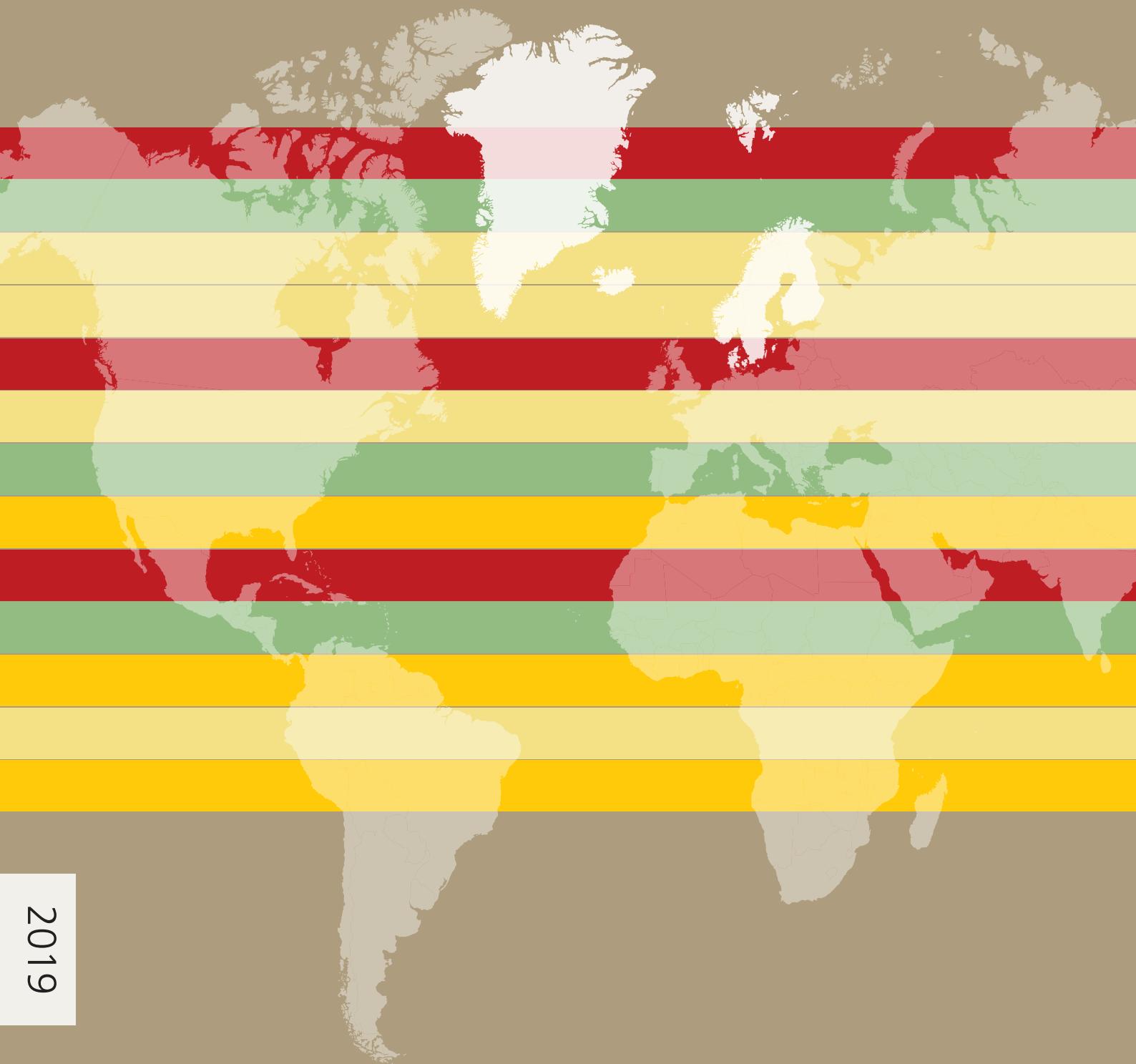


10 YEARS ON REASSESSING THE STOLTENBERG REPORT ON NORDIC COOPERATION



2019

Ten Years On: Reassessing the Stoltenberg Report on Nordic Cooperation

2019

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Preface

Ten years ago, the report ‘Nordic cooperation on foreign and security policy’ was presented to the Nordic foreign ministers at an extraordinary meeting in Oslo, Norway. Penned and fronted by Norway’s former foreign minister Thorvald Stoltenberg, the report proposed thirteen ways in which Nordic cooperation in the foreign and security domain could be formalized and strengthened. Generally well-received in the Nordic capitals, today, the report is regularly referred to in assessments of Nordic foreign and security cooperation, or when Nordic heads of government meet in public to discuss past and future accomplishments.

Since the report’s publication in 2009, we have observed many developments creating a slight push towards closer Nordic cooperation in the field of foreign and security policy. Geopolitical tensions between the West and Russia have sharpened, and new military technologies and new patterns of cooperation between NATO and Nordic countries have developed. At the same time, the Nordic states are trying to strike the right balance between security and welfare, and there is greater attention to how the Nordic states can utilize economies of scale and secure more efficient use of its investments in the field of defence and security policy.

In a talk at the Nordic Council in 2014, Stoltenberg himself reflected on developments on the areas listed in the report, noting ‘with pleasure that several of the 13 recommendations in the report have been implemented, and others are in process’. In this review, we follow up on that assessment. Going through the thirteen proposals, we ask: How important was the 2009 Stoltenberg Report for boosting Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation? What progress can we observe in the decade that has passed since the report was released?

At a general level, it is fair to say that the Stoltenberg Report paved the way for and eased a turn to a stronger Nordic dimension in foreign and security policy. At the same time, it should be noted that the thirteen original proposals vary quite substantially in their scale, scope and feasibility. Some relate to specific instruments in the field of justice and home affairs; others to general and potentially consequential decisions regarding Nordic solidarity and collective defence. As this review shows, few of the proposals listed in the 2009 report have been implemented in full. Still, it can be concluded that the report has been important in changing the overall approach and perspective of Nordic cooperation in these fields.

Several factors contributed to the report’s standing: It presented a larger vision, but combined this vision with very specific, operational initiatives. While promoting Nordic cooperation, it avoided the trap of becoming ‘Nordistic’ in its ideology, stressing instead the importance of Nordic cooperation as unfolding within a larger European and NATO frame. The authors of the 2009 report were well-reputed academics and officials, which helped to give credibility and visibility. Its format, with short and specific measures, was innovative, making the proposals easier to access, disseminate and implement. Moreover, the timing was favourable, coinciding as it did with the global financial crisis that put additional burdens on public budgets and sharpened the awareness of the potential economic advantages and savings to be gained by stronger Nordic cooperation. Finally, the report was open-ended in nature and invited the beginning of larger and more systematic reflection on how the five Nordic states could benefit from innovation and greater cooperation in the fields identified. As such, it also created a broader umbrella for framing not only the topics and proposals specifically listed in the report, but also new initiatives.

The findings presented below stem from a concerted effort by the five Nordic foreign policy institutes. In early 2019, these institutes collectively accepted an invitation from the Nordic Council of Ministers to assess how Nordic cooperation has developed in the thirteen policy areas identified in 2009 Stoltenberg Report. The research team met in Oslo in early March 2019 to discuss the mandate and the task at hand. In the writing process, we have consulted various sources: academic work, political speeches and statements, policy reports and media articles. We have had background conversations with

relevant policy-makers and officials in the five capitals, as well as with contributors to the original report. In the writing process, IIA has had the responsibility for drafting proposals 2, 8 and 9, DIIS for proposals 6 and 13, FIIA for 1, 3 and 4, UI for proposals 11 and 12 and NUPI for proposals 5, 7 and 10. NUPI has had main responsibility for the editorial work, but the contributors stand collectively responsible for the findings presented below.

We present and categorize our overall findings in a scoreboard, where *green* colouring indicates that significant progress has been made, *yellow* that some progress has been made, and *red* that little or no change can be observed since 2009. To allow for further nuances, we also use some shaded colours. *Shaded green* indicates that significant progress has been made but that the Nordic effort has been supplemented by an external body. Similarly, *shaded yellow* indicates that there has been some planning or that steps have been taken, but that action has generally taken place outside of the Nordic five. It should be noted that in our assessment, we have categorized as 'Nordic' only collaboration that includes at least three Nordic states. However, in the discussion of some proposals, we also reflect on bilateral cooperation efforts.

We wish to express our gratitude to all the individuals who have taken the time to speak with us over these last few weeks. We would also like to thank Susan Høivik for language editing and Þór Ingólfsson for formatting.

Oslo, Reykjavík, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Stockholm,

The authors

Reception in the Nordic countries

The 2009 Stoltenberg Report was generally well received among experts and the general public, but attention and media coverage differed in the various Nordic countries. In Norway, the report was accorded considerable attention when it was first published. This can in large part be ascribed to the fact that it was written and promoted by Thorvald Stoltenberg, a former foreign minister and influential figure in Norwegian foreign policy debates. The report has since become a standard reference in Norwegian government documents and parliamentary debates on Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation. In 2017, then Foreign Minister Børge Brende assessed developments in the thirteen areas listed in the report. Noting that the Norwegian government had signed the solidarity clause, Brende highlighted military cooperation, peacebuilding, Icelandic airspace surveillance, cyber-security cooperation, Arctic issues and cooperation between the foreign services as areas where progress had been made. In other areas, he observed, cooperation had evolved on a case-by-case basis, or through existing structures such as NATO.

In Denmark, the report received more limited attention when it was released. The Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) organized a public seminar with Stoltenberg. Although the seminar was well-attended, no journalists were present. One possible explanation is that many Danish journalists associate the term 'Nordic' with lofty declarations rather than concrete substance. However, this could be about to change – in recent years there has been greater political engagement in Nordic cooperation in Denmark. In light of growing tensions in the Baltic Sea region, Denmark has strengthened the military focus on its neighbourhood. As Defence Minister Claus Hjort Frederiksen put it in an interview with *Berlingske* in March 2019: 'We shall be strong, where we live... It has previously been said that Denmark was foot-dragging in Nordic defence cooperation. I wish to change that impression.'

In Finland, the impact of the Stoltenberg Report was limited to foreign and security policy circles. In general, it was seen as a welcome contribution to the debate about Nordic cooperation. However, some of its proposals – particularly concerning joint surveillance of Icelandic airspace and a Nordic declaration of solidarity – were met with scepticism, and were seen more as long-term visions than practicable ideas. Interestingly, in both these areas, progress was made rather quickly: Finland itself put the latter on its agenda when it chaired Nordic foreign policy cooperation (N5) in 2011, resulting in the adoption of a Nordic declaration of solidarity in April 2011. Finland's participation in the Iceland Air Meet 2014 proved a thornier issue, requiring a lengthy domestic debate. While the Stoltenberg Report has remained a point of reference for those interested in Nordic affairs, it has been little discussed in Finland in recent years.

Also in Iceland, the government welcomed the Stoltenberg Report, especially since it was presented at a time when Iceland was re-evaluating its security policy in the aftermath of the US withdrawal from Iceland. The proposal about the Nordic countries sharing responsibility for air surveillance in Iceland gained widespread political support, although the Left Green movement was somewhat hesitant. The report has remained an important reference point in the context of defence and security cooperation.

Lastly, the report was also welcomed in Sweden, where the government saw it as an important boost for Nordic cooperation. Sweden was particularly keen on the idea of a Nordic declaration of solidarity. Prior to the joint Nordic declaration in 2011, Sweden unilaterally established a solidarity declaration in 2009. Furthermore, Sweden eventually joined NATO forces in the air surveillance in and around Icelandic airspace. This was at first seen as a controversial issue, but was later successfully implemented. The Stoltenberg Report was mentioned several times in the Swedish Riksdag and media in the immediate years after its release, but has faded from the public debate in recent years.

Scoreboard

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1 | Nordic stabilization task force | |
| 2 | Nordic cooperation on surveillance of Icelandic airspace | |
| 3 | Nordic maritime monitoring system | |
| 4 | Maritime response force | |
| 5 | Satellite system for surveillance and communications | |
| 6 | Nordic cooperation on Arctic issues | |
| 7 | Nordic resource network to protect against cyber attacks | |
| 8 | Disaster response unit | |
| 9 | War crimes investigation unit | |
| 10 | Cooperation between foreign services | |
| 11 | Military cooperation on transport, medical services, education, materiel and exercise ranges | |
| 12 | Amphibious unit | |
| 13 | Nordic declaration of solidarity | |

Coding

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- | | |
|--|---|
| | Green: Significant progress |
| | Shaded green: Significant progress, but the Nordic effort has been supplemented by an external body |
| | Yellow: Some progress |
| | Shaded yellow: Nordic planning/small steps have been made towards solving the task, but an external body is also involved |
| | Red: Little or no progress |
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Ten years on: Reassessing the thirteen proposals



Proposal 1: Nordic stabilisation task force

'A Nordic stabilisation task force should be established that can be deployed to states affected by major internal unrest or other critical situations where international assistance is desirable. It would be responsible for stabilising the situation and then creating an environment in which the state and political processes can function properly. It should include both civilian and military personnel. The task force should have four components: a military component, a humanitarian component, a statebuilding component (including police officers, judges, prison officers, election observers) and a development assistance component.'

The Stoltenberg Report's proposal for the establishment of a Nordic Stabilization Task Force clearly built on previous Nordic experiences (joint military deployments in Macedonia, Bosnia) and structures (SHIRBRIG, NORDCAPS, the Nordic EU Battlegroup). The proposal also reflected the Nordic states' high profile in civilian crisis management and development assistance.

Despite pre-existing cooperation, the idea of a permanent comprehensive Nordic stabilization task force with four separate components has not been put into practice, although it was discussed and considered after the launch of the report. There are at least three likely reasons for this: Firstly, the strategic environment surrounding the Nordic region has changed dramatically: Russia's increasingly assertive posture, culminating in the annexation of Crimea, has pushed the Nordic states to prioritize national defence over expeditionary operations. Secondly, NATO – a central framework for Nordic crisis-management activities – has refocused on collective defence. Thirdly, most Nordic states already participate in several rapid-reaction forces, although these have not proven particularly effective for responding to the continuing need for contributions to civilian and military crisis management operations – as exemplified by the hitherto unused EU Battlegroups. Instead, flexible constellations have been seen as more important and relevant. Although the full proposal has not been realized, the Nordics cooperate in crisis management in various forms. These have included logistics cooperation in Afghanistan and later in Mali, joint capacity-building projects in support of the East African Standby Force (EASF) as well as in Georgia and Ukraine (together with the Baltic states). Cooperation in operations is also one of the five cooperation areas of the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO). Further, there has been some Nordic cooperation on the civilian side, especially regarding education and training.

Score: Red. There continues to be cooperation between the Nordic states in the area of crisis management, but the far-reaching comprehensive proposal for establishing a Nordic Stabilization Task Force has not been followed up.



Proposal 2: Nordic cooperation on surveillance of Icelandic airspace

'The Nordic countries should take on part of the responsibility for air surveillance and air patrolling over Iceland. Initially, the Nordic countries could deploy personnel to the Keflavik base and take part in the regular Northern Viking exercises that are organised by the Icelandic authorities. After this, they could take responsibility for some of the air patrols organised by NATO. Thus, Nordic cooperation on air patrolling could become an example of cooperation between NATO member states and partner countries that have signed Partnership for Peace (PfP) agreements.'

Air surveillance and air patrolling became a priority for Iceland in the wake of the departure of the US military from the country. Since then, air surveillance has been conducted by NATO countries, including Denmark and Norway. In 2014, Sweden and Finland conducted joint exercises along with NATO, but with unarmed planes. This proposal was generally well received in Iceland (with the exception of the Left Green Movement) but caused a lengthy political debate in Finland, where questions were raised about the nature of the exercise and its relation to NATO activities. The sharing of air surveillance information has expanded, with a political agreement through a November 2017 Memorandum of Understanding on the exchange of air surveillance data in peacetime. This proposal has been fulfilled at least partially, as the Nordics have conducted exercises around NATO's air surveillance and air policing over Iceland. However, the project is not ongoing, and the NATO countries have primary responsibility for providing such surveillance. The participation of the two non-NATO Nordics – Finland and Sweden – has been limited. Nonetheless, this proposal can be considered to have been successfully implemented, as joint exercises were conducted rather soon, even though the initial reaction in Sweden and Finland was that this could occur only in the distant future. Furthermore, we can note the general tendency towards greater Nordic cooperation in air surveillance; Sweden and Finland also participated in NATO's 2018 'Trident Juncture' exercise, which focused on the defence of the Nordic region.

Score: Shaded green. The task has been accomplished for all practical purposes, but Nordic efforts have been supplemented by an external body.



Proposal 3: Nordic maritime monitoring system

'A Nordic system should be established for monitoring and early warning in the Nordic sea areas. The system should in principle be civilian and be designed for tasks such as monitoring the marine environment and pollution and monitoring of civilian traffic. The existing military surveillance systems are not particularly designed to carry out these tasks. A Nordic maritime monitoring system could have two pillars, one for the Baltic Sea ("BalticWatch") and one for the North Atlantic, parts of the Arctic Ocean and the Barents Sea ("BarentsWatch"), under a common overall system.'

The proposal for a Nordic Maritime Monitoring System was inspired by work already underway when the Stoltenberg Report was published. Sweden and Finland had cooperated bilaterally in maritime monitoring since the early 2000s; an initiative to extend their cooperation by including further states was taken in 2008, resulting in the launch of Sea Surveillance Co-operation Baltic Sea (SUCBAS) in 2009. By September 2009, all the littoral states of the Baltic Sea except Russia had joined this cooperation, which aims to enhance maritime situational awareness through the exchange of relevant data, information and knowledge across national and organizational borders. Meanwhile, Norway took the first step towards developing a national monitoring and information system for its Northern sea areas and coastal areas in late 2009. The 'BarentsWatch' became operational in 2012.

However, unlike what was envisioned in the Stoltenberg Report, the various maritime monitoring systems with Nordic involvement have not been integrated into a joint framework. Moreover, Norway has not joined SUCBAS; and the other Nordic states do not participate in BarentsWatch, which has remained a national system. This sub-regional division illustrates how geography, which in many respects unites the Nordic states, can also divide them.

Comprehensive efforts to coordinate and enhance information sharing among maritime authorities – including coast guards and navies – have been taken primarily by the EU, which has established the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR) and pursued the idea of a Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE), including a military Maritime Surveillance (MARSUR) component. Finland, Sweden and Norway were all involved in a two-year pilot project (MARSUNO) to support the establishment of CISE. All three also participate in MARSUR.

Score: Shaded yellow. There is cooperation between some of the Nordic states, but mostly outside any Nordic structures; developments here have not advanced in the direction envisioned by the Stoltenberg Report.



Proposal 4: Maritime response force

'Once a Nordic maritime monitoring system is in place, a Nordic maritime response force should be established, consisting of elements from the Nordic countries' coast guards and rescue services. It should patrol regularly in the Nordic seas, and one of its main responsibilities should be search and rescue'

The Stoltenberg Report linked the idea of setting up a Nordic Maritime Response Force to the establishment of a Nordic Maritime Monitoring System (proposal 3) and a Nordic joint rescue coordination centre. However, neither the Nordic Maritime Monitoring System nor the joint rescue coordination centre has been realized as envisioned by the report. Hence, the preconditions for the Nordic Maritime Response Force have not been in place.

The primary motivation behind the proposal was the combination of increasing maritime traffic in Arctic waters and the limited ability of the relevant Nordic states – mainly Denmark, Iceland and Norway – to respond to the related challenges in terms of surveillance as well as search and rescue. Furthermore, the report urged the Nordic states to jointly develop icebreaker capacity for Arctic conditions. Although Nordic cooperation in these areas has not advanced as proposed in the Stoltenberg Report, these issues have been addressed within the framework of the Arctic Council, which includes all the Nordic states as well as Canada, Russia and the USA. In 2011, the eight Arctic states signed an agreement on aeronautical and maritime search and rescue, followed in 2013 by an agreement on cooperation on marine oil pollution preparedness and response. In 2015, the eight countries set up the Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF), aimed at enhancing practical cooperation among their coast guards, especially in the areas of search and rescue, emergency response and icebreaking. All five Nordic states are also members of the North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum (NACGF), established in 2007. In addition, there are various forms and formats of informal cooperation involving the Nordic coast guards.

Score: Shaded yellow. There is some cooperation on these matters involving all Nordic states, but unlike what was envisioned by Stoltenberg, this takes place under the auspices of the Arctic Council and, above all, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum.



Proposal 5: Satellite system for surveillance and communications

'By 2020, a Nordic polar orbit satellite system should be established in connection with the development of a Nordic maritime monitoring system. Such a satellite system could provide frequently updated real-time images of the situation at sea, which is essential for effective maritime monitoring and crisis management.'

The Stoltenberg Report's proposal for establishing a satellite system for surveillance and communications was ambitious, involving an area then characterized by relatively low levels of cooperation. The report rightly noted that 'satellite image data are essential to ensure continuous maritime monitoring, and satellites equipped with radars can provide information from the sea surface irrespective of weather and light conditions' and that 'a satellite system could be an important tool for communication between the various actors and components of a Nordic maritime monitoring system'. However, no substantial progress has been made on this proposal. For a short time, there was a slight increase in the coordination of Nordic views in the European Space Agency's programme committee for earth observations; otherwise, the ambition has been followed up by other means, including the Norwegian small satellites for ocean surveillance AISSat-1 (2010) and AISSat-2 (2014). Around the same time as the Stoltenberg Report was released, the EU emerged as a new and operative space actor in Europe, and Norway and Iceland joined the EU's Copernicus programme (2014–2020) alongside the Nordic EU member states.

Score: Red. There have been few developments in this policy area. Norwegian Foreign Minister Børge Brende told the Norwegian Storting in 2017 that the objectives underpinning this specific proposal could be best achieved through already existing structures. That also seems to be the Nordic consensus on the matter.



Proposal 6: Nordic cooperation on Arctic issues

'The Nordic countries, which are all members of the Arctic Council, should develop cooperation on Arctic issues focusing on more practical matters. The environment, climate change, maritime safety and search and rescue services are appropriate areas for such cooperation.'

The Arctic Council is the most efficient cooperation body in the Arctic, as stressed by the Stoltenberg Report. On the other hand, this is slightly at odds with the above-noted proposal, as the Arctic Council is based on the informal rule of 'no pre-cooking' of positions and that Nordic preparatory meetings might serve to estrange others.

Moreover, the Nordics differ somewhat in their priorities concerning the Arctic: Sweden and Finland are landlocked in relation to the Polar Arctic and have no constituency there. They can therefore often afford more uncompromising globalist views (on biodiversity, the environment and climate). Norway and the Kingdom of Denmark (Denmark proper, the Faroe Islands and Greenland), on the other hand, has put greater emphasis on human living conditions and finding a sustainable balance between exploiting resources and ensuring protection. As formulated by Norway, 'use of the Arctic is just as important as the protection of it'. Iceland's priorities are a mixture of those mentioned. Iceland prioritizes both sustainable use of natural resources and fighting climate change as well as security and commercial interests in the Arctic region. These differences in overall preferences have occasionally led to some Nordic agenda competition in the Arctic Council.

In addition, there has also been a 'beauty contest' among the Nordics: who is the most 'Arctic'? This may appear humorous, but it is also about foreign policy status and reputation. Finland's Alexander Stubb (Prime Minister 2014/15) promoted the 'Scandinavian Arctic', whereas the Danes have viewed the Polar Arctic as the 'real Arctic'. The Ilulissat meeting of the five Arctic coastal states – the USA, Canada, Russia, Norway and the Kingdom of Denmark – led to Icelandic protests as well as some consternation in Finland, Sweden and even Norway.

Another cooperation forum in the Arctic is the Barents Council. Even though all Nordic countries are members, this forum has largely dealt with bilateral Norwegian–Russian cooperation in the High North.

Also the NORDEFCO military exercises in the High North involving Finland, Norway and Sweden can be classified as 'Arctic', for example the 'Cross Border Training' aerial exercises.

Score: Shaded yellow. The significant accomplishments in Nordic Arctic cooperation should be credited to the Arctic Council (and the Barents Council plus the Arctic Coast Guard Forum) rather than the Nordics as such. In many instances, Nordic countries cooperate within the Arctic Council; however, it is only in the unfortunate event that the Arctic Council should cease functioning that there would be an opening for a purely Nordic effort.



Proposal 7: Nordic resource network to protect against cyber attacks

'A Nordic resource network should be established to defend the Nordic countries against cyberattacks. Its main task would be to facilitate exchange of experience and coordinate national efforts to prevent and protect against such attacks and provide advice to Nordic countries that are in the process of building capacity in this area. In the longer term, the resource network could develop and coordinate systems for identifying cyber threats against the Nordic countries.'

The proposal to establish a Nordic resource network to protect against cyber-attacks was innovative and original, indicating greater cooperation in an area where there had been limited cooperation prior to the 2009 report. In the ten years that have passed since then, the importance of the cyber field has become more evident and the need for such cooperation has increased. Developments here have included high-level declarations and low-level technical cooperation. Regarding the former, several joint Nordic political declarations have reiterated the need for closer cooperation on cyber security. In 2017, the Nordic governments announced that they would deepen their cyber-defence cooperation within the framework of NORDEFCO.

Also on the technical side there have been notable developments, in the public and the private spheres. Arguably the most important has been cooperation among the Nordic Computer Emergency Response Teams, acting as a resource multiplier and improving information sharing. Moreover, collaboration involving the various security services allows for some degree of specialization and mutual assistance, although there is still a potential for further improvement. Finally, GovCERT, a Nordic, graded communication network involving the Nordic national authorities, has become an important instrument for alerting, analysing and preparing responses to digital attacks. Enhanced cooperation remains a collective ambition: in 2018, the Nordic Council reiterated that 'the governments of the Nordic countries should cooperate more closely on cyber defence and include the Baltic countries in their efforts.'

It is difficult to assess the degree to which greater cooperation is the result of political initiatives stemming from the Stoltenberg Report, but it was discussed in Nordic meetings shortly after the launch of the report. Some of the most influential initiatives have been bottom-up technical collaborative ventures, where the level of cooperation is irregular, and personal relationships and individuals have played an important role. Differences among the Nordic states, particularly on how to organize the responsibilities of the various security services, can at times represent an obstacle to cooperation. Prioritizing cooperation at all levels – with the necessary funding, strategic direction and emphasis – could greatly expand Nordic cyber-security cooperation and capacities. Better linkage of bottom-up approaches with high-level statements is a necessary first step in that regard.

Score: Shaded green. Progress has been rapid in this area, but must be seen also in the context of EU and NATO efforts.



Proposal 8: Disaster response unit

'A Nordic disaster response unit should be established for dealing with large-scale disasters and accidents in the Nordic region and in other countries. The unit's main task would be to coordinate Nordic efforts as needed. It would maintain an overview of available equipment and personnel and establish a network made up of the many public and private organizations working in this field. The unit would set up Nordic groups/teams to meet specific needs, for example in the field of advanced search and rescue.'

Shortly after the publication of the Stoltenberg Report, a joint declaration was issued by the responsible ministers on strengthening existing cooperation in disaster management. This 2009 'Haga Declaration' raised the civil protection and emergency management agenda for the first time to the highest political level. The five ministries aimed to work together in driving Nordic cooperation forward in a field previously dominated by bottom-up, disaggregated actions.

The Haga II Declaration of 2013 put forth the ambitious goal of 'a robust Nordic region...free of frontiers'. To achieve this, it emphasizes the importance of exchanging national or Nordic-level experiences, working together to pre-empt and limit the consequences of accidents and natural disasters; joint capacity building and joint interventions are important; there is also a focus on ventures that are cost-effective.

Nordic cooperation in disaster management has been good ever since the foundation of NORDRED, the Nordic Cooperation on Civil Protection. It has been deepened by the Haga cooperation and has also coordinated the Nordic position internationally, strengthening the Nordic profile. One example is the 'Nordic Cooperation Forum', where officials representing the EU and NATO delegations and the European Commission meet four times a year to discuss current issues. There have also been recent developments in cooperation among the Nordic countries (all except Iceland) to ensure efficient information exchange on the prevention of violent extremism. Nordic cooperation has expanded since the time of the Stoltenberg Report, but no formal unit has been created to enable a shared Nordic response to crises and disasters.

Score: Yellow. There has been significant Nordic cooperation at various levels in this area, but no formal unit has been established, and response to disasters may occur at different levels (EU/NATO)



Proposal 9: War crimes investigation unit

'A joint investigation unit should be established to coordinate the Nordic countries' investigation of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by persons residing in the Nordic countries.'

A key condition for effective implementation of international criminal law at the national level is proper national legislation. In recent years, most of the Nordic countries have adopted major new items of domestic legislation on genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. This major undertaking contributes to a common Nordic position and strong footing in the shared international pledge for effective enforcement of international law. The Nordic countries have been among the principal supporters of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and effective enforcement of international criminal law. They have also actively worked together to support the ICC, for example in their joint statements to the UN General Assembly. We observe substantial cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs, and there is also considerable information exchange in relation to terrorism and police cooperation.

The idea of establishing a joint Nordic war crimes investigation unit represented an original and ambitious proposal, as cooperation between the Nordic countries in this field had been minimal, based solely on individual cases. The Stoltenberg Report rightly pointed out that this posed a new challenge for the Nordic countries, which separately have had very limited experience of such cases and thus lack expertise for dealing with them effectively. Thus, the 2009 report argued, a more concerted effort would be advantageous for the Nordic countries as regards investigation of such crimes. However, although further cooperation was seen as desirable, there has not been any real progress towards the creation of a joint Nordic war crimes investigation unit. Representatives of the Nordic countries have agreed to keep their collaboration in this field informal, within existing cooperative forums in the justice sector.

Score: Red. To our knowledge, little has come of this specific proposal.



Proposal 10: Cooperation between foreign services

'In countries and areas where no Nordic country has an embassy or consulate general, the countries could establish and run joint diplomatic and consular missions.'

Nordic countries have some kind of shared representation, in particular in the field of immigration, in nearly 100 locations around the world. They cooperate also in consular affairs, including issuing official travel advice, emergency preparedness and responding to crises that can affect Nordic citizens travelling or residing abroad. Officials report that this kind of cooperation tends to be well-functioning and efficient.

As for co-location of embassies and diplomatic missions, the potential advantages of cost efficiency through the sharing of infrastructure and administrative capacities are often highlighted. In addition, co-location can strengthen 'Nordic branding' and coordination and implementation of joint political initiatives. There have been some examples of joint diplomatic missions. The Nordic embassies in Yangon are fully integrated. In Berlin, all the five Nordic states have been co-located in the same premises since 1999. These two examples are the ones most frequently highlighted by Nordic government officials. In other locations, two or more Nordic states are co-located. For instance, in Dhaka, the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish embassies are co-located. More plans for co-location are underway. In New York, the UN delegations will be co-located from 2019.

Potential complications in realizing this proposal range from the desire of the individual countries to have political visibility and representation, to various legal regulations and constraints, cultural differences as well as numerous practical issues related to existing buildings, budgets etc. In 2018, Sweden proposed that a group be established to assess how to conduct co-location in the best and most effective manner, but to our knowledge, such a formal group has yet to be established.

Score: Shaded green. Cooperation between foreign services is a favourite example quoted by Nordic heads of governments regarding the values of Nordic cooperation. Progress is being made, but some major achievements (such as co-location in Berlin) were in place long before the Stoltenberg Report was issued. There seems to be considerable political will to do more in this area, but some of the practical challenges tend to be understated.



Proposal 11: Military cooperation on transport, medical services, education, materiel and exercise ranges

'The Nordic countries should strengthen their defence cooperation on medical services, education, materiel and exercise ranges. Several of these areas are also discussed in the report presented by the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish Chiefs of Defence.'

The Nordic countries have not yet established a formal *Nordic medical* unit as suggested in the 2009 Stoltenberg Report; however, the Nordic countries often try to achieve various synergies and collaboration in their international missions.

Nordic cooperation on transport capacity – the Nordic Cooperation on Tactical Air Transport (NORTAT) – was established in 2017 to enable joint transport of troops and equipment. NORTAT has been used, for instance for tactical air transport capability to the UN mission to Mali.

There has been greater *Nordic cooperation on military education* with a Professional Military Education Exchange Programme established in 2017, including the Royal Danish Defence College, the Finnish National Defence University, the Norwegian Defence University College, the Swedish Defence University as well as the Baltic Defence College. Further, joint training for peacekeeping operations has been established as well as greater cooperation and exercises between the Nordic air forces. There has also been some Nordic exchange of courses, where for instance Denmark offers training of military police to the other countries.

In the area of *joint procurement, maintenance and upgrading of materiel*, Nordic cooperation has been less successful. Historically there have been several failed Nordic defence procurement ventures, including the Swedish–Norwegian Archer Artillery project. Sweden has also unsuccessfully tried to sell both the Jas Gripen fighter plane and Swedish submarines to the other Nordic countries. This cooperation has been unproductive because the needs, industry structures, and overall strategic cultures of the Nordic countries have differed. However, within NORDEFCO, there is now a plan for joint procurement of a Nordic Combat Uniform system, NCU, involving collaboration among Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Although the Nordic countries have not established joint *firing and exercise ranges*, there has been extensive use of each other's airspace for joint exercises, and greater cooperation within the other military branches.

Finally, Nordic defence cooperation in NORDEFCO has changed: previously motivated by defence–economic reasons, it now revolves around security policy advantages and increased capacities. The new NORDEFCO Vision 2025 is far-reaching; it underlines that the Nordic countries

... will improve our defence capability and cooperation in peace, crisis and conflict. We ensure a close Nordic political and military dialogue on security and defence. Acknowledging our different security affiliations, we pursue an agenda based on joint security perspectives, efficient and cost-effective cooperation to strengthen our national defences and the ability to act together.

Score: Yellow. Some areas of Nordic cooperation on defence go beyond what was envisioned by the Stoltenberg Report, whereas cooperation in other areas, such as joint procurement, maintenance and upgrading of materiel, has been less successful.



Proposal 12: Amphibious unit

'A Nordic amphibious unit should be established based on existing units and the current cooperation between Sweden and Finland. The unit could be employed in international operations. In the longer term, the unit should develop its own Arctic expertise.'

The ambitious proposal of establishing a joint Nordic amphibious unit has not been realized. The proposal was intended to build on pre-existing cooperation between Finland and Sweden; although the Swedish–Finnish cooperation has been strengthened, no Nordic unit has been established. In 2015, a Swedish–Finnish Naval Task Group (SFNTG) was established, with the ambition of being fully trained and equipped to carry out maritime security and sea surveillance operations from 2023. Despite greater cooperation among the navies of the Nordic countries in recent years, the ambitions set out in the Stoltenberg Report have not been fully realized.

This proposal also highlighted the potential of such an amphibious unit to participate in international military operations. Instead, however, Finland, Norway and Sweden have participated, for instance, in the EU Operation Atalanta (EU NAVFOR Somalia) with their national vessels. Further, the legal hurdles facing a unit like that proposed in the Stoltenberg Report have not been addressed; the proposal is unlikely to be realized in the near future.

Score: Shaded yellow. Although bilateral Finnish–Swedish cooperation has been strengthened, no Nordic unit has been established.



Proposal 13: Declaration of solidarity

'The Nordic governments should issue a mutual declaration of solidarity in which they commit themselves to clarifying how they would respond if a Nordic country were subject to external attack or undue pressure.'

Specialization of military tasks among the Nordics should entail that a comprehensive Nordic defence will be more efficient and cost-effective. However, it also means that each national defence will be too specialized to handle its own defence – in turn necessitating mutually binding security guarantees.

The envisaged full specialization and division of labour have not taken place, and probably never will, given the states' differing geopolitical interests as well as their vested interests in national military services (army, navy, air force) – especially those that would be subject to curtailment or abandonment.

However, the foreign ministers agreed on a Nordic declaration of solidarity in 2011: 'Should a Nordic country be affected, the others will, upon request from that country, assist with relevant means.' As the text stands, this is surprisingly binding – actually with a stricter formulation than NATO's classic Article 5 on collective defence. However, the 2011 text preceding it emphasizes 'natural and man-made disasters, cyber and terrorist attacks'. There is no mention of a conventional attack or pressure, which was what the Stoltenberg Report envisioned (possibly because that text was formulated in 2011 in a less tense atmosphere).

At their meeting in Oslo in November 2018, the Nordic defence ministers formulated, as part of their 'Nordic Defence Cooperation Vision 2025', the following pledge: 'The Nordic countries will improve our defence capability and cooperation in peace, crisis and conflict.' Here the topic is obviously conventional attack or crisis, but there is no binding solidarity commitment. The verb 'improve' is sufficiently vague to avoid firm commitment.

The inherent difficulty of the task lies in its asymmetry: that the Nordic NATO members already have a security guarantee (Art. 5) and thus are less motivated than Finland or Sweden. Viewed in this light, the agreed formulations remain surprisingly ambitious. The EU mutual Defence Clause Article 42(7) and Solidarity Clause (Article 222) made the Nordic solidarity declaration less controversial for Sweden, which also saw the 2018 Nordic declaration as a way to connect to non-EU members Iceland and Norway.

Score: Yellow. The task formulated in the Stoltenberg Report has been partly fulfilled; there are no external 'competitors', since a 'Nordic solidarity clause' can only be formulated by themselves.

Concluding remarks

Assessing the 2009 Stoltenberg Report on Nordic cooperation ‘ten years on’ is an important task, but a difficult one. The purpose of the 2009 report was multiple: to identify potentials for cooperation, to trigger discussion and reflections on what could be done in the field of foreign, security and defence policy, as well as to offer a set of specific and tangible proposals. A proper assessment must take all these aims into account.

There is little doubt that the Stoltenberg Report was successful in expanding the horizon of what can be considered as relevant policy options for the Nordic countries, also in areas that were then seen as the ‘normal’ domestic Nordic policy agenda. The report also succeeded in stimulating and energizing discussions among specialists, and the wider public, about the future direction of Nordic cooperation. As such, it has made important contributions towards redefining the agenda of Nordic political and strategic cooperation. Thus, the spirit of the Stoltenberg Report stands as one of its most important contributions and legacy.

Some of the original proposals were context-specific, and related to issues important at the time. However, the report was also innovative and ahead of its time – for instance, as regards the ambitions of strengthening cooperation in the cyber-field, and in relation to crisis management. Of course, caution must be exercised in reviewing a report from 2009 through the lenses of the geopolitics of 2019: the world and the Nordic region have seen several highly significant changes in recent years, with shifts in attention, priorities and policies in all the Nordic countries. It is likely that the contributors to the Stoltenberg Report would have suggested different measures and steps, had they been writing today. Moreover, the less tense geopolitical situation in 2009 may have created an environment conducive to more innovative proposals.

As our scoreboard indicates, many of the proposals in the Stoltenberg Report have not (yet) been realized in the form they were presented in 2009. In this review, we have applied a strict grading scheme, applying the colour code ‘green’ only to instances of full implementation of an entire proposal. It should be borne in mind that non-implemented proposals have not necessarily been ignored or neglected. Some have been implemented in other formats, others have proven less feasible or have become less important. Lack of ‘full implementation’ on the score card should not be taken as signalling failure in Nordic cooperation as such.

From such a small sample, it is difficult to identify patterns as to what has caused success or failure. However, it seems that progress has been achieved especially in areas where there has been a clear understanding of the ‘value added’ by strengthening Nordic cooperation, and where this cooperation can fill a gap, instead of merely duplicating other forms of cooperation within other bilateral, regional or international formats. Cooperation is also most likely to succeed when it can build on pre-existing cooperative structures, and where there is a combination of political will and sufficient administrative capacity to ensure actual implementation. Initiatives that have a solid foundation or pre-history at the practical level are more likely to progress; this applies also to cooperation in areas where there are relatively few legal, practical and economic concerns. Nordic cooperation seems to be most successful when it can draw on the strengths of informal cooperation and can utilize the dense cooperation between administrations of the various countries, rather than seeking to establish specific Nordic units or new institutions. Additionally, as we saw in relation to the proposal for a solidarity declaration, the power of trust and the idea of shared values is a key feature that drives Nordic cooperation.

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