

Trapped in the Twilight Zone?

Sweden Between Neutrality and NATO

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Resumé

Varför har svenskarna ett så knepigt förhållande till Nato? Det svenska politiska systemets våndor inför frågan om Natomedlemskap – som borde vara ett naturligt steg för ett land med vårt läge – är i mycket en konsekvens av att tanken på Sverige som neutralt ännu är en del av självbilden för många svenskar. Dessa identitära och känslomässiga band gör frågan till en het dito som många politiker i det längsta undvikit att ta i. Följaktligen har Sverige hamnat i ett mellanläge mellan neutralitet och Natomedlemskap. Så länge som omvärlden troddes vara fredlig sågs inte detta som ett problem. Men Rysslands hotfulla och aggressiva politik under senare år, i kombination med vår egen militära nedrustning under 00-talet, har framtvingat en debatt i frågan och har gjort att säkerhets- och försvarsfrågorna har hamnat högt på agendan. Tanken på medlemskap stöds nu av en starkare opinion än för 4-5 år sedan, men regeringen och försvarsminister Hultqvist vet att frågan kan splittra både regeringen och partiet. De söker därför hitta ett sätt att få amerikanska säkerhetsgarantier utan formellt medlemskap. Även Finland är i en liknande position. Hittills har denna politik varit remarkabelt framgångsrik, men med Donald Trump i Vita Huset ter sig en sådan politik något mer osäker.

IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE if overseas observers are both flabbergasted and frustrated by the tossing and turning over Sweden's relations to NATO, over its own security policy, and over the state of its defences. For a small but well-off country without security guarantees and with weak armed forces, living close to a revanchist and increasingly bellicose Russia, the solution might seem obvious: join NATO and spend substantially more for your defence.

To American visitors I then retort, that from a European perspective, the same can be said about a number of issues that seem to be vexing America: gun control, abortion, health care, affordable college, etc. There, the solutions seem obvious to a European, but Americans just cannot agree on them. To British visitors one can nowadays just say Brexit – that should shut them up ...

Not long ago, most Nordic analysts and scholars who took an interest in the issue of whether Sweden should join NATO, or should remain some kind of “neutral”, gave the matter a dignified treatment as an issue of security policy, or of national strategy. While some such accounts are still produced, the matter is increasingly seen as one of politics rather than policy. Sweden's ongoing integration into Western structures, the return of a Russian threat to Europe, and Sweden's current military weakness have lent greater weight to the arguments in favour of joining the alliance.

Events, the ongoing debate, and shifts in public opinion have with time also undermined many of the traditional – and once very dominant – arguments against joining NATO and in of favour continued non-align-

ment. One by one, the serious and strategic arguments in support of the present policy have fallen by the wayside, until only three, remain.² These are 1) not putting pressure on Finland, 2) that non-alignment gives Sweden *handlingsfrihet* (freedom of action), which is politico-diplomatic code for being able to pick and choose, and 3) that the accession process might raise tensions in the region.³ The deterioration of the official position on non-alignment has now progressed to the point where the current government has had to resort to procedural arguments such as “no sharp turns” and “the issue is not the agenda”. It is increasingly obvious that the crux lies not in security policy, but in politics.

Dethronement of an issue from policy to politics does not necessarily make the issue easier to solve, however. As Stalin famously observed, the class struggle hardens as it progresses. Within the political parties, the strongest support for staying outside NATO is found in the ex-communist Left Party, in the Greens and in the left wing of the Social Democrats. The Social Democrats are not as dominant as they used to be, but it is still the largest party. However, at their current 25-30 % of the electorate, the Social Democrats could not afford any large-scale loss of voters, especially not on an issue of marginal importance such as security policy.

Despite the fact that political scientists consider security policy as an issue of minor importance in the eye of voters, many leading social democrats still see a decision to part with 200 years of non-alignment and also with the heritage of Olof Palme, as a decision that could split the party, or lead to wide-spread defections to the Left or the Greens. At the very least one could expect any serious intra-party debate on the matter to be tumultuous, emotionally charged and

divisive, and this in a party that still tends its scars from the decision to join the EU in the early 1990s. Moreover, while all four parties in the non-socialist alliance that held power 2006–2014 have since come to support NATO membership as soon as possible, all but the Liberals are recent converts to the cause and their rank and file are divided on the matter. In fact, scratch the surface of almost any Swede and you will find instincts and a sense of detachment from the European mainstream that are the results of 200 years on the side-lines of history.

Politics is not always logical or rational in a Cartesian or Realist sense, nor the result of a simple clash of class interests in a Marxist sense. One reason for this is that among the determinants of a state's policies are emotions and issues related to identity and self-image. When such aspects are involved, they can supercharge the political discourse with emotional heat. Just like gun control or abortion in the US, contentious issues of security policy in Sweden involve deeply held convictions and senses of identity which makes change, settlement and compromise much more difficult.

In order to better understand the factors and complexities involved, and possibly also to scout a route forward, it becomes necessary to survey the political terrain.⁴ In order to do that, one needs to explore the topography of mentalities that in large part shape the political terrain. And that, in its turn, makes it necessary to go back into the past, or at least into current interpretations of the past. This is because just as the present day physical landscape of Sweden is partly defined by a topography that was shaped by the inland ice 10 000 years ago, the present day political landscape and its underlying mental topography is partly shaped by events of the past, and by our tales of the past.

Not just sticky labels

If I had written this text a couple of years ago, I would have started out with poking fun at those – Swedes and foreigners alike – who speak of Sweden as “neutral” in the present tense. “Most likely”, I might have mused, “such ignorance is due to a combination of old mental maps, sticky labels and to people only reading the funnies and the sports pages – if they read newspapers at all.” To some degree I would have been right in ridiculing members of the chattering classes who appear as talking heads in the media, despite not having noticed that things have changed radically since the 1970s. In the run-up to last summer’s vote in the Swedish parliament concerning a host-nation agreement with NATO, opponents claimed that neutral Sweden was covertly, without public debate and with malice a forethought, being led into NATO’s lair. This claim is patently just plain wrong, as anybody that has been following events and the news for the last 25 years with anything like an open mind can testify.⁵

However, in 2015 the late Alyson Bailes – British diplomat and scholar – made a comment that made me rethink the matter. I realized that – in a manner – Sweden was still neutral, and Swedes were too.⁶ Not neutral in the sense of international law or of official security policy doctrine (or more correct, dogma) during the Cold War, but in mentality and by not being fully committed. When it comes to hard security, Sweden still stays on the side-lines of the West, with at least one foot outside and with eyes always on the door, carefully weighing whether its interests would be best served by staying or going. Even as our government talks about its “security policy of solidarity” and how our security is inextricably linked to that of others, it carefully adds an opt-out clause

to any would-be commitment. And as mentioned, *handlingsfrihet* is indeed one of the few strategic arguments remaining in support of the current policy. It means that Sweden hopes to be able to apply a smorgasbord approach to international security and conflict – carefully picking the pieces it likes, while avoiding the dishes that taste bad or could cause heartburn, or worse.

So, in a way Sweden is both neutral and not neutral at the same time. Most of us have long since left the dogmatic and ideologically tinted neutrality of the Cold War – which in reality was far less than pristine. However, the body politic has not really found a new stable position where to rest. Also, for 15 years, our political masters and much of the population really believed that Eternal Liberal Peace had broken out, and that there was no need for a defence of our territory or for robust security arrangements. All that was needed was a small force for international do-goodery. With time, globalisation would turn everybody into rules-abiding middle-class liberals in a neat and tidy world.

Only, that did not happen. Instead Putin invaded Georgia. And when that didn’t wake us up, he invaded Ukraine too. Then ISIS struck against Paris and Brussels, and Europe was inundated with migrants from the Middle East. The EU, already hard-pressed by the Euro-crisis, was not up to dealing with this and was clearly leaking at the seams. China was flexing its new military muscles in the South China Sea. A lot of Swedes woke up to the realisation that the world was dangerous again, that Russia was a menace, that the EU was on the ropes, and that we had neither national armed forces worthy of the name, nor any credible security guarantees. We were stuck in the middle, or in a no-mans-land, between neutrality and NATO. In the words of two respected diplomats tasked separately to study the issue, current policy

leaves Sweden in a “twilight zone” where Moscow sees us as part of the enemy camp, but we have neither security guarantees nor any say about contingency planning and arrangements for assistance.⁷

In part, this state of affairs may reflect the fact that our policy and our political attitudes are still in the process of slow change; change because the world around us is changing, but only slow change because of the powerful pull of attitudes shaped by the past. The root cause here is a sense of separation from the European mainstream. Sweden is not an island nation like the UK (strictly speaking, the UK is not a nation, but at least three), but we are separated from the historical experience of most peoples on the continent in that we have not been at war in more than 200 years. We took early retirement from world history after the Napoleonic wars, and traded the pursuit of glory for the pursuit of happiness and property. That long period of increasingly affluent peace tends to make many Swedes somewhat smug and aloof, thinking that they have found a secret formula that others have not. Thus, in the national narrative *Felix Suecia* has no need for alliances or help from others, because nothing really nasty happens to countries that pursue such wise and enlightened policies.

The deep roots of neutrality

Originally, and for a century and half, the reason for Sweden’s neutrality was mainly a small state’s version of Realism. Sweden had its fingers badly burnt playing the power game with the big boys, and finally realised that it was better for small fry to stay out of the fray. The result was the so called Policy of 1812, whereby Sweden reconciled itself to the loss of Finland and the Baltic provinces, accepted the fact that Russia was the strongest power in the region, avoided conflict

with Russia, but also quietly counted on the countervailing influence of the great western sea power, should Russian pressure become overwhelming.

The final point – about relying on other powers to balance and contain Russia – is part of a more cynical and sophisticated version of the *Felix Suecia* mind-set, which Thomas Bertelman dubbed as “*oumbärlighetens tillförsikt*”.⁸ This roughly translates as being convinced that one is indispensable. According to this view, if Sweden needed help from others, such help would somehow be forthcoming regardless of Sweden’s formal status. Those who think this way – that Sweden will be protected and in effect act can be a free-rider – argue that it has worked for 200 years. Even during the Cold War, as we now know, the US was prepared to help Sweden militarily if attacked by Russia, despite Sweden’s official “neutrality” and despite at times loud criticism of US policies.⁹ During the latter part of the Cold War, this fact was a hidden premise of Swedish security policy and defence planning, but it was surrounded by extremely strong taboos and it was dangerous to even allude to it.¹⁰ Since ten years now, it is openly said as part of declaratory doctrine that we expect help from others in case we are attacked.¹¹

The policy of neutrality also served other purposes, such as channelling national energies into the development of industry, later also containing domestic tension between pro-German and pro-British camps, and after 1945 maintaining the political hegemony of the Social Democratic party and neutering domestic opponents.¹²

However, the public face of Swedish neutrality policy, both in Sweden and abroad, has largely been shaped by an entirely different strand of neutrality. In the late 1960’s

Olof Palme introduced morally based activism in Swedish foreign policy, starting with condemnation of US warfare in Vietnam. Neutrality policy was thus imbued with a sense of moral goodness and superiority it did not have before, in the process also white-washing away some of the nastier stains of Sweden's war-time neutrality. To be Swedish was to be Neutral, to be Neutral was to be Good, thus it was Good to be a Swede. The feel-good effect was very appealing to both public and politicians. Neutrality soon became something of a national meta-ideology, blending with modernity, economic growth and the welfare state to form a new national identity. Swedes thought – and were taught – that they had found a superior and more enlightened model for their nation, which others ought to emulate. Thus, it was not Sweden that should adapt to the outside world, but the outside world that should adopt the wise ways of Sweden. Feelings of aloofness and self-sufficiency were close at hand.¹³

This more ideological and values-laden strain of Sweden's international position has proven very resistant to change. Such major changes and set-backs as 20 years of economic stagnation, the fall of the Berlin wall, 500 % interest rates and EU-membership have made noticeable dents in it, but ideological attachment to the old paradigm of a self-sufficient neutrality still remains a powerful factor in the body politic and is one of the main reasons Sweden was deeply divided on EU-membership and has not yet joined NATO. This should really not be surprising. While a policy based on expediency and realism ought to change when circumstances change, a policy anchored in identity and ideology does not change so easily.

Total Defence during the Cold War

Although Sweden had escaped the ravages of the Second World War, the experience of being under threat had fostered solid support for strong defences among all the democratic parties. Together with a booming export-driven economy, this allowed for very substantial defence spending during the first two decades of the Cold War, producing comparatively strong and large armed forces. These were based on mobilisation, manned by universal conscription of males, and armed by domestic industries and through imports from the West. Some 850.000 could be mobilised in wartime, more than 10 % of the entire population

Around 1960, the Swedish air force was arguably the world's fourth largest, and major investments were made in bases and in a state-of-the art surveillance and control systems. The navy had many and modern ships, and an elaborate system of coastal defences was blasted into the bedrock. However, so much manpower meant that the spending for equipment per soldier was rather low, with the bulk of the army being strait-leg, bicycle mounted infantry towed by agricultural tractors (!), and only a few units were mechanised.¹⁴

Sweden's defences during the Cold War did not only consist of the armed forces. "Total War Requires a Total Defence" ran the slogan at the time. Besides the armed forces the Total Defence included Civil Defence, Economic Defence and Psychological Defence. All able-bodied citizens between 16 and 65 years of age not serving in armed forces were liable for compulsory duty in work details. Air-raid shelters, storage of strategic commodities, railroads etc. were prepared for war. Together with Switzerland, Sweden was

arguably the most militarised of the Western democracies.

For the Swedish armed forces, the first two decades of the Cold War were the “golden years”. In the late 1960s three things happened which changed matters considerably. Political winds blew from the left (as generally in the West), the generation of politicians who had experienced the war were replaced by those with a world-view framed by the 1960s, and the Swedish economic growth model ground to a halt. Part of the solution to the latter problem was to take money from the defence budget to pay for social reforms, and the onset of international détente was used to legitimise this.

Thus, the consensus between the democratic parties on a strong defence and on annual increases in the defence budget to pay for ever more expensive equipment broke up in the late 1960s. Instead, budgets remained flat, which meant that the buying power of the armed forces gradually eroded.

Faced with this very serious problem in the early 1970s, the different arms of service chose different paths. The navy and the air force chose to cut quantity in order to preserve quality (in the case of the air force, keeping the domestic aircraft industry busy may have been a consideration too). But the army took the portentous decision to accept sub-standard quality in order to preserve its order of battle. At a time when the rest of the industrialised world was mechanising its infantry, the Swedish army was considering whether it could afford to motorise all of its brigades with unprotected trucks (lorries). In the end, half of the brigades were given Scania trucks while the other half had to make do with tractors, although the bicycles were largely replaced by trailers.

This was done with a large portion of wishful thinking, a vain hope that some crisis would come, which would cause politicians

to spend more on defence, thereby allowing the “modernisation” of the remainder of the brigades. As the years dragged on it became painfully obvious that the large Swedish army was obsolete, and needed to cut force structure and to modernize. But the top brass and many of the officers were so attached to dogma and to the idea of “the people in arms” that they refused to recognize the fact.¹⁵

After the Cold War

The fall of the Berlin Wall took most Swedish government officials by surprise, and they reacted with bewilderment rather than with elation. This applied not only to the political side, but also to the military. Many refused to accept that the end of the world as they knew it had come, and that neutrality policy had become both obsolete and irrelevant.

The onset of a major domestic economic crisis focussed attention elsewhere, and in a footnote to an emergency economic bill to Parliament, the Social Democratic government declared its intention to join the European Communities, a step hitherto considered absolutely impossible because of the necessity to maintain the credibility of the policy of neutrality.

The prospect of Sweden joining what was becoming the European Union made a re-formulation of security policy necessary. In 1992, the new non-socialist government led by Carl Bildt got the major parties to agree to a new formula. This replaced the policy of neutrality with *military non-alignment*, which gave Sweden the *option* of neutrality in case of war *in its vicinity*. The latter part of the formula represented the remnants of the Policy of 1812, with its emphasis on avoiding a conflict with Russia.

During the 1990's Sweden was slowly sucked into the orbits of the EU and NATO.

In 1993, Sweden sent a mechanised battalion to Bosnia, in part to prove its credentials as a prospective member of the EU. Because the Swedish army's Centurion tanks were too old, Denmark was asked to provide its slightly less obsolete Leopard 1s.¹⁶ In 1994, Sweden joined NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP), and in 1995 became a full member of the EU. The same year, Sweden placed its troops in Bosnia under NATO's command. NATO's role in ending the gruesome war in Bosnia, which the UN had failed to do, helped legitimize military cooperation with NATO.

Despite these changes, large parts of the Swedish establishment and public opinion remained enamoured by the old policy and the paradigm of neutrality, and resisted moves for closer cooperation on security within the EU and with NATO. In the defence realm, powerful conservative forces also still held sway, after an attempt by the Bildt government to modernise the army had been partly aborted due to an acute economic crisis.

The seeds of internationalisation

During the 1990s, six factors were at work slowly pushing Swedish security and defence policies in a more international direction. The first was Sweden's EU-membership, which was prompted by a manifest collapse of the national economic model and facilitated by the fall of the Berlin wall. Swedes were initially very reluctant Europeans, but slowly accepted the fact that they were members of a Union, and this had advantages. The political class also saw that results-oriented negotiations in Brussels might in the end be more rewarding than grandstanding in the UN or at rallies at home.

The second factor was the re-establishment of the independence of Estonia, Latvia and

Lithuania. This was a great boon to Sweden's national interests and national security, but it took a while before the government dared to act on it. Yet, Sweden played a key role in helping to secure the independence of the Baltics and the withdrawal of Russian troops, working in close concert with the US.¹⁷ After the withdrawal of Russian troops, Sweden expanded an existing program of "sovereignty support" to include also military assistance with surplus equipment and with training.

In parallel, there was an international debate on the future security status of the Baltic states. Some argued that these states could not be defended, others that NATO membership would provoke the Russians.¹⁸ Some even suggested that the Scandinavians, rather than NATO, should be the guarantors of the Balts' security. The Swedish government realised that the best solution, both for the Balts and for Sweden, was for NATO to underwrite the security of the Baltics. To those involved in Sweden's Baltic policies, this demonstrated how Sweden's interests and security were interlinked with those of its neighbours. Security could no longer be seen, or secured, in purely national terms.

The third factor was the mechanisation and modernisation of the army, which put Sweden's armed forces and their world-view more on par with other armies in the developed world, and de-legitimised the previously prevailing professional isolation.

The fourth factor was the evolution of the nature of international peace operations, which changed with the end of the Cold War. Operations in the Balkans were dangerous and commanded attention. Moreover, Sweden took part not only for altruistic reasons, but also to protect national interests – the Wars of the Yugoslav Secession had brought record numbers of refugees to Sweden. Sweden discovered that it was a

stake-holder in the European security order and that the threats to this order had to be tackled together with others.

This dovetailed very well with the fifth factor, which was cooperation with NATO through Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP). NATO's command of operations in the Balkans (from late 1995 on) helped legitimize this cooperation and the striving for interoperability, which by its own logic snowballed until the Swedish armed forces had made the transition to using NATO's standards and procedures, rather than its own.

Finally, the sixth factor consisted of revelations that surfaced from the early 1990s and onwards, of Sweden's covert military ties to the West during the Cold War. An official commission revealed that preparations for wartime cooperation with the US, UK, Norway and Denmark – and for the reception of help – had indeed been undertaken, with the government's permission. Moreover, the commission found proof of the US having decided to come to Sweden's assistance, should she be attacked.¹⁹ The commission's findings, which were later followed-up by researchers and journalists, helped puncture the cherished myth of pristine neutrality, unsoiled by contacts with the West, and of a self-sufficient Sweden that took care of its own security.²⁰

The end of the national road

Around the turn of the millennium, Sweden's politicians decided that there was no threat of an invasion in the next ten years. A period of drastic cuts of force structure, both war-time units and peace-time bases, ensued. The armed forces also finally accepted that the Russian threat was gone and that their focus should be on international peace-support operations. However, the international tasks

were still to be solved by ad hoc units made up of former conscripts that had volunteered.

At the same time, American defence consultants convinced some leading Swedish generals that this was a good time to abandon capabilities in the near term in favour of drafting a network-centric defence for the future. Accordingly, the armed forces disbanded their mobilisation system and spent large sums on high-tech experiments. Despite supposedly being the focus, international operations continued to be handled by units set up ad hoc. The training of conscripts went on, but as force structure had shrunk only about 15 % of young men served, so conscription was no longer universal, but rather selective. Moreover, only 30 % of those who served later volunteered for international service. This meant that Sweden's defence establishment was highly inefficient, especially when comparing the output in military terms with the input in economic and manpower terms. Moreover, some functions were so small that they were close to becoming sub-critical.

The time for radical reform

With the old moorings cut loose, defence policy was in a flux, and thus the time was ripe for radical reform. With a new chief of the armed forces (CHOD) and a change to a centre-right government, the prospects of achieving this improved. That the prospects for defence reform improved were perhaps not because of the change in political colour per se, but rather the fact that a new team came in. Moreover, the time was ripe, as more and more people came to the conclusion that the system was patently dysfunctional and had reached the end of the line.

Four further factors helped highlight the dysfunctionality of the old system. One was the Nordic Battle-Group (NBG), an EU battle

group for which Sweden was the framework nation.²¹ After the network-centric bubble had fizzled, the NBG became the new centre of attention. Little cost or effort was spared in making this unit tip-top for high readiness in the first half of 2008. But the period of readiness came and went without the unit being used, whereupon it was disbanded. This waste of effort gnawed at the belief in the existing system.

The second factor was a public debate on the balance between forces for international and for national tasks which started in earnest in the summer of 2007. Critics charged that the government and the armed forces were focussing too much on international peace-support operations, and were neglecting the needs for national defence highlighted by a more assertive Russia. Those on the other side of the debate denied that there was any need for capabilities for national defence, as there was no threat from Russia, and argued that Sweden should focus on overseas operations.

This debate helped to draw attention to the fact that the conflict between international and national tasks was a result of the way the Swedish armed forces were organised, with one set of forces for national tasks, and another ad hoc set for international tasks.

The third factor was that Sweden's and Norway's CHODs had a meeting of the minds and saw the potential for synergies in bilateral defence cooperation, such as logistics, training, and procurement. Pooling resources might be the only alternative to shedding functions in danger of becoming sub-critical. Moreover, the previous government had already prepared the ground for deeper defence cooperation, by declaring that the only thing that was categorically ruled out was mutually binding security guarantees. Thus, anything short of NATO's article 5 was potentially kosher.

The fourth factor that helped provide impetus for the feasibility of radical reforms was the example of Denmark's defence transformation. Starting in 2004, Denmark transformed its armed forces from a conscription-based anti-invasion defence, with international operations as a side-task, to an all-volunteer force for high-end international expeditionary operations. Part of the Danish trick was a more thrifty approach to procurement, settling for what was good enough off the shelf now, rather than paying extra for promises of perfect and tailor-made equipment in the future, and designing to cost, rather than to extreme specifications.

Reform is enacted

The centre-right government kept up the practice of having a Defence Commission, with representatives of all parties in Parliament, as a forum for deliberation on defence and security affairs.²² The previous Commission had applied a post-modern perspective on security affairs, writing off conflicts between states or over borders, in favour of a focus on terrorism, climate change and pandemics. But the first report of the new Commission turned out to be a change in a more traditional and hard-nosed direction, including a sombre analysis of developments in Russia.²³

Most importantly, the Commission asserted unanimously that it could not envisage a military threat that would only affect Sweden or another single country in our region. The Commission even went one step further and issued a "declaration of solidarity", according to which Sweden would not remain passive should another EU Member State or another Nordic country be struck by disaster or by an attack. By the same token, Sweden expected these countries to take similar action should Sweden be so affected. This declaration was soon made into

government policy by inclusion into official government statements.²⁴

The decision of how Sweden would help in case a sister nation was threatened would still be a sovereign one. But the declaration of solidarity nonetheless represents some sort of break with an almost 200 years-old tradition of seeing Sweden's security in isolation, if need be at the expense of our neighbours. It remains to be seen whether all concerned have understood the potential implications of this step, and dare to live up to them.²⁵

The Commission's second report, published in June 2008, dealt mainly with the future shape of Sweden's armed forces. The second report repeated the first report's declaration of solidarity, but added the important follow-on that this meant that Sweden must be able to give and to receive military assistance. This may seem a small step for mankind, but given the past, it was a giant leap for Swedish declaratory doctrine.

Concerning the structure of the armed forces, the Commission's report advocated a change to a system with a single set of forces for all tasks, national and international, manned by volunteers. There would be a mix of standing units manned by regulars, and units manned by volunteer reservists, akin to the US National Guard. Conscription should be discontinued, but would remain on the books in case of a national emergency. All units should be fully manned and equipped, and ready for deployment at short notice. Moreover, the Commission pushed for the implementation of revised principles for procurement – previously enunciated but not acted on – in line with the Danish ones. Streamlining of training and support functions was also part of the package. Funds thus saved were to pay for the new all-volunteer force. No new funding was added – the re-branded “new conservatives” had made a

point of abandoning old positions, such as a strong defence.²⁶

Less than two months after the Commission's final report was published, Russia's attack on Georgia triggered a shift in the debate over defence policy, clearly in favour of tasks closer to home than Afghanistan. The concern was not so much a Russian invasion of Sweden, Russia was still too weak for that, but rather the military threat against some of our neighbours.

The defence reform bill was prepared in the ministry of defence, on the basis of the Commission's report, which had the support of all parties, taking Russia's attack on Georgia into account, and in dialogue with the high command of the armed forces.²⁷ The bill had a number of guiding lights, the principal of which were:

- Focus on operational effect, here and now.
- One set of forces for tasks at home, in our vicinity, and far overseas.
- An all-volunteer force, with a mix of standing units with regulars and on-call units with volunteer reservists. The air force and the navy were to be a standing force, the army mixed. Conscription should be kept dormant.
- Reintroduction of a corps of non-commissioned officers.
- All units were to be fully manned, trained and equipped.
- A transfer of funds to operations from development, procurement and support.
- Thriftier procurement principles and streamlined support structures.

While the number of units would decline slightly as compared with the previous system, decision-makers hoped that the new

units would exist in reality, not just on paper, and the structure as a whole thus would be more powerful and more readily available for actual use.

But there were a number of snags. The high hopes for the new structure depended on the reform being implemented in full. And as no new money was forthcoming, that depended on everything going according to plan, both making the transition to the new structure, and finding cash from the old. And even if a political shift had started, from a sole focus on operations far away, to a focus on both away and home-games, the structure enacted by Parliament was still one designed for occasional expeditionary operations and for low running-costs in peacetime. Not for war.

Implementing the reform

As often is the case, going from words to deeds proved difficult. The Great Defence Reform of 2009 was based on optimistic assumptions and underfinanced. The original plan was for the new structure to be up and running by 2014, and for the reform to be paid for by efficiencies and organizational stream-lining. But costs had been underestimated and efficiency savings overestimated. As the “new conservatives” would not allocate more money, the implementation slipped. The date for when the new force structure would be fully implemented was moved ahead to 2023.

The recruitment of full-time professional soldiers went well initially. But the army had been given too few full-time soldier slots, and the bulk of the army was to be made up by part-time soldiers. And there, recruitment did not go as well. Moreover, basic things like food and lodging for the soldiers had not been solved. Retention cropped up as a problem; higher than anticipated turn-over

rates meant higher costs and lower readiness. This resulted in rising costs, in that the “new force” was delayed, and in lower force capability than envisaged. These problems should have been anticipated on the basis of experiences from other countries that had made the transition to an all-volunteer force.

Not surprisingly, there were also cost overruns in procurement projects, leading to further delays. This contributed to pushing implementation into the 2020's, a time-period during which the Swedish Armed Forces already faced a need to replace or upgrade several big-ticket defence systems and platforms bought in the 1990's. This long-term procurement program had been underfunded even before the 2009 reforms.

This shortfall became apparent already before the government had decided on the early replacement of the new Gripen fighters with an even newer version of the Gripen, but without providing any substantial new funding. The Chief of Defence warned that he would have to disband the whole Army or the Navy to pay for the new planes, if he did not get additional money, but to no avail.²⁸

An important element of the defence reform of 2009 was that contingency-planning for crises and war was taken up again, after a ten-year hiatus. Such planning and plans are important in themselves, but also serve as a tool to determine what capabilities are needed in case of war. Another important element of the reform was the provision that all units had to be combat-ready at short notice. This was a substantial change given the lack of readiness during the previous years.

However, this requirement was not taken seriously by a defence establishment both jaded by impossible demands in the past and set in its own ways. Moreover, these steps towards a posture more suited for warfare

were not matched by any measures to ensure their implementation, any changes in the organisation, or any changes of the management- and budgeting principles. These were still geared towards keeping the cost of operations in peacetime low, and to the occasional peace-support operation.²⁹

The one-week-defence debate and the Russian threat

In the years that followed, the public debate increasingly reflected concerns over the state of Sweden's defences and over developments in Russia. The emergence of a military blogosphere, with knowledgeable insiders writing anonymously, made it hard to keep a lid on the real state of affairs. The national audit office issued a series of scathing reports on both the armed forces and on defence policy. The CHOD reported that from the year 2015, there would be a yearly shortfall of 4 billion kronor, without which the defence reform could not be implemented. But the government, especially the "new conservatives", poo-pooed such concerns.

In late December 2012, the residue really hit the propeller when the CHOD in an interview made clear that the armed forces could only defend one part of Sweden for one week, and only against a small attack. To make matters even worse, the statement was not about current capabilities, but the capabilities the armed forces would have if and when the new organisation had been implemented (which as explained earlier would not happen until the mid-2020's and presumed extra funding). Until then, Sweden's defence capabilities were even lower.

Thus, Sweden was evidently very much dependent on help from the outside, and quick help at that. But whence would help come? The only possibility was NATO, or NATO-members (i.e. the US). As discussed

above it was an open secret that help from the West had been part of Sweden's security calculus during the Cold War, and it still was. However, NATO's secretary-general caused a rumpus a few weeks after the famous interview with the CHOD, when he told the Swedes that they could not count on help from NATO. "Either you are a member or you are not, and only members are covered by collective defence". Further fuel for the most intense defence debate in 20 years was added by newspaper reports that Russian strike-aircraft had conducted mock attacks on Sweden, without the Swedish air force being scrambled, while NATO's Baltic patrol took to the air.

The debate highlighted the fact that prompt help from the outside had become a central factor of Swedish security, but that no steps had been taken to arrange for such help. Security calculus and preparations clearly where not aligned. Shortly thereafter, polls showed a jump in public support for NATO-membership by ten percentage-points.

The debate also showed that something important had changed in Sweden's relations with NATO. Hitherto, it had been assumed that it was Sweden that set the limits for how far cooperation could go. Now, it was increasingly the alliance that set the limits for how close a partner could get. Often with the rider: "If you want more, join us!" Also, Sweden's status as a troop contributor to IFOR, SFOR, KFOR, ISAF and Operation Unified Protector had given us access to many committees and staffs in NATO. But as such operations were being wound down and instead replaced by exercises gravitating towards collective defence, it seemed that the cooperative fora might be closed. Sweden would have to earn a new place as a partner, in a new context. Thus, previous political qualms among Social Democrats were soon brushed aside, and Sweden de-

cided to join NATO's Reserve Forces Pool, just to stay in the partnership game and to stay relevant.

Impact of the war in Ukraine

Russia's land-grab and annexation of Crimea caused an eleventh-hour conversion on the part of the conservative-led government, which only three months before had dismissed suggestions that something foul was afoot in Russia, as well as suggestions that Sweden's defences were too weak. Suddenly, the government proposed increased spending for stronger armed forces, but only in the out-years.

The Defence Commission's report, some weeks later, was almost unanimous in its sombre assessment. Europe had rapidly become a more dangerous place, Russia was challenging the established security order, Sweden quickly needed to boost combat-capabilities and to deepen cooperation with like-minded states. A long list of measures were proposed to this end, on personnel, procurement, etc. Focus was to be on multinational defence against a conventional aggressor. Previous post-modern definitions of security were partly replaced by more traditional concerns over sovereignty. The principles of the defence reform of 2009 were still valid, but the reform was said to need adjustment on a number of points. Deeper defence cooperation with almost everybody (except Russia) was given a green light, especially in the Nordic and the Nordic-Baltic contexts, as well as cooperation with NATO and the US. Preparations should be undertaken to facilitate the reception and the giving of military assistance. To this end a Host Nation Agreement with NATO should be concluded and incorporated into contingency planning. Capabilities in the

areas of combat aircraft and submarines were elevated to special status.³⁰

Two other seminal reports in the defence field were published in 2014, both by recently retired civil servants. A report by Krister Andrén, a former top-level defence advisor, delved into the issue of whether Sweden's armed forces could deter an aggressor through raising the threshold against an attack. His assessment was that this task had been forgotten in the last two decades and that the capability to act as a deterrent or a threshold against an attack at present was rudimentary. Moreover, our society had become more vulnerable, at the same time that the capability to attack us from a distance, with cyber-weapons and cruise missiles, had grown. Mounting a conventional defence to parry such actions was futile, he argued. Instead, focus should be on a survivable capability to strike back, both inflicting pain on the aggressor and escalating the conflict to a level where it could not be ignored by the West. This would mean a fundamental conceptual shift for Sweden, from deterrence by denial, to deterrence by punishment and to deliberate escalation.³¹

The second report was commissioned by the centre-right government and the task was to assess the various types and forms of defence cooperation which Sweden was undertaking or considering. The task was entrusted to Tomas Bertelman, a former career diplomat who i.a. had been ambassador to Russia. Bertelman concluded that there was a fundamental tension between the three goals for such cooperation: efficiency, solidarity and sovereignty. Moreover, while efficiencies could be made through deeper cooperation, e.g. with Finland, such cooperation could only make a marginal dent in the fundamental problem: the gap between the armed forces' tasks and their capabilities. He also drew the conclusion that, as the

Kremlin most probably sees Sweden as part of the Western bloc, our present half-way status means that we incur the risks associated with an alliance, but without having the security guarantees that membership would bring. He suggested that a study be undertaken, preferably together with Finland, of the pros and cons of full formal NATO membership.³²

A change of government

While ambassador Bertelman was preparing his report, an election replaced the centre-right government with a centre-left government, consisting of the Social Democrats and the Green Party. Despite drawing on the ex-Communist Left Party for support, the new government still did not have majority in parliament. In their governmental programme, the new government unilaterally changed the wording on security policy, from the agreed-across-the-aisles formula that “military non-alignment has served us well” (past tense), to “military non-alignment continues to serve us well” (present tense). The government also stated that Sweden should not apply for membership in NATO.³³ Bertelman’s suggestion of a study of the pros and cons of membership was quietly shelved.

While in opposition, the left wing of the social democratic party, some nostalgic diplomats, and parts of the NGO-community had nurtured a desire for a return to a more value-laden and Palmeesque foreign policy. They also wanted to visibly break with a foreign policy that bore Carl Bildt’s imprint. This meant less emphasis on hard security and on Europe, more emphasis on Africa and the Middle East, on the UN, and on values such as feminism, human rights and disarmament. The new foreign minister, Margot Wallström, assumed office with this agenda in mind, and received much attention when

she declared that Sweden’s foreign policy would henceforth be feminist.³⁴

However, in a manner eerily reminiscent of the early 1980s, the political space for the pursuit of an activist agenda was seriously circumscribed by a dramatic submarine intrusion deep into the Stockholm archipelago. The evidence was so clear, and the intrusion so provocative, that the prime minister, the defence minister and the CHOD appeared jointly on a televised press conference to break the news. While nothing was said about the nationality of the intruder, the intrusion was widely seen as being in consonance with Russia’s provocative and aggressive behaviour in recent years. The consequent hardening of the public mood limited the political space available for a values-based foreign policy, or at least reduced the ability of foreign policy to set the tone for security policy. These events also opened up possibilities for a more hard-nosed approach on security policy.

Moreover, Bertelman’s study in conjunction with the dramatic events had made such an impact that two of the parties in the non-socialist coalition changed their minds on the issue of NATO membership, and now demanded that a straightforward study of the pros and cons of membership be undertaken. Following their election-defeat, the leaders of the Conservative Party had resigned. The new party leaders rapidly distanced themselves from policies that had failed, most dramatically on immigration and on defence. One aspect of this was that the Conservative Party, Sweden’s second largest, now supported NATO-membership as soon as possible. One year earlier, this position had only been taken by the tiny Liberal Party. Now all four parties of the former government coalition supported NATO-membership, which meant that a change in the political weather had caused a dramatic

shift in the political landscape, and in a very short time.

This shift pertained not only on the issue of NATO membership, but to defence- and security policy as a whole, with spill-over effects also on foreign policy. The social democrats and their increasingly popular no-nonsense defence minister Peter Hultqvist tried to head off the rush for NATO-membership by arguing that the non-socialist alliance was simply using the NATO-issue to deflect attention from their own neglect and mismanagement of the armed forces during their years in power. The main task at hand, Hultqvist argued, was getting our own forces into shape. The result was – very unusually – a bidding contest where the major parties competed on who was most pro-defence. A focus for this competition was provided by the end-game in negotiations over the five-year defence bill that was presented to parliament in the early summer of 2015, and for which the minority government needed opposition support.

However, the ministry of finance did not take part in this bidding contest, which meant that when the bill was finalized, the additions to the defence budget were rather modest. But it was still significant that the defence budget was given a net increase, for the first time in 20 years. Perhaps more important than these modest increases in defence spending were a number of steps taken in the bill, with the common feature that they reflected a hard-nosed Atlanticist and realist perspective.

As part of the agreement with the opposition that ensured passage of the bill in Parliament, an independent evaluation was also to be conducted of Sweden's different cooperative arrangements and memberships in the defence field, including with NATO. But at the insistence of the government, the task was not to involve an evaluation of the pol-

icy of military non-alignment. Ambassador Krister Bringéus was entrusted with this difficult, and for a serving diplomat also very dangerous, task.³⁵

The defence bill had not minced words about Russia being a threat and a bully, about the UN being powerless, and about the centrality of the transatlantic link and of cooperation with the US. Far from retreating from once controversial aspects of security policy introduced by the previous government – such as giving and taking international military assistance, and the declaration of solidarity – the centre-left government fortified and amplified these. Sweden's security policy doctrine was henceforth officially to be called "the security policy of solidarity". Several former red lines were crossed and taboos were broken. National contingency plans were to be made for the reception and provision of military assistance, and practical preparations for this were to be undertaken. This was something which the previous government had not dared to do. The possibility of joint action with Finland in case of crisis or war was broached, as was holding exchanges on contingency plans with the Nordic nations and "other actors in our vicinity", i.e. the US. To underline the seriousness of this endeavour a study would be undertaken with an eye to identifying and removing any legal and constitutional obstacles to such cooperation.

Concerning the armed forces, the defence bill clearly reflected a sense of urgency and a bottom-up approach. The single most important task for the five-year period was said to be to raise the combat-worthiness of the field units by accelerated procurement of mundane but crucial items, such as radios, carbines and boots, and by larger and more frequent exercises. Empty slots on the rosters were interimistically to be filled by assigning former conscripts. The island of

Gotland, widely considered to be a tempting spot for Russia in case of a conflict in the area, was to be garrisoned again. Civil defence planning was to be restarted after a 20 year-hiatus. A green light was even given to the development of a capability for offensive cyber warfare.

Shortly after the defence bill was passed, the government presented a white paper containing a draft law and regulations for the ratification and implementation of the Host Nation Agreement concluded with NATO by the previous government. Instead of shelving the agreement, or going slow, as some might have expected, the government wanted to apply it as soon as possible. The prospect of the Host Nation Agreement becoming law of course alerted political forces opposed to Sweden's closer alignment with NATO and the US. Among the themes forwarded were that the agreement would open the door for "NATO bases" and nuclear weapons in Sweden, and that it was a step towards membership. Such crude arguments made it possible for the defence minister to counter-attack with accusations of outright lies and disinformation. In the end, the response from the public was rather limp and the counter-movement did not get traction for their arguments. After a bit of drama and shenanigans in parliament, the agreement was ratified by a huge majority and became law July 1st 2016.

Despite the fact that his task was very similar to the one that Bertelman had just fulfilled, Krister Bringéus still managed to rekindle the debate.³⁶ His findings, delivered in September of 2016, included the assessment that Russia's aggression and unpredictability had given rise to a new and dangerous security situation in Europe with the Baltic area as a hot spot, that Sweden would most probably be drawn into any conflict in the Baltic region, and that – bilateral arrange-

ments notwithstanding – as Sweden was not a member of NATO, the country had been relegated to a kind of "twilight zone" when it came to contingency planning. Any coordination of Swedish and American military measures would have to be improvised in an emergency and would thus be less effective. Moreover, Sweden would not be able to contribute to overall deterrence in the region and to the maintenance of peace.³⁷ The report was duly shelved, as its conclusions did not suit the government.

Could there be a Swedish Middle Way?

In the 1930s and in the 1950s, there was much talk of the Swedish economic and social system as a third or middle way between the extremes of capitalism in America and Soviet communism.³⁸ Since the late summer of 2015, it has been possible to see the outline of a new kind of Swedish middle way in security policy, half-way between some version of traditional neutrality and NATO-membership. Observers of the political scene in Sweden speak of a "Hultqvist-doctrine" in security policy and defence policy, which contrasts markedly with the foreign policy pursued by his colleague at the foreign office.

This "doctrine" contains several elements: a tough line on Russia's transgressions of international law – especially the illegal annexation of Crimea, a clear emphasis on the Transatlantic Link, the primacy of deterrence and a rules-based security order, a stronger national defence capability, a "No" to NATO-membership, and finally a substantial deepening of military cooperation with Finland, the other Nordic states, the US and NATO.³⁹

In his charming dialect, defence minister Peter Hultqvist clearly rules out NATO-membership as "not being on the agenda",

but – notably – does this without digging any political trenches that might impede future movement on the issue. Moreover, the group around him argues, NATO is too bureaucratic and cumbersome to rely on a crisis; better then to cooperate directly with America, the real source of power. Thereby, though this is not said openly, they also hope to by-pass the weak and unreliable European allies.⁴⁰ The late and legendary Ingemar Dörfer once reportedly made his way into the inner sanctum of the Pentagon (with Carl Bildt in tow) through the laundry-entrance. The question is if Peter Hultqvist can sneak Sweden under America's protective umbrella in a similar fashion?

In a manner and extent which seems truly amazing to seasoned observers of Sweden's ritualized security policy scene, Hultqvist's "No" to NATO-membership seems to have mollified the concerns of the party's left wing and other remaining neutralists sufficiently to open up a considerable political space for the pursuit of extensive direct military cooperation with America. In a similar manner, deepening military cooperation with Finland apparently also serves the purpose of politically legitimizing such cooperation with "others", i.e. the US.

Of the political battles over security policy since he took office, Hultqvist seems to have lost only two, on the issue of whether to give a muscular or milquetoast response to the French and U.S. request for assistance against ISIS in Syria, and on whether to support efforts in the UN to outlaw nuclear weapons on humanitarian grounds. In Finland, some are worrying that Sweden and America have already revived the secret relationship and secret security guarantees of the 1950s and 1960s, leaving Finland uncomfortably alone with the Bear.

Whether such a middle way is a possible and desirable way forward for Sweden, and

perhaps also for Finland, has been a hotly debated topic within the Atlanticist community in Sweden and Finland since 2015, although this debate is seldom conducted in public.⁴¹ I will here attempt to give an honest rendition of the arguments of both sides of the debate, the Bilateralists and the Mainstream:

The Bilateralists

Proponents of the Hultqvist doctrine, and its Finnish variant, have argued that formal NATO membership is currently impossible, due to domestic political factors in both countries, and that accession might encounter resistance from some established members of the alliance. Given this, it is argued, to focus single-mindedly on the membership issue means making the perfect the enemy of the possible. Better then to go for pragmatic but informal arrangements that can yield tangible benefits for both sides quickly.

Those who promote this view argue that the Pentagon is likely to be interested in such an approach as the US military deals with strategic realities instead of politics, and as it now needs to shore up its posture in northern Europe. Also, it is an open secret that the US is undertaking parallel planning for contingencies in Europe, one set of plans involving NATO and one set of national plans (but perhaps involving NATO allies deemed as dependable). Most likely, there could also be a place for Sweden and Finland in such plans. Moreover, most European members of NATO are more of a burden than an asset, politically as well as militarily; if you can strike a deal with America, without NATO as a middle-man, so much the better.⁴² The credibility of this line of argument was – up to the US election – strengthened by the apparent success of Sweden and Finland in pursuing an ever

closer defence relationship with the US, and by statements by visiting US/NATO officials that can be interpreted as amounting to informal security guarantees.⁴³

Finally, there have also been wide-spread fears in Finland that – if Finland joined NATO – any alliance decision to actually come to Finland's assistance during a crisis, or in a war, might fall victim to the requirement for consensus for decisions within NATO. Then, it is feared, Finland would have antagonised Russia by joining NATO, but would still be left to face the music alone when it mattered.⁴⁴

The Mainstream

In the other camp, those that advocate that Sweden should go for full NATO membership as soon as possible argue that membership would give Sweden a seat at the table as well as solid security guarantees and contingency planning. Moreover, if Sweden remained outside the alliance framework and was weakly defended, Sweden would be a source of instability in the region, instead of contributing to the overall deterrence that maintains peace. While the benefits of informal cooperation may be tangible and rapid, they could also be blurry, uncertain and ephemeral. If help was forthcoming in a crisis it would have to be improvised during an emergency, it could arrive too late, and as Sweden would be in dire straits, Swedes would not have any say in the crucial decisions.⁴⁵

Another argument in favour of formal membership over bilateral arrangements is that any such arrangements or assurances would be unilateral and informal, they could thus be as easily withdrawn as they were given. Sweden's position would thus be analogous to that of a kept woman, at the mercy of the vagaries and whims of US domestic politics and of the executive branch, without the

stability that a marriage, i.e. a treaty ratified by the Senate, would provide.⁴⁶ Although this specific point has not yet been made in public, one could also add that any bilateral Swedish-US cooperation that was not formalized or institutionalized would in the long run face the risk of becoming marginalized and forgotten, and thus of withering on the vine, as did the covert Swedish-US cooperation during the Cold War.⁴⁷

Moreover, the benefits of informal and bilateral arrangements would distract attention from, and reduce incentives for, the pursuit of full membership and this at time when public and elite opinion in Sweden is shifting in favour of full NATO membership. Informal cooperation might thus amount to the equivalent of a “middle-income trap” and Sweden might thus forfeit a historic opportunity to fully and permanently join the Western camp.

In this last argument of the pro-membership camp, one can also detect an ideological element on the part of some participants of the Swedish debate. It is not only in the anti-NATO/pro-neutrality camp that stances are underpinned by issues of identity and identity politics. Also among some Atlanticists, which for long had to suppress their desire to fully “come home” to the West, emotions seem to have super-charged the debate, leading to a tendency to sweepingly dismiss all other solutions except full membership.

As a result, this semi-covert debate among Nordic Atlanticists has at times become a very heated and very predictable dialogue of the deaf, despite being conducted by very intelligent and knowledgeable people on both sides. In the process, some of the finer but important points of the issue have not been appreciated. Principal among these is the fact that the Washington Treaty, on which NATO is based, actually exists as an entity and a commitment that is separate from NATO.

This has potentially huge implications, and it warrants a minor digression from the subject of Sweden's difficulties when it comes to formulating and implementing a coherent and purposeful security policy.

A point overlooked

Contrary to wide-spread beliefs, NATO was not created in 1949. The signing of the Washington Treaty in April 1949 created what used to be called the Atlantic Pact, or the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT), but did not immediately give rise to NATO. The original Atlantic Pact/NAT was a traditional military-political alliance, calling for mutual cooperation, consultation, and – in case of an armed attack on any of the members – for individual or collective assistance to repel the attack, but only in defined geographic regions. The mutual character, the geographic limitations, and non-automaticity of article 5 were all the result of the reluctance of the US Senate to enter into open-ended obligations for the defence of declining European powers, or of their colonial possessions.

However, the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 changed the political calculus and added a sense of urgency, as war seemed to be possible soon in Europe too. As a result, the members of the Atlantic Pact decided to make their alliance tighter by adding a permanent political and military organisation to their alliance, thus adding the "O" to NAT. NATO came into being from 1950/51, but did not fully attain its familiar late-Cold War structure until the late 1960s, after France had left the integrated military command structure. The structure of NATO has, again, been transformed almost beyond recognition since the end of the Cold War.

The addition of the Organisation was intended to firm up the alliance and to make it more ready for war at short notice by

adding a council in permanent session, a secretary-general with a secretariat, an integrated military command structure, planning staffs and several other elements. As a result of this deeper integration on matters that had traditionally been sovereign national prerogatives, a tradition evolved of taking decisions by consensus among the members. This requirement for unanimity is not written into the treaty, except when it comes to inviting new members.⁴⁸ To increase deterrence and to decrease the risk of allies defecting or blocking consensus in a crisis, substantial forces from most allies were placed well forward in West Germany, ensuring that some would be killed at an early stage of a war and thus forcing their governments to recognize that they were at war with the aggressor. Likewise, war games for decision-makers were held regularly in which the decisions leading up to mobilisation, war, and nuclear release were practised, thus over time accustoming allied decision-makers to the momentous decisions that were expected of them in case of war.

The demise of the Soviet threat and the subsequent rise of peace support operations, prompted the dismantling of most of the forces, mechanisms and structures intended to ensure a prompt and collective response by allies to a Soviet invasion. Swiftiness and certainty of response were no longer needed, or indeed possible, when dealing with unknown contingencies outside the NATO area.

25 years on, a Russian political and military threat to Europe is once again a reality, although not exactly in the old form of tank armies able to push to the English Channel in two-three weeks. The threat is back, but the forces, factors and mechanisms to ensure an effective and swift response to Russian threats or aggression are simply not there. Nor can it truthfully be said that the alliance is brimming with the unity and the sense of

purpose that might be warranted to offset these deficiencies.

This, in combination with the fact that the requirement for consensus proved to be an impediment in contingencies involving Turkey in 1991 and 2003, and Kosovo in 1999, makes it entirely understandable that some harbour fears that NATO's decision-making might be delayed or dead-locked in case one or two of its members had a serious crisis or conflict with Russia. After all, even founding member Norway obviously does not feel assured that the alliance might not consider a Russian land-grab in northernmost Norway to be "a local quarrel", rather than an article 5-situation. Such concerns underlie Norwegian thinking about a "threshold defence" which could deliberately escalate any transgression to a level where it could not be ignored by the alliance.⁴⁹ Moreover, similar concerns figure very prominently in Sir Richard Shirreff's recent book about a fictitious war with Russia over the Baltic states.⁵⁰

However, those who do this overlook the fact that article 5 of the Washington Treaty contains what might be called a safety-valve or back-stop, which might be useful in case consensus can't be achieved. Article 5 stipulates that an armed attack on any one of the signatories should be considered as an armed attack on all of them, and that they should "individually and in concert with the other Parties" provide assistance to the party under attack. This wording reflects that the treaty was written at a time when NATO, as we now know it, did not exist and was not envisioned, and that action taken under article 5 would then in effect have been undertaken by the individual signatories, with some of them perhaps acting in concert.

The decision to come to the assistance of an ally under attack could thus be a decision by the alliance as a whole, requiring

consensus, or a decision taken individually by each one of the signatories. Even a decision taken under consensus in the North Atlantic Council would then require decisions by the individual member-states to actually put forces to NATO's disposal. If consensus for some reason could not be achieved or was delayed, allies could and should still come to each other's assistance individually. In doing so, states can cooperate with each other, thus in effect creating a coalition of the willing within the framework of the alliance. As any such action would be outside the framework of NATO, though within the alliance, the allies acting could not draw on assets controlled by NATO collectively, such as the integrated military command structure, communications assets, and contingency plans.

As almost all military assets are nationally owned and controlled, this need not be such a big drawback. Moreover, key officials such as NATO's supreme commander in Europe (SACEUR) are double-hatted and have a national role too. Thus, they could swiftly change to acting in a national capacity. In this manner, a military response to an attack on a NATO member cannot be blocked by a lack of consensus in the NAC, provided that action is supported by the allies that own the needed military assets and the commensurate real estate. And if these allies do not support such action, then the whole thing is a moot point anyhow.

Thus it boils down to the willingness of the US and a handful of key allies to come to the assistance of an ally under attack. Even allies without impressive military forces may play a key role by opening up their territories and their airspace (which is a national decision) for allied forces and operations.

Reportedly, this possibility of circumventing recalcitrant allies by way of parallel planning using national lines of command played

a major role in finally opening the door for NATO contingency planning for the Baltic states after the Georgian war of 2008, which some allies (reportedly Germany) opposed. Faced with the possibility that the US, Poland and others were ready to go ahead nonetheless, leaving Germany out, the Germans finally agreed to NATO planning.

The existence of this possibility should allay any legitimate fears in Finland of mil-quoast allies being able to block a decision on contingency planning for Finland, or on timely help to Finland in a pinch. This possibility could also square the circle concerning a weak spot in the pro-NATO camp's line of reasoning in Sweden, a weakness that the anti-NATO camp has apparently not yet discovered. The pro-NATO camp gleefully points to a contradiction in the reasoning of the opponents of NATO, calling it the "Hirdman paradox" after one of the most prominent voices opposing Swedish NATO-membership. The Hirdman paradox is that Russia is held to be so reliably peaceful that Swedish NATO-membership is unnecessary, yet Russia is at the same time so dangerous that we should not take the risk of antagonizing it by joining NATO.⁵¹ Both of these statements could conceivably be true, but not both at the same time. As Dire Straits sings, if "Two men say they're Jesus, one of them must be wrong"

In a similar manner, the arguments of those who advocate that Sweden should join NATO often contain two statements that seem to contradict each other: As a member of NATO, Sweden could not be railroaded into taking part in someone else's (e.g. Turkey's) war, as all decisions in NATO are taken by consensus. But at the same time, we would as members have iron-clad guarantees of prompt allied help in case we were under attack, because of article 5. Again, both statements can be true, but not both at the

same time. However, if you factor in that under article 5 action to assist an ally can be taken either individually, or in concert with other allies, this contradiction can be bridged and the circle squared.

An aspect not considered

A possible objection to Hultqvist's middle way, which has yet to surface in the debate, is that Sweden by pursuing bilateral ties and ultimately also bilateral security guarantees from the US, thus by-passing NATO, might also undercut the alliance and contribute to the erosion of its viability.⁵²

At the same occasion that Alison Bayles made the comment about Swedes still being neutral, she also remarked that discussions in Sweden on security policy choices are self-centered, almost lacking consideration of how Sweden's choices might affect the security of others, or the West as whole.

This should really not be surprising, given that small-state Realism has been the dominant strand in security policy for more than 200 years. Moreover, it is most probably wise for a small state not to count on positive systemic effects of acts of unselfish do-goodery. That said, it may also be wise for a small state to consider the potential negative systemic effects of blatantly selfish actions that undercut multilateral structures and regimes. As small, export-dependent states with a big bad neighbor, Sweden and Finland both have strong stakes in the current system of systems of multilateral regimes established by the US and its friends after the Second World War and then amended after the Cold War. A renationalization of security policies or a break-down of trading regimes would be a major and unmitigated disaster for both of our countries, although this is seldom mentioned or taken into account.⁵³

The potential dangers of bilateralizing relations should be a weightier concern at present, when multilateral rules-based regimes and arrangements in several arenas are under considerable strain, to put it mildly. Russia has dealt a mortal blow to the co-operative and rules-based post-Cold War order in Europe, is sabotaging the OSCE and discarding arms control agreements. In Asia, China is openly challenging both the post-1945 order and the Law of the Sea. On trade, the WTO's Doha round, TTP and TTIP are dead, and free trade is widely unpopular. The EU is challenged internally by Brexit, by the Euro crisis, and by the rise of populism, nationalism and what Francois Heisbourg calls *souverainisme*.⁵⁴ Externally, the EU is challenged by Russia, by turmoil in the Middle East, and by mass migration. If these trends continue unabated, there is likely to be a tipping point somewhere, after which the forces of anarchy overwhelm the forces of order and create a self-reinforcing momentum. We do not know where this point may be, but in all likelihood it exists, just as in climate change models. Or as in the already heavily polluted Springfield lake in the feature film *The Simpsons*, where Homer triggers a mega-disaster by dumping pig manure in the lake because he wants to make it to a donut sale.

All this is happening while America, the linchpin of world order, is increasingly wary and tired of carrying the burdens of empire. Donald Trump is just providing us with the trailer-park version of an undercurrent that runs across America and is getting stronger: America is being taken to the cleaners by selfish and lazy allies and partners, who do not pull their own weight.⁵⁵

The inbox of the White House is always full, and as seen from Washington the world is brimming with supplicants pleading for attention and assistance. One of the things

that mitigates this state of affairs, at least concerning Europe, is the fact that the US to a considerable degree can deal with some 30+ allies and partners in the region as a collective through NATO and Partnership for Peace.⁵⁶ Think of how Europe would seem if all US clients were to bilateralize their relations – somewhat like the flock of seagulls in the film *Finding Nemo*: Me! Me! Me! Me!...

Doing what is possible and expedient is sometimes the only viable alternative in the short term, and it may be deemed more opportune for both Stockholm and Helsinki to pursue bilateral ties to the US, and possibly also guarantees of some sort. But it would seem wise for them to also consider how their quest for bilateral defence ties might weaken and undermine the greater whole on which their security and prosperity ultimately depends.

Hand in hand or leap-frogging?

Since the mid-1990s, the deepening bilateral cooperation between Sweden and Finland in defence- and security policy has in large part been driven by mutual fear and suspicion. Cooperation “hand in hand” can be seen as a mutual insurance policy against either one of the parties suddenly bolting and running off to join NATO. That such fears are common in Finland is evident from the many references made to the manner in which Sweden suddenly decided to reverse policies and join the EU in the early 1990s, which was done without consulting Finland. On the other side of the Gulf of Bothnia, Swedish fears emanate from the fact that Finnish political culture places a comparatively higher value on national security, has more trust in its elected leaders and less need for consensus. Thus, the mirror image of Finland's fears of Sweden

doing yet another “an EU-switchback”, is of Finland doing a quick change of sides, as it very skillfully did in the early 1990s. Then, Finland simply declared null and void the Friendship and Cooperation Agreement with the Soviet Union and the military clauses of the Paris peace agreement – for decades the linchpins of not only Finland’s security policy but also of Urho Kekkonen’s unhealthy grip on domestic policy.

For a couple of years now, Finland has been markedly more cautious than Sweden in pursuing closer ties with the US and NATO, and also more cautious on actions and statements that might antagonize Russia – while still remaining loyal to EU sanctions on Russia following Crimea. There has been an impression that Finland drags its feet and thus runs the risk of being left behind as Sweden pursues closer ties to the US.⁵⁷ Some have speculated that the reason for this might be that Putin has threatened his Finnish counterpart Sauli Niinistö with nasty consequences if Finland pursued a more Westerly path.

That something of this kind took place during the winter of 2015/2016 seems clear from the flap over asylum seekers coming to Finland by way of Russia. Though the flow of migrants was small in number by Swedish or German standards, it was a reminder of the fact that there are millions of migrant workers in Russia without proper permits, coming from all corners of the former Soviet empire. The not so subtle message was, perhaps, that these migrants could easily be rounded up and sent to the Russo-Finnish border. Moreover, some of President Niinistö’s speeches from 2015 and early 2016 have a tone as if they were written in October 1939, preparing the country for very hard times.⁵⁸

But something – as yet unknown what – seems to have happened during the spring of 2016 that broke the spell of paralysis in

Finland.⁵⁹ In April an independent panel of respected Finnish and foreign experts published a report assessing the effects of NATO-membership for Finland, a report which had been commissioned by Finland’s Foreign Ministry.⁶⁰ Widely expected to be conservative and to argue for a status quo-policy, the report surprised many by unequivocally saying that membership of NATO (together with Sweden) would improve Finland’s national security status. The crux was said to lie in the accession process, which was likely to draw Russia’s ire, and to achieve coordination with Sweden on seeking NATO membership.

In the summer of 2016 this was followed by two official reports that set new standards for Finnish statements criticizing Russia, by high-profile participation at NATO’s summit in Warsaw, and by frantic Finnish efforts to catch up with Sweden as relates to bilateral defence ties to the US.⁶¹

At least twice during the 20th century Finland has proven very apt at swiftly changing geopolitical sides, skillfully choosing the right moment for cutting ties with the losing party and making the jump to the other side. This kind of political dexterity was demonstrated in 1944 and then again in the early 1990s, arguably also in 1917 and then again in 1918/19.⁶² Swedes who feel confident that they have a head start in the race to Washington had better also consider the possibility that they may yet be overtaken.

November upset

The election of the impulsive maverick Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States shocked most observers and seems to upset all calculations. From a European perspective, Trump’s professed isolationism, transactional attitude, sympathy for Putin, and most of

all his cavalier attitude to NATO's article 5 and to extended deterrence, mean that the anchor of the Transatlantic Link, which has held steadily for 70 years, is now dragging. To paraphrase Ayn Rand, the Atlantic Giant shrugged and the earth trembled. And this happens at a time when the world already is probably more dangerous than it has been since the death of Stalin.

The prospect of a Trump presidency seems to make moot all points made in this paper about the future course of Swedish policy, and of European – or even global – security. It might be pointless to discuss the relative merits of seeking bilateral guarantees or of joining NATO, at a time when America's commitment to Europe's security at all is seriously in doubt.

Still, one is reminded of Bismarck's warning against committing suicide because one fears death. Some take heart in the fact the American system of government was deliberately set up to prevent tyranny and the abuse of power, and thus contains an elaborate system of checks and balances, which limits the power of the executive. But in foreign affairs and defence matters the president still has enormous latitude. Others hope that the handful of experienced hands that Trump has appointed, events, the burden of office, or the bureaucracy, will manage to control or moderate Trump's instincts.

Trump's transactional attitude and penchant for making "deals" could lead some to conclude that a bilateral approach now has somewhat greater chances of success. On the other hand, these same factors would also seem to increase the risk of such an approach triggering a wholesale unravelling of multi-lateral security structures and systems.

Moreover, as any businessman or labor unionist knows, the chances of getting a good deal increase if you can stick together as a group. This is pure speculation, but one

could possibly see the outlines of a "deal" in which NATO gets a new lease of life in exchange for Europeans living up to the 2 % pledge (especially northerners) and becoming more engaged in the struggle against terrorism (especially southerners). This, and the fact there actually is some safety in numbers, would seem to indicate that formal NATO membership might be a somewhat better approach. This also has the advantage of directly involving the Senate and thus Congress, which has the powers of the purse, in the matter. However, the fact that Congress – which only a year ago was widely seen as deeply dysfunctional and was ridiculed – is now being seen as a beacon of wisdom and hope, should give pause for thought.

After the US election, Sweden's foreign minister Margot Wallström quickly remarked that now, the advocates of Swedish NATO-membership will probably be biting their nails.⁶³ The problem is that all people whose security and prosperity depends on the Pax Americana should be very worried. If extended deterrence and the western anchor of the Transatlantic Link are in seriously in doubt, ghosts long since banished can come forward again: a second Yalta, a Russian "*Griffnach der Weltmacht*", a crippling trade war, and a renationalization of security in Europe, just to mention a few. Thus, European states should waste no time in doing all they can do to put their own defences in order. Regrettably, it may also be prudent to start thinking about the unthinkable: how European security may be organized without the Americans.⁶⁴ We are all, at the very least, probably in for a very rough ride in the years ahead.

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Notes

1. The author is personally responsible for the content of this text, which does not necessarily represent the views of the FOI or of the Swedish government. This text is adapted and expanded from presentations given to delegations from the US and the UK during 2015 and 2016. An earlier and abbreviated version was published as a Working Paper by the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, April 2017.
2. From 1960 to 1990, the policy of neutrality was so sacrosanct in the domestic context that it really didn't need arguments in support – axioms seldom do. However, for foreign audiences the ministry of foreign affairs had to provide serious arguments. The perhaps best such modern text is Wahlbäck, Krister: *The roots of Swedish neutrality*, SI, Stockholm 1986. 10-15 years later the choice between non-alignment or NATO was the subject of a lively debate. An overview and analysis of the arguments and attitudes at that time is provided in Dalsjö, Robert: "Argument och attityder i alliansfrågan", *KKrVAHT*, 4. häftet 1999, <http://www.kkrva.se/wp-content/uploads/Artiklar/994/alliansfragan.html>.
3. The third argument is very close to the one made in the Finnish NATO-study (see note 60), namely that the transition from military non-alignment to NATO-membership might be vulnerable to Russian interference.
4. From their earliest training, military officers are taught to "read" and analyze the physical terrain for tactical purposes, later also for operational purposes. Given time and talent, it becomes a second nature to some officers. I posit that there is also another kind of terrain, which is increasingly relevant to military officers as the nature of operations change: the political terrain. Just like the physical terrain, the political terrain can be amenable to attack or to defence, be passable or impassable, provide cover or not, etc. And just like the features of the physical terrain are affected by the physical weather – frost can suddenly turn an impassable marsh or river into a marching route – the defining features of the political terrain can be transformed by the political weather, making it possible to pass obstacles previously thought insurmountable. Despite its importance and prominence in decisions big and small, few (Swedish) military officers are aware of the existence of the political terrain, and even fewer can read and analyze it. Reading the political terrain and the political weather is not a dark art. It just requires time, training and talent.
5. Johan Raeder, then the policy director of the Swedish MoD, delivered a very effective rebuttal of such claims at a public meeting in Stockholm 10th May 2012, citing chapter and verse of official statements and parliamentary decisions on Sweden's cooperation with NATO, but his text was apparently never published.
6. In her comments at the launch of Sandö, Carolina; Rydqvist, John and Richard Langlais (eds.): *Strategic Outlook 6*, FOI-R--4124--SE, Stockholm 2015.
7. Bertelman, Tomas: *Försvarspolitiskt samarbete – effektivitet, solidaritet, suveränitet*, rapport från Utredningen om Sveriges internationella försvarspolitiska samarbete Fö 2013:B, Stockholm 2014; Bringéus, Krister: *Säkerhet i ny tid*, betänkande av Utredningen om Sveriges försvars- och säkerhetspolitiska samarbeten SOU 2016: 57, UD, Stockholm 2016.
8. Ibid., Bertelman, Tomas, p. 68 f. It is ironic that the inhabitants of Finland have reached the same conclusion, but based on an entirely opposite and less idyllic interpretation of history. In their national narrative, Finland lives in a harsh world where you have to fight for survival and can only rely on your own abilities. Helping others is wasteful and alliances are at best useless, because no one will ever help Finland to fight Russia. That this view is not entirely historically correct, Swedish help was crucial in the Winter War and German help was decisive in the summer of 1944, does not really matter to many in Finland.
9. *Had there been a war ... Preparations for the reception of military assistance 1949–1969*, report of the Commission on Neutrality Policy, translation of SOU 1994:11, Fritzes, Stockholm 1994, p. 103 ff. The conclusion is based on NSC 6006/1, which is reprinted in facsimile as an appendix to *Had there been ...*
10. Dalsjö, Robert: *Life-Line Lost: The Rise and Fall of 'Neutral' Sweden's Secret Reserve Option of Wartime Help from the West*, Santérus Academic Publishing, Stockholm 2006.

11. For example, "Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is affected. Our country must therefore be in a position to both give and receive support, civilian as well as military." *Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs, Wednesday 11th February 2015*, <http://www.regeringen.se/49b754/contentassets/98c376175ed047e4b851715fb0a8541a/statement-of-government-policy-in-the-parliamentary-debate-on-foreign-affairs-2015>.
12. Cf. op. cit., Dalsjö, Robert, see note 10.
13. Before American readers snicker too much, they might consider that the concept of "a shining city on a hill" is not all that different.
14. They were formally called "armoured", but in an international context, "mechanised" is more fitting.
15. Finland still has this problem. Politicians and public opinion cling to the heritage of the Winter War and the doctrine of "behind every fir tree, a Finn with a carbine", although the top officers have long advocated cuts in force structure to pay for modernisation.
16. Storages for three mobilisation-brigades were raided in order to provide radio-sets for the single battalion in Bosnia, and all of the night-vision devices and heavy machine guns of the battalion in Bosnia came from the recently organised amphibious battalions of the Coast Artillery, as the Army had no such gear.
17. Fredén, Lars Peter: *Återkomst: svensk säkerhetspolitik och de baltiska ländernas första år i självständighet: 1991–1994*, Atlantis, Stockholm 2006.
18. Dalsjö, Robert: "Are the Baltics Defensible?: On the Utility of and Prospects for a Capability for Self-Defence", *RUSI JOURNAL*, vol. 143, no. 4, August 1998, pp. 40–44.
19. Op. cit., *Had there been ...*, see note 9.
20. Op. cit., Dalsjö, Robert, see note 10; Holmström, Mikael: *Den dolda alliansen: Sveriges hemliga NATO-förbindelser*, Atlantis, Stockholm 2011.
21. Other contributors were Norway, Finland, Estonia and Ireland.
22. The Defence Commission should not be confused with the Defence Committee of Parliament. The Defence Commission is temporary and appointed by the government, although it contains parliamentarians.
23. *Säkerhet i samverkan: Försvarsberedningens omvärldsanalys*, Ds 2007:46, Regeringskansliet/Fö, Stockholm 2007, <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/306/a/93589>.
24. *Regeringens deklaration vid 2008 års utrikespolitiska debatt i Riksdagen onsdagen den 13 februari 2008*; *Statement of Government Policy 16 September 2008*, <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/108/a/111081>.
25. Sweden has a rather sordid history of boldly declaring solidarity with our Nordic brethren, but then chickening out when the chips are down. These events are largely forgotten in Sweden, but not so in our neighbouring countries. See Wahlbäck, Krister: "Nordic Solidarity – a Problematic Affair" in Hugemark, Bo (ed.): *Friends in Need: Towards a Swedish Strategy of Solidarity with her Neighbours*, The Royal Academy of War Sciences, Stockholm 2012.
26. *Försvar i användning*, Ds 2008:48, Regeringskansliet/Fö, Stockholm 2008, <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/10715/a/107264>.
27. There were some marginal reservations by a couple of parties, and by dissident parliamentarians.
28. On this decision, see Forsberg, Birgitta: "För SAAB och fosterland", *Affärsvärlden*, 2014-02-26.
29. Cf. Dalsjö, Robert: "Arméchefen och verkligheten", *SvD/Säkerhetsrådet*, 2016-02-05, <http://www.svd.se/robert-dalsjo-armechefen-och-verkligheten>.
30. *Försvaret av Sverige – Starkare försvar för en osäker tid*, Ds 2014:20, Regeringskansliet/Fö, Stockholm 2014, <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/18692/a/240414>.
31. Andrén, Krister: *Krigsavhållande tröskelförmåga- Försvarets glömda huvuduppgift?*, FOI-R--3852--SE, Stockholm 2014, <http://foi.se/rapport?rNo=FOI-R--3852--SE>.
32. Op. cit., Bertelman, Tomas, see note 7.
33. *Regeringsförklaringen den 3 oktober 2014*, <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/3039>.
34. The magazine *Foreign Policy* put Wallström on a list of the most important foreign policy thinkers of 2014 for championing a feminist foreign policy.
35. Op. cit., Bringéus, Krister, see note 7.
36. A very senior former diplomat even stated publicly that he thought the report would provide "an enema" for a constipated debate on security policy and

- NATO, Eskilsson, Max: "Inför fredagens Natosläpp", *natobloggen.se*, 2016-09-05, <http://natobloggen.se/2016/09/05/infor-fredagensnatoslapp/>.
37. Op. cit., Bringéus, Krister, see note 7.
 38. Cf. Childs, Marquis: *Sweden: The Middle Way*, Faber & Faber, London 1936.
 39. Nordgren Christensen, Annika: "Hultqvistdoktrinen", <http://annikanc.com> (2015-08-31); Wolodarski, Peter: "Sverige riskerar hamna i en farlig gråzon", *Dagens Nyheter*, 2015-09-09; Hvenmark Nilsson, Carl: "Sweden's Evolving Relationship with NATO and its Consequences for the Baltic Sea Region", *www.csis.org*, (2015-10-07); Armed Forces' press-statement on Baltops, 20th May 2015, <http://www.forsvarsmakten.se/sv/aktuellt/2015/05/forsvarsmakten-bygger-sakerhet-tillsammans-med-andra/>.
 40. Prop. 2014/15:109, throughout, but especially chapters 4 and 5; *Samförståndsavtal med Nato om världsstödd*, Ds 2015:39; Lindestam, Åsa and Thorell, Olle: "Nato vore för byråkratiskt vid kris", *Västmanlands Läns Tidning*, 2015-08-18; Hultqvist, Peter: "Sveriges militära samarbete med Nato måste fördjupas", *Dagens Nyheter*, 2015-08-30; Interview with Peter Hultqvist in *Radio Sweden*, channel 1, 2015-09-19; *Speech by Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist on Northern European Security*, SAIS, Washington D.C. 2017-05-17, <http://www.government.se/speeches/2017/05/speech-by-minister-for-defence-peter-hultqvist-on-northern-european-security/>.
 41. Two notable exceptions, one from an American guest researcher in Finland, are Michel; Leo: "Bilateral defence treaties with the United States: Not an alternative to NATO", *FIIA Comment* 19/2016, and Wiktorin, Johan: "Behåll alliansfriheten", *Vårt Försvar*, 3/2016.
 42. The most elaborate, outspoken and solid example of this view in the public domain is Forss, Stefan and Holopainen, Pekka: *Breaking the Nordic Defense Deadlock*, US War College Press/SSL, Carlisle, PA 2015.
 43. "US Deputy Secretary of Defense visited Sweden", <http://www.government.se/articles/2016/05/us-deputy-secretary-of-defence-visited-sweden/>; *Statement of Intent between the Secretary of Defense of the United States of America and the Minister of Defence of Sweden*, 2016-06-08, http://www.government.se/49d2af/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/statement-of-intent-swe-us-20160608_signed.pdf; "Biden: Sverige är okränkbar territorium – punkt", *Svenska Dagbladet*, 2016-08-25; "NATO's Vershbow: Alliance would help Finland in Baltic crisis situation", *YLE*, 2016-09-25, http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/natos_vershbow_alliance_would_help_finland_in_baltic_crisis_situation/9190830.
 44. Op. cit., Michel, Leo, see note 41.
 45. Belfrage, Frank et. al.: "Låt inte rysskräcken hindra oss från att gå med i Nato", *Dagens Nyheter*, 2016-01-06. This Op-Ed by 25 prominent Swedes, including a dozen former ambassadors, probably shook the establishment, as the MoFA used to be a solid bastion of the policy of neutrality or non-alignment. See also Winnerstig, Mike: "Varför Sverige i Nato?", *Vårt Försvar*, 4/2016.
 46. The kept woman analogy has not been made in the public debate but it is relevant, though it might seem harsh.
 47. In *Life-Line Lost* (op. cit., Dalsjö, Robert, see note 10), I not only reveal the extent and depth of Sweden's covert military ties to the West during the Cold War, and how they clashed with declaratory doctrine of "neutrality", but I also show that these ties waned considerably from the late 1960s, to the point where they effectively disappeared by the mid-1980s. My explanation for this is that the more strident and dogmatic doctrine on neutrality policy introduced by Olof Palme in the late 1960s made the maintenance of such covert military ties to the US increasingly politically risky. On this specific this point, my assessment differs from that of Mikael Holmström.
 48. Significantly, decisions in Nato does not involve voting. This and other finer points about Nato decision-making are explained and analysed in Michel, Leo: "NATO Decisionmaking: Au Revoir to the Consensus Rule?", *Strategic Forum*, no. 202, NDU/INSS, August 2003; Traugutt, Loren: *Is Consensus Still Necessary Within Nato?*, NDC Research report 07/16 – June 2016.
 49. This is mostly said in roundabout ways in public, but is clear from Diesen, Sverre: "Kampfly eller haerstyrker – hva betyr 'et balansert forsvar'?", *Norsk Militært Tidsskrift*, 2:2016.
 50. Shirreff, General Sir Richard: *War with Russia*, Coronet, London 2016. In this context, one could also mention the concerns in the years around 1960 about the alliance's

- response in case of a Soviet land-grab of Hamburg or Finnmark.
51. Korewa, Aaron: "Hirdmans paradox", *natobloggen.se*, 2016-08-10, <http://natobloggen.se/2016/08/10/hirdmanparadoxen/>.
 52. The sole exception is Leo Michel, who briefly touches on this aspect in "Bilateral defence treaties ...", (op. cit., see note 41).
 53. Dalsjö, Robert and Forss, Stefan: "Nato luo perustan Euroopan turvallisuudelle", *Helsingin Sanomat*, 2003-12-06, <http://www.hs.fi/paakirjoitukset/art-2000004187136.htm?share=14dd7fe9a15b2de54b56ed5596869f3e>.
 54. Heisbourg, Francois: "Brexit and European Security", *Survival*, June-July 2016.
 55. For more sophisticated versions of this message, see Zakheim, Dov: "The Trump Phenomenon and American Isolationism – the Strange Nature of the 2016 Presidential Campaign", *KKrVAHT*, 2. häftet 2016; Goldberg, Jeffrey: "The Obama Doctrine", *The Atlantic*, April 2016; Birnbaum, Michael: "Gates rebukes European allies in farewell speech", *The Washington Post*, 2011-06-10, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/gates-rebukes-european-allies-in-farewell-speech/2011/06/10/AG9tKeOH_story.html?utm_term=.01106677baf.
 56. Cf. op. cit., Michel, Leo, see note 41.
 57. Johansson, Mats: "Nato-debatten: Dags att säga hej då, Finland, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 2016-03-26, <http://www.svd.se/natodebatten-ar-det-dags-att-saga-hej-da-finland>.
 58. *Speech by President of the Republic Sauli Niinistö at the Ambassador Seminar 25 August 2015*, <http://www.tpk.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=333284&nodeid=44810&contentlan=2&culture=en-USRef>; *Speech by President of the Republic Sauli Niinistö at the Opening of Parliament on 3 February 2016*, <http://www.tpk.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=341376&nodeid=44810&contentlan=2&culture=en-US>.
 59. One can of course speculate on possible contributing causes, such as the debate in Sweden going into overdrive with the Op-Ed by 25 notables and with Mats Johansson's column about "Bye, bye Finland", but that would only be speculation.
 60. *The effects of Finland's possible Nato membership – an assessment*, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Helsinki 2016, <http://formin.finland.fi/public/download.aspx?ID=157408&GUID={71D08E6C-3168-439F-9C31-0326D1014C26}>.
 61. *Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy*, Prime Minister's Office Publications 9/2016, <http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=348060&nodeid=49298&contentlan=2&culture=en-US>; "Finnish, Swedish leaders invited into 'inner circle' at NATO summit", *yle.fi*, July 2016, http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/finnish-swedish_leaders_invited_into_inner_circle_at_nato_summit/9002688; Martikainen, Toivo et. al.: *Venäjän muuttuva rooli Suomen lähialueilla*, Valtioneuvoston selvitys- ja tutkimustoiminnan julkaisusarja 34/2016, Valtioneuvoston kanslia, Helsinki 2016. This report was semi-official in that it was written by analysts at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, but published by the Cabinet Offices.; *The United States and Finland Sign Statement of Intent*, 2016-10-07, https://finland.usembassy.gov/ev_100716.html.
 62. Waiting for the right moment to jump from the comradeship-in-arms with Germany, and then rapidly seizing the opportunity is the central theme of Henrik Meinander's excellent book *Finland 1944*. Meinander, Henrik: *Finland 1944: Krig, samhälle, känslolandskap*, Söderströms, Helsingfors 2009. In 1917 Finland declared independence in the confusion following the Bolshevik coup d'état and aligned itself with Germany, only to jump ship a year later (and dump the German prince elected King of Finland) when Germany had lost the war. As for the early 1990s, see Nyberg, Rene: "Ni har vidrört VSB-avtalet" in Bergquist, Mats and Johansson, Alf (eds.): *Säkerhetspolitik och historia: Essäer om stormaktspolitiken och Norden under sjuttio år – Vänbok till Krister Wahlbäck*, Hjalmarson & Högberg, Stockholm 2007.
 63. Öjemar, Fredrik and Härnebo Grapenwall, Yasmine: "Wallström: Natoanhängarna biter nog på naglarna", *Dagens Industri*, 2016-11-09.
 64. "The Baltic States in a post-Nato environment: An Interview with Edward Lucas", 2017-01-16, <https://deepbaltic.com/2017/01/16/the-baltic-states-in-a-post-nato-environment-an-interview-with-edward-lucas/>.