

(Unofficial translation)

Security in a new era

Report by the Inquiry on Sweden's International Defence and Security Cooperation

Summary

I: The mandate

On 20 August 2015, the Government appointed an Inquiry tasked with analysing Sweden's current and future defence and security cooperation with other countries and organisations.

The Inquiry specifically addressed Nordic, Nordic–Baltic and bilateral Swedish–Finnish cooperation, and the transatlantic link, the UN, the EU, the OSCE and NATO.

Consideration of Sweden's military non-alignment was not part of the Inquiry's mandate.

Under its terms of reference, the Inquiry aims to contribute to a deeper national discussion about these issues.

Today's security threats are not only of a military nature. They may stem from such diverse phenomena as climate change and terrorism. However, the Inquiry has not considered it possible to analyse the full range of issues that may affect a state's security. The mandate originates from parliamentary deliberations leading to the 2015 Defence Resolution, and the Inquiry's main focus is therefore Sweden's defence and security cooperation.

II: The defence and security policy framework

After underscoring the importance of adopting a broad approach to security, the Inquiry identifies some fundamental security policy premises.

At the global level, the UN, as the hub of the multilateral system, occupies a fundamental position in Swedish foreign policy.

It is of particular importance that, since 1995, Sweden is a member of the EU, which is built on treaty-based solidarity among its members.

At the core of Sweden's security policy is military non-alignment, the essence of which is that Sweden does not extend mutual defence obligations to other countries.

The report examines Sweden's national declaration of solidarity with EU Member States and Nordic countries.

The Inquiry's assessment of the security policy situation in Sweden's neighbourhood is based on those made by the Defence Commission, with parliamentary representation, in 2013 and 2014, and by the Government in the 2015 Defence Policy Bill.

The Defence Commission stated that Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 represents the greatest challenge to the European security order since the end of the Cold War. Russia has demonstrated its readiness to violate established norms of international law.

The assessments of the Defence Commission and the Government have consistently been confirmed during the course of the Inquiry. Russia's actions have fundamentally weakened the cooperative European security order that emerged after the Cold War. Russia has developed an antagonistic posture towards the West. There is reason to believe that Russia seeks a security system which allows the country to maintain specific spheres of interest along its borders.

The Inquiry concludes that in Europe today there exists a new 'normal' in terms of international relations. The line of confrontation between Russia and NATO has shifted to the Baltic Sea region.

It is not possible to draw any categorical conclusions as to what consequences this will have for Sweden. An important reason is that the outside world lacks insight into the long-term plans of the Russian political leadership, to the extent that such plans exist. It appears that Russia's actions are characterised by a tendency to exploit opportunities it perceives in any given situation.

However, the Inquiry makes four general observations.

The first is that the only state in Sweden's neighbourhood that, in the foreseeable future, could conceivably engage in military aggression against its neighbours is Russia.

The second is that an isolated Russian attack against Sweden must be considered excluded for all practical purposes.

The third – and key – observation is that in all likelihood, Sweden would be drawn into a Russian-Baltic military conflict at an early stage through what might be called 'consequential aggression'. The reasons are of a political, humanitarian and military-geographical nature. A serious crisis in the Baltic Sea region would engage both the EU and NATO. On its own, Sweden would find it difficult to organise the reception of the refugee flows that would probably be the result of an attack against the Baltic countries. In addition, access to Swedish territory would be of military operational importance to both the attacking and the defending parties in a given conflict.

The fourth observation is that a Russian military attack against one or more of the Baltic States is improbable.

At the same time, the actions of the Russian leadership are, as noted, characterised by unpredictability. The Inquiry therefore considers the question under what conditions a Russian attack against the Baltic region nevertheless would be conceivable. Three scenarios are outlined.

The first is a sequence of incidents that spirals out of control. The second is a situation in which Russia would attack NATO at a strategic level. The third involves various situations in which the Russian regime considers its survival to be at risk.

The Inquiry depicts the most common assumption as to what form a military chain of events in the Baltic Sea region would take.

In such a situation, Russia is considered to have the capacity to establish military control over the Baltic region within a few days.

In this scenario, Russia may have an interest in deploying its air defence systems to Swedish territory so as to strengthen its capacity to deny NATO access to airspace over the Baltic Sea. Operations against Sweden may precede the main attack against the Baltic States.

It is likely that NATO's response in the event of a Russian attack would be an operation to recover the area.

All indications are that both the US and the Baltic States would request that US and NATO forces be able to use Swedish territory at an early stage of the conflict.

The Inquiry concludes that should the Russian side plan to dramatically increase pressure on the Baltic States, Russia would likely primarily use hybrid methods.

The Inquiry notes that even if Sweden maintains some key military systems of a high international standard – including combat aircraft and submarines – the general perception is that the current Swedish defence capability is characterised by considerable shortcomings. The conclusion is that Sweden, like other European countries, would be dependent on outside support to maintain its sovereignty in an evolving military crisis.

III: Defence and security cooperation

The report assesses *Nordic* defence and security cooperation. Since 2009, *Nordefco* has provided the organisational framework for this peacetime cooperation. For many years, the rationale was the ambition to provide common contributions to international peace support operations. The *Nordic Battle Group* (NBG) was one of the main expressions of this ambition.

Today, an important element is *Cross Border Training*, particularly the extensive exercise and training activities conducted by the Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish air forces in northern Scandinavia.

The challenges in the Baltic Sea region have come to replace international peace support as the common task. The security policy dialogue among Nordic nations is intensifying and small-scale, constructive military cooperation is being developed. At the same time, the Achilles heel of Nordic defence and security cooperation is being exposed more clearly than before: the fundamental differences in the countries' security policy identities.

Nordic-Baltic cooperation is relatively undeveloped. There is, however, an ambition to deepen the security policy dialogue, as well as military cooperation. The establishment of a common naval and air situational awareness, and increased training activities, are among the areas under discussion. One constraint is the clear

priority the Baltic States give to cooperation with the US and NATO.

Cooperation with *Finland* is Sweden's closest bilateral defence and security relationship. The political objective is to deepen this on a wide front, with an ambition that is fundamentally new to both Sweden and Finland – 'beyond peacetime conditions'. This cooperation constitutes a paradigm shift in security policy for Sweden, as well as for Finland.

The most important long-term overall effect of this cooperation is probably an enhanced joint operational capability through integration and role specialisation. This would result in a stronger regional deterrence. At the same time, mutual dependence would increase.

The concrete military advantages of such cooperation include increased strategic depth¹ for both parties. In particular, the possibility of the countries' air and naval forces to use each other's air bases and harbours can be of importance in a military crisis. In addition, the joint range of capabilities would increase. Sweden has submarines of high international standard, and the Finnish F-18 Hornet, unlike the JAS Gripen, could be equipped with long-range cruise missiles.

A key question is how far the countries are prepared to conduct military operational planning together. The extent will be determined by the level of mutual political will.

There are at present no plans to give this cooperation a treaty-bound character.

Sweden's defence and security cooperation with the *United States* is rapidly developing, based on a mutual interest to broaden and deepen the contacts.

To Sweden, the relationship with the US is of vital importance: for security policy reasons, to strengthen the US commitment to security in northern Europe, and for defence policy reasons, to develop Sweden's military capabilities, not least through training activities and armament cooperation.

¹ In order to facilitate the reading of this report, a number of commonly used security policy concepts are explained in annex 2.

The increased importance of Sweden's geostrategic position, combined with Swedish military and defence industrial expertise within certain niches, contribute to the American interest.

In May 2016, a Statement of Intent provided a formal framework for deepened Swedish-US cooperation. The statement covers five key areas: interoperability, training and exercises, armament cooperation, research and development, and multinational operations.

As far as the Inquiry is aware, planning for common US and Swedish actions in the case of a crisis in the Baltic Sea region is not conducted at present. This might limit the West's overall deterrence in the region.

A potential step towards enhanced coordination could therefore be increased mutual transparency as regards both countries' operational planning.

The *UN* serves as the hub of the multilateral system. The world organisation's security policy importance to Sweden lies primarily in the Security Council's primary responsibility for maintenance of international peace and security, and its right to take decisions that are binding on all Member States based on the legitimacy provided by the UN Charter.

A system is emerging in which major peace support operations will be the responsibility of the UN, the EU principally focuses on civilian and military training missions to support security sector reform, while NATO's main task is the collective military defence of Europe.

The UN is already the most important actor when it comes to peace support missions, a fact that will be further accentuated as the division of labour between the EU, NATO and the UN is being clarified. The organisation leads challenging missions in some of the world's most difficult conflict areas. New missions might be called for.

At the same time, the extensive mission mandates often exceed actual capabilities. Bridging this gap is a major challenge for the UN system.

By providing advanced military contributions to UN peace operations, Sweden can give added value to missions that are of relevance to Sweden's foreign and security policy – as is currently the case with an intelligence unit in MINUSMA (Mali).

As a member of the Security Council in 2017–2018, Sweden will have an opportunity to influence the design of UN-led peace operations. In light of this, it is clear that Sweden will retain its higher level of ambition as regards the UN over the next few years.

To a great extent, the UN can be expected to be the context in which Swedish conceptual thinking and policy considerations concerning all phases of a conflict cycle can be developed.

Sweden should take an active role in efforts to improve the efficiency of the UN's peace support operations. This includes a more transparent planning process and a better dialogue with the three main actors: the Security Council, the Secretariat and the troop-contributing countries. One concrete contribution could be to push for a strengthened role and a more representative composition of the UN Military Staff Committee.

The *EU* retains its position as Sweden's most important foreign and security policy platform. Brussels is the venue where Sweden most effectively can contribute to European diplomacy. The voice of Sweden is enhanced by active participation in the EU's common security and defence policy, primarily its military and civilian crisis management operations, which provide an operational base and credibility to the Union's common foreign and security policy.

Earlier ambitions among some of the Member States that, over time, the EU would take over NATO's role in Europe have gradually been abandoned. However, it cannot be excluded that "Brexit" might revive this debate.

The invocation of Article 42.7 of the Treaty of European Union following the attacks in Paris in 2015 was a reminder that EU solidarity has a concrete security and defence dimension, even if its institutional expression differs from NATO's.

The EU's operational focus is currently on civilian and military advisory and capacity building missions, primarily in Africa.

These missions underpin the global role that the EU long has strived for, but has had difficulties to realise. At the same time, there is growing frustration among some of the Member States that the Union has not yet been able to make full use of its potential in the foreign and security policy arena.

EU cooperation will remain of limited importance for Sweden's defence capabilities.

The OSCE is an integral part of the European and Transatlantic security structure. Along with the United Nations Charter, the OSCE principles and commitments constitute the normative foundation for European security. A key element in this is the right of all states to territorial integrity and to make their own security policy choices, including the principle that national borders may not be changed by use of force.

At the same time, the OSCE reflects the idea of the indivisibility of security. Every country has the right to define its security policy, but not to the detriment of others. This contains an element of tension accentuated by Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

The strength of the OSCE lies in the work carried out by its three independent institutions as well as its field missions.

The Inquiry concludes that the OSCE's ability to contribute to a solution to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict will determine the future political relevance of the organisation.

Since its inception in the mid-1990s, the *partnership with NATO* has developed into an important security policy tool for Sweden. It has been, and remains, of fundamental importance for the development of Swedish defence.

International developments since 2014, and the fact that NATO is phasing out its crisis management operations, create new conditions for Sweden's partnership with NATO.

Opportunities exist to further deepen the cooperation, primarily with regard to new challenges around the Baltic Sea. At the same time, NATO's increased focus on collective defence increases the sensitivity for both parties in engaging in close political and practical interaction.

The report's consideration of the implications of possible Swedish *membership in NATO* differs from the other areas of analysis, as it cannot be based on Sweden's own experiences. This section is therefore to a large part of a descriptive nature. The Inquiry does not take a view on whether Sweden should apply for NATO membership or not. Such a decision is of a political nature. Consequently, references to Swedish NATO membership are made in a hypothetical context.

For the members, engagement in the NATO framework is based on the notion that international military cooperation is

fundamentally beneficial. This view was formed by the lessons learned from the first half of the twentieth century and a realisation of the risks posed by national defence structures without a multilateral context. For the allies, NATO provides the platform for transatlantic security cooperation.

NATO can be described as a security policy organisation, which has the possibility to draw on its members' national military assets and capabilities. NATO as an organisation has no military forces.

Article 5 entails an individual and collective obligation to assist an ally in the event of an armed attack. The specific details of a country's contribution depend upon the situation. In this regard, there is no automaticity in Article 5. There is no legal basis for an allied country to engage other members in an armed attack. The real significance of the Article is that an attack against one member state is considered an attack against all 28 members. This is obviously a strong deterrent against any attack.

The command structure is the backbone around which joint operations can be built and led. It is of fundamental importance in that it creates conditions for combining military efficiency with transparency and influence for the members.

The purpose of operational military planning is to deter a hypothetical aggressor by making the aggressor understand that preparations to successfully meet any attack have been made. Operational military planning is also the basis for the Alliance's actions in the event of a crisis. Since 2014, the level of ambition regarding NATO's operational planning has greatly increased.

NATO is a nuclear alliance in the sense that US nuclear capability is the ultimate guarantee of the security of NATO members.

The Inquiry illustrates possible consequences of a Swedish NATO membership.

The implications for Sweden's national operational capabilities are not necessarily evident. Also for NATO members, the first line of defence is constituted by national efforts. Hence, membership is not a shortcut to solving deficiencies in national capabilities. It would, however, allow for joint operational planning.

NATO membership is not likely to have a major impact on national defence expenditures. Experience suggests that the level of defence appropriations is determined by public finance and other

domestic policy considerations, viewed in light of the perceived security threat.

Being a member of NATO would probably make it difficult to pursue the idea of an international ban on nuclear weapons.

The overall impression is that the Alliance would welcome a Swedish membership application. The Allies' reasoning is based on the perception of Sweden as a security provider and their view that Swedish membership would increase deterrence in the Baltic Sea region.

Finland prefers not to be part of the Swedish NATO debate. The Inquiry concludes that an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of Swedish membership in NATO in relation to Finland should be made from an overall regional perspective and not with respect to Finland alone.

Russia opposes Swedish membership in the Alliance. The most important military reason is probably that it would complicate Russian military operational planning and limit the country's opportunities to take military action in the Baltic Sea region.

NATO membership would imply that Sweden assumes the rights and obligations of the Washington Treaty, with Article 5 at its core.

On a day-to-day level, the most obvious consequence would be that Sweden gains access to a multilateral transatlantic platform from which to pursue Swedish interests.

At the same time, joining NATO – like membership of the EU – would in some general sense restrict Sweden's political and diplomatic room for manoeuvre. Membership would be a new element in Swedish foreign policy and an additional dimension to take account of in its daily implementation.

The most tangible military consequence of Swedish NATO membership would be to dispel the current uncertainty regarding common action in the event of a Baltic Sea crisis, and that the West's deterrence therefore most probably would increase.

It is, however, difficult to determine to what precise extent. Ultimately, the effectiveness of deterrence is determined by the aggressor. When evaluating overall deterrence in the Baltic Sea region, consideration must also be given to the extensive defence and security cooperation that Sweden is currently developing with other countries and organisations.

A Swedish membership application would likely lead to a political crisis with Russia, although its scope and duration is difficult to determine. Previous rounds of enlargement suggest that Russia, after initial opposition, accepts the fact of the matter and that the situation returns to *status quo ante*.

Russia's military response would probably involve adjusting to any build-up of military capability that may occur on Swedish territory – should such a build-up at all take place – in order to re-establish a perceived balance.

IV: Afterword

Today is a new era. It is characterised by an emerging sense of unpredictability regarding security in our part of the world.

The Inquiry concludes that Sweden has developed significant international defence and security cooperation.

What we see in 2016 is a growing network of cooperation activities, which mutually reinforce each other. In this sense, Sweden is well positioned to manage the new challenges.