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**Western European democracies
and new Russian revisionism**

Does alliance membership matter?

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Forord

Denne studien er gjennomført som avsluttende del av stabs- og masterstudiet ved Forsvarets høyskole i Oslo, kull 2020/21, andre halvår 2021. Det var en stor glede for meg som tysk stabsoffiser å få lov til å delta i masterutdanning ved Forsvarets Høyskole. Dessverre medførte pandemien store hindringer for gjennomføringen og fysisk oppmøte ved Akershus festning var unntaket. Allikevel var oppholdet i Norge for meg og familien min veldig givende og vi har lært mye om landet og folket ved siden av det offisielle.

Det tyske forsvaret ga meg fri til å skrive oppgaven fra juli 2021 til desember 2021 på heltid, istedenfor den norske deltidsmodellen. Derfor slutter forskningen til denne oppgaven i slutten av 2021 og hendelser i Ukraina etter 24.02.2022 er dermed ikke inkludert i dette arbeidet.

Jeg vil videre rette en stor takk til alle som har bidratt i dette arbeidet på en eller annen måte. Det angår spesielt familien min og dermed først og fremst kona mi, som har tidvis avstått fra å utøve yrket sitt og har alltid understøttet meg både under studiet og under skriveprosessen. Bibliotekansatte på Akershus festning var alltid til stede og hjalp meg i stor grad å finne og anskaffe litteratur i forskningsfasen. Videre vil jeg rette en stor takk til personalet fra Bundessprachenamt primært til min norskspråklærer Solveig Isaaksen-Zimmermann og til språktjenesten som har rettet språk i oppgavens tekst. En spesiell takk går sist, men ikke minst, til min hovedveileder Håkon Lunde Saxi for gode råd, spesielt i begynnelsen av arbeidet, alltid interessante faglige innspill og en totalt sett veldig god veiledning.

Forword

This research was the final part of the command & staff course 2020/21 at the Norwegian Defense University College in Oslo during the second semester in 2021. As a German staff officer, it was a pleasure for me to get the opportunity to join the master programme at the Norwegian Defense University College. Unfortunately, the pandemic situation led to significant restrictions in terms of execution, and therefore lessons in presence were the exception.

However, staying in Norway for one and a half years was very rewarding for me and my family. We learned a lot about the country, its culture and its people – apart from the “official business”.

The German armed forces released me from my duty from July 2021 until December 2021 to allow me to conduct this research on a full-time basis rather than applying the spare-time model which is customary in Norway. For this reason, the status of the research is that of the end of 2021, and the events that have taken place in Ukraine since 24th February 2022 have not been considered.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to this research in one way or another. First and foremost, this applies to my family and especially my wife who temporarily suspended the exercise of her profession. She has continuously supported me during both the study and the research process for this thesis. The library employees at Akershus fortress were always there to help me find and provide to me the right literature in the research phase. Furthermore, I want to thank the employees of the Bundessprachenamt, especially my Norwegian language teacher, Mrs Solveig Isaaksen-Zimmermann, and those of the language service who proofread this text with regard to linguistics and grammar.

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Abstract

A steadily more aggressive course of action by Russia changed both the security situation in Europe and the security and defense policy of European states. Furthermore, in the second decade of the 21st century, NATO has shifted back its focus, away from stabilisation missions to collective defense. But not every member nation has kept pace with the adjustments. Particularly the obligation to invest at least 2% of the GDP into defense measures, which is also referred to as the NATO Defense Investment Pledge, has been a subject of disagreement among NATO members. This thesis takes the dissent as a starting point to highlight the reasons for the way and the intensity in which states react to a specific threat. It tries to determine if the reaction of a country to a new threat is predominantly influenced by the state's alliance membership or simply the country's geopolitical location. The countries Germany, Norway and Sweden, which differ in size and location and include NATO members as well as a non-allied state, were chosen as comparison units.

For all three states, both the defense expenditure and the procedure and intensity of changing the orientation of the armed forces within the period from the end of the Cold War until 2020 were analyzed. In order to achieve the objective of the thesis, the following research question shall be discussed and answered: *Is membership in an alliance such as NATO the crucial factor that has determined western European states' defense policy response to Russia's new aggressive revisionism, or does geopolitical exposure to Russia offer a more convincing explanation?*

This thesis examines the aspects "defense expenditure" and "(re-)orientation of the armed forces" and reveals in both cases that geopolitics override the commitments that arise from the membership in an alliance. Regarding the first case, i.e. defense expenditure, it is notable that Sweden's changes in defense investments keep up with those of the other states considered in this research. This applies to the time of rearmament in the 90's as well as to the increase in investments after 2014 or, in the case of Sweden, especially after 2017. The second case, (re-)orientation of the armed forces, is even more distinct. It shows that Sweden reversed several measures taken in the age of stabilization missions at a good pace to regain mobilization abilities and high-intensity warfighting capabilities. Sweden's effort was the decisive factor that led to the conclusion that geopolitics matter most.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Motivation for the topic “Does alliance membership matter?”

First of all, this thesis was written in the timespan from July 2021 until December 2021 before Russia’s attack on Ukraine on 24th February 2022. For this reason, all considerations and drawn conclusions refer to the end of 2021.

In 2014, Russia’s offensive actions on the Crimean Peninsula and in the eastern part of Ukraine changed the security situation in Europe significantly. These actions led NATO to prioritize collective defense and recognize the threat posed by Russia once again. Especially the northern and eastern member states, but also Norway and Germany share this new-old threat perception. With this fundamental change, many European countries, politicians, and military leaders realized that both the time of large *out of area* operations¹ and wars of choice, and the time of the *peace dividend*² was over. Following a decade of relatively constant expenses, the overall defense spending in the case of Germany increased by 23% from USD 39.9 bn in 2014 to USD 52.8 bn in 2020 (Statista, 2020). This points to the fact that this large increase is the result of a type of threat perception that has not played a role since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Today, Europe faces manifold security threats: Failing states in Africa lead to an increase in migration, China’s growing influence both in the military and economic domains causes tensions, and not least, Iran’s nuclear project is a challenge to containing proliferation in the Middle East. Neither of the above security threats can be solved by one country alone, and each of them is too important to be neglected. However, the new Russian revisionist policy threatens the core of the Alliance, its *cohesion and solidarity* and perhaps even the territorial integrity and sovereignty of some NATO member states. For the affected states this is an existential threat.

As a consequence of this revisionism, originally neutral states such as Sweden meanwhile have also perceived Russia as a threat. Not least because of their geopolitical location, they have therefore moved closer to NATO during the last few years. At the same time, they are willing to join or establish

¹ **Out of area** describes all peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations far away from NATO’s territory, such as the missions in Afghanistan, Libya, or against the Islamic State.

² **Peace dividend** describes savings in defense spending and defense-related assets, e.g. arms production facilities, due to the end of a war or a time of tension. Such savings can be used for other, peaceful purposes. Following the end of the Cold War after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, the peace dividend was very high; the arms race between USA and NATO on one side and the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact on the other had ended (Herbert, 2011, pp. 138–139).

other multilateral cooperation formats, for example the *Nordic Defense Cooperation (NORDEF)*³. In view of the differences in geopolitical location, population, economy, and memberships in different alliances, it is very interesting to compare the different approaches of these states to countering new Russian revisionism, as well as their reasons.

Several articles on topics comparable to this research have been published. Merete Evensen addressed very similar aspects in her master thesis, in which she wrote about NATO's reaction to the crisis in Ukraine. This thesis focusing on NATO analyzed the political, military, and economic reactions of the Alliance (Evensen, 2019). Evensen found that security political reactions had been the greatest and economic measures less extensive, although several NATO members had supported economic sanctions imposed by either the EU or the USA. Furthermore, Allers wrote an article on defense cooperation between Germany and Norway regarding the "submarine treaty" and described the similarities of interests and common views on the challenges in security policy shared by both states (Allers, 2018). An analysis by Ermerling provides additional information on the main driving forces behind defense cooperation between Norway and Germany within the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) program, the NATO Response Force (NRF), and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) (Ermerling, 2018).

This thesis tries to find out if the reaction of a country to a new threat is predominantly influenced by the state's alliance membership or simply the country's geopolitical location. For this reason, three countries (Germany, Norway, and Sweden) were chosen, which differ in size, and location, and include NATO members and a non-allied state. The focus of this thesis is to analyze the backgrounds and reasons of the three states leading to the common and different approaches and measures taken within their respective security and defense policies. Ultimately, it is the conclusion of the thesis that defense spending, defense policy, and the orientation of the armed forces, is to a greater extent the result of the geopolitical exposure of the three states to Russia rather than alliance membership.

³ **NORDEF** is a defense cooperation between Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Finland. It is not an alliance aimed at mutual assistance, but promotes the exploration of synergies, finding efficient common solutions and thus strengthens the individual members' national defense capabilities (NORDEF, n.d.).

1.2. Research topic and delimitations

After the events in Ukraine and on the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, the western community agreed that Russia had crossed a red line and violated international law (see Section 1.4). Yet, according to the countries' national interests, the reactions of the different nations varied in terms of enthusiasm and reservations. Sweden, for instance, called for "robust [economic] response to send a stronger signal to Russia", while Germany acted "reluctant because of strong economic, financial, historic or even religious ties" (Emmanouilidis, 2014, p. 4). This study is to answer the main research question:

Is membership in an alliance such as NATO the crucial factor that have determined Western European states defence policy response to Russia's new aggressive revisionism or does geopolitical exposure to Russia offer a more convincing explanation?

After the end of the Second World War, Europe was divided into a western and an eastern sphere. NATO was founded as a political alliance, which swiftly became a military alliance not least because of its idea of collective defense and the members' obligation of assistance. These principles have attracted new members to NATO, which has grown to 30 member states today. NATO membership has a big influence on national security policy, since especially smaller countries can slip under the protective screen of a superpower (USA) and benefit from the political power of the many other member states.

The research question was operationalized by examining the hypothesis that security policy overrides other political domains, and that *geopolitics* is the most important factor in this context. In order to confirm or to falsify this assumption, the following sub-questions were addressed:

Given the countries' differences in alliance membership and geopolitical location,

1. Are there any correlations with regard to the increases in defense expenditure?

In order to respond this question, the one of the following hypotheses should be confirmed:

- a) If the defense spending of both Germany and Norway as NATO members has increased since 2014 in accordance with the Alliance's demands while Sweden's spending has developed differently, this will point to an alliance related behavior.
- b) If Sweden's defense spending has increased about the same as that of Germany and Norway, this indicates that geopolitical rather than alliance reasoning predominates.

-
2. What are the differences between the orientation and concept of the individual armed forces?

Accordingly for this question, one of the following hypotheses must be confirmed:

- a) If it can be recognized that the member states Germany and Norway act similarly to one another and are closely guided by NATO strategy, Alliance membership is the dominating factor.
- b) If it is obvious that Norway and Sweden, who are located very close to Russia, adapt their defense policies in a much more similar manner than that of Germany, geopolitical location is the dominating factor.

The research mainly focuses on the timespan from 2000 to summer 2021. However, it is required to consider the time before 2000 so as to be able to compare individual cases, figures, and situations. The events in 2014 marked a turning point in history and international relations. For the first time, the Final Act of the 1975 Helsinki accords had been violated. This treaty signed by 35 states⁴ stipulates that the frontiers established after World War II are inviolable and the territorial integrity of each state must be respected (CSCE, 1975, p. 5). It is also the worst crisis in international relations between western countries and Russia since the end of the Cold War.

At this point, two important delimitations in this thesis should be made clear. Firstly, as the focus of this thesis is on security and defense policy, cultural and economic issues will only be covered to a limited extent. Secondly, for the purpose of this paper, “alliance membership” will be defined as NATO membership. While the EU is an important European security organization, it does not presently function as military alliance established for the purpose of collective defense. The EU's significance for national defense policy and strategy is therefore more limited than that of NATO. While it would also be possible to investigate the significance of EU membership on defense policy, its lower salience compared to NATO, as well as the need to limit the scope of this thesis, will mean that I will not systematically examine the importance of EU membership.

⁴ USA, Canada, the Soviet Union, and all European states at that time, with the exception of Albania and Andorra

1.3. Disposition

The research paper consists of three main chapters. After this introduction, there is the Method and theory chapter. It is dedicated to describing the strategy, design, and method of research used to give a scientific answer to the research question. In addition, the chapter explains basic terms and theoretical basic knowledge of Russian revisionism and geopolitics.

This chapter is followed by the two case chapters. Chapter 3 examines the first case, i.e. defense expenditure. It starts with a short description of the meaning of defense expenditure and how it can be measured. This is followed by an explanation of the NATO members' Defense Investment Pledge, or simply NATO's 2% target. Afterwards, there is one section each on the individual researched countries to examine their defense spending from the end of the Cold War to 2020. The chapter is completed with a summary and the chapter conclusion on this case.

The second case is outlined in Chapter 4. At the beginning, there is a short analysis of how military operations have changed and how NATO adapted its strategy in the last 20 years. Subsequently, each country is analyzed with respect to its defense policy and especially the concept and organization of its armed forces. The chapter and thus the case is concluded with a summary and the chapter conclusion.

Finally, the conclusion in Chapter 5 is to summarize the most important findings and to give an answer to the research question.

1.4. Origins of the new tensions between Russia and the western countries

This section describes the origin of the first tensions resulting from Russia's intervention in South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 2008 and the core of the current struggles between western European countries and Russia: the ongoing Ukraine conflict. As a consequence of the development of this conflict and the violations of treaties, the relations between Russia and the western states today are as bad as in the early 1980s (Duncan, 2020, p. 2). Accordingly, these tensions are fundamental to the topic of this thesis.

The beginning of the changing relations with Russia dates back to 2008. Georgia deployed troops to its separatist province of South Ossetia in August 2008 to maintain stability and to counter the independence efforts. Russia, in contrast, invaded the province to defend the independence of the province and to protect local citizens of Russian descent. Soon, the conflict spilled over to Abkhazia, another renegade Georgian province. After a five-day war, Russia recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This led to the break-off of diplomatic relations between Georgia and Russia, and to the end of the post-Soviet order. At the same time, it demonstrated, that Russia was willing to take military action outside its territory to achieve its political goals and to keep the west and NATO in particular at bay (Jahn, 2008, pp. 5–9).

The Ukraine conflict began in the end of 2013, when Ukraine got into the focus of geostrategic interests of both the EU and Russia. The offending object was the *association agreement with the European Union*, which would have moved Ukraine closer to the EU at the disadvantage of Russia. President Yanukovich's rejection to sign the agreement led to increasingly violent protests in Kiev, in which a number of people were killed (Tiedeke & Waßmuth, 2014, p. 2). As early as 2011, the Kremlin estimated that this agreement was a realistic geopolitical threat in itself, fearing the EU's further expansion into its self-proclaimed post-Soviet sphere of influence (Duncan, 2020, pp. 2–3). After the success of the "Euromaidan" movement⁵ and the establishment of a new pro-western government, the association agreement was to be signed. Moreover, Ukraine intended to repeal a language law of 2012, which acknowledges Russian as an official regional language. Although neither happened, Russia started information campaigns accusing the EU and the USA of supporting the government and spread the narrative that Russian-speaking minorities were suppressed, mainly on Crimea and in the eastern Ukraine regions.

⁵ **Euromaidan** describes the protests against then-president Yanukovich promoting a western orientated Ukraine. The movement was named after the demonstrations' place of origin: the Kiev Independence square, called Maidan (Open Society Foundations, n.d.)

Consequently, the Russian government used this as an excuse to invade Crimea to protect their supposed compatriots (Biersack & O'Lear, 2014, pp. 247–249). The real reason for this decisive intervention was rather the fear of the new government in Kiev not extending the lease of the Black Sea Fleet facilities⁶ on the Crimean Peninsula. But the level of preparation and preparedness on the Russian side indicated a contingency plan, which had been drafted much earlier (Duncan, 2020, p. 4).

Suddenly, well-equipped soldiers appeared everywhere on the peninsula on 27 February 2014, not wearing any emblems of nationality to avoid escalation to an international conflict. Although any relationship between Russia and these “little green men” was denied, it was implausible for unorganized self-defense units to be so well armed and obviously well trained (Buckley et al., 2014). Soon, local fighters joined the unmarked forces and formed a new Crimean government, which requested annexation by Russia. Therefore, a hasty referendum was held only two weeks later with a dubious⁷ result in favor of the annexation. However, it was neither accepted by Ukraine nor the United Nations (Biersack & O'Lear, 2014, pp. 250–249).

The case of the annexation of Crimea marks two important points in recent European history. Firstly, it violated the Final Act of the 1975 Helsinki Accords by changing the borders using force and violating the sovereignty of Ukraine (CSCE, 1975, p. 5). Further, it violated the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, in which Russia, among others, had reaffirmed “to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine”. In return Ukraine had handed over all nuclear weapons of Soviet origin to the Russian Federation and signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Security Council Report, 1994).

On the other hand, the Russian narrative has always been fostering the idea of Crimea being the original Russian homeland.⁸ The Russian Federation as the Soviet Union’s successor state had always intended to return Crimea to its territory, especially because of the strategically important port facilities in Sevastopol. In 2014 it eventually seized the opportunity (Luchterhandt, 2014, pp. 62–65, 84).

After Crimea had been annexed with forceful, coercive but not violent means, Russia invaded the Donbass in the eastern part of Ukraine to shape the *Novorossiya project* in a much more violent manner. This included both the use of hidden tactics, i.e., supporting local criminals and Russian

⁶ The **Black Sea Fleet** has been located in Sevastopol since 1783, when the city was built to accommodate it. It is the third largest fleet of the Russian Navy and covers the operational areas of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. Russia has an official lease agreement with Ukraine, which originally lasted until 2017 and was prolonged by President Yanukovich until 2043 (Quiring, 2014)

⁷ Reportedly 96.7% voted for the incorporation to Russia (Duncan, 2020, p. 4)

⁸ De facto, it was first conquered in 1793 and incorporated into the Russian Empire. Later on, it became Russian territory inside the Soviet Union until being transferred to the Ukrainian Socialist Republic in 1954. With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Crimea became part of newly founded Ukraine and given extensive autonomous rights.

nationalists, recruiting former Afghanistan and Chechnya war veterans, and the deployment of regular forces to the area in August 2014 to avert defeat by the Ukrainian Army.

The war was eventually won with military means, but Russia and its fellow campaigners suffered many casualties and lost international political support. In the aftermath of the combat activities, two separatist people's republics⁹ were formed, which are not acknowledged by the UN and the international community (Mitrokhin & Weichsel, 2014, pp. 3, 15-16).

After months of escalation, two cease-fire agreements, namely *Minsk I* and *Minsk II* were concluded between President Putin, Ukraine's president Porochenko and the separatist republics. The latest agreement tried to deescalate the situation by having the cease-fire monitored by OSCE¹⁰ representatives (Bamberger, 2017). Unfortunately, the parties to the agreement have totally conflicting views. While Ukraine wants to reinstate its sovereignty by pushing back Russian troops and reestablishing the former border under its own control, Russia wants to crack Ukraine's sovereignty by supporting the autonomy of the separatist republics. Furthermore, Russia aims to implement a new counter elite in these states in order to challenge the pro-western government and thus avoid any further expansion of western influence (Duncan, 2020, pp. 1, 6).

⁹ The Donetsk People's Republic (DNR), established on 6 April 2014 and the Luhansk People's Republic, established on 27 April 2014 (Duncan, 2020, p. 6).

¹⁰ The **OSCE** (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) is the successor organization to the **CSCE** (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe). It has 57 participating states of equal status. The OSCE has a comprehensive approach to security that encompasses politico-military, economic and environmental, and humanitarian aspects. It addresses a wide range of security-related concerns, including arms control, confidence and security building measures, human rights, national minorities, democratization, policing strategies, counter-terrorism, and economic and environmental activities (OSCE, n.d.-b)

1.5. Russia's security strategy, and military strategy and capabilities

The following two sections describe firstly Russia's security strategy with its main focus on *regime stability* and *great power status*. Afterwards, it is described how the military strategy is based on a network of *nuclear* and *non-nuclear deterrence* supplemented with *non-military means*. The purpose of this section is to know the intentions of the opposing side and thus to understand why the three countries adapted their measures in security and defense politics.

1.5.1. Security strategy

Regime stability and with-it security has been a central concern in Russia since Putin came into power. Successful military interventions and more hardline foreign policy were used to stifle calls for modernization in domestic policy challenging the government's authority. Therefore, it is comprehensible that foreign and security policy, including the instrumentalization of security threats and the glorification of brutal military solutions, are the pillars of Putin's power. Furthermore, power is concentrated in the person of Vladimir Putin and used to implement his perception of *realpolitik*. The small steps for rapprochement made by President Medvedev were stopped by Putin after he regained control in 2012 (Meister, 2019, pp. 75–76). He prioritized the security sector and increased the budget despite the ongoing crises and simultaneous cuts in key areas such as health, education, and science.

Maintaining a *Great Power status* has always been an integral part of Russian politics. As this has mainly been achieved through strong military power, the military in Russia has always been given the highest priority, which has had detrimental effects on the development of living standards and economic efficiency. The mere existence of the world's largest number of nuclear warheads¹¹ and carrier systems underlines Russia's claim to great power status, and allowed to compensate for the weakness and inferiority of the military's conventional weaponry during the 1990s and 2000s (Smith, 2019, p. 54).

1.5.2. Military strategy and capabilities

The Russian military strategy can be divided into three parts: *Nuclear deterrence*, *non-nuclear deterrence* and *non-military means* (Zysk, 2020). Russia's rebuilt of military power following the long decline in the Yeltsin era after 1990 and the current development in military strategy are closely tied to the presidency of Vladimir Putin and his military reforms and increased defense spending after 2008 (Trenin, 2016, p. 23).

¹¹ Russia possessed 6,225 (45%) of 13,800 warheads worldwide in 2021 (Statista, 2021a)

Nuclear deterrence is achieved with highly mobile land- and sea-based missile and rocket systems and long-range bomber aircraft. Nuclear weapons were given the highest priority after 1990, because the conventional forces were in a very bad shape and the military clout was low. To achieve strategic balance with the USA, Russia actually dropped the “no first-use assurance” in order to use a “limited nuclear attack to deescalate a confrontation with a superior opponent” (Zysk, 2018, p. 2)¹². The most important asset for ensuring Russia’s *second-strike capability*¹³ is the Northern Fleet located in the *Barents Sea*, consisting of its backbone, Russia’s sea-based nuclear weapon carriers, and the tools to defend them. Following the originally Soviet concept of *Bastion defense*, the launch-platforms and installations in the Arctic are protected by a comprehensive defense system. The concept relies on the capability to control the inner Arctic area and deny any access to the outer area.¹⁴ Other components are long-range air patrols with nuclear weapons on board, anti-access / air denial (A2/AD) missile systems along the coasts and at sea as well as land forces – i.e. two motorized infantry brigades - near the Norwegian and the Finish borders (*The Geostrategic Arctic*, 2019, pp. 3-5).

Besides the Barents Sea, there is a second area of strategic interest: The *Baltic Sea region*. Albeit lower in importance, the area and especially the enclave of Kaliningrad plays an important role both for nuclear and non-nuclear deterrence as well as A2/AD measures and installations, not least because of the vicinity to the NATO members Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland (Alberti, 2021, pp. 1–2).

Non-nuclear deterrence is the second means in a connected defense network with the long-term goal to achieve strategic superiority. It includes all non-nuclear means, but especially relies on high-precision long-range missiles and show of force with exercises. The backbone for high-precision long-distance strikes are the new *Iskander*¹⁵ and *Kalibr*¹⁶ missiles. The development of these *dual capability*¹⁷ missiles violated the INF Treaty¹⁸ and therefore led to the dismissal of the treaty by USA in

¹² Zysk’s statement is subject of debate, but there is general agreement that Russia has a lower threshold to use nuclear weapon than the West (Bruusgaard, 2017)

¹³ **Second-strike capability** is the ability to strike back with nuclear weapons and cause massive damage to the enemy after being attacked with nuclear weapons (Britannica Encyclopedia, n.d.).

¹⁴ The **inner area** is defined as a circle within Russian waters up to the imaginary line from northern Norway via Bear Island to Svalbard, the so-called Bear Gap. The **outer area** is between the Bear Gap and the imaginary line from Greenland via Iceland to the northern edge of the United Kingdom, the so-called GIUK Gap

¹⁵ The **Iskander** missile family consists of both cruise missiles (Iskander K) and ballistic missiles (Iskander M). It has a nominal range in excess of 450 km - 750 km and dual capability (Dalsjö et al., 2019, pp. 36–38).

¹⁶ The **Kalibr** is a newly developed cruise missile very similar to the U.S. Tomahawk cruise missile. It has a range of up to 1650 km, is available in several versions and has dual capability (Dalsjö et al., 2019, pp. 39–40).

¹⁷ **Dual capability** means that the missile can carry both nuclear and conventional warheads.

¹⁸ The INF Treaty (Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces) was signed in 1987 between the USA and the USSR, and banned all nuclear-capable missiles with a range between 500 km and 5500 km (BMVg, n.d.).

2019 (Zysk, 2018, p. 5). Since the deployment of Kalibr missiles to the Northern Fleet and the at least interim deployment of Iskander missiles to Kaliningrad¹⁹, Russia has the ability to target almost every point in Europe with its missiles. Both missile types are highly flexible and hence unpredictable. The *dual capability* enhances the unpredictability because it blurs the line of a nuclear war, because it is impossible to identify the type of warhead installed in a missile on its way to the target (Zysk, 2018, p. 5). Consequently, there is a smooth transition between nuclear and non-nuclear deterrence, just as intended.

Russian leaders are aware of the fact that they would lose a long-lasting military conflict with NATO or particularly USA. Additionally, Russia is in an inferior technological position, not only but especially because of the economic sanctions after 2014 (Alberti, 2021, p. 1). If deterrence fails, it relies on surprise, determination, and quick action to avoid defeat and maintain the initiative. The prospect of a strong Russian reaction, possibly including non-strategic nuclear weapons for tactical reasons, is to frighten every aggressor, and fear of an escalating nuclear war is to ensure the opponent's retreat (Zysk, 2018, p. 5).

The second wing of non-nuclear deterrence consists of scheduled and unscheduled exercises. The Russian armed forces conduct several strategic routine exercises to be prepared for quick reaction, and to show their ability to mobilize and deploy their forces. Close allies, such as Belarus, participate in these exercises on a regularly basis, but also other nations with shared interests, e.g. other former Soviet Republics or China, (Weitz, 2021, pp. 1–2).

Operational strategic exercises are conducted annually and regularly rotate through the four military districts²⁰. The objectives of the exercises with up to 100.000 to 150.000 participants is to show the strategic combination of military operations in several military districts (Johnson, 2018). For example, the intention behind ZAPAD²¹ 2017 conducted in the Western Military District (WMD) was to demonstrate Russia's readiness to conduct large-scale military operations against a near peer adversary. It included deployments of major parts of the WMD short-range ballistic missile units and Russian Strategic Rocket Forces dispersion drills (Muzyka, 2021, pp. 5–6).

¹⁹ Russian authorities confirmed that Iskander missiles had been temporarily deployed to Kaliningrad before 2018. They also confirmed that they deployed Iskander missiles in 2018 (Reuters, 2018). It seems that the missiles are still there, since Russia "claimed the right to put weapons anywhere on its own territory (Deutsche Welle, 2018).

²⁰ The **Northern Fleet Strategic Command** is not seen as a regular military district and has no own district exercise.

²¹ **ZAPAD** is the western military district's exercise, **VOSTOK** the eastern's, **TSETR** the central's and **KAVKAZ** the southern's (Johnson, 2018).

Unscheduled “snap”-exercises are held in various districts without prior notice, neither to the armed forces below the General Staff, nor the OSCE.²² They are conducted four to six times a year on various levels to test the readiness and effectiveness of command echelons from the strategic down to the tactical level (Johnson, 2018). As recently as April 2021, Russia showed that it is capable to deploy up to 30,000 soldiers from several military districts to a dedicated area within a month, in this case the border to Ukraine. The ambiguous posture and strength of the forces made it hard for the west to estimate whether this was another exercise or the preparation of an invasion into Ukraine (Muzyka, 2021, p. 1). Such exercises challenge NATO and its member states due to their unpredictability, which implies a disadvantage during the initial phase of a potential conflict.

The use of *non-military means* to achieve military strategic objectives, or the combined use of non-military means and military means as *hybrid warfare* is commonly associated with General Gerasimov, the chief of the Russian General Staff. He emphasized the mixing of boundaries between war and peace and the increased importance of non-military means in future conflicts already in 2013. Furthermore, he stated that the whole population and the whole territory could be involved in a conflict (Bilban & Grininger, 2019, p. 13). According to him, a conflict can be divided into six phases:

-
1. Concealed origination
 2. Escalation
 3. Outbreak of conflict activity
 4. Crisis
 5. Resolution
 6. Restoration of peace
-

Table 1: Phases of a conflict according to Gerasimov (Sivitski, 2017)

Military and non-military measures indicate the overall duration of the conflict. Information warfare is both the interface between military and non-military means and the basis for other non-military measures, e.g., the formation of political opposition, and is conducted throughout the conflict. Other means, such as sanctions, political and diplomatic pressure or the formation of coalitions and unions, are only present in single phases (Sivitski, 2017). Military measures, e.g., strategic deterrence or peace enforcement operations are taken to supplement such activities. Gerasimov’s approach is not completely new, since the USA’s previous doctrines had already included similar concepts, which were applied in former wars (Bilban & Grininger, 2019, p. 15).

²² To guarantee military transparency, these types of exercises and their scale actually demand for the invitation of observers according to the Vienna document (OSCE, n.d.-a).

However, the Russian Military Doctrine of 2014 sees modern wars as “an integrated application of military force and political, economic, information or other non-military methods and means implemented with the exploitation of the population's protest potential and with the support of special forces” (The Russian Military Doctrine 2014 in Zysk, 2020). The methods applied in this grey zone are fake news, influence campaigns on social media, cyber-attacks, assassinations, influence on political parties, economic coercion and others (Zysk, 2020). These hybrid tools are used when the risk and costs of deploying conventional military forces is too high or the mission is just not feasible. Nevertheless, a hard hitting and sustainable military force is always held ready in the background (Rumer, 2019). All these elements have been identified in the Ukraine conflict (see Section 1.4).

The previous two sections have explicitly described that Russia is both willing and capable to use offensive, hybrid, and subversive means to achieve its strategic goals. By fighting wars in its perimeter and within the Russian Federation itself such as Chechnya, even with an unprepared military, Russia demonstrated that it is willing to take the risk and fill the power-vacuum after the collapse of the Soviet Union, maintain its position and its influence, and protect ethnic Russians or Russian speaking people outside its borders (Smith, 2019, pp.54-55). “Russia will go to war in an international crisis to protect its interests and influence” (Muzyka, 2021, p. 4). Russia’s preparedness and will have made a sustainable impact on the threat perception and defense political countermeasures of the three research countries.

2. Method and theory

The following passage describes the *research strategy*, *research design*, and *research method*. The purpose is to give a scientific answer to the research question and to deliver the theoretical basis for the research. Although research method and strategy are often used to explain the same thing, Denscombe's distinction is used for differentiation: *Research strategy* is the approach taken to achieve the research goal. It consists of the research logic as a rationale for shaping the project, whereas the *research design* and a clearly identified research problem are the tools for data collection described by the *research method* (Denscombe, 2017, p. 4).

The last phase of the research is the discussion. It is formulated in the respective chapter conclusions of Chapters 3 and 4, where the findings and theories are connected.

2.1. Research strategy

The first step is to determine the research strategy. It must be *ethical*, *feasible* and *suitable* with regard to the research question. There are three options: *quantitative research*, *qualitative research*, and the *mixed approach*. Quantitative research is based on numbers and often associated with large-scale studies and analyses of specific *variables*. In contrast, qualitative research makes use of words or visual images, and is mainly used for small-scale studies with a *holistic approach*. As it does not exclusively depend on the numbers from the data collection, qualitative research has the advantage that is possible to carry out the analysis in the meantime (Denscombe, 2017, pp. 4–7). The quantitative approach is intimately connected to *positivism*. Positivism tries to rebuild the social reality like a physical reality. Members of this school are of the opinion that everything can be described and thus studied scientifically (Denscombe, 2017, p. 8). The whole world is considered objective and measurable, and personal impressions are seen as less important. *Postpositivism*, however, challenges the objectiveness and the notion of the absolute truth of knowledge. It rather reflects a deterministic philosophy and tries to support or defeat a theory after the evaluation of collected data (Creswell, 2003, pp. 6–7).

Constructivism and *interpretivism* can be seen as opposites of this approach. Both claim knowledge through assumptions and place value on subjective opinions of individuals and their understanding of the world. Multiple and varying opinions enable the researcher to pursue a *constructivist approach* to investigate complex views instead of thinking in categories. Historical and cultural settings are included in the research, and through interaction with others, the researcher can establish or develop a theory instead of verifying an existing one (Creswell, 2003, pp. 8–9). *Interpretivism* supports the constructivist approach by being skeptical about the possibility of

objectiveness, considering the researcher as a part of the social world with own experiences and identity. The social world is rather a complex, multi-layered phenomenon, which can be best understood through a process of interpretation (Denscombe, 2017, p. 8).

Finally, the *mixed approach* combines the qualitative and quantitative methods into a single approach. This means, that components of both approaches, e.g., methods or data, and even the whole research can be mixed. Furthermore, this approach enables the researcher to use varied perspectives to look at the problem and benefit in terms of the accuracy of the findings, the completeness of the picture, and the development of the analysis (Denscombe, 2017, pp. 162–164).

This research tries to identify if a country's political decisions are rather influenced more by membership in an alliance *or* by geopolitics. It compares three likeminded nations, which share many similarities in culture, education, and welfare. On the other hand, they have different historical backgrounds, geopolitical locations, and very dissimilar population, both in size and density. The motivation for political and military counteractive measures depends on a complex interaction between political, economic, and cultural factors and opinions. The opinion of single individuals, such as politicians, play the same role as the interests of political parties and industrial heavyweights. As these influencing factors cannot be measured in numbers, just as the context of Russian revisionism, a qualitative research approach paired with a constructivist and interpretivist approach is best suited and therefore prioritized for this research.

2.2. Research design

To meet the criteria of a scientific research, the study must be *valid* and *reliable*. Validity is achieved if the right empirical data is collected and used to answer the questions. It is divided into *internal validity* and *external validity*. Internal validity describes the congruity between the findings and the conclusions in a research, whereas external validity means that the findings of the study can also be applied to other cases (Jacobsen, 2015, pp. 16–17). In this study, the requirement for relations to other cases is less important than the correlation with theory as a method to explain it. A research with an *intensive design* analyzes the depth of an action or a phenomenon and aims at understanding how reality is perceived and how things are connected (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 90).

A *case study* is the best option for investigating a complex relationship between factors within a particular social setting (Denscombe, 2017, p. 5). The goal of a case study is "to illuminate the general by looking at the particular." It is characterized by a focus on relationships and processes rather than outcomes and end products, as well as a *holistic view* with multiple sources of data rather than isolated factors and a single research method. A case study not only tries to figure out what is going on, but also to explain why. It sees the case as a whole and aims to understand how actions and settings are linked to one another. Thereby it discovers how several parts affect each other, and it allows the use of different methods and types of data.²³ Because of these multiple advantages, the case study has often been used in sociology, political science and other domains to gain knowledge of individual, group, organizational and political phenomena (Yin, 2009, p. 4). Furthermore, a case study can serve as a "test-site" for theory and can be used both for theory testing and theory building (Denscombe, 2017, p. 61). The disadvantages of a case study are the difficulty to generalize the findings and to get access to the data of the particular case. Moreover, the case study is lesser focused on the outcome than on the process (Denscombe, 2017, p. 66). The case is a phenomenon that has already existed before the beginning of the research and will continue to exist after the research has finished (Denscombe, 2017, pp. 56–58).

Summing up all criteria, a case study with an *intensive design* offers many advantages and is a viable choice for answering the research question. Its disadvantages are outweighed, because the aim of the research is not to generalize, but to find an answer for a specific group (Western European countries) sharing many commonalities, and to identify the reason for a specific behavior. This means that there is a *causality*. One possibility to discover causality is a *comparative case study* with more than one research unit in time and space. The aim is to uncover causal relationships between the phenomena (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 105).

²³ Usual data types are observations, interviews, documents, and questionnaires.

Finally, this research will be a *comparative case study* with an *intensive, qualitative design*. The variables in this research are differentiated between independent and dependent variables. Independent variables have an impact on dependent variables but exist autonomously. A change affects the dependent variable (Denscombe, 2017, p. 74). The independent variable in this research is *membership in a military alliance* and *geopolitical security interests*. The dependent variable is the *adjustment measures in security and defense politics*. It is divided into the two cases *defense expenditure*, and *(re)orientation of the armed forces*. The research units are Germany, Norway, and Sweden. The context of the research is Russia and its aggressive revisionist behavior since 2008 and particularly 2014.

The units Germany, Norway, and Sweden were chosen, firstly because of their different memberships in the international security organizations NATO (Germany and Norway), EU (Germany and Sweden), and NORDEFECO (Norway and Sweden). Secondly, they all have historical and geographic ties with Russia. Thirdly, none of them was a former member of the Warsaw Pact. This makes it possible to compare them with each other. Furthermore, all three countries are liberal constitutional democracies, neighboring states to Russia (like Norway) or Baltic rim states (like Germany and Sweden) and therefore can be reasonably expected to have similar threat assessments. They are of the opinion that Russia is the main threatening factor for themselves and NATO, while for example southern European states feel more threatened by failing states in Africa, terror organizations and the resulting migration flow (Samaan, 2018, pp. 58–59). Each case will be analyzed to identify the impact of the independent variables, *membership in a military alliance* and *geopolitical position*, on the dependent variable *adjustment measures in security and defense politics*.

2.3. Research method, sources, and own role

This section is dedicated to describing the tools and procedure for collecting data. In qualitative studies as this, the usually applied collection types are observations, interviews, document studies, and audiovisual materials (Creswell, 2003, pp. 185–188). Out of these four, the *document study* or *document research* supplemented with audiovisual materials apparently is the best manner to produce overarching results on such a complex and wide topic. The main advantages are easy and cost-effective access to data, and confirmability, because public documents are checked on a regular basis and potentially challenged by readers. Furthermore, documents are records which are saved at their publishing date, and accordingly provide a timeline of a specific topic (Denscombe, 2017, pp. 244–245, 257).

In a document research, one main issue is the *credibility* of the collected information. This means that the source is authentic, the information is representative, objective, valid, and up-to date. Depending on the author, there might be biases because of his or her social affiliation. This holds particularly true in the case of secondary data, which may have been produced for another purpose and may only be partially useful for the research (Denscombe, 2017, pp. 249–250, 258).

This research is mainly based on primary sources, e.g., governmental publications and official statistics, and secondary sources such as topical scientific papers. Additionally, news media are used as sources of information on individual incidents or background information. While governmental publications, especially those published by democratic governments, are both authoritative, objective, and factual, a strict standard must be applied when it comes to the objectivity and expertise of news media (Denscombe, 2017, p. 245). In order to ensure compliance with these requirements, a checklist proposed by M. Denscombe is used for rating the articles (Denscombe, 2017, p. 259).

The author of this thesis is a German staff officer who has attended the German Staff Officer Course in 2014 and the Norwegian command and staff course in 2020/21. Because of his background, the author is presumably more proficient in German issues, quite well informed about Norwegian politics, and less so about the Swedish.

2.4. Terms and theoretical basis

The purpose of this section is to provide a short description and explanation of the term *Russian revisionism*, and the meaning of *geopolitics*.

2.4.1. Russian revisionism

The word *revisionism* originally was used with a different meaning by the labor movement to revise Marxism in the 19th century, laying the foundation for the creation of the social democratic parties (SNL, 2021). In the context of international relations, it is used for policies targeted to “change regulations of international law or constitutional regulations, and also to revert to previous borders” (bpb Lexikon, 2021) or “an attempt to change the distribution of public goods, including territory, as well as the normative basis of the system” (Sakwa, 2019, p. 13). In simple terms, there are two types of policy: to preserve the status quo or to change rules or boundaries. There are several historical examples for revisionism in Germany. Firstly, the recovery of territories and sovereignty in demand of justice for the unfavorable Versailles Treaty, which had resulted from the defeat in the First World War. Secondly, as a direct consequence, the expansions before and in the beginning of the Second World War by the Nazis, who justified their invasions of the Czech Republic and Poland with historical territorial claims. Thirdly, after the end of the Second World War there was a long struggle in the newly founded Federal Republic of Germany if the “Oder-Neisse line”²⁴ was to be officially recognized. The dispute was officially settled only in 1990²⁵ with the signing of the “2+4 Treaty”²⁶, when it was recognized as the official and unchangeable boundary between Poland and Germany (bpb, 2020).

Both the West and Russia tried to establish peaceful co-existence after the fall of the Soviet Union. But NATO’s bombing in Serbia in 1999 (not mandated by UN resolution) and especially the Alliance’s enlargement into Russia’s former sphere of influence in 1999²⁷ and 2004²⁸ disillusioned Russia’s understanding of partnership. This was regarded as a hegemonic practice to consolidate a unipolar world order with the USA on top, and forced Russia into its post-western phase (Sakwa, 2019, pp. 2, 10, 14–15). Since 2012, when Putin entered his second presidential period, neo-revisionism has

²⁴ The winners of the Second World War drew the **Oder Neisse line** at the Potsdam Conference in 1945. Accordingly, the territories east of the rivers Oder and Neisse was to be under Polish administration until the final determination of the Polish western border. The prewar border, which had been located more to the east, could not be reestablished because of the Soviet Union’s westward expansion into previously Polish territory.

²⁵ The Federal Republic of Germany had de facto already acknowledged the border by signing the Final Act of the Helsinki Accord in 1975.

²⁶ The **2+4 Treaty** is the treaty, which made German Reunification possible and through which Germany regained full sovereignty. The ‘2’ stands for the former two German states, the ‘4’ for the four victorious powers of the Second World War.

²⁷ Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland (NATO, 2020b).

²⁸ Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia (NATO, 2020b).

been the framework of Russian foreign policy. This means, that there has been no further cooperation with the EU and USA, except of strategic common issues such as nuclear arms control, especially with regard to Iran and North Korea (Sakwa, 2019, p. 18).

The annexation of Crimea can thus be seen as a clear revisionist action, in which a borderline was adjusted to gain a strategic advantage and protect the Black Sea Fleet, which until then had been garrisoned in Ukraine – a state under strong influence of the EU and USA. Since Russia has not changed its policy, it is not possible to rule out further revisionist action. “Russian Revisionism” thus describes the current Russian policy trying to revise borders in order to regain a perimeter of security around its territory, mainly to the west and the south.

2.4.2. Geopolitics

Geopolitics is presently used by both scholars and media to describe ruthless power politics, most notably with respect to China’s expansion in the South Chinese Sea or Russia’s annexation of Crimea and potential interests in the Baltics or the Arctic. However, the origin of the term can be traced back to the analysis of political and economic phenomena related to geographical causal factors. It is a branch of *realist theories* within the academic field of *International Relations (IR)* and merges thoughts about geography, history and strategic studies (Wu, 2018, p. 787). Since the beginning of the Cold War, geopolitics has been used²⁹ as a simplified form of realism to seek for geographical advantage in order to expand one’s power to gain a balance of power and thus stabilize the world system. It has therefore been necessary, even after one opponent was gone, to analyze the strategic importance of several places on earth to secure hegemony (Scholvin, 2014, pp. 1–2).

Hence, geography plays a major role in geopolitics or even is “the most fundamental factor in the foreign policy of states because it is the most permanent” (Spykman, 1942, in: Kaplan, 2012, p. 29). Although modern technologies, including supersonic missiles, nuclear weapons, satellites, and information technology, challenge this statement, the size of oceans, length of frontiers or shores, and the position of high mountain ranges still matters. The case of Norway with its substantial coastline and important location in the North Atlantic can serve as an example. Challenges for military operations and logistic sustainability on operations far away are another reason why geopolitics is still important (Kaplan, 2012, pp. 30–34).

But geopolitics is not only limited to military domination and power politics. Scholvin writes further about *realistic geopolitics* and that “geographical factors in combination with human-made material structures in this area create a framework for the action of human stakeholders. Among other things, this leads to options for foreign political strategies.” (Scholvin, 2014, p. 3). In conclusion,

²⁹ One of the masterminds was former US-American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

geopolitics can be regarded as a combination of geography, human activity, and technology that helps policymakers determine their strategic or political options. While geography and technology set objective limits, human activity factors, such as population or ethnicity, must be considered in the evaluation (Wu, 2018, pp. 816-817).

For further use in this research, the absolute location of the respective states (Germany, Norway, and Sweden) and their location relative to Russia is of main interest. This includes coinciding interests in the Arctic, the strategic importance of several islands and maritime zones, buffer zones or common borders as well as the support of Allied partners situated in an area of special strategic interest.

3. Defense expenditure

This chapter examines the first case in this research: defense expenditure. It compares the development of defense spending in the three examined countries. The aim is to find out if there are any correlations between the amount of spending, membership in NATO, and/or geopolitical location. The hypotheses to verify are either:

a) *If the defense spending of both Germany and Norway as NATO members has increased since 2014 in accordance with the Alliance's demands while Sweden's spending has developed differently, this will point to an alliance related behavior.*

or:

b) *If Sweden's defense spending has increased about the same as that of Germany and Norway, this indicates that geopolitical rather than alliance reasoning predominates.*

Section 3.1 begins with a short description of the meaning and components of defense expenditure. It is also explained how costs are measured and what measures are required to make them comparable with each other. Thereafter, there is a summary and short discussion about the origins of *NATO's Defense Investment Pledge* and its meaning in Section 3.2. This is followed by the presentation of each country's defense expenditure development in Sections 3.3 to 3.5. The reasons for the respective attitudes towards the investment pledge and for the changes in spending is also discussed there. The case *defense expenditure* is completed by a short summary in Section 3.6, which also includes a comparison and the chapter conclusion.

Albeit this is not a quantitative research, it is still necessary to compare figures in this chapter. However, it is not the figures themselves, which are of vital interest; it is the changes in the course of time, the trends, and the assumed connection to the changed security situation and the respective country's geopolitical location. The focus continues to rest on the qualitative meaning of these figures. Moreover, it is necessary to expand the period of review to include the timespan from the late 1980s to today in order to identify reasons or recurring patterns for changes with regard to the changed security situation.

3.1. What is defense expenditure and how is it measured?

Defense is one of the core tasks of a sovereign state. The provision of defense and security are public core tasks to be ensured by the state and necessitate spending the required money. However, budgets for public tasks and goods such as defense or infrastructure measures compete with social spending, which in general is more attractive for political parties to gain votes in election campaigns (Jehmlich et al., 2019, p. 162). NATO defines defense expenditure as “payments made by a national government specifically to meet the needs of its armed forces”, including fees for the Alliance. It consists of four main categories: equipment (including research and development), personnel (including military and civilian personnel and pensions for both groups), infrastructure (national and NATO common infrastructure) and others (e.g., peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, even if they are paid from the budget of another ministry) (NATO, 2021d, pp. 15–16).

The defense expenditures of different states can be compared with regard to many different factors: the *GDP*³⁰, population, percentage of the overall expenditure of a country, and many more. Initially, the nominal spending and its development are analyzed in this research. The *SIPRI Military Expenditure Database*³¹ is an independent and reliable source for this subject. An alternative is the IISS³² database, which deviates from the SIPRI database only to a minor degree (Bardt, 2021, p. 44). Another reliable source is NATO’s database, but it does not include any data on Sweden. In this research, the SIPRI data is primarily used and, where necessary, complemented with NATO data. To ensure accurate comparison, price adjustments due to inflation must be considered and a single currency be used in general. Monetary information in this study is given in US dollar (USD) and based on prices and exchange rates as of 2019³³. Furthermore, the value of bare numbers is limited without interpretation and reference to economic output and wage level in the respective state. For example, in 2020 the defense spending in Germany was USD 51.6 bn and in Russia USD 66.8 bn (SIPRI, 2021b). The level of wages and the costs of pensions and military equipment were not equal in both countries. There was a significant imbalance, with a much higher level in Western Europe compared to Russia. Thus, these figures do not mean that Germany has the same capabilities and armed forces of the same size as Russia at its disposal. There are several instruments to prevent such misinterpretations. One of

³⁰ **Gross Domestic Product** is the most important indicator to capture economic activity. It “is the standard measure of the value added created through the production of goods and services in a country during a certain period. As such, it also measures the income earned from that production, or the total amount spent on final goods and services (less imports).” (OECD, 2021).

³¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

³² International Institute for Strategic Studies

³³ This includes all data and figures in this research, which are given as “constant USD”.

them is to put the defense expenditures in relation to the economic power of a country. This is done by the defense expenditures as a *percentage of the GDP*.³⁴ Since NATO mainly uses the percentage of the GDP and NATO members at the Wales Summit 2014 agreed on annually spending 2% of their GDP, it is used as a second indicator in this research. The third indicator is the expenditure for equipment including research and development in percentage terms. This is also included in NATO's Defense Investment Pledge (see Section 3.2) and therefore must be analyzed and combined, too. The most suitable data sources for this purpose are NATO's annual overviews of spending. Unfortunately, they offer only data for NATO members and thus not for Sweden. For the Swedish investments in equipment, the applicable figures of the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) are used, although they are very individual and not subject to uniform breakdown methods (Wyss, 2013, p. 42).

³⁴ This method is not completely satisfactory, since it does not include the power purchasing party.

3.2. NATO's Defense Investment Pledge

The origins of *NATO's Defense Investment Pledge*, commonly known as the 2% target, go back to the year 2006, when the defense ministers agreed on the intent to spend a minimum of 2% of the GDP on defense to ensure the Alliance's readiness. In the aftermath of the financial crisis in 2007/2008, the member states prioritized other political domains, though. During this period, the imbalance of expenditures within the Alliance continued to increase significantly, not only because of the ongoing out of area operations (NATO, 2021e). At the Wales Summit in 2014, all member states agreed that Russia's actions against Ukraine had fundamentally changed the security situation in Europe and therefore decided to adopt a number of measures. One of them was to stop the decline of defense spending and to set a target value for all member states. The target was to spend a minimum of 2% of the GDP on defense to meet the capability priorities of the alliance. Additionally, at least 20% of the defense spending was to be dedicated to equipment, including research and development. Member states, which lay below this target were to increase their spending within a decade, that meant by 2024 (NATO, 2014).

Since its adoption in 2014, the meaning of the Defense Investment Pledge has been widely discussed both in public and among politicians. Its opponents claim primarily that 2% is not a meaningful value for measuring military capability. Kamp, for example, shows that Germany's military capability would remain on the same level even if Germany fell into a big recession and for this reason fulfilled the 2% target (Kamp, 2019, p. 2). Another current example to support this position is the case of Norway. Norway had similar expenses in 2019 (USD 7.52 bn) and 2020 (USD 7.51 bn)³⁵. At the same time, the percentage of GDP spend on defense increased from 1.85% to 1,94% (SIPRI, 2021b). In spite of the apparent increase, not a single additional Dollar was spent; the sole reason for the mathematical increase is the decreased GDP as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic situation.

In contrast, the proponents of the 2% target invoke that it is necessary to have a benchmark to measure progress towards a specific goal, and this indicator should consider the size and economic power of the individual countries. The US ambassador to Norway, Mr. Braithwaite, made it clear that the 2% target was such a benchmark and that its purpose was to measure the minimum commitment of a nation to mutual defense within the Alliance (Braithwaite, 2019). This point of view first and foremost expressed the American perception of the "defense freeriding" of individual European countries. The most famous supporter of this view was former US president Donald Trump, who tried to force all NATO members to fulfill the condition. He was of the opinion that the pledge had been a commitment rather than a declaration of intent (Hilde, 2020, p. 5). However, also European scholars

³⁵ Constant USD means that the figures are adjusted to reflect inflation. This is used for all following data.

argue for an indicator to measure the priority given by a state to its security efforts based on the country's economic performance. Bardt for example argues, that a country with a high economic performance not only has the financial means for higher defense expenditure, its potential for suffering severe damage in the case of a conflict is also much higher (Bardt, 2021, p. 49).

Since the heads of government of all member states signed the Wales declaration, the development has been as follows: In 2014, before the Investment Pledge was decided, only 3 out of 27 member states³⁶ met the 2% target, and 7 out of 27 met the 20% criterion for equipment expenditure. Only the UK and the USA met both criteria. As the example of Greece illustrates, the target of spending 2% of the GDP alone is useless without the second requirement of spending at least 20% on equipment. For clarification, Greece managed to spend 2.2% of its GDP in 2014, but as little as 8% on equipment³⁷ (NATO, 2021d). Defense investment spending can be seen as a key indicator to compare how single countries react to new threats. This is because the investment in new equipment and especially development and innovation make it possible to upgrade existing military equipment and adapt armed forces to new threats. The percentage of the total budget shows the importance given to this category by the individual countries (Béraud-Sudreau & Giegerich, 2018, pp. 60–61).

In 2021, three years before the decade of budget adjustments is over, 10 out of 29 member states met the 2% GDP criterion.³⁸ It is remarkable that 24 met the criterion of spending 20% on equipment, including all who fulfilled the target of spending more than 2% of their GDP on defense. It is even more remarkable that all member states sharing borders with Russia are among the 10 countries that meet the goal. Furthermore, the 10 countries with the lowest percentage (all below 1.5%) are states, which are not directly connected to the Russian sphere of influence (NATO, 2021d).³⁹ Consequently, it seems that the increased defense expenditures between 2014 and 2021 are directly linked to a geopolitical threat perception, at least when it comes to NATO members. This assumption is subject to examination in the following sections, including an analysis of the expenditures of a non-member nation, i.e., Sweden.

³⁶ The three are: Greece, the USA, and the UK. Island is missing in this count due to the fact that it does not maintain any armed forces.

³⁷ For comparison only: the UK spent 23% on equipment.

³⁸ The seven are: Greece, the USA, Croatia, the UK, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Lithuania, Romania, and France. The total number of members has increased because of the admittance of Montenegro (2017) and North Macedonia (2020).

³⁹ The ten include: The Netherlands, Albania, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, Canada, Slovenia, Belgium, Spain, and Luxembourg. The figures for Norway vary between several sources and add up to between 1.94% and 2.03% of the GDP. Norway is therefore not included in the ten.

3.3. Germany's defense spending

After the imminent threat in the east disappeared in 1990, Germany lost its role of the central NATO frontier state. For this reason, Germany was able to achieve the highest savings (*peace dividend*) in defense expenditure of all former western countries (Bardt, 2021, p. 41). Consequently, Germany's investments in defense continuously declined from its all-time high of USD 62.1 bn in 1990 to its lowest value of USD 33.3 bn in 2005. The all-time low in 2005 was followed by a consolidation period from 2006 to 2014, with an average annual spending of approximately USD 40 bn. After 2014, the defense expenditure's graph moved steadily upwards towards the highest value since the end of the Cold War of USD 51.6 bn in 2020 (SIPRI, 2021b). Figure 1 shows the development of the nominal spending with its changing points in 1990, 2005, and 2015. It is the tendency between these changing points⁴⁰ and the reasons for it that are of special interest in this research.

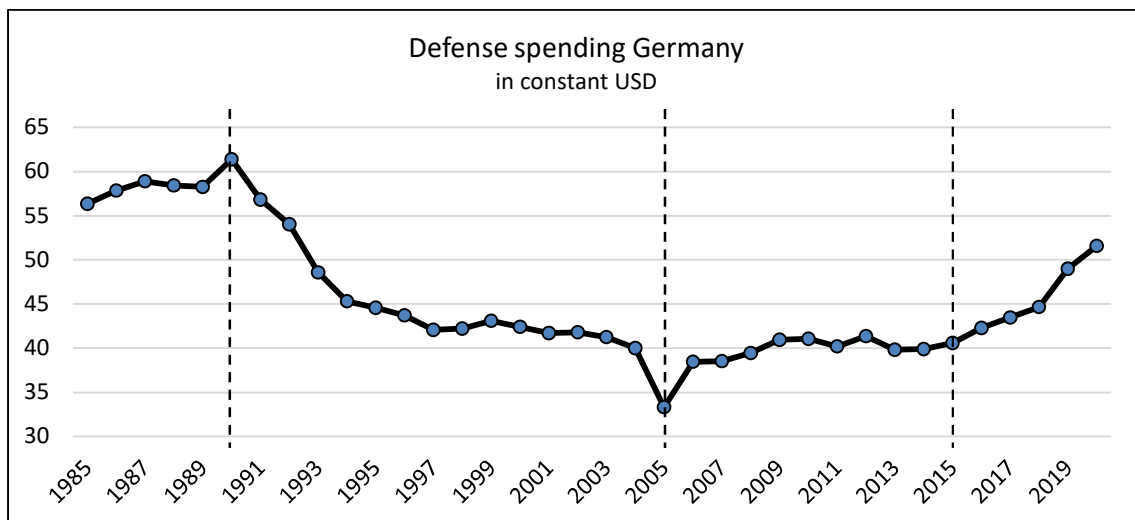


Figure 1: Nominal defense spending in Germany from 1985 to 2020 (SIPRI, 2021b)

The tendency after the first changing point in 1990 was characterized by enormous personnel cuts and an extensive reduction in materiel and garrisons. The total number of military personnel in the German armed forces declined from more than 450.000 in 1990 to 250.000 in 2005. This total number remained constant until 2011, when conscription was suspended and the total number fell to its present level of approximately 180.000 active troops (Statista, 2021b). The second changing point marks the end of the cuts in 2005, when the old "Cold War army" was phased out and the Bundeswehr transformation, initiated in 2002, was in full swing. The main task for the new "*Armee im Einsatz*" no longer was territorial defense, but participation in international stabilization missions (Bundeswehr,

⁴⁰ The changing points indicate an alteration in the development of expenditure.

2021). The third changing point in 2015 is intimately connected with the altered security situation in Europe. Then German Minister for Defense von der Leyen called this point in time for a “trend reversal”, which followed the long deployment in Afghanistan and associated extensive challenges in ongoing armaments projects (Deutscher Bundestag, 2014, p. 6569). Accordingly, the following tendency saw a steady increase in expenditure, which reflected the growing tensions from 2014, which reached its highest value since the end of the Cold War in 2020 (USD 51.6 bn), as shown in Figure 1. Amounting to USD 53.2 bn, the estimated spending for 2021 even surpasses this benchmark (NATO, 2021d).

When considering the share of the GDP, the decline since 1990 is even more obvious. Starting at almost 3% in the late 1980s, the percentage fell below 1.5% in 1997, and did not return over this line again before 2020 (SIPRI, 2021a).

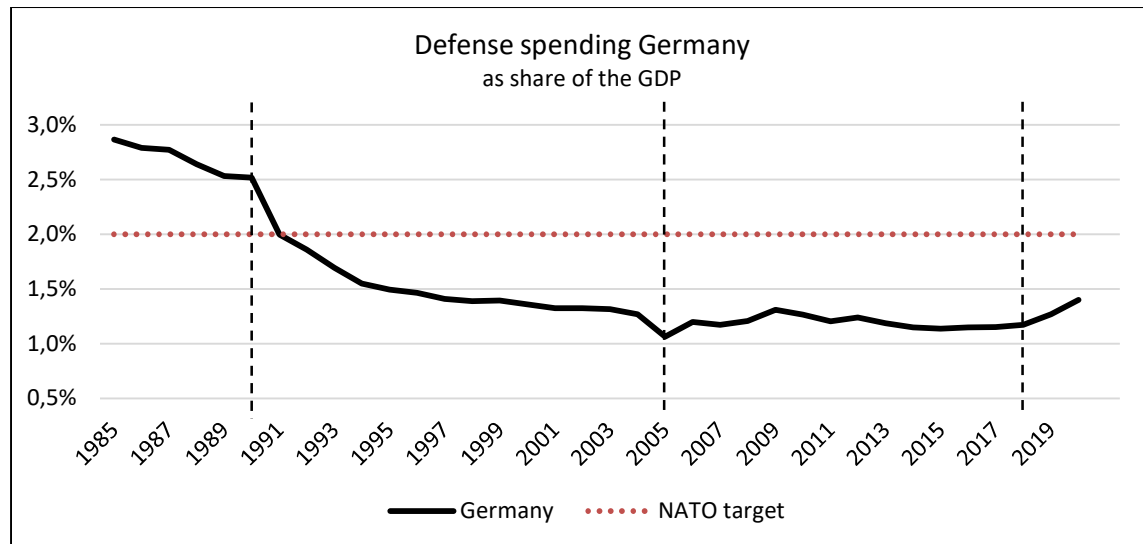


Figure 2: Defense spending in Germany in percentage terms from 1985 to 2020 (SIPRI, 2021a)

The first two changing points in this graph are identical to nominal spending. And albeit the third turning point also sees an increase in percentage, the change of tendency only followed in 2017, i.e., two years later than the nominal increase. In 2020, the share of the GDP originally had been at 1.4% (SIPRI, 2021a). However, the decline in economic performance due to the pandemic situation inflated the nominal increases in 2020 and 2021 to a 25-year high of 1.55% in 2020 and 1.53% in 2021 (NATO, 2021d).

Within the main research period of this study from 2014 to 2021, there is a clear increase both in nominal spending and in percentage of the GDP from 2014. Nevertheless, it is still a long way for Germany to fulfill NATO’s 2% target until the deadline in 2024. If the country’s economic performance

increases any further, the gap will grow even more. Should Germany stick to achieving the goal, it would have to spend an additional EUR 86 bn in the next four years (Bardt, 2021, p. 41).

NATO's second requirement in the Investment Pledge is to spend at least 20% on equipment, and research and development. Germany has also fallen short of this target for many years but is on the way to achieve it in the future, as can be seen in Figure 3.

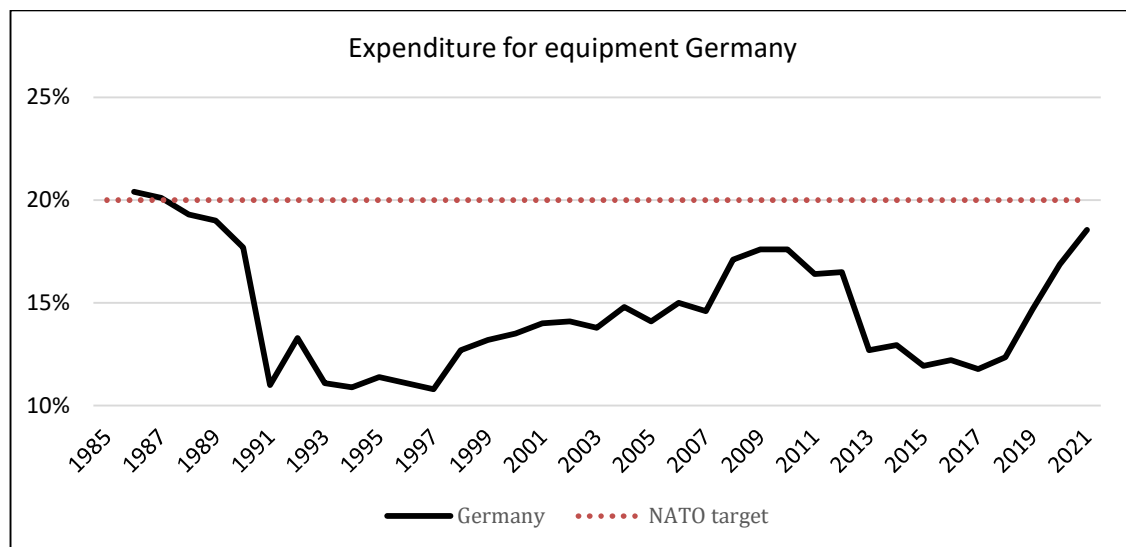


Figure 3: Expenditure for equipment from 2014 to 2021 (NATO, 1990, 1993, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008b, 2015, 2021d)

Summing up all three criteria for measuring defense expenditure, it can be determined that Germany has increased its nominal expenditure, expenditure in terms of percentage of the GDP, and the percentage spent on equipment. Nevertheless, it does not fulfil the conditions of NATO's Defense Investment Pledge. The reasons for the defense spending adjustments can be found both in commitments to the Alliance and the country's geopolitical location. On the one hand, Germany agreed to the Wales Communiqué and repeatedly confirmed to be willing to meet it. Chancellor Angela Merkel announced at the 2018 Munich Security Conference that Germany feels obliged to meet the criteria by 2024, because NATO again plays the most important role for preserving peace in Europe and the principle of territorial integrity (Merkel, 2018). However, the German government adjusted the 2% commitment for itself to a 1.5% target by 2024. As the new German Minister of Defense announced in 2019, this "downgrading" was coordinated with NATO and conforms to the German minimum demands, (Kramp-Karrenbauer, 2019). One reason for the ability for such downgrading is that Germany today is in a better geostrategic position than prior to 1990, when it had been divided and faced the Soviet Union's armed forces and its Warsaw Pact allies just a few kilometers behind the iron curtain. Not only has the Soviet threat dropped since then, but especially NATO's expansions in

1999 and 2004 have made the security situation in Germany considerably more comfortable. All the sudden, the country was completely surrounded by NATO Allies.⁴¹ Before 2014, the demand for national territorial and collective defense was almost zero. Consequently, the peace dividend was still high and defense spending had only remained at the same level because participation in international operations required new and specialized equipment, which resulted in high costs.

The changed security situation in Europe since 2014 has forced Germany to realign its priorities (see Section 4.3) and adopt it to the Alliance’s demands. The way Germany has met the demands shows that it takes both the threat and the demands seriously, but at the same time uses its sovereignty and better geostrategic position to independently adjust the expenditure target.

GERMANY	
NATO’s 2% target	No
NATO’s 20% equipment and research target	No
Increase in expenditure from 2014 to 2020	23 %
Increase in percentage points of the GDP	0.25%
Main reasons for the increase in expenditure	Geostrategic reasons and NATO commitments

Table 2: Summary of the most important indicators for Germany’s expenditure

⁴¹ Except for Austria and Switzerland in the south, but both states are close partners.

3.4. Norway's defense spending

In Norway, there was no decrease in nominal defense expenditure after the end of the Cold War. Annual costs remained on a relative constant level between USD 4.1 bn and USD 4.7 bn in the timespan from 1985 until 2001. After the first changing point in 2001, when the defense expenditure crossed the USD 5 bn line for the first time, there was a steady increase until 2015. Since then, the upward trend has become even more pronounced, as can be seen in Figure 4 (SIPRI, 2021b).

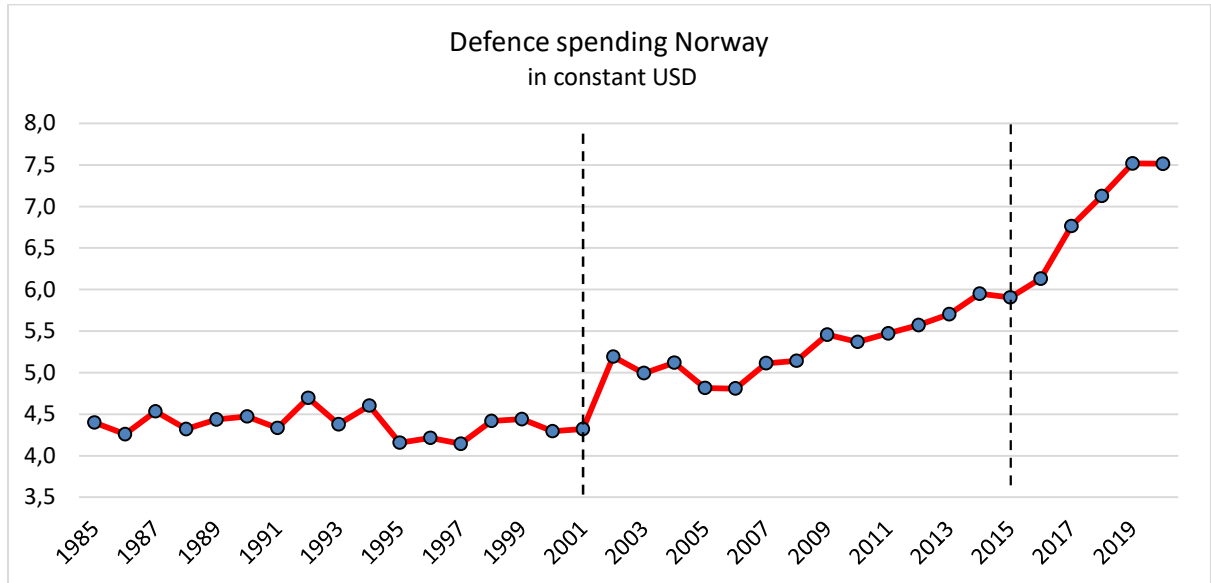


Figure 4: Nominal defense spending in Norway from 1985 to 2020 (SIPRI, 2021b)

The reasons for the development between 1985 and the first changing point are manifold. Firstly, despite the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Norway continued to perceive a threat emanating from Russia. Particular reasons were instability in the early 90s and the vicinity of the Russian North Fleet with its nuclear capabilities. Consequently, Norway could not rule out the danger of a Russian invasion, at least in the “High North” (*Nordområdene*). This aspect is important, because Norway used to be one of the few NATO members holding on to this threat perception with regard to the “High North” (Børresen, 2004, pp. 119, 122).

Secondly, its force structure during the 1990s was still the same as in the 1950s, when the Norwegian armed forces had been built up with huge financial and materiel support by the USA. This structure was tailored to invasion defense (*invasjonsforsvar*), and in terms of strategy and equipment was increasingly becoming antiquated. Although the Norwegian armed forces had been significantly reduced after 1990, their material and equipment were still completely outdated and subject to replacement and modernization. A lack of political will for any increase in defense budget, and increasing personnel costs led to a deterioration of education, training, and maintenance of equipment

until 1998. Eventually, a large defense reform around the turn of the millennium initiated the reorganization of the Norwegian armed forces (Børresen, 2004, pp. 138–139). And thirdly, the armed forces were given new tasks and branches, which required the procurement of additional and new equipment (Solheim, 2018). The financial means needed for the establishment of these new units and their equipment could not be compensated through massive reductions and suspension of the “total defense” (*totalforsvaret*)⁴² concept. Norway was in a financial dilemma due to a double imbalance: the financial means did not match the size of the armed forces, and the concept of the armed forces was not suitable for future tasks (Bogen & Håkenstad, 2015, p. 122).

Consequently, there was an overall reorganization of the armed forces in the beginning of 2001. This reorganization coincided with the Al-Qaeda 9/11 attacks and the invoking of NATO’s Article 5, which led to a long and costly international mission in Afghanistan. This and other international missions, as in Kosovo and Iraq, explain the sudden nominal increase above the USD 5 bn line at the first changing point because of extra grants (*extrabevilgninger*)⁴³. The budget remained over this margin and continued to increase annually from 2002 until 2015. However, the gap between the ambitions in the long-term plans (*langtidsplan*)⁴⁴ and the actual capabilities were particularly high in the years immediately after the reorganization in 2001 and 2002 (Hilde, 2020, p. 2). Figure 5 illustrates the decline in terms of percentage of the GDP in these years.

Since 2008, there has been a steady increase in annual spending with a considerable increase by 25% since 2015 to the all-time high of USD 7.5 bn in 2019 (SIPRI, 2021b). This value is almost double of the average value in the 1980s, when the Cold War was at its peak. One reason for this steep increase has been the fighter jet program (*kampflyprogrammet*)⁴⁵, for which the Norwegian parliament approved extra financial resources and which has claimed a major percentage of the budget increases since 2015 (Hilde, 2020, pp. 4, 23). Another reason were higher financial requirements for recruiting, activities, education, and exercises to enhance readiness (Prop. 151 S,

⁴² **Totalforsvaret** is the Norwegian concept of civil-military cooperation, which aims at supporting each other in terms of preparedness for all sorts of crisis. It was established during the Second World War by the Norwegian exile government, and during the Cold War developed into a mobilization and requisition system in order to ensure the armed forces’ access to all kinds of resources. After the Cold War, the system was de facto suspended, but reinstated in 2016. See also Section 4.4 (Børresen, 2021).

⁴³ **Extrabevilgninger** are temporary additional appropriations for international operations or the procurement of new or expensive goods (Hilde, 2020, p. 23).

⁴⁴ The **langtidsplan** is valid for four years and sets the framework for the development of the Norwegian armed forces within this period. It determines the level of ambition and the resources the government intends to spend on the defense of the country. The budget for the plan is subject to approval by parliament (Stortinget) (Hilde, 2020, p. 2).

⁴⁵ The “**kampflyprogrammet**” is the biggest equipment acquisition in the history of the Norwegian armed forces. It covers the purchase of 52 F-35 multi-role aircraft, adaption of ground assets, and development of a Joint Strike Missile (JSM) by 2025 (Forsvarsmateriell, 2019)

2015, p. 27). The third reason was the reprioritization of funds to ensure the availability and sustainability of certain capabilities, which had been considered less important before (Prop. 151 S, 2015, p. 39).

In contrast to the nominal spending, the priority of the defense sector seems lower when considering its share of the overall expenditure of Norway in percentage terms. Although nominal spending remained at the same level during the 1990s, its share of the GDP decreased considerably from 3.0% in 1992 to 1.7% in 2001 (SIPRI, 2021a). The two changing points at which the defense expenditure started to increase again can also be identified in this figure.

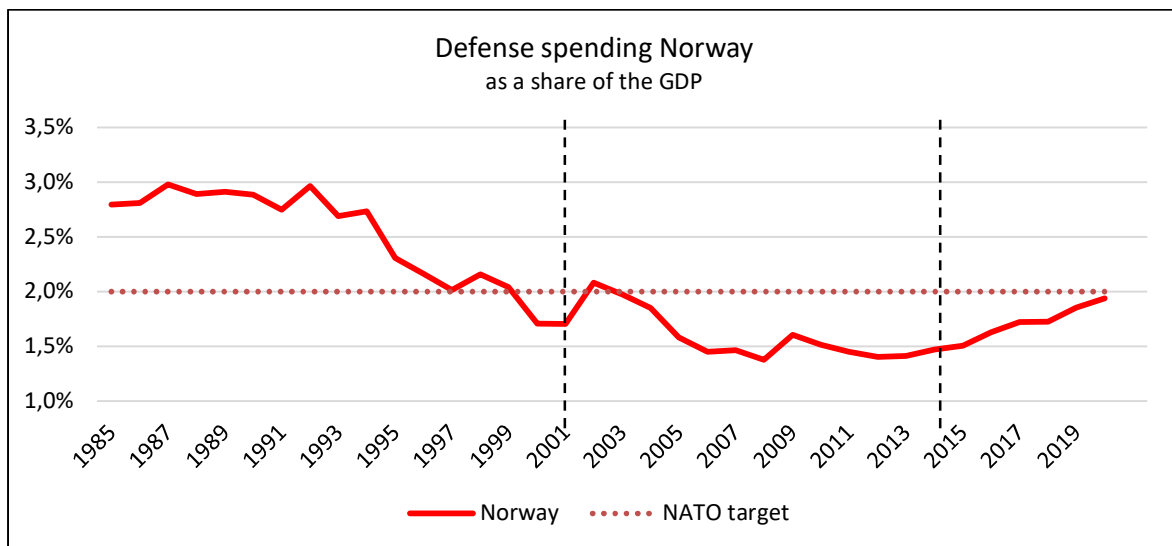


Figure 5: Defense spending in Norway in percentage terms from 1985 to 2020 (SIPRI, 2021a)

In the period following the defense reform and 9/11, according to nominal increase and percentage terms, the costs for international operations were highest between 1999 and 2002. Following a short surge to 2.1% of GDP in 2002, (Hilde, 2020, p. 21), the percentage fell to its all-time low of 1.38% in 2008⁴⁶. After being relatively constant in the period from 2009 to 2014 at around 1.5%, it has increased to 2.0% by 2020. According to Hilde, meeting the 2% target was possible due to a fortunate combination of an increase in defense expenditure, a higher emphasis on the reported figures, enhanced creativity, and unforeseen side effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Creativity* among other things means the consideration of additional factors after 2013, for example an additional USD 1 bn for pensions and other costs paid by other departments. Altogether, these adjustment measures in 2019 summed up to an increase by 0.2% (Hilde, 2020, pp. 1, 8).

⁴⁶ Brøygaard notes that Norway's defense spending was lowest in 2015 at only 1.29% (Brøygaard, 2019, p. 1). However, the figures of SIPRI were used continuously for all three countries, and SIPRI shows a percentage of 1.51% for 2015 (SIPRI, 2021a).

The development of the share of the GDP makes it easier to explain Norway's hidden peace dividend after the Cold War. Although nominal expenditure was not cut, the percentage of the GDP decreased, and with it the priority of defense in the public budget. Similarly, the new focus on defense and its higher prioritization in the budget has been reflected by an increase in percentage since 2014. In 2020, Norway almost met NATO's 2% target, even though as the result of a pandemic-decreased GDP. At the same time, former Norwegian Minister of Defense Bakke-Jensen downplayed the meaning of the 2% target. He was of the opinion, that "[one] should [not] put so much emphasis on the percentage of GDP. It is a good goal to see how we (Norway) are doing in burden sharing compared with the other member countries, it is not something we should put great emphasis on internally!" (Bakke-Jensen in Eide, 2020).

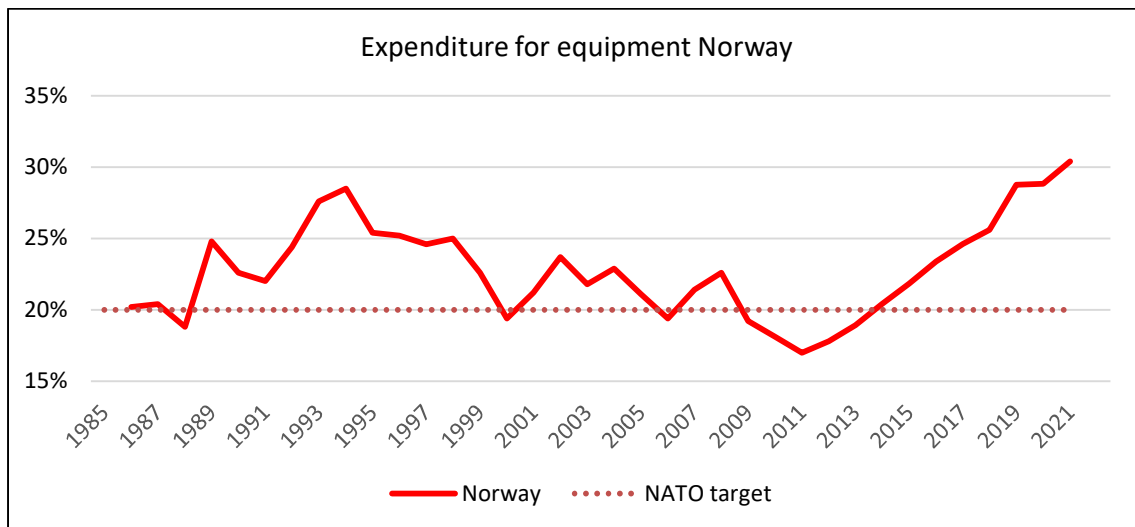


Figure 6: Expenditures for equipment from 1985 to 2021
(NATO, 1990, 1993, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008b, 2015, 2021d)

After a "lost decade until the reorganization of its armed forces" (Bogen & Håkenstad, 2015, p. 79), Norway began to reinvest in equipment and infrastructure, the latter primarily to be able to receive Allied partners and reinforcements. This increased the expenditure for equipment, for which Norway had already met NATO's demand in 2014, when it reached 20.4%. Recently, this rate increased to 30.4% in 2021, the fourth-best value in NATO⁴⁷ (NATO, 2021d, p. 13). However, these figures must be viewed with caution because the reason for this high level is the temporary additional appropriation for the fighter jet project scheduled until 2025, which inflates the defense budget by several billions. This boost to the budget, which has increased today's investment in materiel to 42%, is not a sustainable increase and scheduled to cease in a few years (Hilde, 2020, p. 22,27).

⁴⁷ Only Croatia, Luxembourg, and Greece spent more on equipment in percentage terms. In the case of Croatia and Greece, the extraordinarily high value for 2021 is unique.

In summary, the Norwegian defense expenditure has increased to a remarkable degree since 2013, and especially since 2015, when Norway's security policy was adjusted accordingly. Today, Norway meets both the 2% target in terms of GDP percentage shares and the 20% equipment target. However, it must be considered that the figures would be different without the fighter jet program and the pandemic effect. Not taking the program into account, the spending has still increased to 16% (compared to 26%) since 2015 (Hilde, 2020, p. 26). The country's steep increases are comparable for all three indicators and show that Norway takes the threat posed by Russia seriously. It is obvious that its geostrategic location fosters the government's willingness to spend more money on defense. On the other hand, it cannot be ruled out that the government succumbed to the pressure by the USA because of its critical strategic dependence.

Norway	
NATO's 2% target	Yes
NATO's 20% equipment and research target	Yes
Increase of expenditure from 2014 to 2020	21%
Increase in percentage points of the GDP	0.46%
Main reason for the increase in expenditure	Geopolitical reasons and dependence on US support

Table 3: Summary of the most important indicators for Norway's expenditure

3.5. Sweden's defense spending

Sweden is not a NATO member state. Accordingly, it has not signed the Wales Declaration and is not subject to the Defense Investment Pledge. Consequently, it has not been exposed to external political pressure to fulfill the demands. In the EU, there is no agreement on spending a certain percentage of the GDP on defense. Nonetheless, the same three indicators (nominal spending, spending in terms of percentage of the GDP, and percentage of spending dedicated to equipment) are applied to Sweden so as to be able to compare the three countries in this study.

The original high numbers both in terms of nominal spending and as a share of the GDP have historically resulted from Sweden's neutrality policy. As a "permanently neutral country" since 1814, Sweden was not part of any alliance during both the two world wars and the Cold War. As a consequence, it had to be able to defend itself and maintain its own defense industry – quite an expensive project for a relatively small country with a population of around 10 million (Schüngel, 2005, p. 7).

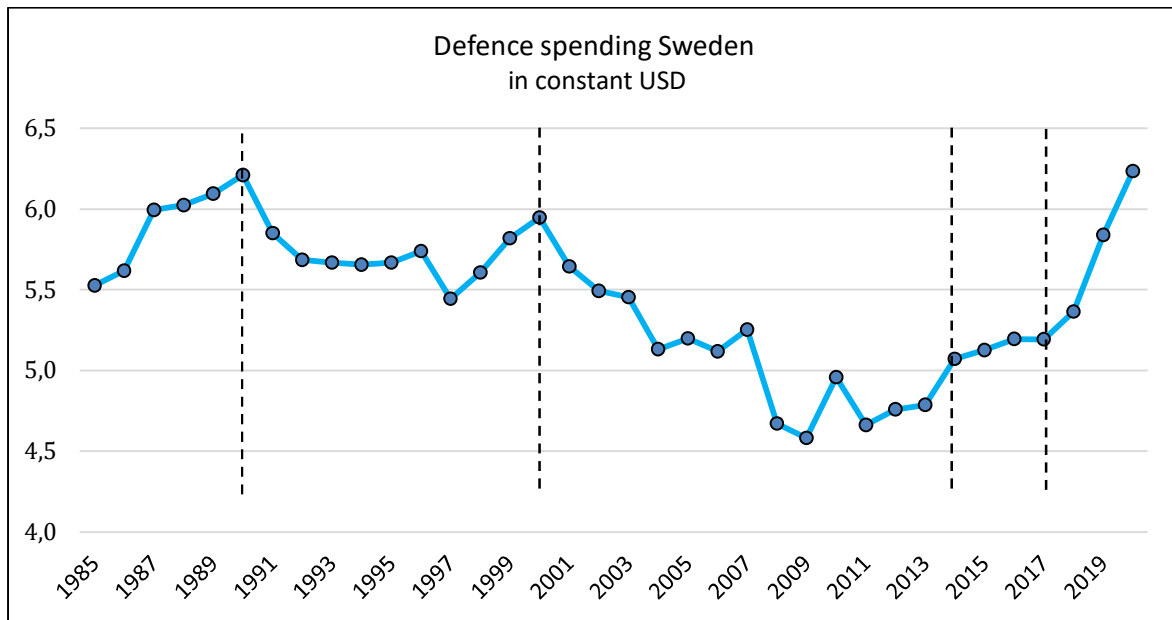


Figure 7: Nominal defense spending in Sweden from 1985 to 2020 (SIPRI, 2021b)

The nominal spending in Sweden had reached its former all-time high in 1990, when it amounted to USD 6.2 bn. It decreased in the following years, but was consolidated until 2000, when it nearly touched the USD 6 bn line again from the bottom. After that period, it declined steadily and fell significantly under the USD 5 bn line, reaching an interim low of USD 4.6 bn in 2009. This represented a decrease by 26% since 1990 (SIPRI, 2021b). After a period of six years with an average annual spending of USD 4.7 bn, spending increased again, breaching the USD 5 bn line in 2014, and from 2017

on surged to a new all-time high of USD 6.2 bn in 2020 (SIPRI, 2021b). When looking at these numbers, four changing points can be identified: the end of the Cold War in 1990, the intermediate high in 2000, the rise after 2013, and the steep incline after 2017.

The first change of tendency after the end of the Cold War can be explained by the absence of a threat. Yet, the nominal costs did not decrease significantly because of three reasons: the expensive national defense industry with its solitary approaches to defense projects, the unchanged territorial defense concept, and considerable troop contributions to UN missions (Schüngel, 2005, p. 9)⁴⁸.

The second changing point in 2000 coincides both with the Swedish defense reform in 1999 and Sweden's obligation to the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). This obligation implied further international missions in the EU context, and the Swedish government raised the budget for these missions (Schüngel, 2005, pp. 17–21). Since the integration of Sweden into the CSDP only made the defense reform initiated in 1999 possible, these two points must be seen in combination. The reform and its financial implications resulted in significant personnel cuts (approx. 25%), a revised orientation of the armed forces (see also Section 4.5), and the decision to abandon the limitation to national contracting in procurement, at least in some areas (Swedish Ministry of Defense, 2004, pp. 8, 14–19).

The third changing point is the reaction to the 2015 Defense Act, which emphasized that increasing the warfighting capability of the Swedish Armed Forces and ensuring the overall Swedish defense capability were the most important issues in the years to come (Swedish Ministry of Defense, and Swedish Ministry of Justice, 2018). These changes are obvious both in terms of nominal spending (Figure 7) and as a share of the GDP (Figure 8) where the effects only took hold in 2017, when Sweden issued its new National Security Strategy. This underlined that the security situation in Europe has deteriorated. Albeit a direct, separate military attack on Sweden remained unlikely, a crisis overspill in connection with Russia's aggression to Ukraine could not be excluded, including the use of military force (Prime Minister's Office, 2017, pp. 17–18). According to the Defense Act "*Totalförsvaret 2021-2025*" the trend of increased spending, both in nominal terms and in percentage of the GDP, will at least continue until 2025. The government's planning proposes an increase by 45% of the 2020 expenditure, and 95% compared to 2015, and includes an enhanced force structure, the procurement of new submarines and fighter jets, and an increase in personnel (Government Offices of Sweden, 2020).

⁴⁸ For example, until 1991, 12% of all UN soldiers came from Sweden. Sweden has deployed 80.000 troops to UN missions until 2004 (Schüngel, 2005, p. 9)

Looking at the expenditures as a share of the GDP as depicted in Figure 8, there is an obvious steady descent from a comparatively high level of 2.7% in 1985 to as little as 1.0% in 2017 and 2018, which at the same time in percentage terms represents one of the lowest spending levels in the entire EU (SIPRI, 2021a). In this graph, there is only one changing point in 2018, at which the continuous fall comes to a halt and the percentage starts to climb again.

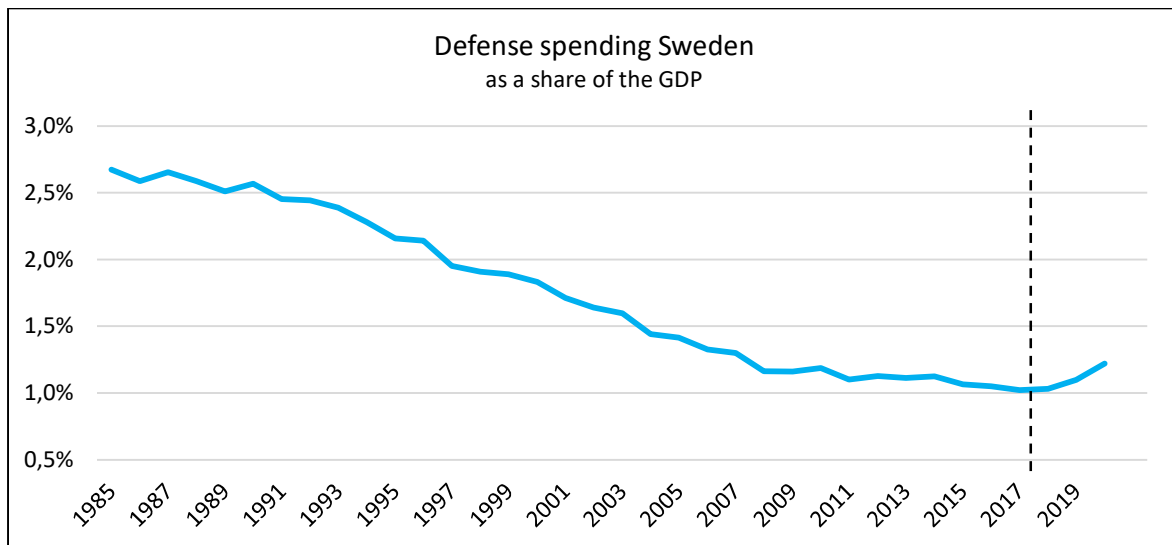


Figure 8: Defense spending in Sweden from 1985 to 2020 in percentage terms (SIPRI, 2021a)

The expenditure for equipment has historically always been very high due to Sweden's procurement of unique, national solutions described above. Since Sweden is not included in NATO's overview, the data is from another database and thus not fully comparable, though. The United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) data shows expenditure for equipment by country, but the information is incomplete and not verified. Consequently, the UNODA data is of limited use for comparison purposes but expresses that Sweden has invested more than 20% on equipment and research in the last eight years.

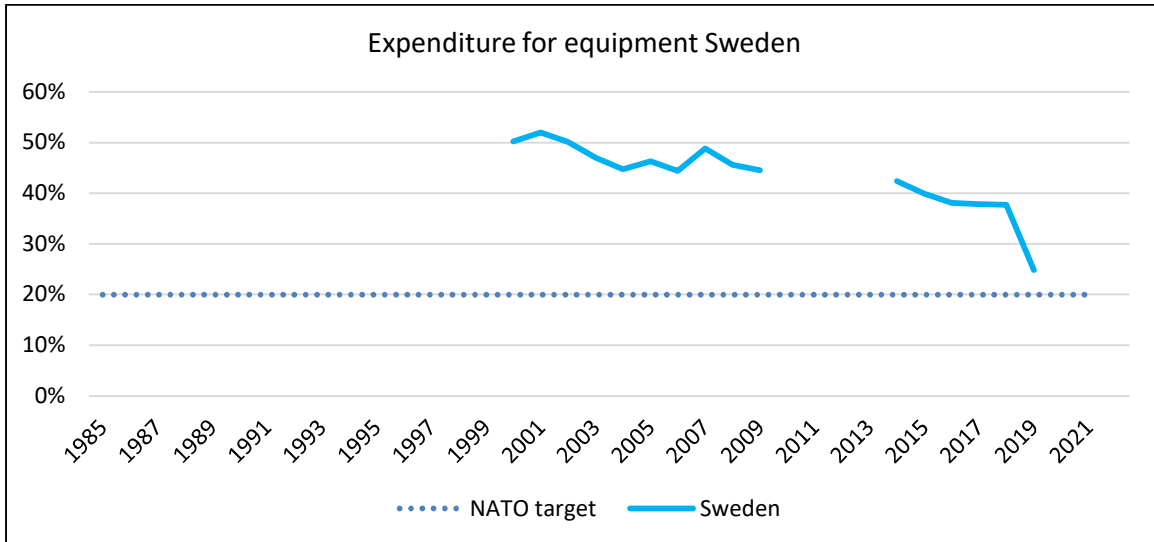


Figure 9: Expenditure for equipment from 2000 to 2019 in percentage terms (UNODA, n.d.)

Although Sweden is not a NATO member, the same pattern can be identified in response to the 2014 events. Starting from a very low level in percentage of the GDP, the defense expenditure increased steadily, but not because of any Alliance-related commitments. This is considered as clear evidence for the fact that the increase was triggered by the geopolitical threat perception of a Baltic rim state relatively close to at least the exclave of Kaliningrad. Sweden’s plan to continue increasing the defense expenditure in the next few years also supports this theory.

Sweden	
NATO’s 2% target	No
NATO’s 20% equipment and research target	Yes
Increase of expenditure from 2014 to 2020	19%
Increase in percentage points of the GDP after 2014	0.95%
Increase in percentage points of the GDP after 2017	0,20%
Main reason for the increase in expenditure	Geopolitical location

Table 4: Summary of the most important indicators for Sweden’s expenditure

3.6. Summary and chapter conclusion

When comparing the figures for the three countries, the similarity of the changing points catches the eye: they are at exactly the same points in time, i.e., 1990, 1999/2000, and 2014/2015. However, the tendencies in between vary, and the changing points are not necessarily reflected in the share of the GDP. In reference to the significance of the geopolitical location, Germany gained a much higher peace dividend by cutting the nominal costs directly after the end of the Cold War, while Sweden and Norway remained skeptical and retained their territorial defense systems, although in retrospect they were no longer affordable. The tendencies between the turn of the millennium and 2015 are relatively equal, because all three countries reorganized their armed forces with a focus on efficiency and orientation towards stabilization missions.

After 2014, all three countries increased their spending significantly (see Table 5), but quantitative differences remained. These increases correspond to other European NATO members, who on average in 2017 increased their budget by 3.6% (Béraud-Sudreau & Giegerich, 2018, p. 59). Nevertheless, by comparing the two NATO partners in this research it becomes obvious that Norway put more emphasis on achieving the NATO commitments than Germany, even if Germany has increased its defense budget in nominal terms more than Norway. Interestingly enough, Sweden also increased its budget even though it is not subject to such commitments.

To give an answer to the research question, it can be determined that the first case (examination of defense expenditures) indicates that for all practical reasons *a country's geopolitical location is more relevant for its willingness to spend more money on defense than any pressure by an alliance or a single state*. Germany, a country less threatened and more independent in terms of military support, can serve as an example in support of this view. Having defined its own lower spending target of only 1.5%, Germany seemingly does not attach much importance to the 2% target. On the other hand, it has spent a record amount of money on defense. Conversely, Norway has put much emphasis on achieving the 2% target, even if sophisticated calculation methods had to be used. This shows that Norway has taken the commitment more seriously and is willing to fulfill it in order to preserve its status as “a good Ally”. As Sweden shows in the final example, a state without any alliance membership, has taken the same path. However, it cannot be dismissed that Sweden has moved much closer to NATO than ever before and the percentage of the Swedish increase is much lower.

	Germany	Norway	Sweden
NATO's 2% target	No	Yes	No
NATO's 20% equipment and research target	No	Yes	Yes
Increase in expenditure from 2014 to 2020	23%	21%	19%
Increase in percentage points of the GDP	0.25%	0.46%	0.20%
Main reason for the increase in expenditure	Geostrategic reasons and to a lesser degree: NATO commitments	Geopolitical reasons and dependence on U.S. support	Geopolitical location

Table 5: Comparison of the most important indicators of the three countries

Finally, the one of the two hypotheses made at the beginning of this chapter must be validated. The first assumption – (a) *If the defense spending of both Germany and Norway as NATO members has increased since 2014 in accordance with the Alliance's demands while Sweden's spending has developed differently, this will point to an alliance related behavior* – can be denied. While Norway's increase was according to the Alliance's demands, Germany did not meet the target by independently adjusting the target to 1.5%. Although Sweden did not achieve the 2% goal either, the development of its defense expenditure since 2013, especially since 2017, and including the current investment plan until 2025 does not show any significant difference.

Contrariwise, the second theory – (b) *If Sweden's defense spending has increased about the same as that of Germany and Norway – this indicates that geopolitical rather than alliance reasoning predominates* - **can be confirmed**. Sweden has increased both its nominal expenditure and its expenditure in percentage of the GDP in the same scale as Germany did. **The first case defense expenditure has shown that geopolitical reasons predominate alliance related reasons.**

4. (Re-) orientation of the armed forces

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the second case of this research: *the orientation and concept of the respective armed forces*. The intention is to identify the differences, and if the differences are connected to the respective geopolitical location or rather the reforms promoted by NATO. The hypotheses to be verified are either:

a) *If it can be recognized that the member states Germany and Norway act similarly to one another and are closely guided by NATO strategy, Alliance membership is the dominating factor.*

or:

b) *If it is obvious that Norway and Sweden, who are located very close to Russia, adapt their defense policies in a much more similar manner than that of Germany, geopolitical location is the dominating factor.*

This includes especially the decisions and measures taken by the respective government with regard to the realignment of the country's armed forces. They result from the security policy framework in which the respective country is located. Moreover, mobilization capabilities and tools are considered in order to identify the differences in orientation and expected warfighting scenarios.

The chapter is therefore divided into six sections. At first, there is a short overview of the origins of the "era of international operations" and its characteristics in Section 4.1. This is followed by a short presentation of the mechanisms leading to NATO's return to collective defense in Section 4.2. Thereafter, it is analyzed how each of the three countries readjusted the orientation of its armed forces back to collective or territorial defense in Sections 4.3 to 4.5. These sections address the question about the respective reasons for reorientation.

The period under review for this analysis starts in the early 2000s, when the "era of international operations" was at its peak, and ends in 2021, when every examined country has more or less realigned its armed forces back to collective defense. Section 4.6 concludes the case of the orientation of the armed forces. It summarizes the most important similarities and differences and presents a chapter conclusion with regard to the above assumptions.

4.1. The era of international operations

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the number of mandates of the UN Security Council for international peacekeeping missions grew significantly. This is because of the polarity in world politics and the associated possibility and will of the UN's veto powers⁴⁹ to block each other in the UN Security Council. For example, in the bipolar⁵⁰ world of the Cold War era, only 18 mandates for UN peacekeeping missions were passed within the 41 years from 1948 to 1989. In contrast, between 1991 and 2010 – in a unipolar world⁵¹ – 47 mandates passed the Security Council in only 20 years (Korecki, 2019). The collapse of the Soviet Union not only led to the absence of a threat, but it also made humanitarian intervention in conflicts possible. In many cases, this had not been possible before because of political issues within the Security Council, and accordingly was seen as a global phenomenon. But even in Europe, the two decades around the turn of the millennium were completely different than previous years.

The question of polarity is of importance especially for NATO operations outside the Alliance's territory. While NATO forces were not involved in any military conflict throughout the Cold War, the tempo and diversity of operations significantly increased after 1990, beginning with the first troop deployments in the course of the Second Gulf War⁵² in 1991. The following operations ranged from single-domain operations, e.g. naval counter-piracy missions or land-based training missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, to large-scale joint and combined operations with a duration of two or more decades, e.g. KFOR⁵³ or ISAF⁵⁴ (NATO, 2021f). Even the EU, which is not primarily a military organization, has conducted own military operations abroad since 2004 (EEAS, 2019).

Each of the examined countries contributed to a variety of operations or missions led either by the UN, NATO, or the EU. The 'era of international operations' thus had a similar formative influence on the armed forces and defense policy of each of the countries. It did not end because of a shift in polarity⁵⁵, but because of a realignment of the western world, which is subject of the next section.

⁴⁹ The **veto powers** in the UN Security Council are the USA, the UK, France, Russia (formerly the Soviet Union), and China.

⁵⁰ **Bipolarity** describes a world system of two superpowers (USA and the Soviet Union), which surpass the next following powers enormously (Tunsjø, 2018, p. 27)

⁵¹ Since the Soviet Union as a superpower had ceased to exist, the USA remained as the only superpower from 1990 until the early 2010s, when China rose to superpower status (Tunsjø, 2018, p. 28)

⁵² The names of the **Gulf Wars** are used differently subject to context. Since the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) is often considered the First Gulf War, the Second Gulf War for the purpose of this research paper means the war between the USA and Iraq (1990-1991).

⁵³ **Kosovo Force** – ongoing NATO mission in Kosovo initiated in 1999

⁵⁴ **International Security and Assistance Force** – NATO mission in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2014.

⁵⁵ Many scholars argue if the system is bipolar or multipolar today. Tunsjø is of the opinion that it is bipolar, with USA and China being the superpowers (Tunsjø, 2018)

4.2. NATO's shift back to collective defense

This section gives an overview of NATO's priority shift from international operations back to collective defense. At the same time, it serves as the basis for the following sections, where the individual countries are examined. Although the EU also has a security strategy, it is not subject of examination in this research, not least because of its much smaller role.

In 2008, NATO prime ministers held the opinion that a peaceful, democratic Afghanistan was the most important precondition for international, and particularly Euro-Atlantic security. For that reason, the mission in Afghanistan with troop contributions from 40 different states⁵⁶ had been given top priority. The following continuous increase in troops was seen as an additional contribution to stability and cooperation in Europe. Therefore, the focus of recruitment for mission increasingly moved towards the east of the Alliance territory, which led to the admission into NATO for many eastern European countries. Finally, NATO membership was also put in promising to Georgia and Ukraine⁵⁷. Despite this promise and the emerging dispute with Russia, the partnership between NATO and Russia still used to be a strategic element and was intended to foster security in the Euro-Atlantic area (NATO, 2008a). Armed forces had been transformed since the late 1990s from their Cold-War orientation into flexible and deployable, counter-insurgency capable, sustainable forces with enhanced interoperability, with NATO's missions to Kosovo and Afghanistan serving as a booster. Nevertheless, insufficient financial resources limited the progress of this transformation process and led to the *Defense Investment Pledge* (see Section 3.2).

But already then, Norway – as a neighboring country to Russia and situated next to its important bases on the Kola peninsula indicated, that NATO was running the risk of forgetting the security challenges at its own borders. A non-paper called “*neighborhood initiative*” (*nærområdet initiative*) sparked discussion inside NATO. The main topics discussed were the maintaining of core tasks across the board, and securing political and popular support in the future (Haraldstad, 2013, pp. 38–39). After the events in Georgia and Abkhazia in 2008 where Russia had violated the sovereignty of an independent country, NATO reacted calmly. However, it stated that it had to reaffirm its commitment to collective defense by sharpening contingency planning, fostering readiness by conducting exercises, and improving logistics. However, Russia was explicitly not named as a threat to the Alliance, but still as a partner, even if single Allies raised doubts and felt they were the subject of political or economic intimidation by Russia (NATO, 2010).

⁵⁶ Including 17 non-member states, inter alia Sweden.

⁵⁷ The troop contributions was more the reason for Georgia, which sent up to 925 troops to ISAF than Ukraine, which only sent 15 in 2010 (ISAF, 2010 in ChartsBin, 2010;)

In 2010, NATO's definition of its future military missions according to its new strategic concept pointed towards reorientation. "Deter, prevent and defend against any threat of aggression in order to ensure the political independence and territorial integrity of every NATO member in accordance with Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty" was a clear sign against Russia and guidance for all member states that a shift of priorities was to be expected (NATO, 2010).

The situation changed finally with the Wales Summit in 2014, when Russia's behavior was described as aggressive and a challenge to the security of the Alliance. The consequence was the newly established *Readiness Action Plan (RAP)* (NATO, 2014). The RAP was the most significant reinforcement of NATO's collective defense after the Cold War and led to *assurance* and *adaptation measures*. *Assurance measures* are activities in all domains particularly on and around the territory of Allies in Central and Eastern Europe, which were most threatened by Russia. Measures have ranged from air policing and regular AWACS⁵⁸ surveillance flights in the Baltics to sea-based mine countermeasures patrols, and an increase in exercise activities. Initially, these measures took place on a rotational basis. *Adaptation measures* have comprised all structural long-term changes to enhance readiness and decisiveness. Examples include the upgraded NATO Response Force (NRF) with a volume of 40,000 personnel; the establishment of a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) with 20,000 troops as a part of the NRF⁵⁹; new small multinational headquarters (HQ), the so-called NATO Force Integration Units⁶⁰ (NFIUs), which facilitate the deployment of the VJTF and NRF; and finally the development of the existing Multinational Corps Northeast HQ⁶¹ to a high-readiness multinational HQ enabled to command multinational forces in the Baltics or Poland (NATO, 2021g). Moreover, the RAP also underlines the importance of the demonstration of capabilities and the deterrent effect of exercises. Beginning in 2015, NATO established an exercise program with both national and multinational exercises, including the large and complex Trident Juncture exercises, which were held in 2015 in Italy, Portugal and Spain, and in 2018 in Norway (NATO, 2016).

NATO's commitment to deterrence and collective defense was proven in 2017 by the implementation of an enduring presence of troops on its flanks, i.e., enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in the northeastern flank and tailored Forward Presence (tFP) to the southeast and in the Black Sea. In

⁵⁸ **Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS)** based on a modified Boeing 707-aircraft. NATO owns and operates a fleet of 14 aircraft for surveillance, command and control, battle space management and communications (NATO, 2021a).

⁵⁹ The VJTF consists of a land brigade with up to 5.000 soldiers and air, maritime and SOF components (NATO, 2020c)

⁶⁰ **NFIUs** improve the cooperation between NATO and national forces. There are currently eight NFIUs in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia to facilitate a possible rapid deployment of the VJTF.

⁶¹ The **Multinational Corps Northeast HQ** in Szczecin, Poland, is an already existing headquarters, which was originally operated by Denmark, Germany, and Poland. Now it has four tasks: to command the VJTF and NRF in its region, control the NFIUs in its region, monitor the security situation, and foster cooperation (NATO, 2016).

these “tripwire” operations, multinational troops have been deployed on a rotational basis. In the case of eFP, mainly land-based battalion-size battlegroups have been stationed continuously in each of the Baltic States and Poland, each headed by a lead-nation⁶². The land- and sea-based tFP consists of a multinational brigade headquarters, training opportunities, and a reinforced maritime presence in the Black Sea (NATO, 2021b).

Since its foundation in 1949, NATO has always pursued the “open door policy”. This means that the alliance is willing to include any European country as a member, which fulfils the commitments and obligations of a membership (NATO, 2020a). Although Sweden meets all criteria, it has not chosen to join the Alliance. Nevertheless, it has participated in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program⁶³ since its foundation in 1994 and has developed close relations to NATO, and increasingly so in the last few years. Sweden is one of NATO’s “enhanced opportunity partners” and has contributed to several NATO operations for many years. Furthermore, the ongoing Russian activities in the Baltic area led to an even closer cooperation. This includes regular dialogue, common exercises, and the agreement on the participation in the enhanced NRF in terms of Host Nation Support (NATO, 2021h).

After the end of mission in Afghanistan in 2021 and the de facto end of its second largest mission, KFOR in Kosovo, NATO has completed its return to collective defense. Today, the Alliance’s priority focuses on collective defense, deterrence and resilience (NATO, 2021c).

⁶² A UK led battlegroup in Estonia, a Canadian led battlegroup in Latvia, a German led battlegroup in Lithuania, and a US led battlegroup in Poland.

⁶³ The **Partnership for Peace** program, established in 1994, is a bilateral cooperation between individual Euro-Atlantic states and NATO. The partner states choose the priority of cooperation. Many former PfP members have become members in the last expansion processes.

4.3. Bundeswehr concept in Germany

This section examines Germany's realignment of its armed forces back to collective defense in the last two decades. The basic documents for this research are the *White Paper (Weißbuch)*, the *Defense Political Guidelines (Verteidigungspolitische Richtlinien, VPR)* and the *Bundeswehr Concept (Konzeption der Bundeswehr)*. The White Paper stands on top of the hierarchy of security political documents and was last published in 2006 and 2016. Issued by the government, it provides the basic principles of Germany's security policy and serves as a guideline for all political actions and decisions (Bundesregierung, 2016, p. 15). Furthermore, it is the basis of the Defense Political Guidelines, which were last published in 2011. The Bundeswehr Concept is usually based on the VPR. However, the last issue of 2018 was an exception to this rule, as it was published immediately after the release of the new White Paper. The contrast between the 2004 Concept from the era of international operations, the 2013 Concept issued during the beginning of the reorientation process, and the current 2018 version is the main empirical basis for examination in this section.

4.3.1. From stabilization back to collective defense

In the early 2000s, neither Germany nor NATO were challenged by conventional armed forces. Security rather was threatened by regional conflicts far away, terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (BMVg, 2004). Consequently, the missions of the Bundeswehr in 2004 were firstly, to ensure the capacity to act with regard to foreign affairs, secondly, to contribute to stability in and outside Europe, and, only in third place, to guarantee national security and defense. Furthermore, the tasks of the armed forces did not include territorial defense or defense at all:

Tasks of the German armed forces as of 2004

- International conflict prevention and crisis response, including the fight against international terrorism;
 - Support of Allies;
 - Protection of Germany and its citizens;
 - Rescue and evacuation;
 - Partnership and cooperation; and
 - Disaster relief at home and abroad.
-

Table 6: Tasks of the German armed forces as of 2004 (BMVg, 2004, p. 14)

International conflict prevention and crisis response, including the fight against international terrorism, were seen as the most probable tasks. Therefore, these tasks were deciding factors for the structure, equipment, and capabilities of the Bundeswehr. In contrast, capabilities tailored exclusively

to homeland defense were not needed at this time, even if their recoverability was to be guaranteed⁶⁴ (BMVg, 2004, pp. 14–15). Instead, national shortcomings, such as information superiority, capabilities for quick deployment and sustainability, interoperability and CBRN defense should be prioritized according to NATO's capability commitment (BMVg, 2004, p. 88). This resulted in a newly structured and significantly smaller Bundeswehr following substantial downsizing in garrisons, personnel, and materiel. The international orientation and budgets cuts called for "holistic thinking" within the entire Bundeswehr instead of thinking in single service patterns⁶⁵ in order to exploit synergy effects and improve performance in international missions (BMVg, 2004).

Although a territorial threat with conventional means remained unlikely in the beginning of the new millennium's second decade, Germany faced a shifting of power between states and the rise of regional powers⁶⁶ (BMVg, 2011a, p. 8). Being situated in the heart of Europe, Germany pursued a policy aimed at keeping the effects of crises away, and contributed to crisis management locally, if necessary, also with military means (BMVg, 2011a, p. 13). Consequently, the Bundeswehr was given a new set of tasks:

Tasks of the German armed forces as of 2011

- Homeland defense as part of collective defense in the framework of the North-Atlantic Alliance;
- International conflict prevention and crisis response, including the fight against international terrorism (unchanged);
- Contribution to military tasks in the framework of the CSDP of the EU;
- Contributions to homeland security [...];
- Rescue and evacuation (unchanged), including hostage rescue abroad;
- Partnership and cooperation (unchanged); and
- Humanitarian aid abroad.

Table 7: Tasks of the German armed forces as of 2011 (BMVg, 2011a, p. 21)

In contrast to the tasks seven years before, homeland defense as part of collective defense⁶⁷ returned to the top of the list and replaced international conflict prevention and crisis response (BMVg, 2011a,

⁶⁴ Conscriptio, which applied until 2011, was seen as the conceptual guarantee for the recoverability of such capabilities (BMVg, 2004, p. 16).

⁶⁵ The consequence was the creation of new organizational elements, e.g. the Joint Support and Enabling Service (*Streitkräftebasis*) and the Central Medical Service (*Zentraler Sanitätsdienst*).

⁶⁶ Russia was explicitly not named in the document.

⁶⁷ **Collective defense** in the German way of thinking was seen as an enhanced territorial defense by securing the territorial integrity and political independence of all partners with deterrence and defense against armed attacks (BMVg, 2013, p. 11)

p. 21), but again, this was rather a statement than a maxim for the reform to come. The Bundeswehr was reduced once again⁶⁸, conscription was suspended, and personnel shrank to its all-time low of 180.000 military billets. This stood in clear contrast to the conceptual capability for military force reconstitution and mobilization from 2004, which had pivoted around conscription. The reasons for this contradiction are mostly down to financial issues, but also persistent ineffectiveness as a result of top-heavy structures and not enough boots on the ground in international missions (Saxi, 2013, p. 3). Instead of providing sufficient forces for collective defense according to the order of tasks, the *pooling and sharing*⁶⁹ of capabilities and deploying forces to international missions stood still in the middle of deliberations and led to the abandonment of capabilities, e.g., army air defense. Therefore, the most probable scenario for the near future – contribution to international missions – continued to dictate the structure of the armed forces. Contrary to the 2004 Concept, additional homeland and collective defense means and capabilities at least justified some additional elements.

To live up to its role as a lead-nation in Europe, and to preserve a basic qualification for collective defense, Germany developed a prioritized capability profile for its armed forces. It was to include all the capabilities needed for a framework nation and give smaller partners the opportunity to plug in. These necessary capabilities consisted especially of key skills in the fields of command and control, reconnaissance, combat, and support. They should be held available not in depth but in breadth to provide a range of options for action, considering the unpredictability of threats (BMVg, 2013, pp. 27-29,42-44).

In the middle of the second decade, it became obvious that the established international order was in upheaval. Globalization and digitalization carried negative side effects for security, and the international system was challenged by China as a newly emerging world power. But peace and security in Europe were mainly challenged by Russia and its willingness to enforce its own interests by force, as signified by an increase in military activities at NATO's external borders (Bundesregierung, 2016, pp. 28–32). Consequently, German security policy was adjusted and the mission and set of tasks of the German armed forces changed significantly compared to the previous ones:

⁶⁸ The so-called reorientation of the Bundeswehr (*Neuausrichtung der Bundeswehr*) in 2011 was the most recent reform. It was implemented to ensure the sustainability of the Bundeswehr in terms of funding and personnel recruitment and retention against the backdrop of changing demographics.

⁶⁹ **Pooling** describes a collaboration between partners to gain mutual benefits in terms of education, exploitation of resources and supply. Examples for pooling are the European Air Transport Command or NATO's AWACS service. **Sharing** means that a single partner provides skills and capabilities to another partner. A current example is NATO's air policing to secure the airspace of the Baltic states due to their insufficient air force capabilities (Mölling, 2013, pp. 1–2).

Tasks of the German armed forces as of 2016

- Homeland and collective defense within the framework of NATO and EU;
 - International crisis management, including active military and non-military contributions;
 - Homeland security, national crisis and risk prevention, and subsidiary support in Germany;
 - Partnership and cooperation (unchanged), also beyond NATO and EU; and
 - Humanitarian disaster relief.
-

Table 8: Tasks of the German armed forces as of 2016 (Bundesregierung, 2016, p. 91)

Albeit all tasks had the same priority, homeland and collective defense was the core task. Furthermore, it became again the determining parameter for the basic setup of the armed forces because international crisis management no longer was considered crucial. Contingents for international missions were to be manned according to the situation (BMVg, 2018, p. 44). Capabilities should be developed so as to ensure that the most ambitious tasks could be performed with the single set of forces⁷⁰ (BMVg, 2018, pp. 35–36). Collective defense was further subdivided into homeland defense, (collective) Alliance defense and Alliance solidarity measures to meet the threat of symmetric opponents with increased capacities and modernized capabilities (BMVg, 2018, pp. 23–24). The latter has mostly shaped the adaptation of the Bundeswehr since 2015. From the beginning, Germany assumed responsibility for a battle group as a framework nation in NATO’s eFP mission to Lithuania. Other contributions were made on a rotational basis as a lead nation for several VJTF rotations and air policing in the Baltic states⁷¹. Additionally, Germany made a strong statement with the contribution of a large number of troops in the NATO Trident Juncture exercises in 2015 and 2018⁷².

One additional major indicator for the renewed importance of collective defense was the new emphasis on the significance of the reserve, which again is considered an integral part of the armed forces and employed accordingly to guarantee the ability to increase the military clout and secure the Alliance’s rear area in Germany (BMVg, 2018, pp. 38–40; 63–64).

4.3.2. Reasons for reorientation

Germany is a firmly integrated member of NATO and the EU. Its security interests are determined by its central position in the heart of Europe and its economic dependencies. It has therefore a particular

⁷⁰ **Single set of forces** means that not all capabilities in a wide spectrum can be provided for more than one theater of operation.

⁷¹ Germany was the lead nation of a battalion size task force during the first VJTF rotation in 2015, and of the brigade size task force in 2019. Germany is scheduled to lead the next brigade task force in 2023 (NATO, 2019).

⁷² Germany deployed 3,000 troops (around 10% of the overall participants) to Trident Juncture 2015 (Wiegold, 2015) and 10,000 troops (around 25% of the overall participants and the second largest number after the host-nation Norway) to Trident Juncture 2018 (Bundeswehr, 2018)

interest to maintain the sovereignty and territorial integrity of itself and its allies. Its planning goals and skills development are entirely subject to NATO's strategic concept, supplemented by the EU's CFSP⁷³ goals (Bundesregierung, 2016, pp. 24–25). However, Germany's adaptation measures did not always coincide with the current strategy of NATO.

For example, Germany's Reorientation of the Bundeswehr from 2011 deviates from NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept. On the one hand, NATO promoted a course to recover the ability for collective defense, deterrence, and prevention, and even if it was more of a rhetoric to reassure concerned members than a real change of strategy, the shift towards reorientation was visible. Germany, on the other hand, obviously did the opposite, even if it acknowledged the necessity of collective defense in theory. In particular the suspension of conscription in the same year, and with it the lost ability to mobilize reserve forces supports this argument. Although conscription continues to be rooted in the German Constitution (*Grundgesetz*), quick mobilization is no longer possible because of two reasons: The political reason is that it is highly unlikely to gain a parliamentary majority for the reintroduction of conscription. The practical reason is that Germany lost the ability to conduct medical checks and recruit conscripts throughout the country when disbanding its Selection and Induction Offices (*Kreiswehersatzämter*). But also, the continued structural focus on international missions at that time – first and foremost in the army – supports this argument. Instead of keeping a large number of armored units available to be able to face a peer adversary, a light infantry battalion was established in every brigade, because such forces had mainly been required for stabilization missions abroad at this time (BMVg, 2011b, sec. Anlage 1a and 1b). This reform was only possible because of Germany's geopolitically independent position.

In contrast, Germany acknowledged the shift following the 2014 events and contributed widely to several assurance and adaption measures. This included the above troop contributions, but also the perception that Germany and its location in the middle of Europe and between the North and the Baltic Seas could be crucial for any transatlantic and Western European logistic supply to the eastern members (BMVg, 2018, p. 23). Among other reasons, the Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC) in Ulm was therefore established to strengthen NATO's and Europe's deterrence capabilities and the readiness for defense. Furthermore, it was to demonstrate that Germany was ready to assume responsibility (Kramp-Karrenbauer, 2021).

In summary, Germany acted in accordance with NATO's guidelines, but not exclusively because of the guidelines. In the early 2000s, it reorganized the Bundeswehr to meet the requirements of NATO's international missions. Between 2010 and 2014, Germany however did not make any major

⁷³ Common Foreign and Security Policy

efforts to actually implement the changed strategy concept, because it did not perceive a real threat to its territory. After 2014, Germany began to meet NATO requirements with the given resources and, as a strong economic nation, also to take on security and military responsibility.

	GERMANY		
	2000 – 2010	2010 – 2014	2016 -2021
Orientation of the armed forces	International operations	International operations	Return to collective defense
	Capabilities for mobilization	No capabilities for mobilization	No capabilities for mobilization
Warfighting capability	Conscription army Capabilities for high-intensity conflict	Professional army Significantly reduced capabilities for high-intensity conflict	Professional army Refocusing on high-intensity capabilities Returned focus on the reserve
Driving force	Alliance related during geopolitical independence	Geopolitical independence	Geopolitical (To retain security in Europe)

Table 9: Summary Germany

4.4. Forsvaret concept in Norway

This section examines the way Norway adjusted its armed forces in the last two decades. The basic documents for this research are the long-term planning for the armed forces (*Langtidsplaner for Forsvaret, LTP*), which are issued every four years. It is a proposal made by the government to the parliament following the consultation of several experts. After parliamentary approval, it is effective for four years and implemented in the armed forces according to the chief of defense's plan (*Forsvarssjefens plan*) (Forsvaret, 2020). The main empirical documents for this section are consequently the LTPs of 2007-2008 (St.prp. nr. 48, 2007), 2011-2012 (Prop. 73 S, 2011), 2015-2016 (Prop. 151 S, 2015), and the current version of 2020-2021 (Prop. 14 S, 2020). The first half of the examined timespan was partly the subject of Flatvoll's master thesis "Norge og NATO" (Flatvoll, 2016). His findings and conclusions were also integrated in this research.

4.4.1. From mobilization defense to operational defense to collective defense

Against the backdrop of the experiences from the Second World War, Norway – as a neighboring country of the Soviet Union – has since then pursued the strategy of *deterrence and reassurance* (*avskrekking og beroligelse*). Deterrence was guaranteed by NATO's obligation to assist, and reassurance by several *self-imposed restrictions* (*selvpålagte begrensninger*)⁷⁴ to prevent any provocations of the powerful neighbor (Oma, 2021, pp. 1–3).

The defense system during the Cold War until the turn of the millennium took the form of a mobilization-based defense (*mobiliseringsforsvar*). Around 2000 both the changed security situation, but also financial reasons, led then to a comprehensive reorganization into a modern *operational defense* (*innsatsforsvar*)⁷⁵ system, prioritizing the quick deployment of forces abroad for international missions. This transformation came along with significant reductions in personnel, equipment, and capabilities, in favor of new capabilities according to the new demands, for example special forces (Flatvoll, 2016, pp. 11–12). This was before any reorientation started.

Already in the 2007-2008 LTP, Norway asserted that it faced new security challenges in the vicinity of its borders. Likewise, and in contrast to the others, Norway's strategic focus since then has been the "High North" (*Nordområdene*)⁷⁶. Both Russia and Norway have substantial interests in this area, because of their vulnerable oil and gas installations (Norway), power generation (Russia), and the

⁷⁴ The most important restriction is the so-called *basepolitikken*, which prohibits any long-term Allied presence

⁷⁵ The translation "operational defense" for the Norwegian term "innsatsforsvar" originates from Swedish documents, in which this translation is used permanently (see: Swedish Ministry of Defense, 2004, pp. 5, 12-14)

⁷⁶ **Nordområdene** is a Norwegian term for the circular area between the North Pole and the Polar Circle. It includes the Barents Sea and the Barents Region. Norway claims sovereignty over big parts of this area, including vast fishing and energy resources (NRK, 2014).

assumed existence of gigantic mineral resources (both). This led to disputes between Norway and its “rival and stressful partner”, who began to deploy the military again to the North Atlantic in 2007, albeit on a smaller scale than during the Cold War, but with revitalized nuclear capabilities (St.prp. nr. 48, 2007, pp. 26–27, 30)

Consequently, the central role of the Norwegian armed forces was to contribute to maintaining Norway’s sovereignty. This main role called for an own national military presence in the area on land and at sea to ensure both the country’s sovereignty and compliance with the self-imposed restrictions (St.prp. nr. 48, 2007, p. 15). The tasks of the armed forces during this time were subdivided into national tasks and tasks to be accomplished together with Allied partners. Despite the above conflict of interest, there was no distinct opponent. The provision of operational capabilities continued to be the most important task.

LTP 07/08	Tasks of the Norwegian armed forces
National tasks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secure the national basis for decision; 2. Maintain Norwegian sovereignty and rights; 3. Take care of the exercise of authority in limited areas; and 4. Prevent and handle security political crisis in Norway.
Multinational tasks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Collective defense of Norway and other parts of NATO against threats or attacks; and 6. Multinational crisis response outside Norway.

Table 10: Tasks of the Norwegian armed forces as of 2007 (St.prp. nr. 48, 2007, p. 54)

The long-term plan from 2011 retained this view with a few exceptions, and emphasized the importance of contributing to NATO’s relevance and credibility, since the Alliance was the “cornerstone of Norway’s security policy” (Prop. 73 S, 2011, p. 21). This was to be ensured by better connecting NATO’s and Norway’s command structures and improving the preparations for the reception of Allied reinforcements. The second-most important point was to preserve the national tasks and the ability to be present in regions of own strategic interest (Prop. 73 S, 2011, p. 13). This prioritization is recognizable in the adjusted and prioritized order of tasks:

LTP 11/12	Tasks of the Norwegian armed forces
Multinational tasks	1. Constitute a war-prevention threshold based on NATO membership; and 2. Defend Norway and its Allies against serious threats and attacks as part of NATO's collective defense system.
National tasks	3. Avert and handle security-political crises with national resources (incl. allied engagement); 4. Secure the national basis for decision; 5. Maintain Norwegian sovereignty and rights; and 6. Take care of the exercise of authority in limited areas.
Multinational tasks	7. Multinational crisis response outside Norway; and 8. Contribute to international collaboration.

Table 11: Tasks of the Norwegian armed forces as of 2011 (Prop. 73 S, 2011, p. 47)

Compared with the former tasks as of 2007, there is a major difference and a completely new top priority. This correlates with the next-lowest priority given to crisis response operations out of Norway. The other tasks remain unchanged.

The first LTP after Russia's intervention in Crimea (LTP 15/16) did not change the priority of tasks, but the ambition of the first (main) task was adjusted: "*Guarantee credible deterrence based on NATO's collective defense*" (Prop. 151 S, 2015, p. 21) was formulated much more precisely than the former task to "*constitute a war-prevention threshold based on NATO membership*" (Prop. 73 S, 2011, p. 47). The use of the term "deterrence" was particularly noteworthy, since many in Norway associated it with the Cold War (Saxi, 2021).

From then on, the top priority was to strengthen the national defense capability by enhancing the responsiveness, combat power, sustainability, but above all to reinforce the involvement of Norway's central allies.⁷⁷ Improved interoperability and an increase in presence, support, and the quantity of exercises were to enhance Norwegian and NATO deterrence capabilities. The changed security situation led to a reduced warning time. Also, it led to the realization that the Norwegian armed forces must be prepared and able to endure and defend until the Allied support arrives. In other words, collective defense and especially homeland defense was back on top of the agenda, including the capability for military operations in the entire spectrum, from hybrid warfare to high-intensity combat. Therefore, the generation of strategic capabilities, such as the new F-35 fighter jets and new

⁷⁷ Norway's closest allies are USA, United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands (Prop. 73 S, 2011, p. 28)

submarines, have been prioritized to ensure credible deterrence, as have been new surveillance aircraft for better situation awareness in the far north (Prop. 151 S, 2015, pp. 55-57).

Moreover, as a first step, the size, sustainability, and combat effectiveness of the border patrol (*grensevakten*) in the Finnmark region bordering on Russia was strengthened. The combat power, mobility, and firepower of the previously mainly stationary force was increased. A standing battalion-sized cavalry battalion was also to be added to the defense of Finnmark, in Porsanger. Finally, a Cold War-era headquarter, called *Finnmark landforsvar*, was also reestablished. It commanded all Army and Home Guard units in Finnmark.⁷⁸ (Prop. 151 S, 2015, p. 57). Another major adjustment was the willingness to increase the defense budget to better balance the ambitious tasks, structures, and financial means (see Section 3.4).

In the latest long-term plan (LTP 2020-21), tasks have not changed, and priority was given to increasing the armed forces' *responsiveness and sustainability*. This is to be accomplished by increasing the personnel strength, contingency stocks, and with new or updated equipment⁷⁹ (Prop. 14 S, 2020, p. 14). As it is mainly an outlook for the future, the LTP 2020-21 is not of major interest for this examination.

The last paragraph in this section is dedicated to buildup capability. In the Norwegian armed forces, this capability is ensured by *conscription (verneplikt)*, the *home guard (heimevernet)*, the *total defense concept (totalforsvaret)*, and the *reserve*. *Conscription* has always been retained and seen as the basis for the personnel structure of the armed forces and as a link between the armed forces and the population (St.prp. nr. 48, 2007, p. 16). Modernized in 2015 with the obligation to serve both for men and women, it has guaranteed the operational capabilities of readiness and national defense by giving access to personnel both for the first-year service (*førstegangstjenesten*) and the reserve. The fact that conscription enables the armed forces to draft well-educated personnel guarantees their access to the necessary professionals (Prop. 151 S, 2015, p. 93).

The *total defense concept* was originally developed after the Second World War to guarantee civil support of the armed forces in times of crisis and war, and further developed in into a system of mutual assistance in peacetime, crisis, and war (Prop. 73 S, 2011, p. 52). Nowadays, it is Norway's answer to increase its resilience and sustainability against a superior opponent, especially by reducing the weaknesses against hybrid and combined threats. The unclear security situation boosts the

⁷⁸ **Finnmark Landforsvar (FLF)** is a new military unit in the Norwegian army, which in 2020 consisted of the border patrols in Sør-Varanger, the mixed "Porsanger battalion" (a recce and support battalion), and the home guard district HV-17. It is the only military unit in the army with a subordinate HV unit (Forsvaret, n.d. a).

⁷⁹ The new equipment will not be available before the second half of the ongoing decade. It includes new helicopters, battle tanks, long-distance precision artillery, and submarines. By then, the ongoing introduction of F-35 fighter jets and P-8 surveillance aircraft should also be completed.

demand for the utilization of the society's resources, especially with regard to preventive measures and in order to guarantee readiness in the full crisis spectrum (Prop. 14 S, 2020, pp. 11, 13, 70).

The *home guard (heimevernet)*⁸⁰ has always ensured Norway's nationwide capability for mobilization. According to its structure and tasks⁸¹, it is rather the backbone of the total defense concept than a source of replacement combat units, however. Norway has not maintained an operational military reserve force so far, but the government recently introduced an army reserve, and has the ambition to reintroduce a reserve concept for the entire armed forces to increase sustainability and enhance the flexibility if a buildup demands special qualifications or merely personnel replacement (Prop. 14 S, 2020, p. 59).

"The defense of Norway takes place along three main lines: the national defense capability, the collective defense in NATO and especially bilateral support and reinforcement of close allies." (Prop. 14 S, 2020, p. 11)

4.4.2. Reasons for reorientation

"The defense of Norway is ensured by national efforts abroad and at home, and by facilitating Allied operations in Norway and its nearby areas" (Prop. 14 S, 2020, p. 7).

This maxim shows a close relationship and interconnectivity between Norwegian national and Allied defense. Albeit Norway is not in Russia's sphere of interest, and the situation in Ukraine is not directly transferable to Norway, a crisis somewhere else (for example in the Baltics) can have serious security political consequences for Norway, at least for its maritime areas (Prop. 151 S, 2015, pp. 28–29). Russia's rearmament program, its high-precision weapons and changed reassurance poses a steadily increasing threat to Norway, not at least because of Norway's fear of being drawn between the fronts of two rival great powers due to its important strategic position in the far north. Hence, Norway has to put effort on maintaining both its influence in the nearby areas, and its security. This means that it has to strengthen NATO's political community and the relations to its closest allies.

Norway's geographic location has already been described. Its role has not changed throughout the years, and it never was a "buffer" between NATO and Russia. Norway's strategy and its security policy have always been geared to securing its independence and liberty. Therefore, Norway introduced the new deterrence and reassurance measures, but as a small state has always strived for justice before power. This geopolitical struggle for survival has been obvious in its defense policy and the orientation of the armed forces during the last decade.

⁸⁰ The **heimevernet** is a reservist force of 40.000 soldiers, all former conscripts. It is organized in regional units serving in 17 districts (Forsvaret, n.d.-b; Leraand, 2020).

⁸¹ Main tasks of the heimevernet are the guarding and securing of objects and infrastructure (Prop. 73 S, 2011, p. 17).

The first point confirming this thesis is the fact that already in 2008 Norway raised concerns about the security situation in its vicinity, and therefore promoted the neighborhood initiative to reclaim the skills required for collective defense. Norway was the mastermind of this idea, and the Alliance was influenced by Norway because of its – occasionally geopolitical – concerns, and not vice versa. The next argument to affirm that Norway’s defense policy is guided by geopolitical concerns is that the main task of its armed forces was “to constitute a war-prevention threshold” and later accordingly “to guarantee credible deterrence”. These kinds of task are not found in any NATO requirement but originate from Norway’s national threat assessment.

Anyhow, Norway’s defense strategy builds on multinational support. However, Norway has not relied on NATO alone, but has established several bilateral agreements on troop reinforcement, or at least the pre-positioning of equipment (*forhåndslegning*) just in case. These concerns are expressions of a fear that NATO reaction forces are “not available” for Norway, because they might be engaged somewhere else, most likely in the Baltics. The efforts to develop the total defense concept to guarantee the reception of allied reinforcements consequently points in the same geopolitical direction.

All the above arguments belong to the category of “deterrence”. Moreover, Norway has to meet its own “reassurance” measures, which means that it has to take more responsibility and thus increase its presence in its focus area, e.g., the far north, to prevent an increase in Allied presence and the associated tensions with Russia. This is important for preserving the country’s influence on its own security, and for maintaining the balance between deterrence and reassurance (Prop. 14 S, 2020, p. 11).

At the same time, though, Norway is anxious to fulfill its obligations to NATO’s collective defense system. Examples are Norway’s participation in several measures of NATO’s Readiness Action Plan, e.g., the contribution of forces to several VJTF rotations, or the willingness to participate in NATO’s enhanced Forward Presence with frequent troop contributions. It is worth noting that both measures are undertaken in full awareness that the committed troops will be missing on the home front in the event of an attack on Norway.

Summing up the arguments, it is very clear for the case of Norway that geopolitical reasons have predominated considerably since 2008. As Norway has become kind of a frontline state, it must take responsibility for defending its sovereignty, but strongly depends on allied support.

	NORWAY		
	2000 – 2010	2010 – 2015	2015 -2021
Orientation of the armed forces	International operations	Territorial defense / act as a threshold	National defense and reception of allied reinforcements
	Capabilities for mobilization abolished	No capabilities for mobilization	Re-establishment of capabilities for mobilization
Warfighting capability	Conscription army	Conscription army	Modernized conscription army
	Capabilities for high intensity conflicts abolished	Reorientation towards high intensity challenges	Refocusing on high-intensity capabilities Re-establishment of a reserve
Driving force	Alliance related	Geopolitical	Geopolitical

Table 12: Summary Norway

4.5. Försvarsmakten concept in Sweden

Lastly, the concept and orientation of the Swedish armed forces is analyzed in this section. The basic document for the Swedish defense policy is the *Defense Act (Försvarsbeslut)*, which is usually revised every five years. It is a proposal made by the government to the parliament after consultation of the Defense Commission. Following parliamentary approval, it is effective for the following five years (Ring, 1999). The main empirical documents for this subchapter are consequently the Defense Acts of 2009 (Prop. 2008/09:140, 2009), 2015 (Prop. 2014/15:109, 2015), and the current version of 2020 (Prop 2020/21:30, 2020). In addition, the new security strategy from 2017 (Prime Minister's Office, 2017) was included in the research.

4.5.1. From invasion defense to operational defense to modern total defense

Sweden's policy of neutrality and the decision not to join a military alliance such as NATO has evolved historically; it was Sweden's reason of state during both world wars. As a neutral state and a state without any alliance membership, Sweden ensured its own *invasion defense (invasionsförsvar)* throughout the Cold War. But Sweden's accession to the EU, the European integration, and NATO's and the EU's enlargements into the east, especially the joining of the Baltic nations and Poland, automatically strengthened Sweden's security substantially, as they formed a perimeter of friendly countries. However, this benefit also changed the original Swedish security policy of a completely neutral state. The EU was not only "central to Sweden's security", as an EU member state it could also benefit from the solidarity among the members. On the other hand, it also had to guarantee assistance – possibly including militarily means - to others in the case of an emergency. Sweden declared in 2009, that it would not remain passive if a member state of the EU or a northern country such as Norway was to be subject to military attack or struck by disaster (Prop. 2008/09:140, 2009, p. 9). Even if Sweden has not joined NATO as of now, it has been a member of the Partnership for Peace program since its establishment in 1994 in order to develop and deepen cooperation with the Alliance⁸². Sweden's own contribution for promoting peace and security has been its continued willingness to join international peace operations under the umbrella of NATO, the UN, or the EU (Swedish Ministry of Defense, 2004, pp. 5–9).

For this purpose, the Cold-War organization of the Swedish military as an invasion defense force became both outdated and was no longer affordable. Consequently, like many other European countries Sweden shifted the orientation of its armed forces to a "modern, flexible and highly

⁸² The public opinion of a possible NATO membership has changed in Sweden. The Swedish parliament discussed the topic in 2020 and the majority shifted in favor of NATO, and at the same time, public opinion had turned into the same direction (Alberti, 2021, p. 7)

accessible *operational defense (insatsförsvar)*". The reorganization started in 1999 after a comprehensive reform of the defense sector. It led to the decommissioning of all units, equipment, and establishments without a long-term need and which did not fit into the new operational defense concept. Instead, Sweden focused on deployable troops in order to increase the effectiveness of its troop contributions in international missions abroad, and to build up the capability for commanding multinational rapid reaction forces⁸³ (Swedish Ministry of Defense, 2004, pp. 12–14, 20). Therefore, the tasks of the Swedish armed forces were the following:

Tasks of the Swedish armed forces according to the 2009 Defense Act

- Defend Sweden and enhance the security with missions on Swedish territory, in the vicinity, and outside the region.
 - Identify and counter violations of Swedish territory and, in accordance with international law protect sovereign rights and national interests outside Swedish territory.
 - Assist society and government authorities with available capacities and resources when needed.
-

Table 13: Tasks of the Swedish armed forces as of 2009 (Prop. 2008/09:140, 2009, p. 36)

This "orientation towards international missions" changed fundamentally with the new Defense Act in 2015. It stated that the Baltic Sea region and thus Sweden as one of the major rim states was again of strategic importance. This region has been of strategic interest for Russia, too, as it is vital for homeland defense, especially so in the case of Gotland. The island is of special relevance since the entire Baltic Sea and the access to its eastern part can presumably be controlled from there. On the one hand, this made military operations in the Baltic area more probable than before, and on the other, it changed Sweden's military strategic position. This role and the associated possibility of an attack as a single act in a wider conflict⁸⁴ affected Sweden's security. Although a direct armed attack against Sweden remained unlikely, the probability had increased (Prop. 2014/15:109, 2015, pp. 44–46). Therefore, the Swedish government announced that its most important issues were to increase the operational capability of the military units⁸⁵ and to ensure the overall capability of the *total defense (totalförsvar)* system in order to constitute a threshold for a possible attack. Consequently, the operational defense

⁸³ The level of ambition was to be able to lead and participate in two large-scale mission, including the deployment of one battalion each and three smaller operations additionally.

⁸⁴ This affects especially Gotland, the area of Nordkalotten, the Stockholm area, and the access to the Baltic Sea as possible military strategic intermediate objectives to gain a better position to achieve the objective.

⁸⁵ Increasing the operational capability among other things means to enhance the readiness of all units. Single units shall be combat ready immediately, main elements of the armed forces within three months, and no units shall need more than six months to achieve readiness (Prop. 2014/15:109, 2015, p. 66).

concept should be reorganized into the modern *total defense (totalförsvar)* concept with an adjusted and expanded spectrum of tasks (Prop. 2014/15:109, 2015, pp. 7, 9, 50):

Tasks of the Swedish armed forces according the 2015 Defense Act

- In peacetime maintain enhanced readiness to
 - o Be able to prevent and manage conflicts and wars;
 - o Protect Sweden's freedom of action in the face of political, military, or other pressure; and, if necessary
 - o Defend Sweden against incidents and armed attack.
- Promote Sweden's security by participation in operations on own territory, in the vicinity, and also out of the region.
- Identify and counter any violations of Swedish territory and in accordance with international law also protect sovereign rights and national interests outside Swedish territory (unchanged).
- Assist society and government authorities with available capacities and resources when needed (unchanged).

Table 14: Tasks of the Swedish armed forces as of 2015 (Prop. 2014/15:109, 2015, p. 53)

Within these tasks, three special priorities were established, namely basic requirements, reinforcement of the defenses of Gotland, and anti-submarine hunting capabilities. Firstly, basic requirements include everything necessary for gaining the ability to meet a peer adversary, e.g., bulk materials, vehicles, communication equipment, night vision devices etc. Secondly, the reinforcement of Gotland's defenses to meet the strategic challenge was to include the deployment of mechanized forces beginning in 2018. Thirdly, modernized anti-submarine capabilities to improve situational awareness at sea, and to give the armed forces the ability to counter any attacks from above and under the surface. This had not least become necessary because Russia had already violated the sovereignty of Baltic rim states and showed its preparedness for offensive action by deploying dual capable missiles to Kaliningrad and sorties of its strategic bombers across the Baltic Sea (Prop. 2014/15:109, 2015, pp. 13–14, 23, 29). These priorities and the return to total defense, including an improvement of warfighting capabilities and the continued reliance on expensive national armament solutions, were confirmed in the 2017 National Strategy (Prime Minister's Office, 2017, pp. 17–18).

To build up the warfighting capability of the armed forces, it was mandatory to regain the ability for mobilization. This ability had de facto been abandoned with the 2009 Defense Act. Sweden had transformed its military into a volunteer force and abolished conscription. There had been mainly two reasons for this decision: Firstly, an attack on Sweden was rated as unlikely, and accordingly the

structures required for mobilization in order to defend the country were no longer deemed necessary nor were they still appropriate. The second reason was the government's assumption that professional soldiers could be educated and trained in a more effective manner and thus would be able to fulfill more than a single role. This would enable the units to be employed for multiple tasks and thus increase their efficiency. But at the same time, the legal basis for conscription – the *National Service Act (totalförsvarsplikt)*⁸⁶ - was maintained and adjusted by introducing compulsory service for both men and women. This enabled the government to reinstate conscription, if necessary (Prop. 2008/09:140, 2009, pp. 77–78). Already in 2015, it was stated that the recruitment of military personnel was a problematic issue, and thus the return to total defense was proposed (Prop. 2014/15:109, 2015, pp. 51–52). Later in 2017, when the armed forces faced problems to recruit enough volunteers to fulfill its tasks, conscription was finally reintroduced with effect from January 2018 (Regeringskansliet, 2017).

The developments since 2014 have pushed Sweden even closer to NATO⁸⁷ and led to the signing of a host nation contract with the Alliance. It was seen both as an advantage for NATO by guaranteeing Swedish support for military operations on its territory in terms of exercises, crisis response and other missions, and by helping Sweden to develop the military capabilities of the armed forces (Regeringskansliet, 2015). Simultaneously, Sweden strengthened its cooperation with the Nordic countries⁸⁸ and the Baltic states to enhance security by raising the threshold for conflict in the region. Therefore, existing multinational military exercises across the borders and in all domains were expanded to guarantee effective response.

The presumably ongoing deterioration of the security situation in the Baltic region⁸⁹ and the increased importance of Sweden's geopolitical location led to an even more precise statement in the Defense Act of 2020. It assessed that Sweden *will* be affected if an armed conflict was to occur in the region. Moreover, it was seen as possible that Sweden was *attacked first* in order to set the prerequisites for achieving the wider objective, even if Sweden was not the main target of the aggressor (Ministry of Defense, 2020, p. 48). This assumption is based on the assessment of 2015 that

⁸⁶ The **National Service Act** states, that every Swedish citizen is obliged to participate in the Swedish total defense. This includes men and women from the age of 16 until 70 (WD2, 2018, p. 5).

⁸⁷ Apart from its participation in the NATO PfP program, Sweden also joined the NATO Response Force (NRF) and the Enhanced Opportunities Program (EOP), which made Sweden, besides Finland, to the closest ally among all NATO's partners (Prop. 2014/15:109, 2015, pp. 37–38).

⁸⁸ The **Nordic countries** are: Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, and Denmark (Nordic cooperation, n.d.).

⁸⁹ The reason for this was seen inter alia because of Russia's increased number of ground forces (50% increase from 2011 to 2019) which mainly took place in the Western military district including the exclave of Kaliningrad, and the enhanced joint warfare capability (Ministry of Defense, 2020, p. 19).

the geopolitical location of Sweden is of strategic importance for both NATO and Russia, because of its role for control over the Baltic Sea and access to it.

Today, the Swedish government relies on an improved *total defense* concept for countering any armed attack on Sweden. All elements of the concept must be strong, ready, and sustainable to ensure the concepts works as a deterrent and thus as a viable peacekeeping strategy; they are to ensure that Sweden is prepared in the case of a war and guarantee the ability to defend the country against any armed attack (Ministry of Defense, 2020, pp. 81, 84, 101). Therefore, the goals for the military have remained unchanged, no new or special tasks for the Swedish armed forces were added. Instead, the present military defense is to be transformed into a sustainable *wartime organization*. To achieve this goal, the government planned to strengthen the operational capability by increasing the number of units and personnel. Units are to be staffed with both career service members and conscripts⁹⁰. In recent years, this ambition was emphasized by conducting readiness and mobilization exercises to an unprecedented extent under operational conditions so as to train the countering of a surprise attack and simultaneous mobilization measures (Ministry of Defense, 2020, pp. 100–102).

4.5.2. Reasons for reorientation

Sweden, with its strict non-alliance doctrine, is a perfect example for demonstrating that defense policy, and consequently the orientation of the armed forces, is mainly based on geopolitical threat assessment. This held true for the time of the Cold War, when Sweden in fact acted independently, as well as for the era of international operations, when Sweden participated in several missions led by NATO, the EU, and the UN. Every participation was in line with the stipulations of the respective Swedish strategy or Defense Act and contributed to enhancing Sweden's security from outside its territory and region.

One can argue that Sweden as a member of EU and NORDEFECO as well as a member of the PfP program might have been pushed into the respective direction by these organizations. However, none of these organizations or collaboration networks is a real military alliance. Not even the EU can be considered a military alliance despite the existence of its CSDP and military operations, because it lacks an own command structure and the mutual defense clause in Art. 42.7 EU Treaty is broader and weaker than NATO's Article 5 since it is based on bilateral agreements⁹¹. The PfP program does not give

⁹⁰ The total amount of positions in the wartime organization is to increase to 90,000. This would be an increase of 50% compared to the number in 2020 (60,000). Conscription therefore is to add 8,000 troops per year (Ministry of Defense, 2020, p. 115)

⁹¹ If one member states invokes the Art. 42.7 EU treaty in the case of an armed attack on its territory, all member states are obliged to support the affected member state. However, the manner of support is up to the respective states. Military support is not predetermined. This should ensure the neutrality of single historic neutral states like Sweden, Finland, Austria and Ireland. The EU has only a coordinating role. It should facilitate bilateral agreements (Europäisches Parlament, 2016).

Sweden any guarantees for assistance either. It is rather a partnership, which fosters the development of Sweden’s armed forces and their warfighting capability by enhancing interoperability through participation in multinational exercises. This contributes to the ability to meet a qualified adversary. At the same time, Sweden benefits from NATO’s command and planning capability, which contributes to comprehensive security in the region (Ministry of Defense, 2020, p. 73). But for all that, Sweden has no commitment to NATO or its overarching strategy.

It is therefore important to underline that it was Sweden’s sovereign decision to enhance the partnership with NATO and sign the host nation agreement, not NATO’s. Even if this agreement offers NATO better options for the support and supply of its most northeastern members, it is of Sweden’s vital interest to maintain and deepen partnership with NATO and the USA. Sweden thereby gains the opportunity to be integrated into NATO’s defense plans and is given a voice, even if it does not involve formal voting rights.

It was also Sweden’s own decision to abandon operational defense in favor of modern total defense. The reasons are clearly described in the Defense Acts of 2015 and 2020 as well as the National Security Strategy of 2017 and are solely based on the increased geopolitical significance of the Baltic Region with a reinvigorated aggressor in the east. Every Swedish approach to any defense cooperation, e.g., NORDEFECO, is related to a shared threat perception, i.e., Russia being the most important challenge to the security environment. This leads to the conclusion that all measures taken by Sweden in the period of review were down to geopolitical reasons.

	SWEDEN	
	2000 – 2015	Since 2015
Orientation of the armed forces	International operations	Reorientation to territorial defense
Warfighting capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability for mobilization reduced - Conscription abolished in 2013 - Capabilities for high intensity conflicts reduced and partly abolished 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability for mobilization restored - Conscription reintroduced in 2017 - Capabilities for high intensity conflicts being restored
Driving force	Geopolitical	

Table 15: Summary Sweden

4.6. Summary and chapter conclusion

Comparing all three units, there is one major similarity: The sequence of adjustment and alignment of the armed forces. Every examined country had pursued a kind of invasion or territorial defense concept until the beginning of the era of international operations. Each concept was gradually reformed and reorganized to operational defense in order to meet the new demands and increase flexibility. Finally, every country returned to territorial or collective defense by 2017 at the latest.

GERMANY		
	2000 - 2016	2016 -2021
Orientation of the armed forces	International operations (Operational defense)	Return to collective defense

NORWAY			
	2000 – 2010	2010 – 2015	2015 -2021
Orientation of the armed forces	International operations (Operational defense)	Return to territorial defense as a threshold	National defense and reception of allied reinforcements

SWEDEN		
	2000 – 2015	Since 2015
Orientation of the armed forces	International operations (Operational defense)	Reorientation to territorial defense

Table 16: Summary and comparison of the orientation of the armed forces

In this overarching similarity, there are no differences between the two NATO members and non-allied Sweden; they rather seem to share geopolitical reasons. There is an independent approach between 2000 and 2015 to save money and personnel and take care of security issues far away on the one hand, and on the other hand, geopolitical dependence after 2015 due to the newly perceived threat.

When looking into detail, there are differences with regard to the date of the shifting, intensity of the transformation, and the retained reassurance measures, though. While Sweden and Norway completed the reorganization of their armed forces earlier, Germany took more steps and went the furthest, e.g., by disbanding the whole selection and induction organization when conscription was suspended. Albeit Sweden was on the same track, it came around and reinstated conscription to guarantee personnel buildup. Norway in contrast, which had always held on to conscription, was the first to return to territorial defense.

GERMANY			
	2000 – 2010	2010 – 2014	2016 -2021
Warfighting capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capabilities for mobilization retained - Conscription army - Capabilities for high intensity conflicts retained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capabilities for mobilization abolished - Professional army - Capabilities for high intensity conflicts significantly reduced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capabilities for mobilization abolished - Professional army - Refocusing on high-intensity capabilities - Re-establishment of a reserve
NORWAY			
	2000 – 2010	2010 – 2015	2015 -2021
Warfighting capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capabilities for mobilization abolished - Conscription army - Capabilities for high intensity conflicts abolished 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No capabilities for mobilization - Conscription army - Reorientation to meet high intensity challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Return to the ability for mobilization - Modernized conscription army - Refocusing on high-intensity capabilities - Re-establishment of a reserve
SWEDEN			
	2000 – 2015	Since 2015	
Warfighting capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capabilities for mobilization reduced - Conscription abolished in 2013 - Capabilities for high intensity conflicts reduced and partly decommissioned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capabilities for mobilization restored - Conscription reintroduced in 2017 - Restoring of capabilities for high intensity conflicts 	

Table 17: Summary and comparison of warfighting capability

In comparison, Norway and Sweden today are much more focused on territorial defense than Germany, simply because there is no further ally between their territory and Russia. Consequently, they both strived for partnerships to enhance deterrence and guarantee support in the case of an armed attack on their country. Norway and Sweden are thus receivers of support and security, even if Norwegian's effort is more distinct. But it is noteworthy that Sweden has abandoned its historically neutral stance in many areas and is more and more striving for partnership and reassurance. Both countries fear the danger of being drawn into a power struggle without being the main target: Norway

because of its location in the North and its vicinity to Russia's strategically most important North Fleet installations and Sweden because of its key position in the Baltic area.

Germany, on the other hand, as a security provider has commitments first and foremost to the Baltic states. In comparison to the other two countries, its geostrategic location has changed since the end of the Cold War, from being NATO's central front to its rear area. Therefore, its role as a logistics hub for Allied reinforcements on their way to Poland and further into the Baltics has become considerably more important.

Finally, the two hypotheses made at the beginning of this chapter must be validated. The first thesis – (a) *If it can be recognized that the member states Germany and Norway act similarly to one another and are closely guided by NATO strategy, Alliance membership is the dominating factor* – cannot be verified, because besides many congruities, there are distinct differences with regard to warfighting capability. While Norway relies on mobilization and the reception of Allied support, Germany sticks to its professional army without significant mobilization capacities and focuses on its key importance for logistics support in Central Europe.

However, the second hypothesis – (b) *If it is obvious that Norway and Sweden, who are located very close to Russia, adapt their defense policies in a much more similar manner than that of Germany, geopolitical location is the dominating factor* – **can be confirmed**. As described above, there is a lot of congruence between the Swedish and Norwegian views of security policy and the orientation of the armed forces. Sweden's return to territorial defense, including the re-establishment of mobilization capabilities and its focus on total defense is the factor determining that geopolitical reasons dominate in this case. Of course, Germany's role is different to its former Cold War role. Today its position in the middle of Europe implies a strategic key role for the logistics. It lives up to this role. But in terms of capability for mobilization and restoring high intensity warfighting, Germany lags behind. **The second case "reorientation of the armed forces" in this research has shown that geopolitical reasons predominate alliance related reasons.**

5. Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to research how western European countries reacted to Russia's aggressive behaviour which became evident by its military actions taken against Georgia in 2008, but particularly against Ukraine between 2014 and 2020. The focus was placed on the research question:

Is membership in an alliance such as NATO the crucial factor that has determined western European states' defense policy response to Russia's new aggressive revisionism, or does geopolitical exposure to Russia offer a more convincing explanation?

The disposition of this research was designed to give a science-based answer to this question. After a detailed introduction with background information about the origins of the tensions and a description of the underlying Russian strategy, the Method and Theory chapter addressed mainly the design of this case study. Germany, Norway and Sweden were chosen as comparison units because of their commonalities as western European democracies with no background in the Warsaw Pact on the one hand, but with different types of membership in alliances like EU and NATO on the other hand. In order to answer the research question, the independent variables *membership in a military alliance* and *geopolitical location* were analyzed with respect to the dependent variable *adjustment measures in security and defense politics*. This dependent variable was split up into two case studies: the development of defense expenditure, and the (re-)orientation of the armed forces within the three countries examined.

The first case *defense expenditure* was introduced by an overview and a description of the meaning of the term, followed by an explanation of NATO's Defense Investment Pledge, commonly known as the 2% target. Within the case study, every research unit was analyzed regarding the adjustments it made to its spending in terms of nominal and percentage amounts in relation to the point in time at which security policy changes were implemented. This analysis showed that all three research units not only increased their spending, but they did so at exactly the same points in time. Although all three countries spent more money in 2020 than in 2014 and the expenditure increased between 19 % (Sweden) and 23 % (Germany), quantitative differences remained. Norway, for example, put much more emphasis on achieving NATO commitments than Germany did, while Sweden also increased its budget even though it is not a member of NATO and thus not subject to the associated rules. Finally, the findings were compared in the partial summary and the chapter conclusion was drawn to contribute to answering the research question. The reasons for the differences in spending can be found in geopolitical factors. While Germany can afford to invest only 1.5 % of its GDP because it is surrounded by friendly nations, Norway is willing to invest more. With a border to Russia and overlapping and diverging interests in the far north and in the Arctic, it is dependent on NATO and

especially U.S. support. Sweden is the final example to confirm the hypothesis that geopolitical reasons outweigh alliance-related reasons since its defense spending has increased by about the same as that of Germany and Norway. The motive for doing so is Sweden's location and not a membership in any alliance with corresponding obligations.

The second case *(re-)orientation of the armed forces* was introduced by a short review of the respective stabilization missions abroad, which characterized the decades after the end of the Cold War. After a short look into NATO's strategy and its main focus, which shifted slowly but steadily back to collective defense, the three units and the measures they took to change the orientation of their armed forces were analyzed. This analysis showed that all three units reorganized their armed forces twice after the end of the Cold War. At the beginning of the 90's, they abandoned their invasion or territorial defense approach and reshaped it into a modern operational one. The reasons for this step were manifold, but financial considerations and the disappearance of the threat by Russia were the most important ones. After the return of a perceived threat in 2008 or at the latest in 2014, each of the three countries reorganized its armed forces more or less into a territorial or collective defense army. It is notable that there is no variation between the two NATO members and alliance-free Sweden. But to find an answer to the research question, a closer look had to be taken at some details. The keywords are warfighting capability and mobilization ability. Germany, for example, abolished both conscription and all capabilities for mobilization. On the other hand, Sweden and Norway abolished or reduced their capabilities for mobilization, too, but started to restore them again. Norway never dropped the conscription, and Sweden reintroduced it in 2017 after a four-year break. All three countries reduced their capabilities for high-intensity warfighting with a peer-to-peer adversary significantly in the 90's and early 2000's, but began to rebuild these capabilities rudimentarily. However, it is evident that Norway and Sweden put more focus on territorial defense than Germany, simply because of their geographic location next to the aggressor. Germany has a different geostrategic position in comparison to former Cold War times and is today both force provider and logistic hub for NATO in Europe. Finally, at the end of the analysis of each country, the reasons were determined and compared in the subsequent chapter conclusion. In this case, too, the hypothesis that geopolitical location is the dominating factor could be confirmed: It is obvious that Norway and Sweden, who are located very close to Russia, adapted their defense policies in a much more similar manner than Germany did.

Thus, both case studies yielded a clear result in favour of geopolitics, and the answer to the research question is that *geopolitical exposure to Russia is indeed the crucial factor that has determined western European states' defense policy response to Russia's new aggressive revisionism.*

Further research in this context seems to have become a bit obsolete, given Russia's violent attack on Ukraine which began on 24th February 2022. Russia's course of action is the best evidence that proves that geopolitics still matter. But a possible topic for further research could be to examine the extent to which other NATO members – especially those in southwestern Europe – have adapted their defense politics and their armed forces in the face of the new real threat.

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