with, three of the Nordic countries are members of NATO and are already covered by Article 5 of the NATO Treaty. As long as NATO exists, the question is how a Nordic musketeer paragraph should be interpreted – and to what extent NATO countries outside the Nordic Region could be affected by a Nordic solidarity clause if one of the Nordic NATO countries were to be involved in a conflict affecting a Nordic country that is not a member of NATO.

But in the short term, the situation is somewhat different.

As long as NATO exists, the Nordic voice at NATO meetings would be stronger if Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland could form a sort of 'mini NATO' within the Atlantic Alliance. Sometimes the argument is advanced that you can't jump on to a moving train – in other words Finland cannot submit an application for membership before knowing what direction NATO is going to develop in. That argument does not hold. Developments can be influenced, but only from the inside. The same goes for the EU.

But neither Elisabeth Rehn nor I believe in a new comprehensive European security organisation, as Russia has suggested.

According to the Stoltenberg report, co-operation within military procurement in the Nordic countries is a prerequisite for maintaining effective defence. Advanced technology is becoming more and more expensive, and at the same time funding for defence in the Nordic countries is getting tighter and tighter.

That may well be so on the theoretical level. But in practice it has proved difficult to agree on procurements.

'Take for example the joint Nordic helicopter project. Finland, Sweden and Norway managed to agree to purchase NH-90 helicopters – but they all wanted their own versions, which led to deliveries being considerably delayed. Denmark chose a different type of helicopter altogether.'

Personally, however, I think the fact that military hardware is getting more and more expensive may in future persuade the Nordic countries to make further efforts to improve and speed up procurement decisions and thereby also create greater synergies.'

Much has changed since Elisabeth Rehn was defence minister from 1990 to 1995.

She points out that the post-war peace treaty prevented Finland from entering into military co-operation with Germany. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, President Mauno Koivisto declared that Finland was no longer bound by this agreement.

Elisabeth Rehn's name is also linked with the procurement of American Hornet fighters (F/A-18). But she does not want to take all the credit, and points out that it was she and the former finance minister Iiro Viinanen who were responsible for the matter in government. The decision was taken just six months before the economic recession of the early 1990s hit home. Despite the Swedes' disappointment, Elisabeth Rehn has never repented for choosing the Hornet rather than the JAS Gripen.

'It would probably have been hard to defend choosing the JAS, which crashed during a test flight just after we took our decision.'

THE ARCTIC RULES

The Arctic and the Arctic Ocean are almost as far removed from Finnish thinking in 2009 as the moon is. Stoltenberg's proposal of increased Nordic co-operation in the Arctic region is too readily dismissed as 'Norwegian interests'.

'I think that security and security organisations will be built up around the seas. For us in the Nordic Region it is the Gulf of Finland, the Baltic and the Arctic that matter,' Elisabeth Rehn explains.

'For the Nordic countries, these two maritime regions constitute the fundamental basis of security policy. Stoltenberg also talks about 'Baltic Watch' and 'Barents Watch'. Satellite reconnaissance, integrated Nordic information exchange, co-ordination of maritime rescue services and environmental measures could form a part of both.

The oil and gas deposits that will be opened up for exploration when the ice melts make the Arctic seas an extremely interesting area, both economically and in terms of security policy. On top of this, the North-East Passage and the North-West Passage will shorten transport times by ship by one or two weeks, and they can be used by larger vessels than those that currently sail through the Suez Canal and the Strait of Hormuz or have to circumnavigate Africa.'

The EU has hitherto lacked a strategy for the Arctic, and this could be one of the reasons why surprisingly little attention is paid to the region in Finnish security policy. That ought not to be the case.

'The foreign policy leadership is focused on the EU. This is natural, but this also entails a certain risk of being blind or at least late off the mark when it comes to setting up a forum in which influence can be exerted elsewhere.'

The forum in which Finland – and Sweden – could potentially have an importance greater than that of the respective countries alone, is the Arctic Council.

The Council comprises the five Nordic countries plus the USA, Canada and Russia. Of these countries, it is only Russia which is saying in its new security strategy

that the oil and gas deposits constitute a potential risk of a military confrontation. It should be remembered, however, that the 'High North' is already high up NATO's list of priorities. And there the region will remain as long as NATO exists.

'Sea lanes and international waters entail maritime traffic, merchant ships and foreign naval ships. And a certain amount of traffic below the surface,' Elisabeth Rehn points out.

'It will also entail new demands in terms of maritime surveillance, maritime rescue and border surveillance. It will also place greater demands on the environment, whilst providing a good basis for peacebuilding. So as to be able to tackle these challenges effectively, Stoltenberg calls for more comprehensive Nordic co-operation.

But for the time being Finnish politicians are looking to Brussels. This does not mean, however, that there is some sort of impasse further north.'

The Arctic Council, the chairmanship of which is currently held by Denmark, decided in spring 2009 to meet every year instead of every other year. In this way the Council clearly aims to increase its political influence.

'It is surely now, in 2009, that Finland must begin looking to the possibilities for gaining influence. In 40 years it will be far too late,' says Elisabeth Rehn.

She is right. The US, Finland and Sweden have no sea areas within the Arctic Circle as such, but nonetheless have population in the Arctic region as a whole.

We both believe that in 2049 the Arctic Council will have an importance somewhat similar to that of the EU or NATO today. We do not rule out the possibility that the Baltic countries will have joined the Arctic Council because the security strategy for the Baltic Sea is bound up with the security strategy for the Arctic. This is dependent on economic interests – the gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, which is very much both a security and environmental policy question, and the oil and gas deposits in the north.

'But we ought not to have too many countries in the Arctic Council. On the other hand, close co-operation – a partnership – with several organisations or countries is not excluded. China might also join as a co-opted member,' Elisabeth Rehn floats the idea.

THE USA AND RUSSIA

'High North and Low Tension' – this is the motto of the Arctic region. We reflect on whether this is a political soundbite.

'Perhaps not. Of course you cannot deny the strategic significance of the region, and that the security policy aspect will create problems from time to time. Any future conflicts will be about control of energy resources. But nonetheless I

believe that the problems can be solved through balanced diplomacy,' says Elisabeth Rehn.

Balanced diplomacy. She comes up with that expression while we talk. And by that she means that the Arctic Council is better placed than the EU and NATO to function as a confidence-building forum.

We take another look at the map in front of us. Eight countries with sea areas and populations within the Arctic region. And a number of countries outside the region – up to 60 according to various sources – that would like a slice of the cake when it comes to exploiting the oil and gas deposits.

'For once the US and Russia share a common interest. And that is to keep all other countries out – with the exception of the other countries in the Arctic Council, of course. In 40 years the US and Russia might be the best of friends,' says Elisabeth Rehn.

Maybe the very deep-rooted and general journalistic scepticism will rear its ugly head. Or maybe the different views held by Russia and the US on countries like Iran or North Korea will come to the fore. At any rate I would add that of course it depends on whether they have friends in common.

THE UN WILL PREVAIL

Even if the EU and NATO have outlived their usefulness in 40 years, the same doomsday scenario does not go for the UN, says Elisabeth Rehn. This may be because she has had several high-ranking positions in the UN, principally in the Balkans, therefore it comes down to loyalty, or maybe because she knows the organisation so well.

'The UN will have been through structural changes, for sure. Maybe the Security Council too. But the UN is likely to prevail as the deadweight organisation that it is. But a deadweight that doesn't slide easily can be a good thing.' She would also like to see more women in top jobs, both in the UN and more generally. Women are not mentioned specifically in the Stoltenberg report, but Elisabeth Rehn is convinced that Stoltenberg takes it as a given that women will play an important role in all aspects of security policy in the Nordic Region.

'I once asked Kofi Annan (the former UN Secretary General) why he didn't appoint more women to top jobs. The answer was that in my case it was easy to get my appointment through since I had been a defence minister,' she says.

Neither of us thinks that there will be peacekeeping forces any more. We decide to call them crisis management forces. Is this a sign of gathering pessimism?

The same Picasso print hangs in Elisabeth Rehn's home and in my study. Over 70 years have passed since the Spanish Civil War and the bombing of Guernica, but the face of war is just as ugly today as it was then.

ELISABETH REHN is one of Finland's most experienced politicians, and one of the best known outside her home country.

Rehn represented the Swedish People's Party in parliament 1979–94, was Minister of Defence 1990–95 and a Member of the European Parliament 1995–96. She has also served as the UN Special Envoy for Human Rights in the former Yugoslavia 1995–98, and as the UN Secretary General's Special Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1998–99.

Since 2001, Rehn has been heavily involved in UNIFEM, advocating women's rights, especially in the developing world.

YRSA GRÜNE was born in Helsinki in 1948, and graduated from the Hanken School of Economics in Helsinki. She is a leader writer on *Hufvudstadsbladet*, specialising in security and foreign policy.

Grüne, who was Head of Foreign News 1994–2003, took a leave of absence in 1994 to work for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in Geneva. She is still a member of a Red Cross Field Assessment and Co-ordination Team.



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“It’s a bit like your family –
you don’t always agree with them,
but they’re there if anything happens.
The Nordic countries are our closest
relatives, our immediate family. Europe
is our extended family. That’s just the
way it is.”

INGIBJÖRG SÓLRÚN GÍSLADÓTTIR

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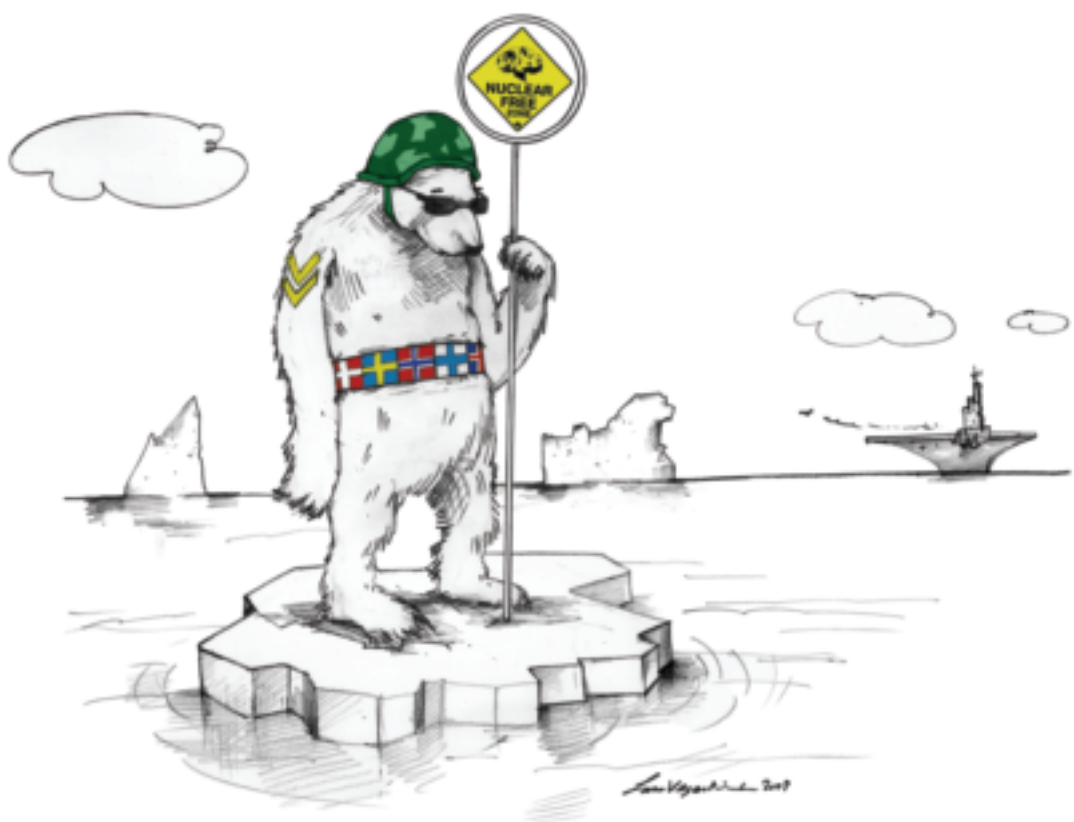
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HUGE POTENTIAL FOR SPECIALISED POLICY CO-OPERATION IN THE NORDIC REGION

Bogi Ágústsson interviews former Minister of Foreign Affairs

Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir

The Stoltenberg Report, published in February 2009, lays the groundwork for co-operation between the Nordic countries on defence and security policy, which has previously remained outside the scope of traditional Nordic co-operation. What do you think about this issue?

INGIBJÖRG SÓLRÚN GÍSLADÓTTIR: 'I think it's very much time for people to start looking at Nordic co-operation on security and defence policy. As far as the Nordic countries are concerned, activity in this area has been frozen for 45 years – throughout the whole Cold War period. Despite the rapid pace of change since 1990, especially in Europe, for some reason or other no progress has been made towards Nordic co-operation on these subjects.'

BOGI ÁGÚSTSSON: *Has the time come to reconsider the matter?*

'The time has very much come to dust down this discussion. The Nordic countries have much in common in this context, even though their individual histories and pasts are in many ways very different, and even though political and psycho-logical aspects vary from country to country.

These are all small nations and reasonably similar in terms of size and power, except Iceland. Individually, the Nordic countries are not in a strong position, but together they can make a difference within the EU, within NATO, within the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), within the UN and elsewhere.'

Do you interpret Stoltenberg's latest proposal for unity against perceived threats as an outline for an actual defence alliance, a mini-NATO?

'In my opinion, that's not on the cards at the moment. The NATO member states enjoy a certain solidarity in this regard, as do the EU countries. The EU has decided that each individual country must come to the assistance of the others in the event of terror attacks, so we're all covered.

I don't think any prospective defence co-operation would add anything new to that, and I don't think we should expend too much energy thinking about this aspect of defence policy – at least, not to the parts related to military defence.'

What, then?

'We should be looking at the security aspect, exploring how we can work together and specialise in security.

If you look at the nature of the Region, it becomes apparent that the Nordic countries could specialise in marine rescue and relief efforts in the wake of environmental disasters. All over Europe, individual countries increasingly have their own specialities, e.g. Estonia and data security, the Czech Republic and chemical weapons.

The Nordic countries could specialise together. We would have to consider what equipment and protective measures would be required, which tasks would be performed, and how to bring all of this together.

We all have an interest in taking care of the Arctic Region. Our relationship with the sea puts us in a unique position when it comes to security and defence issues within our own territories.

But we also have other commitments. All of the Nordic countries are aware that we have a certain way of life, a particular social system, that imposes obligations upon us.

We could, for example, specialise in humanitarian projects, emergency aid, peacekeeping, care of refugees, development aid and general building of infrastructure, including establishing working governments, in blighted countries. That sort of thing could be our job away from home.'

There are those in Iceland who say that the Nordic countries let Iceland down in the wake of the economic crisis around the ICESAVE affair. Was there no solidarity there?

'I don't think you can put it like that.'

If co-operation in the military sphere is not on the agenda, what about pre-existing bilateral co-operation, e.g. between the Danish and Icelandic coastguards, and other nations that work together on, for example, military procurement?

'I believe that co-operation on the procurement of military equipment and supplies and instruments can only be beneficial. Everyone needs to cut back on or reduce their defence spending.

With regard to our North Atlantic co-operation with the Danes, I don't see why it shouldn't be possible to extend this to the other Nordic countries and beyond.'

Why beyond?

'The North Atlantic is so vast that major investment in rescue equipment will be needed in the next few years. This means that we need to work with stronger nations: Canada, the USA, Russia – and, for that matter, China, Japan, even North Korea – and perhaps others too if shipping routes are opened up in the Arctic.'

What threats do you see there?

'We must not lose our grip on things, either to the major nation states or to the multinationals that will begin to assert themselves in this area.

We in the Nordic countries can stand together. For example, we can strive at NATO level, EEA level and in other arenas to ensure that the Arctic Region remains a nuclear-free zone.'

Is that a realistic idea? Both American and Russian nuclear submarines frequently travel through the area, which must surely represent a major obstacle to making the area free of nuclear weapons? Wouldn't it entail a ban on these kinds of submarine?

'It isn't a straightforward question, but it would probably be worthwhile standing firm together and beginning to address it.

Maybe we should take the first step along that path, beginning with everybody providing information about the types of vessel in the area. We need to establish how people would react if an incident were to occur involving vessels of this kind, as has happened in the past.

This would obviously take a long time and involve much discussion and argument. But it's important that we are able to stand together and insist that there be no military activity in the area, or at least that it should be restricted as far as possible and that the Region should be a nuclear-free zone.'

So the Nordic countries should take the initiative?

'We're not nuclear powers and have extensive interests in the Region, especially as far as the environment is concerned, which would be in peril if anything untoward were to happen.'

One of the questions included in the draft for this interview asked you to imagine that you were a prime minister or minister of defence in 2049, and to provide arguments for or against the Nordic countries working more closely together on defence and security policy.

'2049? That's quite some way off. I know that the Arctic will gain more and more importance in terms of energy extraction, shipping, tourism, fishing and all sorts of other things.

It will be a more and more important region and all of the Nordic countries have major interests in it – so it is beyond all discussion that they will have to work closely together.'

Would close co-operation on security policy have any consequences for the Nordic countries' co-operation within NATO and the EU?

'No, I don't think so. Of course, problems may emerge with that, I can't claim that they definitely won't.

If Iceland joined the EU, the Norwegians would be the only ones left on the outside. And as there is already extensive co-operation between the Finns, the Swedes and NATO, I don't see any particular problem there.'

There are many who say that Nordic co-operation has not changed much, although new elements and priorities have been introduced, such as the prime ministers' Globalisation Forum, which looks at opportunities for co-operation in relation to the challenges posed by globalisation. Can you see other similar opportunities?

'I think it's necessary for the Nordic prime ministers' offices to have some kind of central management of security issues, as there are so many interested parties to be co-ordinated – those who work on defence, law enforcement, rescue and salvage, environmental issues, health issues, etc.

Only the prime ministers' offices can bind all of these elements together.

Co-operation should also be closer between the prime ministers in the security and defence policy area. Some form of security policy committee should be established. It shouldn't have the authority to issue orders, but it should act as a platform for consultation – perhaps in a similar manner to the Globalisation Forum.'

People have begun to define security much more broadly than before. Do you envisage much more extensive co-operation in this area, even though it will actually take place in the traditional defence-policy sphere?

'It won't be the ministries of defence and foreign affairs that deal with those kind of security issues. It will have to be the prime ministers' offices. Only they have the power to issue orders to other ministries.'

Stoltenberg mentions various practical measures, e.g. joint embassies...

'I think this is a very good idea. It's so important that we try to keep costs down. The Nordic people would never back increased spending – people want to reduce the costs of diplomacy. Working together would therefore, to some extent, be an excellent idea.

We have always regarded embassies as a bilateral form of co-operation. But perhaps we should consider specific embassies dealing with particular subjects.

We could have a gender-equality ambassador. Why can't we work together on that? We have a proud tradition in this area, and a great deal to offer. An ambassador for peace issues, perhaps? I'm thinking out loud here, but a whole host of possibilities open up if we move away from direct bilateral embassies towards ones that deal with particular subjects.'

It has been said that states don't have friends, they have interests. Would this type of co-operation be built on interests, or on something deeper?

'It's a bit like your family – you don't always agree with them, but they're there if anything happens. The Nordic countries are our closest relatives, our immediate family. Europe is our extended family. That's just the way it is.

Of course, there will always be special interests, but we should never underestimate the ties and relations that arise as people get to know each other. These links are just as important as our common history.'

But what about the public's attitudes to Nordic co-operation?

'Nordic co-operation has never been a problem in Iceland – people accept it as a matter of course. Nobody will find it strange that co-operation on security and defence issues has been placed on the agenda.'

What should be the main priority in co-operation on defence issues?

'All the countries need to establish their defence priorities, but it's not that simple. They face new threats, but it is impossible to completely eliminate the old ones. People can't ignore their geographical and strategic position.'

There's one country that people think about when it comes to those kind of threats to the Nordic countries...

'Russia is obviously an old neighbour, and a nationalistic Russia might give rise to concerns. In certain circumstances, it could pose a certain danger, but should that occur then a Nordic defence alliance would not be an effective shield – only NATO and the EU would be effective. However, people also have to be absolutely clear that no such threat exists from Russia at present.'

Does that mean that the idea of a joint Nordic defence alliance, which was shelved before 1950, is not topical now?

'No, we don't need to revive that discussion. Things might evolve in that direction in the future, but there are other issues that we have to address first. We have to develop co-operation in areas where it is politically feasible, where the people support it, where we share common interests and where it is realistic.'

INGIBJÖRG SÓLRÚN GÍSLADÓTTIR was born in 1954. She graduated with a Master's degree in history from the University of Iceland in 1983. She was elected to Reykjavik City Council for the Women's List 1982–1988, and sat on the council again from 1994–2006, this time for the Social Democrats. She was mayor from 1993–2003, and member of the Althing for the Women's List 1991–1994, and for the Social Democrats 2005–2009. She was chair of the Social Democrats from 2005–2009 and the Icelandic Minister of Foreign Affairs 2007–2009.

BOGI ÁGÚSTSSON was born in 1952. He studied history at the University of Iceland 1972–1977, after which he became a journalist in the foreign affairs department at RÚV (Icelandic Radio and TV). He was Scandinavian correspondent 1984–1986, Information Officer for Icelandair in 1988, head of news for TV 1989–2002, news director for Radio and TV 2002–2007, and has been a reporter ever since. He has been a presenter for RÚV TV news since 1979.

“The Russians couldn’t imagine in their wildest dreams that this form of co-operation is directed against them.”

“The Nordic countries were never able to create a union, and that will never happen.”

JONAS GAHR STØRE

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Bjørn Hansen interviews Norway's Foreign Minister

Jonas Gahr Støre

Two years ago the Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre said to his Nordic colleagues: 'We discuss mutual co-operation without having any real horizon. We need to have something to be discussing towards, so let's set up a study and define that horizon.'

Sweden's Foreign Minister Carl Bildt added: 'Let's ask Thorvald Stoltenberg to go 30 to 40 per cent further than our countries' governments can envisage today – I like the boldness of such an initiative.'

According to Foreign Minister Støre, that was the background to the task that was given to the veteran of Norwegian politics, Thorvald Stoltenberg, in 2007. Now Støre has 13 concrete proposals before him. He fully supports some of the proposals – he opposes some others. The latter applies especially to the establishment of a standing Nordic military deployment force.

BJØRN HANSEN: *But what, from a Nordic perspective, is the most important thing about the Stoltenberg report?*

JONAS GAHR STØRE: 'I would say the most important thing is that it was drafted. It's the overall context that counts, that is to say we have arrived at a point in modern Nordic history where we can put forward proposals to investigate extending foreign and security policy co-operation. The Norwegian government has considered the report, and we haven't dismissed any of the proposals, so they are all in play. I would say that the most straightforward proposals are continued intensification of co-operation in the military domain in terms of procurement, exercises, cost savings and efficiencies. Then the maritime perspective is important for us, and that extends to work around maritime and aerial surveillance of Iceland.'

Not so many years ago raising foreign and security policy issues in the Nordic Council was almost taboo. Is it all because the Cold War ended that the Nordic situation has changed?

'I led a study project from 1991 to 1992 that proposed introducing foreign and security policy reports in the Nordic Council. This was a touchy subject at the

time, and the fact that it was possible at all was down to the end of the Cold War. I would add that the European integration process was also a strong contributory factor. We should remember that the EEA Agreement is the most important Nordic co-operation agreement ever signed. In the late 1940s we dreamt of a common currency, a common market and common defence. However, the Nordic countries had to concede that these questions would have to be resolved in a broader European framework. It was through the co-operation initiated by the EU that we reached the agreement that gives us a common market.'

The report integrates the military and civilian aspects. What will it mean for humanitarian operations to be combined with military ones?

'I can tell you what it won't mean. It won't mean that we will have to blur the distinction between a humanitarian mandate and a military mandate. In the Nordic Region we have a strong tradition of treating this as a matter of principle. But having said that, these countries have been in the lead internationally when it comes to seeing a connection between peacekeeping operations and deployments with humanitarian dimensions. We must be attentive to all aspects so as to understand that there aren't just military responses to complex situations and that they also demand a political and a humanitarian dimension.'

But a military/civil deployment force is being suggested...

'It's a force that will have to be able to work under UN mandates in close contact with the UN system. For Stoltenberg, the aim is to identify what is required in order to stabilise states. Then these elements will also have to be available. We mustn't use the military to carry out humanitarian mandates. But we need to have these elements working in an overall strategy where we are world leaders. I am one of those who has been sceptical about the idea of setting up a standing deployment force. Internationally speaking there have been mixed experiences of standing deployment forces. Whether they are under EU or NATO control, standing deployment forces have a tendency to remain in place, cost huge amounts of money and lead to frustrations about their being used. What I think we can do is to form a really good overview of what individual countries can contribute so that we can quickly mobilise a force when needed.'

What is the security policy significance of the suggestion in the report that the Nordic countries should assume the bulk of the responsibility for the defence of Iceland?

'In my opinion it is an interesting proposal that deserves further consideration. It is not being suggested that the Nordic countries should assume responsibility outside of NATO, rather that they would have responsibility within NATO. Iceland is a member of NATO, and NATO's closest partners are Sweden and Finland. I think it is an interesting idea that with our fuller responsibility following the Cold War

we could assume a particular responsibility for Iceland, and I think it's an idea that will be welcomed in NATO because it shows that their partners can work well together and those who have joint challenges within a region assume responsibility jointly.'

Would it mean that Sweden and Finland would be bound even more closely to NATO?

'It would reflect the close connection they already have, just as Norway's contribution to EU operations reflects the close connection we have in that direction.'

This isn't an isolated proposal – it is broad-based and far-reaching...

'But I repeat: Stoltenberg was asked to go much further than the governments are able to today. It isn't appropriate to implement all of Stoltenberg's 13 proposals today. But the very dynamic inherent in this method gives the Nordic countries something interesting to focus their discussions on.'

Are you afraid that a report like this can create expectations at the Nordic level that will end in disappointment just as they have done in the past when big Nordic projects have been negotiated, such as a defence union and an economic union?

'The worst thing would be if there were no expectations. Then we would be mired in a position that would not be conducive to new ideas or new responses to challenges. Politicians have an ambivalent attitude to expectations. On the one hand they create enthusiasm. On the other hand we are afraid of coming crashing down to earth. I prefer the first option: creating expectations, and making demands. But on the other hand, today in 2009, we are discussing things that we wouldn't even have considered in 1995. It could be that we end up attaching importance to some Nordic projects that Stoltenberg hasn't discussed but which are inspired by the boldness inherent in his proposals. I am against a standing force because it would be too expensive and demanding, but that does not make the proposal any less interesting.'

Are there any of these proposals that would be in conflict with the undertakings made by Norway in NATO or EU contexts?

'Yes, there would be a problem if we were to have three separate standing forces, such as a NATO Response Force, EU Battle Groups and maybe also an EU component. But we shouldn't be too rigid just because the term "standing" gives the impression that there is an entire unit standing ready. If we can put together a unit at short notice because the components of it have trained together, that is something that could be useful.'

The Norwegian government, under Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, has attached greater importance than ever before on development and international

co-operation in northern regions. The Stoltenberg report is in favour of involving the Nordic countries more in satellite co-operation, maritime surveillance, shipping, health, the environment, security, ice-breaking and search and rescue. So the question is whether the Nordic countries want to park Russia on the sidelines in an area where the Russians have essential interests. Støre dismisses this problem:

'The Russians couldn't imagine in their wildest dreams that this form of co-operation is directed against them. On the contrary. Most of the 13 proposals entail what I would almost call a precondition that there is Russian involvement. The Russian foreign minister terms it the most successful regional co-operation in Europe. With the new channels that are now dialoguing with Russia, there would have to be some very dark sides to Russian thinking to...' Støre does not complete the sentence.

The Nordic countries have different security policy solutions. How will it be possible to combine such different traditions when it has not been possible previously?

'I think it's happening now. It's happening as we sit here talking together. It's not that far away in the future. The fact that the Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish commanders-in-chief are discussing this type of co-operation based on economic grounds, but also because the security and defence policy imperatives have been reduced, says something about the change that has taken place. What makes the Nordic Region so fascinating in a European context is that the world around us sees us as incredibly homogeneous and united. But when you study the Nordic countries more closely, there are enormous differences. Let's just take a quick tour: 3 EU countries, 3 NATO countries – Norway is more closely involved in EU military activities than Denmark, Finland has the euro, all are in Schengen, all are in the Nordic Region. Even if we are good at talking to each other, you can also see how different we are in organisational terms. But it only goes to show that despite these differences there are some cultural, societal and security policy common denominators.'

Who should be in charge if we reach the point where there are closely integrated units working together?

'Here I come back to the observation that the Nordic countries were never able to develop a Nordic defence union, a Nordic currency, a Nordic market. This is something that belongs one level higher up, i.e. Europe. I cannot imagine a separate Nordic command in an integrated Nordic system. I imagine that if we can get smooth co-operation up and running in a range of areas, the Nordic Region will be able to work together closely within such a framework.'

What is Norway's position when it comes to Stoltenberg's striking proposal for a 'mutual security policy guarantee'?

'Many people see this as the most innovative of the 13 proposals, and I would praise Stoltenberg for coming up with it, because it calls for both hearts and minds. Some will think it is impossible. I was born in 1960, and I belong to the generation that thinks that it is unworkable given Article 5 (in the NATO Treaty). But at the same time the report takes it as read that the countries will retain their commitments and affiliations vis-à-vis the EU and NATO. So it goes without saying that it is not feasible to sign up to something that conflicts with commitments to the two organisations. But in the modern security policy picture we have in the Nordic countries, with 12 to 15 risk factors to deal with - none of these being military - I think it is evident that the problems of one Nordic country have a direct bearing on the security problems of the others. So the question is this: would there be any value in coining that expression? Even now some would claim - with some justification - that Sweden has taken the biggest step in that direction by saying that Sweden would not be unaffected by the fate of another Nordic country. As far as NATO countries are concerned I think that the wording in Article 5 lends itself more readily when this type of proposal is being discussed. This proposal is not designed for 2009, but it can lie and mature over a timeframe of 10 to 15 years. I commend it because I don't want to exclude the possibility that within this period we will reach a situation where articulating a Nordic declaration of solidarity that is line with and not in conflict with our NATO and EU commitments is both realistic and possible. I also think that this would be desirable.'

Could it be envisaged that the Nordic countries, on the basis of such a declaration of solidarity, would enter a war situation without the involvement of NATO and the EU?

(For the first time in the interview Støre takes a deep breath before answering. The pause lasts an eternity of six seconds.)

'That is a very good question that deserves to remain in place to stimulate the debate. I would say that for us, fundamental security, our existential state security, depends on NATO, and I would never be in favour of having some other sort of declaration that would contribute towards replacing it. I imagine that in the Nordic reality that we live in now the need will emerge to have something supplementary. I return to my fundamental analysis. The Nordic countries were never able to create a union, and that will never happen. But within the framework of the European and transatlantic security commitments that we have, aspects will emerge in a wide range of areas that we didn't discuss during the Cold War, but which now form part of national security, for example climate change. Article 5 is a radar screen for the existential issues, and then beneath that radar screen there is an ever clearer radar screen where we can glean the issues that we ought to be reflecting on.'

JONAS GAHR STØRE (Labour) has served as Minister of Foreign Affairs in Jens Stoltenberg's cabinet in Norway since 2005.

Støre was previously employed as a special adviser in the Office of the Prime Minister 1992–95, and as Director General, International Department, Office of the Prime Minister 1995–98. After working as Chief of Staff in Gro Harlem Brundtland's office at the WHO 1998–2000, he was State Secretary and Chief of Staff, Office of the Prime Minister until 2001 and Secretary General of the Norwegian Red Cross 2003–05.

BJØRN HANSEN is a Norwegian journalist. He is one of the most experienced news presenters and correspondents in the Nordic countries, having worked for the Norwegian state-owned radio and television public broadcasting company, the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation.

Bjørn Hansen has also appeared several times on CNN, as well as on other international news channels. He was a news correspondent for NRK in Washington, DC in 1991. From 2002 to 2007, he was the host for *Urix*, a popular foreign news programme in Norway, broadcast every Thursday night on NRK.

“We have to build as many bridges as possible, on as many levels as possible, with as many stakeholders as possible.”

“Within the EU we have, of course, devised a formula that should one member state find itself involved in conflict, then the others will not stand idly by. Of course, this solidarity principle also applies to our Nordic neighbours...”

JAN ELIASSON

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Kjell Albin Abrahamson interviews Sweden's former
Minister of Foreign Affairs and top international diplomat
Jan Eliasson

KNELL ALBIN ABRAHAMSON: *Jan Eliasson – you are best known for your work in international politics, most recently as UN special envoy to Darfur. You have been Assistant Secretary General of the UN and, at the beginning of your diplomatic career, assistant to Olof Palme as UN mediator in the conflict between Iran and Iraq. Given your international interests, how much space is left in your heart for the Nordic Region and Nordic co-operation?*

JAN ELIASSON: 'A very big space! I'm glad to have been brought up in the pro-Nordic spirit. I can still sing the Danish and Norwegian national anthems, which I learned by heart at the age of ten. In school, we read Bjørnstjerne Björnson and Henrik Ibsen, and we would never have dreamt of speaking English in Copenhagen, as so many Swedes now do. It's a pity that Nordic language teaching is being phased out, and that Swedish is slowly being edged out in Finland.'

Is it easy or difficult to be pro-Nordic?

'Easy, because Nordic co-operation enjoys such widespread popular support and peoples' views of the neighbouring countries are so positive. As somebody who travels a lot, I know just how fraught with danger crossing a border can be elsewhere in the world. The positive attitude to Nordic co-operation is really quite striking. It's a pleasure for us to cross borders, and that's a positive start towards internationalism – the first step is not to be afraid of the outside world.'

Did you ever have occasion to discuss Nordic co-operation with Olof Palme?

'Several times. On one of our many flights between Baghdad and Tehran, I once asked him about his political failures. One that he mentioned was NORDEK (the Nordic Organisation for Economic Co-operation). He was extremely displeased with the way that the proposed Nordic economic union fell apart in 1969–1970, and the fact that the countries subsequently went their separate ways. He had hoped either that the Region would emerge as a strong alternative to the EEC, or that we would approach the EEC from a much stronger bargaining position.'

That close Nordic partnership was, of course, in many ways a forerunner of today's EU – but perhaps we were not as good at marketing it?

'This is true. I have a funny story from Bonn, where I served in 1967–1970, that illustrates precisely this point. At a reception on the occasion of the celebrations to mark Finnish National Day, I and three other tall young Nordic diplomats were having a discussion. A nice young German asked what we were talking about.

"We're talking about Nordic co-operation," I replied.

"What's that?" asked the young German.

"Well, we're all Nordists," my Danish colleague replied.

Astonished, the beautiful young German blurted out, "You're all nudists?"

This true story shows that there was a time when Nordic co-operation was completely unknown, even though we introduced passport union and had a common labour market long before the EU.'

How do you view the current state of Nordic co-operation?

'We don't have as much time to devote to Nordic co-operation as we used to. My own diplomatic career reflects this change – much less time was devoted to Nordic co-operation at the end of my career than at the beginning. This is mainly because we belong to two dynamic international organisations that require our attention and that direct our focus towards specific issues. In the case of Sweden and Finland, it is the EU, for Norway and Iceland it's NATO, and for the Danes it's both.'

Some politicians believe that Nordic co-operation has outlived its usefulness in the globalised world of today. Carl B. Hamilton of the People's Party thinks institutions like the Council of Ministers could be scrapped.

'No, it's extremely important to preserve Nordic co-operation. I'm concerned about some trends – two to three decades ago, it was easier to use the languages we share at Nordic meetings. It's also important that we nurture and maintain grassroots support. We have to build as many bridges as possible, on as many levels as possible, with as many stakeholders as possible.'

The scope of Nordic co-operation has clearly diminished in recent years, though – most notably after Sweden and Finland joined the EU in 1995.

'Yes, it is no longer accorded the same priority, and many people no longer think along Nordic lines. When I started work at the Foreign Office, it was taken for granted that Nordic positions were aligned in advance of the UN General Assembly. I don't know how many speeches I made at the United Nations that opened with the words "On behalf of the five Nordic countries..." We don't do that anymore. Now, it's most likely to be a common European voice.'

Has the Nordic baby been thrown out with the bathwater?

'Far too often, we forget that every single country in the Nordic Region increases its influence exponentially simply by working with others. The most natural partnerships are with the other Nordic countries. Secondly, we have to ask ourselves to what degree we can work with the countries around the Baltic Sea, especially the Baltic republics. Thirdly, to what extent can we co-ordinate with other European countries? It's important to realise that we're part of a greater whole, and that this increases the importance of our own voices. We have taken the Nordic voice for granted, but not taken care of it.

The Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre's proposal that the Nordic countries speak with one voice in the G20 is interesting. We have a strong combined economy, and the same is also true for research. The G20 is indeed a powerful presence in world politics, and it is only right that the Nordic countries should assert themselves within this new, multi-polar organisation.'

Although Nordic co-operation has become narrower, it has at the same time become deeper – take, for example, Nordic defence co-operation.

'We have long worked together on defence in the Nordic countries. As part of Partnership for Peace we have held joint Nordic exercises, which have even included the Baltic States. The Nordic countries also work together on peace-keeping missions, mainly for the UN. This is an almost classic concept that, unfortunately, seems to have declined in importance.

The debate on closer co-operation has started, and should be taken seriously. Within the EU we have, of course, devised a formula that should one member state find itself involved in conflict, then the others will not stand idly by. Of course, this solidarity principle also applies to our Nordic neighbours, regardless of EU membership status. Stoltenberg has presented a proposal in this context that seems worthy of further discussion.'

Is Nordic defence co-operation a mini-NATO?

'Absolutely not. It is no secret that Sweden and Finland are sensitive about being associated with the commitments contained in Article 5 – the one about "one for all, all for one". Nor do Denmark, Norway and Iceland envisage Nordic defence co-operation as an alternative to NATO. It is more a reflection of the geographical proximity and shared values in our part of the world. Defence co-operation is reminiscent of the EU solidarity clause, and it would be odd if we didn't have a similar commitment to solidarity between the Nordic countries.'

What led to this insight?

'The fact that the Nordic countries are becoming increasingly important in geopolitical terms. In the long run, this is mainly due to Arctic issues – specifically,

discussions about resources in that part of the world and what sea lanes should be opened up in the North-east and North-west passages as a result of climate change. This opens new perspectives on the area's significance.

There is also a new element to consider, as the Russian–German gas pipeline seems likely to be on its way in the Baltic Sea. So far, the proposal has only been studied from an environmental perspective, but there are also security aspects to consider. For example, the need to monitor it may lead to a heavier naval presence in our neighbourhood.'

And should the Nordic air forces and navies work together on this?

'Yes, as a former reserve naval officer, I am concerned that we are reducing our sea defences. There's virtually no military presence left on Gotland, and there are plans to close down the remaining unit, despite it working so well. I hope they will think again. We have to retain the ability to defend and monitor our territorial waters. For some time now there has also been the pirate aspect to consider. I don't envisage armed conflict, but I do think there will be greater strategic interest in the Baltic Sea and the far north.'

The Nordic solidarity declaration and Nordic defence co-operation have been characterised by MEP Eva-Britt Svensson (V) as a 'roundabout route into NATO'.

'Absolutely not, the part of the political spectrum I represent is extremely careful not to get caught up in certain other parties' pro-NATO aspirations. It's important that we maintain grassroots support, that we are able to tackle any environmental disasters and that we continue to work with countries with which we have strong traditions of partnership and converging interests. Neither Finland nor Sweden, which laud neutrality as a fundamental principle, nor Norway, Denmark and Iceland, which are members of NATO will, in my view, ever compromise on their fundamental positions. However, all five would like to strengthen contacts in an area where, for better or worse, we may become increasingly important.'

Could Nordic co-operation ever develop into an alternative to NATO?

'I don't think Norway, Denmark and Iceland would ever go along with that, nor give up their Article 5 commitment. From their perspective, Nordic defence co-operation is an additional factor. For our part, defence co-operation is an expression of the wish to seek security and tangible practical solutions through working with others. Especially in times of shrinking resources.'

The Visegrád countries – Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary – are expanding their diplomatic co-operation to stop 'embassy death'.

Do you envisage closer Nordic diplomatic co-operation aimed at halting the decline in Swedish representation abroad?

'We have enjoyed positive experiences of this kind of co-operation, the Nordic embassy complex in Berlin, for example, which cemented the image of Nordic affinity in Germany. We also work together in some parts of Africa and Asia, using each other's diplomatic or consular representation. I think this is something to explore. There is also a competing alternative, which will grow in importance once the Lisbon Treaty is implemented and a joint EU diplomatic service set up.

When we talk about big changes, we must never forget that the biggest historical change was the end of the Cold War – and in that context the Nordic countries came out among the big winners. Our history and geographical proximity, our interests and common values provide the very strong glue that holds together Baltic Sea co-operation. We risk missing out on an important dimension of developments in the new Hanseatic area if we close Swedish offices around the Baltic. The reduction in our Baltic presence that has ensued from closure of the consulates in Hamburg, Gdansk and Kaliningrad makes me sad.'

JAN ELIASSON, born 1940, top international diplomat, former Cabinet Secretary, chair of the UN General Assembly and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Eliasson spent two years as the UN special envoy to Darfur, with a mandate to try and find a solution to the region's seemingly intractable crisis.

KJELL ALBIN ABRAHAMSON, born 1945, is a foreign correspondent for Radio Sweden. He has been stationed in Moscow, Vienna and Warsaw. Abrahamson has written nine books, mainly about Central and Eastern Europe. The most recent was *Så länge du lever* (*As Love as You Live*, 2009).



LARS VEGAS NIELSEN is a prize-winning Danish cartoonist.

Since graduating as an illustrator and cartoonist from the Designskolen Kolding in 1996, Nielsen has worked as a freelancer, mainly for newspapers, magazines and periodicals. A member of the board of Danish Cartoonists, he was awarded the Ministry of Culture's Prize for Illustrators in 2007 for his work on *Sebastian's Monster*.

The Nordic Co-operation

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and three autonomous areas: the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland.

Nordic co-operation has firm traditions in politics, the economy, and culture. It plays an important role in European and international collaboration, and aims at creating a strong Nordic community in a strong Europe.

Nordic co-operation seeks to safeguard Nordic and regional interests and principles in the global community. Common Nordic values help the region solidify its position as one of the world's most innovative and competitive.



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ONE FOR ALL, ALL FOR ONE?

– NEW NORDIC DEFENCE POLICY?

Nordic co-operation has long since grown up. In recent years, the five nations have been concentrating on fewer core areas, facing up to the new challenges posed by globalisation, turning their attention to the outside world, forging closer links with neighbouring regions and working more closely together in international arenas.

But does the new geo-political situation mean they are prepared to reassess collaboration on security and foreign policy as well? Does it mean that the time is ripe to revive the idea of an actual military and security-policy partnership, more than six decades after preliminary discussions in the aftermath of WWII petered out?

The Nordic Council and Council of Ministers' Yearbook 2009 commissioned five of the most experienced foreign correspondents in the Region to interview five top politicians about these very issues.

Read how the current and former ministers responded to direct questions about the advantages and disadvantages of a Nordic mini-NATO, about future collaboration with NATO, the UN, the EU and other neighbouring countries, and about the new horizons for a modern Nordic partnership.

