report 2/2025

Nuclear arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament in the Nordic region

Lessons from the past and possible routes ahead

Editors: Astrid Brodén, Thomas Jonter and Emma Rosengren

PUBLISHED BY THE SWEDISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS | UI.SE

report

Summary

This UI Report examines the history of nuclear disarmament advocacy in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden to highlight current and future possibilities for Nordic cooperation in this area. The chapters on Denmark and Norway show how both countries have managed to balance their engagement in both conventional and ambitious disarmament initiatives with their security commitments to NATO. Meanwhile, Finland has navigated its historic non-alignment policy by maintaining a pragmatic and gradualist approach to disarmament, whereas Sweden has advanced more comprehensive policies of nuclear disarmament that have diminished over time as the security context has shifted. Based on these findings, the report demonstrates how fostering Nordic cooperation in this area could leverage shared traditions and normative power to position the Nordics as a leading unit on nuclear disarmament and arms control, both within and outside of NATO. Against a security context of mounting nuclear threats, this could include more pragmatic initiatives around nuclear non-proliferation, risk reduction and de-escalation, utilizing existing disarmament infrastructure like the Stockholm Initiative and focusing especially on security in the Baltic and Arctic regions. Although limitations in scope and expertise prevented the inclusion of Iceland in this report, future studies are encouraged to address this important gap.

Authors: Astrid Brodén, Thomas Jonter, Emma Rosengren, Trine Rosengren Pejstrup, Tapio Juntunen and Kjølv Egeland

A report by the Swedish Institute of International Affairs and the Alva Myrdal Centre for Nuclear Disarmament, Uppsala University

UPPSALA UNIVERSITET
Alva Myrdal Centre for Nuclear Disarmament

THE SWEDISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Introduction

While the Nordic countries have a long history of cooperation, security has long been excluded. With all Nordic countries now part of NATO and evolving European security alternatives, defence and security cooperation has risen to the top of the agenda. This report suggests that increased attention should be paid to a policy area that has historically garnered strong public support in the Nordics and cemented the region as a leading international actor in this area of security – nuclear disarmament diplomacy. We use the term "nuclear disarmament" in a broad and pragmatic sense. While the goal remains the total elimination of all nuclear weapons, we recognize that the road to realizing this vision is paved with different obstacles defined by the changing circumstances of domestic discourses, geopolitical contexts, technological advancements and many other factors. Therefore, other tools, including non-proliferation and arms control efforts, must be added to the toolbox to allow states to gradually realize the aim of general and total disarmament. In the present security situation, for instance, such disarmament efforts can contribute to lowering the nuclear-threat level in the Nordic region by emphasizing risk reduction and de-escalation initiatives related to no-first-use policies.

This report is the result of a collaboration between the Program for Global Politics and Security at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI) and the Alva Myrdal Centre for Nuclear Disarmament (AMC) at Uppsala University. It is based on material presented by Trine Rosengren Pejstrup (Danish Institute for International Studies), Tapio Juntunen (Tampere University), Kjølv Egeland (NORSAR), and Astrid Brodén (UI), Emma Rosengren (UI) and Thomas Jonter (AMC) at a workshop with the Unit for Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Expert Control at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in November 2024. The report shows that while Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden have all been involved in international diplomacy on nuclear disarmament, their strategies and priorities have differed. The chapters by Rosengren Pejstrup and Egeland discuss how Denmark and Norway have historically balanced their NATO commitment and disarmament engagement in both more conventional and ambitious ways. The chapter by Juntunen demonstrates how Finland's disarmament efforts have been anchored in pragmatism and great (nuclear) power alignment, whereas Brodén, Rosengren and Jonter highlight how Sweden's disarmament ambition has shifted from more innovative and comprehensive initiatives to more cautious and irregular initiatives in the post-Cold War era. As such, while there is no fixed path forward for increased Nordic cooperation in this area, this report illustrates the abundance of experience and expertise in the field of nuclear disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation that can be consolidated and mobilized according to current Nordic security priorities.

The papers published in this report were written in the autumn 2024, in what now appears to be a different security context. With US President Donald Trump and his administration's increased scepticism towards international cooperation, we are now moving towards a new geopolitical situation. Today, political leaders in Europe are reconsidering US commitments and security guarantees, within and beyond

NATO. Against this background, there are strong incentives for Nordic states to strengthen and expand their cooperation on foreign and security policy. A common Nordic strategy on nuclear disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation could help reduce direct nuclear risks in the region and de-escalate greater global tensions, leveraging the considerable normative power of Nordic diplomacy and technical capacity of Nordic industry. In this spirit, this report examines the historic engagement of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden in nuclear disarmament to help identifying possible solutions for the future.

Denmark's Role in Nuclear Disarmament, Arms Control, and Non-Proliferation: Policies and Practices

Trine Rosengren Pejstrup, PhD student,
Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS)

This paper offers a brief examination of Denmark's nuclear arms control and disarmament policies, spanning from the Cold War to the present day. It explores Denmark's historical balancing act between NATO commitments and domestic anti-nuclear sentiment, as well as its contributions to disarmament initiatives. The paper highlights post-Cold War shifts, including renewed transatlantic alignments and challenges posed by emerging technologies. It concludes by discussing the opportunities and obstacles Denmark faces in advancing multilateral nuclear disarmament and arms control in the coming years.

A Balancing Act

Denmark's nuclear weapons policies have historically been a delicate balancing act.[1] Successive governments have sought to reconcile strong domestic anti-nuclear sentiments with the demands of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership. This duality has shaped what has been described as an enduring 'double approach' to nuclear policy.[2] Following World War II, Denmark, like other small European states, reassessed its policy of neutrality, which was seen as increasingly unreliable in the face of great power competition. As a result, Denmark joined NATO in 1949, which the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark Rasmussen described as a 'cornerstone in the fundamental structure of general security'.[3]

Unlike some NATO members, Denmark never considered developing an independent nuclear arsenal, aligning instead with the United States' (US) nuclear deterrence strategy.[4] In 1957, Denmark introduced self-imposed restrictions that included prohibiting the deployment and transit of nuclear weapons on its territory, reflecting strong domestic anti-nuclear sentiment.[5] This policy was intended to strike a balance between Denmark's commitments as a NATO member and widespread public opposition to nuclear arms. 1957 also saw the establishment that Denmark would remain nuclear weapons-free 'under prevailing circumstances' meaning outside times of crisis and war.[6] At a NATO ministerial meeting in 1957, where the US had placed the issue of storing tactical nuclear warheads

[1] Olesen MR (2018) To Balance or Not to Balance: How Denmark Almost Stayed out of NATO, 1948–1949. Journal of Cold War Studies 20(2): 63–98.
[2] Vestergaard C (2014) Going non-nuclear in the nuclear alliance: the Danish experience in NATO. *European Security* 23(1): 106–117.
[3] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (1949) Speech by Gustav Rasmussen, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (1949), at the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington D.C., 4 April 1949. Available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/history_pdf/20161130_19490404_Denmark-s.pdf (accessed 2025-02-14).
[4] van Dassen L and Wetter A (2006) Nordic nuclear non-proliferation policies: different traditions and common objectives. In: Herolf G, Bailes AJK and Sundelius B (eds) The *Nordic Countries and the European Security and Defence Policy*. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, pp. 252–266.
[5] Jakobsen PV (2020) Denmark in NATO, From laggard to leader to loyal? In: Testoni M (ed) *NATO and Transatlantic Relations in the 21st Century*, London: Routledge, pp. 85–104.
[6] Petersen N (1987) Denmark and NATO 1948–1987. *Forsvarsstudier* 2. Oslo: Forsvarshistorisk forskningssenter.

and deploying intermediate-range missiles in Western Europe on the agenda, Danish Prime Minister Hansen referred to Denmark's 'well-known' position of not accepting tactical nuclear weapons on Danish territory 'under prevailing circumstances'.[7] It has later been argued that this phrasing has allowed Denmark to maintain flexibility in its nuclear weapons policy, as the policy could be adjusted if the 'prevailing circumstances' changed.[8] Inconsistencies in Denmark's nuclear policies became evident throughout this time. While the official stance rejected the presence of nuclear weapons, Denmark tacitly accommodated US demands throughout the 1950s and 1960s. For example, it allowed the US to station nuclear weapons in Greenland and permitted nuclear-armed ships to visit Danish ports.[9]

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Denmark demonstrated a notable political commitment to disarmament and arms control. This was reflected in the appointment of a dedicated disarmament minister, Kristen Helveg Petersen, and the establishment of an independent disarmament office within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[10] The Social Liberal government at the time sought to position Denmark as an active and ambitious participant in disarmament and arms control discussions between the US and the Soviet Union.[11] In 1969, Denmark further cemented its stance by becoming the fourth country to ratify the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) shortly after it opened for signature.

During the lead-up to NATO's 1979 double-track decision on deploying intermediate-range missiles, Denmark, like Norway, was hesitant about endorsing the dual-track approach. Both countries were particularly concerned about ensuring the program did not directly affect their own region.[12] Similarly, NATO's decision to modernise its nuclear strike force in the 1980s led to protests in several Western European countries.[13] In Denmark, movements like 'Nej til Atomvåben' and 'Kvinder for Fred' reflected the widespread popular opposition to nuclear weapons.[14] From 1982 to 1986, Denmark was also a persistent 'footnote state' in NATO.[15] During this period, a left-centre majority in parliament compelled the liberal-conservative government to append dissenting footnotes to NATO communiqués. These footnotes signalled Denmark's opposition to the deployment of intermediate-range missiles and the US' Strategic Defense Initiative.[16] Although the footnote policy compelled the Danish government to articulate its national disarmament agenda, it was described as

[7] Jakobsen (2020).
[8] Kierulf J (2014) *Nedrustning: i et folkeretligt perspektiv*. Jurist- og Økonomforbundets Forlag
[9] Danish Institute of International Affairs (1997) *Grønland under den kolde krig: dansk og amerikansk udenrigspolitik 1945–1968*, vol. 1 and 2. Copenhagen: Dansk udenrigs- politisk institut.
[10] Folketinget (n.d.). Kristen Helveg Petersen. Available at: https://www.ft.dk/medlemmer/fhvmf/k/kristen-helveg-petersen
[11] Jakobsen (2020).
[12] Special Meeting of Foreign and Defence Ministers (1979) The "double- track" decision on theatre nuclear forces, Brussels, 12 December. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27040.htm (accessed 2025-02-14).
[13] McNaugher T and Parker T (1980) Modernizing NATO's long-range theater nuclear forces, RAND Corporation, October 1980. Available at: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/papers/2008/P6486.pdf (accessed 2025-02-14).
[14] Mariager R (2013) Surveillance of peace movements in Denmark during the Cold War. *Journal of Intelligence History* 12(1): 60–75.
[15] Folketinget (n.d.).
[16] Petersen N (2019) 'Footnoting' as a political instrument: Denmark's NATO policy in the 1980s. In: Risso L (ed) NATO at 70: A Historiographical Approach. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 295—317.

having limited practical impact within the alliance.[17]

Shifting Priorities Post-Cold War

Denmark's post-Cold War efforts in the field of multilateral nuclear disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation can generally be described as modest.[18] Denmark did, in 1998, ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, underscoring its dedication to prohibiting nuclear tests globally. However, the 1990s' renewed focus on transatlantic relations in Danish security and defence politics saw a turn away from nuclear disarmament as part of nuclear non-proliferation efforts.[4] Following the First Gulf War, Denmark adopted an activist foreign policy approach, which some analysts attribute to the aftermath of the footnote policy, a stance that had diminished Denmark's influence within NATO.[19] The 2004 agreement by the Danish Government to permit the US to upgrade its radar systems in Greenland, tied to the development of the US national missile defence system, underscored this renewed transatlantic alignment.[20] The decision faced criticism from experts in Denmark and abroad, as well as from residents of Greenland, who expressed concerns that the US missile defence initiative might escalate global nuclear tensions, potentially fuelling a new arms race and exacerbating proliferation risks.[21]

The emphasis on transatlantic alignment continues to shape Denmark's security and defense policies, underscoring its strategic commitment to NATO and close cooperation with the US. In 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and NATO also jointly organised the 17th Annual NATO Conference on, Arms Control, Disarmament, and Weapons of Mass Destruction Non-Proliferation in Copenhagen.[22] In 2023, Denmark struck a historic 10-year defence deal with the US that allows US troops and equipment to be based permanently on Danish soil.[23] The new deal ends this 70-year ban, giving the US access to three air bases at Karup, Skrydstrup and Aalborg. Evolving foreign and security strategies of successive Danish governments reflect a shift in the political attention to and prioritisation of disarmament in recent years. The Foreign and Security Policy Strategy of the Social Democratic government from 2022 stated that Denmark will once again 'fight for disarmament and arms control,' arguing that Denmark 'must promote modern international agreements that reduce the risk of military escalation between countries in a world with ever more weapons.'[24] However, the Foreign and Security Policy Strategy from 2023 of the current coalition

[17] Olesen (2018).
[18] Kierulf (2014).
[19] Vestergaard C (2014) Going non-nuclear in the nuclear alliance: the Danish experience in NATO. European Security 23(1): 106–117.
[20] US Department of State (2004) Agreement to amend and supplement the 1951 Agreement on the Defense of Greenland, Igaliku, 6 August. Available at: http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/or/35269.htm (accessed 2025-02-14).
[21] Kierulf (2014).
[22] North Atlantic Treaty Organization (2021) 17th Annual NATO Conference on Arms Control, Disarmament and Weapons of Mass Destruction Non-Proliferation, Press Release, 128, 3 September. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_186281.htm (accessed 2025-02-14).
[23] Danish Ministry of Defence (2023) New agreement strengthens defence cooperation between Denmark and the United States, 19 December. Available at: https://www.fmn.dk/en/news/2023/new-agreement-strengthens-defense-cooperation-between-denmark-and-the-united-states/ (accessed 2025-02-14).
[24] Danish Government (2022) Foreign and Security Policy Strategy.

government does not mention disarmament, arms control, or non-proliferation.[25]

At the United Nations (UN), Denmark continues to emphasise that it 'welcomes endeavours such as the Stockholm Initiative' focused on advancing nuclear disarmament through practical steps and bridge-building between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states.[26] However, it has a history of rejecting a number of initiatives from the UN on nuclear disarmament, for example the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). When the TPNW negotiations started at the UN headquarters in New York, Nikki Haley, the then US ambassador to the UN, organised a protest meeting outside the door. The Danish ambassador to the UN stood right behind her.[27] Since then, Denmark has not signed or ratified the TPNW. Instead, Denmark has reiterated that it supports the retention and potential use of nuclear weapons as part of NATO's nuclear deterrence policy. In a parliamentary committee in 2021, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Kofod, confirmed that while there is no legal barrier to Denmark's accession to the TPNW, it would go against NATO 'solidarity'.[28]

Denmark has, however, warned of the serious challenges that the NPT is facing, arguing that its future viability is threatened. During the NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in August 2023, Denmark argued that it 'would like to see a world without nuclear weapons develop', and that there are 'valuable steps that can be taken to move in that direction', including on risk reduction, increased transparency and nuclear disarmament verification.[29]

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead for Danish Disarmament Diplomacy

Looking ahead, Denmark faces both significant challenges and valuable opportunities in shaping its approach to nuclear disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation. With rising security concerns pushing military spending to the forefront of national policy, one pressing challenge to advancing nuclear disarmament is public attention and political prioritisation. The public attention given to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation has all but disappeared in recent years in Denmark.[4] At the same time, there is significant public support for increased military spending in Denmark, particularly in light of the rising security concerns following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. An opinion poll conducted by Epinion for Danmarks Radio shows significant public support for the increased defence

[25] Danish Government (2023) Foreign and Security Policy Strategy.
[26] Danish Government (2020) Statement by H.E. Mr. Martin Bille Hermann, Permanent Representative of Denmark, General Debate First Committee of the 75th UN General Assembly, New York, 19 October. Available at: https://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/1com/1com20/statements/19Oct_Denmark.pdf (accessed 2025-02-14).
[27] Sengupta S and Gladstone R (2017) United States and Allies Protest U.N. Talks to Ban Nuclear Weapons. New York Times 27 March. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/27/world/americas/un-nuclear-weapons-talks.html (accessed 2025-02-14).
[28] Udenrigsudvalget (2021) Åbent samråd i Udenrigsudvalget om situationen i Damaskus samt Aleppo og Hassakah m.v., 25 June. Available at: https://mobiltv.ft.dk/embed/20201/URU/td.1793151/1h19m45s (accessed 2025-02-14).
[29] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2023) General Statement-First Preparatory Committee for the 11th Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, 1 August. Available at: https://oestrig.um.dk/en/news/news-page (2025-02-14).

spending that a broad political majority agreed upon in 2024.[30]

Most recently, Danish politicians have vowed that Denmark will become a 'frontrunner on the defence technological stage' in areas such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing.[31] These advanced technologies have the potential to enhance nuclear capabilities, including in areas such as missile defence systems, nuclear command and control systems, and the refinement of nuclear deterrence strategies. In 2023, the Niels Bohr Institute in Copenhagen was selected to host the new NATO Center for Quantum technologies. This is part of NATO's Defense Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic, which 'aims to keep the NATO countries technological edge by promoting new and disruptive technologies in the alliance'.[32]

Nonetheless, there are opportunities for further disarmament engagement from a Danish perspective, including a strengthened collaboration with other Nordic NATO members to draw on existing lessons-learned by these states.[33] This includes Norway, which has long balanced NATO membership and active disarmament engagements, as well as Finland and Sweden, who have recently joined NATO and are now in the process of determining how this affects their disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation efforts.[34] Furthermore, as Denmark prepares for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2025-2026 term, advocating for a 'more secure, peaceful, and equitable world'[35], it has a unique opportunity to support multilateral disarmament. Denmark can leverage its soft power, reputation as a peaceful nation, and pragmatic diplomacy to act as a bridge-builder. By focusing on facilitating dialogue and maintaining open channels of communication, Denmark can play a significant role in fostering cooperation within disarmament and arms control.

In summary, Denmark's evolving foreign and security policies reflect a complex balancing act between transatlantic alignment, support for nuclear disarmament initiatives, and its commitment to NATO's nuclear deterrence strategy. While Denmark has contributed to multilateral disarmament efforts, including its early ratification of the NPT, its policies have also been marked by contradictions, such as tacit acceptance of nuclear deployments in Greenland. In the post-Cold

[30] Henriksen M, Lindegård Hansen R and Nygaard JA (2024) Troels Lund Poulsen: Forsvaret skal have endnu flere penge. Danmarks Radio, 11 October. Available at: https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/troels-lund-poulsen-forsvaret-skal-have-endnu-flere-penge (accessed 2025-02-14).

[31] Greenfort C and Flemming Hansen N (2022) Konservative og Dansk Erhverv: Nato-satsning kan blive et nyt eksporteventyr. Altinget, 10 March. Available at: https://www.altinget.dk/forsvar/artikel/konservative-og-dansk-erhverv-nato-satsning-kan-blive-et-nyt-eksporteventyr (accessed 2025-02-14).

[32] Danish Ministry of Defence (2023) NATO and Denmark are opening a Center for Quantum Technologies in Copenhagen, 29 September. Available at: https://www.fmn.dk/en/news/2023/nato-and-denmark-are-opening-a-center-for-quantum-technologies-in-copenhagen/ (accessed 2025-02-14).

[33] Rosengren Pejstrup T (2024) Challenges to multilateral disarmament; Global perspectives on UN disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. Danish Institute for Disarmament Research. Available at: https://www.diis.dk/en/research/trust-deficit-and-rising-militarisation-challenge-un-disarmament-efforts

[34] Jonter T and Rosengren E (2024) Advocating nuclear disarmament as NATO members – lessons from the past and possible routes ahead for Finland and Sweden. H-Diplo RJISSF Policy Roundtable III(2).

[35] Denmark for the UN Security Council 2025-2026, https://dk4unsc.dk.

War era, Denmark's emphasis has shifted towards transatlantic alignment and technological innovation, underscoring new challenges and opportunities. As Denmark prepares for a role on the UN Security Council, it has the potential to reinvigorate its commitment to nuclear disarmament by leveraging its diplomatic strengths and collaborating with Nordic allies to navigate the increasingly complex landscape of global arms control.

Finnish Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Diplomacy: The Dawn of Pragmatic Gradualism?

Tapio Juntunen, Tampere University

Finland's nuclear disarmament policy has long been characterized by strong small state liberalist tendencies. This has been visible in the way Finland has anchored its nuclear disarmament policy in two key principles. First, the policy has built upon the pragmatic acknowledgement that any genuine progress in nuclear disarmament is unlikely to happen without the consensus of leading great (nuclear) powers. Thus, Finland has rarely been among the spearheads demanding more progressive disarmament initiatives or acute actions from the leading nuclear powers, especially if those actions exist outside of the conventional Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) frame.

Secondly, the inherent pragmatism of Finnish nuclear disarmament diplomacy has traditionally been balanced by more institutionalist and normative ambitions. This is visible in the narratives that aim to highlight Great Power responsibility in enhancing the cohesion of the NPT regime, as well as the general acceptability it enjoys among the society of states. This line of thought regards Great Powers as the main actors for enhancing international stability and mitigating the negative repercussions of unconstrained nuclear weapons buildup and consequences of deterrence policy. In this equation, smaller states are usually destined to have a bridge-building role in facilitating both Great Power consensus and, amid Great Power rapprochement, the quest for common ground among hegemonic and counter-hegemonic camps within the field of nuclear disarmament diplomacy.[36]

Although the two principles or tendencies are not always easy to reconcile with each other, in practice they have amalgamated into a policy of nuclear disarmament gradualism. This policy has been long anchored in the key goal of supporting the functionality and cohesion of the nuclear non-proliferation regime as the cornerstone of the global nuclear order. Nuclear disarmament has been understood as an incremental process led by the five nuclear weapon states recognized by the NPT. Since the end of the Cold War, regardless of government composition, Finland has consistently avoided active participation in more progressive nuclear disarmament initiatives, such as the process that led to the TPNW.[37]

Another notable feature of the Finnish nuclear disarmament profile has been its continuity and stability. Although the policy line has not been completely static since its initial articulation in the 1950s and solidification during the 1960s, the continuities are still quite significant. This is especially evident when one considers the overall transformation of Finnish foreign policy, from the aspirant neutralism during the Cold War era, through the period of deepening military alignment in the 2010s, to the fully fledged transatlanticism brought about by Finland's NATO membership in 2023. Finally, it must be noted that Finland's traditional pragmatic nuclear disarmament policy and its broader transatlantic foreign policy orientation are both currently under

[36] Ritchie N (2024) A contestation of nuclear ontologies: resisting nuclearism and reimagining the politics of nuclear disarmament. *International Relations* 38(4): 492–515.

[37] See Juntunen T and Rosengren E (2024) Naturalizing nuclear deterrence: A comparative analysis of Finnish and Swedish discourses on nuclear weapon politics, 2016–22. *Nordic Review of International Studies* 3(2): 24–25.

pressure due to the increasing complexity, multipolarisation and competitiveness inherent to the third nuclear era[38], not to mention the potential U.S. decoupling from Europe under President Donald Trump's second administration.[39]

Origins of Finnish nuclear disarmament pragmatism

The first outlines of Finland's nuclear disarmament policy can be traced back to President J.K. Paasikivi's thinking (in power from 1946 to 1956). Paasikivi viewed nuclear disarmament initiatives typical of the era, some of which were heavily ideological, with suspicion. Paasikivi feared that if Finland was forced to take a stance on issues related to nuclear weapons and disarmament, this could easily compromise Finland's already precarious international status.[40] Paasikivi's reasoning was grounded in the fact that Finland was effectively tied to the Soviet Union's sphere of influence following the Second World War. Thus, in his view, any major profiling in nuclear disarmament matters would have either led to Finland's effective alignment with Soviet Union interests or in a major diplomatic confrontation with its eastern superpower without any guarantees of foreign support.

During his presidency, Paasikivi, who generally valued a prudent and circumspect approach to Finland's Post-War international affairs, thought that Finland's stance on nuclear disarmament should be tied to the broader foundations of its foreign policy. Although the principles were not publicized at this stage, Paasikivi's diary notes show that they were based on three discernible pillars: that Finland should only support arms control and disarmament initiatives that (i) relied on the legitimacy provided by the international system built around the UN, (ii) sufficiently accommodated the interests of both/all major powers (or were based on the interpretation of serving such shared interests), and (iii) were based on recognized international norms, such as the UN Charter's condemnation of aggressive war. This would ensure that Finland's actions would not be clearly directed against any state or group of states.[41]

Paasikivi's formulations were not articulated in official doctrine, however, due to the difficult international status of the country before the so-called Geneva spirit in mid-1950s, which comprised a shorter turn to more relaxed period in great power politics. This phase also led to Finland finally being granted UN member status in 1955, which also meant that Finland had to formulate a publicly discernible nuclear disarmament policy. Around the same time, the emergence of second-wave nuclear disarmament initiatives in the UN and the cracks that developed in the bipolar international system provided more room for manoeuvre also for non-aligned and neutral states.[42]

During the latter half of the 1950s, under the leadership of newly elected president Urho

[38] Futter A, Castelli L, Hunter C, Samuel O, Silvestri F and Zala, B (2025) *The Global Third Nuclear Age: Clashing Visions for a New Era in International Politics*. New York: Routledge.
[39] See for example Fella T (2025) "Europe and America: Time for Serious Decoupling". *The National Interest* February 21. Available at: https://nationalinterest.org/blog/politics/europe-and-america-time-for-serious-de-coupling (accessed 2025-03-10).
[40] Paasikivi JK (1985) *J. K. Paasikiven päiväkirjat 1944–1956. Toinen osa 25.4.1949–10.4.1956*. Edited by Blomsted Y and Klinge M. Porvoo – Helsinki – Juva: WSOY, pp. 199, 201, 399.
[41] Ibid.
[42] See Lottaz P and Iwama Y (eds) (2023) *Neutral Europe and the Creation of the Nonproliferation Regime 1958–1968*. London: Routledge.

Kekkonen, Paasikivi's first pillar was condensed into the principle of non-interference in matters that would likely lead to conflicting interests between the two major powers. Finland's geopolitical position as Soviet Union's potential defensive buffer zone increased the stakes of keeping a safe enough distance from great power tensions, including nuclear weapons politics and disarmament diplomacy.

Understanding the Cold War legacy

As Paasikivi's predecessor, Kekkonen also avoided initiatives on nuclear disarmament during his first term (1958–62). For example, Kekkonen's reactions to the proposal for a Central European Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (the so-called Rapacki Plan) in the winter of 1957–58 were evasive at best. Around the same time, the plans to establish multilateral nuclear forces (MLF) within NATO created a major latent threat to Finland's security due to the obligations stated in the Finno-Soviet Treaty of 1948. Indeed, Moscow pressured Kekkonen to take a more active role in nuclear arms control matters and further Soviet interests within the region by propagating the already debunked concept of Nordic neutrality. Kekkonen felt obliged to respond to this challenge, if not proactively, then at least as autonomously as possible. This increased Kekkonen's interest in harnessing nuclear arms control as an instrument to achieve a more active (and independent, relatively speaking) foreign policy posture.[43]

In the early 1960s, Finland made its first nuclear arms control initiative when Kekkonen presented his proposal for a Nordic nuclear-weapon-free zone (NNWFZ) in May 1963. In terms of content, Kekkonen's initiative combined elements from previous proposals by Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki and Swedish Foreign Minister Östen Undén. That said, the primary objective of the deliberately vague proposal was about steering the international discussion agenda onto paths more favourable to Finland, signalling national security concerns, and, ultimately, to remind the great powers of the value of sub-regional military disengagement in the Nordic region for European stability.

As was expected, Kekkonen's initiative did not resonate favourably in NATO. Norway and Denmark were known to exercise their own nuclear option policy, recognizing it as part of what later became known as the model of Nordic Balance.[44] Even Sweden, which had not yet abandoned its secretly prepared national nuclear weapons program,[45] did not support official discussions on the subject. In any case, Kekkonen's 1963 NNWFZ initiative served as a watershed proposal that initiated Finland's nuclear disarmament policy activity during the Cold War era. Although being in effect a diplomatic non-starter, the NNWFZ initiative was subsequently developed in several waves both in its substance and means of

[43] Suomi J (1992) *Kriisien aika. Urho Kekkonen 1956–1962*. Helsinki: Otava, p. 82.

[44] In essence, the Nordic Balance model was based on the idea that Norway's and Denmark's options within NATO, as well as Sweden's genuine neutrality and latent possibility of closer alignment with the west, served as important counterweights against Moscow's ability to pressurize Helsinki away from its precarious aspirant neutralism. In Finland the model was usually deemed too mechanistic, leaving little agency for Finland itself. Thus, Finnish foreign policy elite usually tended to discuss about more delicate and nuanced dynamics of Nordic stability and interconnectedness. See Brundtland AO (1966) The Nordic Balance: Past and Present. *Cooperation and Conflict* 1(4): 30–63; cf. Nyberg R (1983) *Pohjolan turvallisuus ja Suomi. Ydinaseiden vähenevä merkitys*. Jyväskylä: Gummerrus, pp. 136–140.

[45] See Jonter T (2016) *The Key to Nuclear Restraint. The Swedish Plans to Acquire Nuclear Weapons During the Cold War*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

promoting it. With the initiative, a genuinely new tool was embedded in Finland's foreign policy, one that did not fit into the retreating small-state approach of the Paasikivi era.

In the practical reasoning behind Kekkonen's original initiative, it is noteworthy that elements related to its timing and political positioning aimed to distance Finland from Soviet interests – despite of the fact that the initiative itself originated in Moscow. The 1963 NNWFZ initiative also grounded diplomatic non-starter initiatives into Finland's foreign policy repertoire – the realistic prospects for the implementation of the initiative were weak, especially due to the known sensitivities of Norway and Denmark's NATO memberships. But on a more principled and formal level, Kekkonen's initiative and its associated motives could be considered genuine and legitimate in an otherwise rather hostile security environment. From the outset, the NNWFZ initiative also emphasized the responsibility of the Great Powers to engage in what could be conceptualized as sub-regional security dilemma sensibility.[46] This policy had both structural and psychological features, the latter of which were particularly emphasized during President Mauno Koivisto's term in the 1980s. In simplified terms, it was about making visible the interdependencies between the stability of the Nordic region and the broader European balance of power policy. This also involved emphasizing the interdependence of the Nordic countries' security policy solutions instead of a more mechanistic Nordic balance model.

During the third and fourth waves of the NNWFZ policy from the mid-1970s to the end of the Cold War in 1991, maintaining and strengthening the practical connection between the Nordic countries gradually became the main objective of the policy. This led to almost complete instrumentalization of Finland's regional nuclear arms control policy. Amidst the euro-missile crisis, public interest in the NNWFZ initiative grew in all Nordic countries.[47] This created a counterintuitive puzzle for President Koivisto and key officials in the administration: should the inter-Nordic discussion on the NNWFZ become too heated in other Nordic capitals, especially in Denmark and Norway, this might backfire as the initiative itself would be perceived as a diplomatic burden for Finland.[48]

Thus, Finland would lose an integral foreign policy instrument and a crucial source of tacit knowledge on nuclear weapons and disarmament diplomacy, and a tool to engage in meaningful inter-Nordic discussion on key strategic issues. The solution to this dilemma was to steer discussions on the NNFWZ away from high political limelight towards established negotiations between key officials from all Nordic countries.[49] Eventually, by the end of the Euromissile crisis, the NNWFZ initiative became habitualized into an almost permanent project in Finland's foreign policy. It is from

[46] Cf. Wheeler NJ (2018) *Trusting Enemies: Interpersonal Relationships in International Conflict*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[47] Juntunen T (2021) 'We Just Got to Keep Harping on About It': Anti-Nuclearism and the Role of Sub-Regional Arms Control Initiatives in the Nordic Countries During the Second Cold War. In: Gassert, P et al. (eds) *The INF Treaty of 1987: A Reappraisal*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, pp. 215–236.

[48] See for example Mauno Koivisto's Presidential Archives, report group 24 Ulkopoliittiset selvitykset lokakuu 1981–1982, a report by Jaakko Kaleva and Klaus Törnudd from a Pugwash seminar in Norway, "Nordic Initiatives for Arms Limitation in Europe (18.5.–20.5.1982)".

[49] See Juntunen T (2024) *Varjonyrkkeilyä Pohjolassa: Ydinaseongelman alueellinen hallinta Suomen ulkopolitiikassa kylmän sodan aikakaudella*. Diss. Tampere: Tampere University Press, Chapter 8 and 9.

this practice-theoretical perspective that the longevity of the NNWFZ policy becomes understandable, even though the prospects for its establishment remained very narrow, except for the very last years of the Cold War. Ultimately, the NNWFZ initiative was quietly buried as the bipolar system of the Cold War collapsed and the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991.

Sticky habits: changes and continuity in the Post-Cold War nuclear disarmament posture

It must be noted, though, that Finland's Cold War disarmament profile was not cynical pragmatism all the way down. President Kekkonen was one of the first state leaders who discussed the potentially destabilizing effect of second-generation cruise missile technology in 1978, when he announced the second, more detailed, version of the NNWFZ initiative. Moreover, Kekkonen's successor President Koivisto was especially concerned about the prospect of nuclear weapons buildup in northern sea areas after the achievement of the INF Treaty and its focus on land-based missile systems (a concern shared by Norway at the time). Moreover, Koivisto often discussed the irrationality of excessive nuclear weapon buildup and the dangerous normalization of concepts such as limited nuclear war.

The latter was evident in Koivisto's decision to vote in favour of the resolution prohibiting the first use of nuclear weapons at the UN in 1983. Although the vote could easily be interpreted as conflicting with NATO's doctrine, Koivisto highlighted the moral reasoning underpinning Finland's disarmament pragmatism:

> We do not interfere in great power conflicts, as we base our positions on our own security interests and principles. We cannot always agree with all foreign powers, nor can we always remain silent in the face of disagreement. […] If we have taken a stance for principled reasons, we do not want to interpret our position in this matter as interference in the conflicts of great powers, but rather as maintaining our own stance. An example of this was the issue of the use of nuclear weapons. Since we are against all use [of nuclear weapons], we are also against first use.[50]

That said, the end of the Cold War significantly diminished Finland's emphasis on and efforts towards nuclear disarmament diplomacy. As mentioned, the NNFWZ project was quietly buried in 1991, just when the intra-Nordic administrative working group had come up with a consensus on the ground proposal for the establishment of such a zone. When observing the level of change in overall foreign policy during the immediate post-Cold War era, Finland probably had the most significant reorientation of its international standing among Nordic countries. Although Finland had just restored its neutrality policy by agreeing with the newly formed Russian Federation on the termination of the FCMA Treaty in January 1992, as early as March 1992 the Finnish government decided to apply for membership in the European Community, following Sweden's lead on the

[50] Koivisto M (1995) *Historian tekijät. Kaksi kautta II*. Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä, p. 70. Original in Finnish: "Me emme sekaannu suurvaltojen välisiin ristiriitoihin, kun lähdemme kannanotoissamme omista turvallisuuseduistamme ja omista periaatteistamme. Aina emme voi olla samaa mieltä kaikkien ulkovaltojen kanssa emmekä me aina erimielisyyden sattuessa voi vaietakaan. YK:ssa usein kannat kirjataan ja vaihtoehdot ovat vähissä. Jos olemme olleet jotakin mieltä periaatteellisista syistä, me emme halua tulkita omaa kannanottoamme tässä asiassa sekaantumiseksi suurvaltojen eturistiriitoihin, vaan pysymiseksi omalla kannallamme. Tällainen oli esimerkiksi kysymys ydinaseiden käytöstä. Kun olemme kaikkea käyttöä vastaan, me olemme myös ensikäyttöä vastaan."

issue. Finland eventually joined the European Union in 1995, a move that increased the need for more sophisticated knowledge on integration policy, an issue that partly replaced the Cold War era policy focus on arms control issues.

During the 2000s, Finland started to enhance its profile in conventional arms control. Finland's role in achieving the Arms Trade Treaty as one of its original co-authors is a useful example of this. In 2009, Finland also decided to join the Ottawa Treaty prohibiting Anti-Personnel Mines, albeit only after considerable domestic debate.[51] Finland's ambivalent approach to conventional arms control was accentuated by the fact that it opted not to sign the Oslo Convention prohibiting Cluster Munitions, mostly due to Finland's tradition of maintaining credible national deterrence. The decision not to abolish the conscription-based army as the backbone of Finland's comprehensive security approach, despite of the changed post-Cold War security environment, further underlines the salient role of defence policy considerations in Finland's overall security and foreign policy.

When it comes to nuclear disarmament policy, Finland has maintained its profile as a stern supporter of the NPT regime. This has been especially evident in Finland's alignment with leading nuclear powers and a majority of NATO members in the process that led to the signing of the TPNW at the UN in 2017.[52] Already in the negotiation phase in 2016, Finland decided to opt-out from the process, unlike Sweden who decided to join the negotiations. In part, this decision echoed Finland's earlier decisions to not join the New Agenda Coalition in the late 1990s and to keep a hands distance to the so-called humanitarian initiative, especially during the later stages of the process. Instead, Finland has profiled in supporting various NPT-tied middle- ground initiatives such as the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament,[53] the US led CEND-initiative (Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament),[54] and various other informal groups such as the unofficial continuation of the GICNT (Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism)[55] network after Russia's war against Ukraine and the IPNDV network[56] on increasing expertise on nuclear disarmament verification.

Moreover, Finland has been an active facilitator of the NPT review cycle. In 2011–15 Finland hosted the pre-negotiations around achieving a conference on the establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of

[51] In the time of writing this, the current Petteri Orpo's government has announced that Finland reconsiders its membership in the Ottawa Treaty due to the increasing threat perceived to pose by Russia. Hawkins E (2024) Wednesday's papers: Land mines, more police, cold up north. *Yle*. Available at: https://yle.fi/a/74-20127484 (accessed 2025-02-14).

[52] See Juntunen and Rosengren (2024), pp. 29–30.

[53] Government Offices of Sweden (2024) Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament. Available at: https://www.government.se/government-policy/foreign-and-security-policy/stockholm-initiative-for-nuclear-disarmament/ (accessed 2025-02-14).

[54] US Deparment of State (n.d.) Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND). Available at: https://www.state.gov/creating-an-environment-for-nuclear-disarmament-cend/ (accessed 2025-02-14). Both the Stockholm initiative and the CEND-initiative were launched in 2019 in the aftermath of the TPNW.

[55] https://www.nti.org/education-center/treaties-and-regimes/global-initiative-combat-nuclear-terrorism-gicnt/

[56] International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, https://www.ipndv.org/. Finland also held a position in the IAEA board of governors between 2021–24.

Mass Destruction.[57] In August 2023, Finland chaired the first session of the Preparatory Committee of the NPT 2026 Review Conference in Vienna. Alongside this, Finland also chaired the Working Group on further strengthening the review process of the Treaty, an illustrative example of the long-standing policy of supporting the integrity of the NPT regime and approaching nuclear disarmament as a process defined by pragmatic gradualism.

What does the future hold?

From the late 2000s onwards Finland has gradually broadened and deepened it's defence cooperation through various bilateral, minilateral and multilateral initiatives and formats, including with NATO. In hindsight, this process is easy to simplify into a steady movement that started from military non-alignment, developed to de facto military alignment, and ended in a full-fledged membership in NATO.[58] Despite of this, the public opinion, alongside the majority of Finland's major political parties, remained unfavourable towards applying for NATO membership until recently. However, Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine in 2022 and the regressive challenge Russian leadership posed to the post-Cold War security order rapidly changed public opinion in favour of NATO membership in Finland. After a decades long period of deepening defence cooperation with the alliance and building an internationalized framework of networked defence, Finland joined NATO in 2023.

When it comes to foreign policy and nuclear disarmament diplomacy especially, Finland already aligned quite effortlessly with the mainstream NATO approach. The TPNW decision in 2016–2017 was an obvious precursor to this. After submitting its NATO membership application, Finland decided to participate as an observer in the first meeting of the parties to the TPNW in June 2022. However, in the fall of 2023, Petteri Orpo's government decided that Finland would withdraw from any further meetings of the parties to the TPNW, even as an observer.[59] The government's rationale was that even an observer status would weaken Finland's status within NATO and could be interpreted as impeding Finland's responsibility in alliance burden sharing. The political declaration of the first TPNW meeting in 2022 was also considered problematic because of the way it equated Russia's coercive nuclear threats with NATO's extended nuclear deterrence posture as being similarly antithetical to international law.

Although recent reports provided by the unit of arms control in the Finnish MFA to the parliament states that NATO membership will not alter Finland's disarmament and arms control policy line,[60] there have been

[57] Finnish Government (2011) Finland to host conference on the establishment of a zone free of weaponsof mass destruction in the Middle East. Available at: https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/finland-to-host-conference-on-the-establishment-of-a-zone-free-of-weapons-of-mass-destruction-in-the-middle-east (accessed 2025-02-14).

[58] Pesu M (2022) As Finland Watches : From alignment to alliance. *War on the Rocks*, February 11. Available at: https://warontherocks.com/2022/02/as-finland-watches-from-alignment-to-alliance (accessed 2025-02-14).

[59] Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2023) Ydinasekieltosopimuksen (Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons, TPNW) toinen osapuolikokous New Yorkissa 27.11-1.12.2023. Available at: https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/Liiteasiakirja/Documents/EDK-2023-AK-27424.pdf (accessed 2025-02-14).

[60] See Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2023) Asevalvonnan ajankohtaiskatsaus, 7.6.2023. Available at:

some gradual changes apparently brought about by the NATO membership. For example, although the official explanation by the foreign ministry for the change in Finland's TPNW policy in the fall of 2023 stresses consistency with the past, there have been some notable changes in the policy; while Finland abstained from voting on the establishing the UN negotiations in 2016, since achieving NATO membership it has clearly shifted to voting against TPNW related resolutions in UNGA.[61] Moreover, the 2024 policy document clearly states that the general prospects on achieving nuclear disarmament have considerably worsened, and that there are signs of increasing nuclear weapons arms race, especially due to rapid rise of China's nuclear capabilities. Thus, although Finland will continue its work in various middle-ground initiatives and risk reduction efforts, the conditions surrounding the NPT regime are for the first time characterized as inherently tense and conflictual (between the P5 and "states pushing vigorously towards disarmament"), thereby casting a notable shadow over the vitality of Finland's long-standing pragmatic disarmament gradualism.

The aforementioned changes suggest that Finland's traditional bridge-building policy, aimed at bringing different parties' positions closer together to manage the cohesion and functionality of the NPT regime, is increasingly being challenged and, at the same time, being partially replaced by a focus on principles related to alliance politics and nuclear burden-sharing. The latter was also evident in Finland's decision to participate in NATO's Steadfast Noon nuclear exercise in fall 2024 with its F/A-18 Hornet fighters – the first occasion where Finland could participate in such an exercise as more than an observer.[62] This decision follows from Finland's "no reservations to alliance commitments and obligations"-policy, first adopted when negotiating the membership with NATO. Reminiscent of NATO's traditional dual-track approach, the MFA's report on current matters in arms control also promises that Finland aims to take an active role in NATO's internal arms control policy and processes. Outside of NATO Finland will continue its active and constructive arms control and disarmament profile to enhance both national and international security, but only in ways that do not undermine or put NATO's nuclear deterrence into question. That said, the prospect of military-political decoupling from Europe posed by President Donald Trump's second administration, along with the increasing nuclear arms race and the growing significance of nuclear deterrence policy related to the impending third nuclear age, together present a significant challenge to Finland's long-standing pragmatic nuclear disarmament policy and, more broadly, to the transatlantic orientation of its foreign policy.

https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/Liiteasiakirja/Documents/EDK-2023-AK-18258.pdf (accessed 2025-02-14); Asevalvonnan ajankohtaiskatsaus, 12.6.2024. Available at: https://www.parliament.fi/FI/vaski/Liiteasiakirja/Documents/EDK-2024-AK-28284.pdf (accessed 2025-02-14).

[61] Juntunen T, Lavikainen J, Särkkä I and Pesu M (2024) *NATO as a nuclear alliance: NATO's nuclear capability and its evolution in the international nuclear order*. Publications of the Government´s analysis, assessment and research activities 2024:25. Helsinki: Finnish Government, p. 103. Available at: http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-383-203-9 (accessed 2025-02-14).

[62] Carrara D (2024) Exclusive: Nuclear Exercise Steadfast Noon Participants Revealed. *Key.aer*. Available at: https://www.key.aero/article/nuclear-exercise-steadfast-noon-participants-revealed (accessed 2025-02-14). Finland's participation is interpreted to belong to the so called CSNO activities (*Conventional Support for Nuclear Operations*).

Norwegian Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament Diplomacy: History and Prospects

Kjølv Egeland, NORSAR

Norway has consistently supported a range of measures to roll back nuclear dangers. Successive Norwegian governments have been vocal supporters of instruments to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, to stop nuclear testing, and to reduce the size of the nuclear-armed states' arsenals. For its own part, Norway has consciously eschewed both independent nuclear armament and the hosting of US nuclear weapons on its territory. At the same time, Oslo has been reluctant to openly criticise its nuclear-armed allies' atomic policies and have generally accepted NATO's overall nuclear strategy. This paper offers a brief overview of Norwegian views on nuclear arms control and disarmament from the onset of the nuclear age to the present. The paper is organised chronologically, beginning with the immediate aftermath of the atomic bombings of Japan and continuing with the Cold War and post-Cold War periods, respectively. The paper ends with a reflection on the prospects for Norwegian nuclear arms control and disarmament efforts in the future.

Beginnings

The advent of the atomic age brought to the fore what Daniel Deudney has referred to as the 'nuclear-political question': Which political arrangements are necessary to provide security from large-scale nuclear violence? Meeting in London in January 1946, Norway and the other founding members of the newly established United Nations decided, by consensus, to establish an Atomic Energy Commission charged with advancing specific proposals for the exchange of 'basic scientific information for peaceful ends', for control measures to ensure that nuclear energy would be used 'only for peaceful purposes', and for the 'elimination from national arsenals of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.'[63] While Norway would not directly take part in the Commission's work – membership was restricted to the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and Canada, which had been heavily involved in the US nuclear weapons programme during the Second World War – Norwegian officials repeatedly spoke out in favour of disarmament and international control of atomic energy in other forums.

The Norwegian Labour Party, which governed Norway for most of the period between 1945 and 1965, backed proposals for the elimination of nuclear weapons specifically and for disarmament more generally. In its manifesto of February 1949, Labour strongly decried the Soviet Union's unwillingness to seriously consider robust control mechanisms in these and other areas of international cooperation.[64] Norwegian policymakers had also looked with concern at the Soviet Union's imposition of a 'friendship' treaty with Finland the year before; many feared that Norway might soon be placed under heavy pressure by its mighty neighbour in the north-east.

In April 1949, Norway joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a founding member. The Labour Party had initially been torn on the question of whether to pursue the creation of a regional defence union with Denmark and Sweden or instead

[63] United Nations General Assembly (1946) Resolution 1(I), 1st Session, London, 24 January 1946.

[64] Arbeiderpartiet (1950) *Landsmøtet 1949: Protokoll*. Oslo: Arbeidernes aktietrykkeri, p. 121.

join a broader Western alliance involving the United States and Great Britain. The latter option would eventually win out as key individuals in the Norwegian foreign policy establishment concluded that alignment with NATO would offer not only a more robust security guarantee but also access to generous military aid from the United States.[65]

Prior to joining the NATO alliance, however, the Norwegian government publicly declared that it would not allow foreign powers to establish military bases on Norwegian soil. The declaration was a response to a Soviet inquiry about Norway's position vis-à-vis Western alignment and the potential construction of foreign military bases in a country directly bordering the USSR. The Labour government's declaration that Oslo had no intention of allowing such bases to be established was meant to reassure Moscow that Norway would not allow itself to become a beachhead for US or Western aggression against the Soviet Union. The underlying analysis was that defence cooperation and alliance building were of major importance but had to be balanced against the imperative of preventing tensions from escalating in the first place; Norway had to take care of its peacetime defence requirements on its own, that is, with Norwegian personnel and Norwegian-operated equipment.

NATO initially eschewed a nuclear strategy. In 1950, Denmark, supported by Norway, made sure that the alliance's first 'strategic concept' did not explicitly endorse the potential use of atomic weapons. In the words of the Danish foreign minister at the time, the alliance should not adopt language 'that could be argued to stand in the way of an effective ban on nuclear war.'[66] Within a few years, however, following the alliance's failure to reach agreed targets for conventional armament, NATO would shift to an overt reliance on the so-called massive retaliation strategy. According to this approach, which was adopted by the alliance through the 1954 document 'MC 48' and subsequently incorporated into the alliance's overall strategic concept in 1957, the United States would respond 'immediately' to Soviet aggression against NATO members with a major nuclear counterattack against the Eastern bloc.[67]

Norwegian Arms Control and Disarmament Priorities during the Cold War

The credibility of the massive retaliation strategy quickly came into question. Would the United States really risk all-out nuclear war over relatively minor communist provocations in another hemisphere? The answer seemed to give itself. Over the course of the second half of the 1950s, in response both to the apparent credibility-deficit of the massive retaliation doctrine and the Soviet Union's successful launch of an earth-orbiting satellite in the fall of 1957 (suggesting that the Soviet Union had effectively mastered long-range rocket technology), NATO began shifting to a nuclear strategy centred on the supposed deterrent power of local deployments of tactical nuclear arms. To make the extended nuclear deterrence guarantee more credible, so the argument went, the United States had to make tactical nuclear weapons available to its allies in the areas deemed vulnerable to

[65] Skogrand K (2004) *Norsk forsvarshistorie: Alliert i krig og fred.* Bergen: Eide Forlag, p. 160.
[66] Villaume P (1995) *Allieret med forbehold.* Copenhagen: Eirene, p. 503. My translation from Danish.
[67] NATO (1954) The most effective pattern of NATO military strength for the next five years (MC 48) (1954), § 3(b).

enemy incursions.[68] Policymakers in Oslo were for a period split on this issue.[69] However, in the spring of 1957, the Labour Party's annual conference adopted a motion committing the Party to oppose not only any and all nuclear testing but also the stationing of nuclear weapons on Norwegian soil. This motion became the kernel of what has since become longstanding Norwegian policy, namely that Norway does not allow the stationing of nuclear weapons on Norwegian soil – at least not during peacetime – and that foreign vessels that call at Norwegian ports must not have nuclear weapons on board.

In December of 1957, at the NATO summit in Paris – NATO's first-ever meeting at head-of-government level – Prime Minister Gerhardsen gave a speech that reportedly 'caused a great stir' at NATO headquarters.[70] Gerhardsen declined the US offer to station nuclear warheads and missiles in Norway and urged NATO and its members to seek disarmament negotiations with the Soviet Union: 'We still stand by the proposals [for disarmament] adopted by the United Nations.'[71] Allowing the NATO bosses to 'feel the breath of public opinion', the speech contributed to a sense in Washington and at NATO headquarters in Paris that the United States and its allies needed to do more on arms control and disarmament. Over time, this and other calls for active measures to address nuclear dangers helped foster a more ambitious US diplomatic posture vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. In 1963, Great Britain and the two superpowers adopted the Partial Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, banning nuclear testing in the atmosphere, outer space, and underwater.[72]

While Oslo did not overtly oppose the deployment of nuclear weapons to other NATO members, Norway consistently supported measures and proposals to limit the spread of nuclear weapons both within NATO and beyond. Declassified documents have revealed that, during the early 1960s, Oslo was considering vetoing the proposal to create a so-called multilateral nuclear force within NATO should it ever be put to a vote.[73] In 1966, when NATO established a permanent forum for intra-alliance consultations on nuclear strategy, Norway was initially sceptical of joining. However, Norway was eventually brought on board, largely on the back of an American suggestion that the nuclear consultation forum would provide an arena for putting pressure on West Germany to join the NPT, which was then under negotiation in Geneva.[74]

In the late 1970s, following the Geneva Conference on Disarmament's decision to establish a Group of Scientific Experts to help develop a verification system for a future ban on underground nuclear testing, the Norwegian research institute NORSAR was selected as one of the participating institutions. NORSAR received major backing from both the US and Norwegian

[68] See, e.g., Kissinger HA (1957) *Nuclear weapons and foreign policy.* NY: W. W. Norton and Company.
[69] See Egeland E (Forthcoming) The "cosmic bluff" revisited. *Cold War History*.
[70] Melissen J (1994) Nuclearizing NATO, 1957–1959. *Review of International Studies* 20(3): 253–275.
[71] Gerhardsen E (1980) Norsk base- og atompolitikk. In: Jagland T et al. (eds) *Atomvåpen og Usikkerhetspolitikk.* Oslo: Tiden, p. 199.
[72] See, e.g., Fleming DF (1961) *The Cold War and its origins: Volume II, 1950–1960.* Garden City: Doubleday; Nash P (1997) *The Other missiles of October*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.
[73] Norwegian Government (1963) Meeting in the Norwegian Parliamentary Select Committee on Foreign Policy and Constitutional Matters, 13 March 1963. Available at: https://bit.ly/4i6DGAS (accessed 2025-02-14).
[74] Norwegian Government (1966) Meeting in the Norwegian Parliamentary Select Committee on Foreign Policy and Constitutional Matters, 9 Dec. 1966. Available at: https://bit.ly/3ZpUkmT (accessed 2025-02-14).

governments and would play a key role in the development of the monitoring system that in 1996 was incorporated into the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). NORSAR's seismic array at Hedmark in Norway – one of six Norwegian stations in the CTBT's International Monitoring Systems – remains the largest monitoring station in the global test-ban regime. It was also the first to be certified by the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization. NORSAR's monitoring stations in Karasjok and Longyearbyen are the two stations closest to – and with the best data for – the former Russian nuclear test site at Novaya Zemlya.

The so-called 'Euromissile crisis' of the late 1970s and early 1980s generated fractious policy debates in Norway. Many Norwegian citizens, as well as important factions of the policy elite, opposed the deployment to Europe of a new generation of US intermediate-range nuclear missiles. While successive Norwegian governments stood by NATO's 'dual track' decision (the decision to accept the deployment of new weapons but at the same time to seek disarmament negotiations with Soviet Union), powerful forces within the Labour Party floated the idea of pursuing the creation of a Nordic nuclear-weapon-free zone. Some of Norway's allies objected strongly to these proposals. US Secretary of State Alexander Haig reportedly warned the Norwegian foreign minister at the time that the creation of a zone 'would have implications for the United States' support to the defence of Norway'.[75] This put the Labour government under significant pressure from two sides – on the one hand from its own anti-nuclear grassroots and on the other from the US government. The issue dissipated when, a few years later, the Soviet Union and United States initiated promising arms control negotiations. The 1980s also saw debates within the Norwegian defence-policy establishment about the merits of nuclear no-first use. While a range of policymakers clearly viewed the credibility of US nuclear first use on behalf of Norway or other non-nuclear allies as very low,[76] the Norwegian government never expressed unequivocal support for no-first use – only for efforts to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in the alliance's military strategy.[77] The latter formed a consistent line in Norwegian policy.

Post-Cold War Disarmament Advocacy

The 1990s saw the rise to prominence of the 'human security' agenda. Norway was heavily involved in the negotiations that led to the 1997 Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty and spearheaded the process that in 2008 culminated with the adoption of the Oslo Cluster Munitions Convention. The Cluster Munitions Convention, in particular, had been championed under the banner of 'humanitarian disarmament', a framing developed and advanced by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. In 2010–2012, when the Obama administration's 'Prague agenda' for nuclear disarmament began showing serious signs of exhaustion, important actors within the Norwegian foreign policy establishment decided to apply the

[75] Norwegian Government (1981) Meeting in the Norwegian Parliamentary Select Committee on Foreign Policy and Constitutional Matters, 21 July 1981, p. 54. Available at: https://bit.ly/4g4mvhA (accessed 2025-02-14).

[76] See, e.g., Holst JJ (1984) *En atomvåpenfri sone i nordisk område: Hensikter og konsekvenser.* Oslo: Norsk utenrikspolitisk institutt, p. 9.

[77] See, e.g., White Paper no. 58 (1986–87), *Om sikkerhet og nedrustning.* Oslo: Utenriksdepartementet, 1987.

humanitarian disarmament approach to the issue of nuclear weapons.

During and in the years after the 2010 NPT review conference, Norwegian officials made the case that nuclear weapons should be seen in a humanitarian perspective. They maintained that 'experience from humanitarian disarmament should guide us on how to pursue and negotiate disarmament issues in general'[78] and that the use of nuclear weapons 'would be illegal under international humanitarian law'.[79] Perhaps most crucially, they argued that as long as the nuclear-armed states kept dragging their feet on disarmament, it might be worthwhile to try to 'develop norms against the use of nuclear weapons, and even to outlaw them, without a consensus decision'.[80] In 2012, Norway invited all interested states and civil society organisations to take part in a conference in Oslo on the 'humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons'. In tandem with a series of joint statements on the 'humanitarian dimension' of nuclear disarmament issued by a steadily growing group of states in international forums from 2012 onwards,[81] the 2013 Oslo conference initiated the process that in 2017 culminated with the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Norway, however, disengaged from the so-called humanitarian initiative and ban-treaty movement following a change of government in Oslo after the fall 2013 elections (from a centre-left coalition to a right-wing coalition). While the parties on the right have continued to oppose the TPNW, several parties on the left and in the centre of the Norwegian political spectrum favour Norwegian accession. The position of the Labour Party – the senior partner in the current government coalition – is that it should be a long-term goal for both Norway and other NATO members to join the treaty but that the current security environment makes accession impossible in the short term.[82] Norway has attended the TPNW meetings of states parties as an observer. Currently, the Norwegian government's main priority in the field of nuclear arms control and disarmament policy is the development of new techniques and strategies for nuclear disarmament verification.

Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities

The last decade has seen Norway taking a more cautious approach to nuclear arms control and disarmament. This shift can in large measure be attributed to the deterioration, over roughly the same timeframe, of the international security environment. While Russia does not necessarily pose a direct conventional military threat to Norway or NATO – if anything, the Russian military's performance in Ukraine appears to indicate that the Russian military is much less formidable than most Western analysts believed prior to February 2022 – it is difficult to envision meaningful nuclear negotiations with a Russian political leadership that seems not only erratic and untrustworthy but

[78] Støre JG (2010) Disarmament – reframing the challenge, speech at the Leangkollen Conference, The Norwegian Atlantic Committee. Asker, 1 Feb. 2010. Available at: https://bit.ly/3CGU8rw (accessed 2025-02-14).
[79] Angell-Hansen B (2011) Statement of Norway to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva 17 March 2011. Available at: https://bit.ly/40Zw0ub (accessed 2025-02-14).
[80] Støre (2010).
[81] The statements noted, *inter alia*, that nuclear weapons should never be used again 'under any circumstances'. On the significance of this phrase, see Meyer P (2018) Folding the umbrella, Policy Brief 58, Asia-Pacific Leadership Network, 26 February 2018.
[82] Arbeiderpartiet (2021) *Partiprogram 2021–2025*, p. 114. Available at: https://bit.ly/4fTzPFE (accessed 2025-02-14).

increasingly detached from reality.[83] The war in Ukraine, Russian nuclear sabre rattling, and intensifying great power competition between the United States and China have undoubtedly also strengthened the incentives for NATO members to conform with the alliance mainstream on sensitive policy issues. In 2024, Norway took part in a NATO nuclear war exercise for the first time in decades.[84] Norway has also entered into a new defence cooperation agreement with the United States regulating US military activities on Norwegian soil. The agreement opens for more extensive American military presence in Norway, many have suggested that it reverses Norway's longstanding policy of not allowing foreign states to maintain permanent bases on Norwegian territory, but states explicitly that nothing in the agreement alters Norwegian policies regarding 'the stockpiling or deployment of nuclear weapons on Norwegian territory.'[85] Another potential reason for Norway's relative caution in arms control and disarmament policy in recent years is a sense in Oslo that Norway is increasingly dependent on military assistance from the United States and other Western major powers, that is, that Norway has less diplomatic room for manoeuvre than before due to its increasing military dependency. While Norway has boosted its defence expenditures in recent years, the increasing unit cost of weapons and defence equipment – as well as the end of the US Defense Assistance Program in the 1970s – has meant that Norway now operates far fewer naval ships, tanks, howitzers, and military aircraft than it did during the Cold War. The entry of Finland and Sweden into NATO – and with it the prospect of increased Nordic defence cooperation – could potentially counteract this tendency of increasing military dependence on the United States, Britain, and France. Robust Nordic defence cooperation could potentially give the Nordic states increased political and diplomatic leeway – should they want it.

The international security environment does not currently look particularly propitious for nuclear arms control and disarmament. Yet we know from history that major breakthroughs in arms control and disarmament diplomacy have often come on the back of periods of acute hostility between the nuclear powers (the mid-1960s and mid-1980s being cases in point). Creating political will on the part of the major powers is a *sine qua non* for progress. But there are also more modest initiatives that could be taken or carried forward in anticipation of the potential opening of a window of opportunity in the future. This includes, for example, work on nuclear disarmament verification and the provision of generous funding for civil society actors working on the nuts and bolts of nuclear arms control and disarmament. The increasing enmity between nuclear-armed powers have also made it increasingly important to work for transparency efforts that could help dampen arms racing dynamics. This might include, for example, the advancement of verification efforts and transparency initiatives associated with nuclear testing.

[83] See, e.g., Freedman L (2024) Reality is chipping away at Putinism. *The New Statesman*, 5 April 2024. Available at: https://bit.ly/4i1xNFg (accessed 2025-02-14); Ferreri E (2022) Putin's invasion of Ukraine reveals leader "disconnected in many senses from reality," expert says. *Duke Today*, 24 Feb. 2022. Available at: https://bit.ly/41lxvTZ (accessed 2025-02-14).

[84] Paust T (2024) Norge sender stabsoffiserer til Natos kjernevåpenøvelse. *Nettavisen*, 16 October 2024. Available at: https://bit.ly/4fGAQ43 (accessed 2025-02-14).

[85] Supplementary Defense Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Norway and the Government of the United States of America, see https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/077c7bbef47a4ea4bc756b1703ea9c9d/avtaltetekst-sdca-engelsk.pdf.

Swedish Nuclear Disarmament Diplomacy: Continuities and Changes

Authors: Astrid Brodén (UI), Emma Rosengren (UI) and Thomas Jonter (AMC)

Ever since the Swedish government abandoned its national nuclear weapon program and joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a nuclear weapons free state in 1968, Swedish officials have been instrumental in advancing nuclear disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation on the international arena. Nevertheless, periods of heightened political tension have complicated such efforts, as they are implicated in broader security contexts. While Sweden was seen as a leading nuclear disarmament advocate during the Cold War, disarmament engagement has diminished considerably since the early 2000s, while military cooperation with foreign allies armed with nuclear weapons has intensified. In this chapter, "nuclear disarmament" is used in a broad and pragmatic sense, including initiatives for non-proliferation and arms control as instrumental parts of the path towards complete nuclear disarmament. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, this culminated in Sweden's accession to NATO and, in effect, its adoption of the alliance's extended nuclear deterrence doctrine. The impact of this security shift on Sweden's nuclear disarmament advocacy remains uncertain but, importantly, does not signify the inevitable end of such efforts. Instead, lessons from Sweden's past advocacy for nuclear disarmament are imperative for how to overcome present challenges and to pursue new opportunities of advancing nuclear disarmament as a NATO member.

Disarmament policy takes form

Since the early 19th century, Sweden has been a nation at peace which was, until recently, ensured by enduring policies of neutrality and military non-alignment. At the founding of NATO in 1949 and the emergence of the Cold War, Sweden chose to remain non-aligned. Nevertheless, to ensure that standing apart from the great power struggle between the United States (and its NATO allies) and the Soviet Union (and the Warsaw pact) did not endanger national security, Sweden combined its neutrality and non-alignment with continued enforcement of male conscription and considerable investment national defences. Indeed, during this period Sweden's military expenditure superseded many NATO member states and was amongst the highest per capita in all of Europe.[86]

Alongside its policy of armed neutrality, Sweden pursued multilateral disarmament diplomacy throughout the Cold War period. First emerging in the 1960s, Swedish nuclear disarmament advocacy evolved in parallel with intense national debate about whether the country should develop its own nuclear weapon arsenal. Indeed, this contentious issue – propelled by ample political will to utilize Sweden's unique technical capacity and the lack of international nuclear weapon regulation at the time – had divided parliament, the public, and the ruling Social Democratic Party (SAP) before it was abandoned.[87] Ultimately, within a geopolitical context of widespread fear over escalating nuclear proliferation, both sides of the Swedish nuclear weapons debate

[86] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Military Expenditure Database. Available at: https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex (accessed 2025-02-14).

[87] Jonter T (2016) *The Key to Nuclear Restraint. The Swedish Plans to Acquire Nuclear Weapons during the Cold War*. London: Palgrave, Macmillan.

eventually embraced nuclear disarmament diplomacy as a core tenant of Sweden's security doctrine and foreign policy[88]. In uniting both sides of the nuclear weapon debate, nuclear disarmament engagement came to serve as "an exit" from the nuclear weapon plans.[89] This policy shift was supported by both liberal, conservative and social democratic parties after 1968.

Sweden's international disarmament engagement was initiated by Foreign Minister Östen Undén, who had been an outspoken opponent of the nuclear weapon program since the early 1950s. In 1961, he tasked Alva Myrdal to investigate the possibility of developing a Swedish nuclear disarmament program. Based on her findings, Myrdal wrote a proposal calling for the establishment of a voluntary international nuclear weapon-free club (the Undén plan). Even though the plan was never realized, disarmament advocates in Sweden made continual efforts to establish a Nordic Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NNWFZ). This was greatly influenced by President of Finland Urho Kekkonen's initial call for such a zone in 1963 and the relaunch of the initiative in the mid-1970s. In June 1981, the Swedish Parliament unanimously passed a bill calling on the government to further investigate the possibility of creating a NNWFZ. While the Swedish government continued to support the establishment of a NNWFZ throughout the 1980s, its relevance peaked in public speeches and media debates of the early 1980s. Myrdal would, in 1982, come to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for her work on nuclear disarmament alongside Mexican diplomat Antonio García. As the first of many consecutive Swedish initiatives for nuclear disarmament, the Undén plan sparked opposition from the United States and many of its NATO allies, but received considerable support by Denmark, Norway, Canada and Finland.[90]

After joining the Eighteen Nations Disarmament Committee (ENDC) as a non-aligned state in 1962, Sweden's ability to impact nuclear disarmament internationally was strengthened further. Before superpowers adopted a more limited arms control agenda and began bilateral negotiations, ENDC was a United Nations body tasked primarily with presenting initiatives on how to make progress in preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons and promoting disarmament efforts. Within the committee, Sweden worked on technical solutions to nuclear disarmament and advocated for international test ban treaty negotiations. Such efforts led to the conclusion of the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) in 1963. Over the 1960s, Myrdal's leadership made nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation a central feature of Swedish foreign policy. Indeed, neutrality and disarmament were gradually cemented as core features of the Social Democratic Party's position on international cooperation, law, and détente.[91] Across the political spectrum, support for nuclear disarmament advocacy was associated with Swedish technological expertise and innovation in the area on a global stage.[92]

[88] Rosengren E (2022) *Gendering Nuclear Disarmament. Identity and Disarmament in Sweden during the Cold War*. Diss: Stockholm: Stockholm University.

[89] Jonter T and Rosengren E (2014) From nuclear weapons acquisition to nuclear disarmament – the Swedish case. *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 30(1): 46—63.

[90] Jonter T and Rosengren E (2024) Advocating Nuclear Disarmament as NATO Members – Lessons from the Past and Possible Routes ahead for Finland and Sweden. *H-Diplo RJISSF Policy Roundtable* III(2).

[91] Kronvall O and Petersson M (2005) *Svensk säkerhetspolitik i supermakternas skugga 1945–1991*. Stockholm: Santérus.

[92] Rosengren E (2022) Gendering Sweden's Nuclear Renunciation. A Historical Analysis. *International Affairs* 98(4): 1231—1248.

During this time, Sweden also participated in ongoing international debates around the regulation of nuclear weapons and played a part in finalizing the NPT in 1968. As a non-aligned member of the ENDC, Sweden pushed for nuclear weapon states to undertake an additional package-deal solution to the NPT, including a non-proliferation treaty, a comprehensive test ban treaty, and a fissile material cut off treaty.[93] Despite considerable resistance from great powers, a commitment to nuclear disarmament was eventually included in Article VI of the NPT, which called on nuclear weapon states to pursue all future negotiations on nuclear disarmament in "good faith". In the end, although the final version of the NPT was not as radical as Swedish officials had hoped, the country signed the treaty. The ratification of the NPT is still regarded as a watershed moment, and the treaty continues to be considered the cornerstone of global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament efforts.[94] For Sweden, advancing the pursuit of nuclear disarmament through such efforts remained a core part of national security and foreign policy until the end of the Cold War era.[95]

Disarmament on decline?

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the vigour of Swedish nuclear disarmament advocacy began to fade. As the international security context transitioned into a new paradigm, Sweden began pursuing interrelated policies involving I) the gradual disarmament of national defences, II) a broadened security approach, and III) increased military cooperation with NATO member states. In 1994, Sweden signed the Partnership for Peace agreement with NATO. In 1995, Sweden joined the European Union (EU).[96] Thereafter, Sweden both participated in NATO-led military operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan and took part in joint Nordic military exercises over the 2000s.[97] After Russia's military annexation of Crimea in 2014, Sweden also signed the first comprehensive defence agreement with NATO, *Värdlandsavtalet* (the Host Nation Support Agreement).[98] All together, these security shifts mark a gradual transition away from Swedish neutrality in favour of military non-alignment, but with greater Western European and transatlantic security integration. During this period, Sweden also showed a more moderate commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Indeed, the weakening of Swedish nuclear disarmament advocacy in the post-Cold War period was a notable shift from earlier decades. For instance, after the Social Democrat Maj-Britt Theorin left her post as the Swedish disarmament representative in 1991, no replacement was appointed either by the incoming Conservative government nor the subsequent Social Democratic administration of 1994.[99] Furthermore, by joining the EU, Sweden essentially aligned itself with nuclear weapon states like France and the United Kingdom and, in consequence, began to occupy a less radical "intermediate position between the mainstream of NATO members and the group of disarmament advocates" in the

[93] Rosengren (2022).
[94] On the hegemonic nuclear order, see Ritchie N (2019) A Hegemonic Nuclear Order: Understanding the Ban Treaty and the Power Politics of Nuclear Weapons. *Contemporary Security Policy* 40(4): 409—434.
[95] Jonter and Rosengren (2024).
[96] Jonter and Rosengren (2024).
[97] Petersson M (2022) Nye forutsetninger for Norge i det nordiska forsvarssamarbeidet. *Forsvarets forum* 23.
[98] Engelbrekt K, Holmberg A and Ångström J (2015) *Svensk säkerhetspolitik i Europa och världen*. Stockholm: Nordstedts juridik.
[99] Jonter and Rosengren (2024).

Union.[100] Therefore, while Sweden would come to initiate the "EU Strategy against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction" in 2003,[101] more progressive nuclear disarmament initiatives were increasingly sidelined for measures more agreeable to European and transatlantic allies.[102]

Nevertheless, between 1996 and 2006 Swedish officials did pursue new international arenas for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament advocacy. In 1998, Sweden co-founded the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) alongside Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia and South Africa. The NAC promoted "a new nuclear disarmament agenda" in the pursuit of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.[103] In 2003, the late Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh also tasked former liberal foreign minister Hans Blix, an experienced disarmament diplomat and former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), with developing a commission on "reducing the dangers from nuclear, biological, chemical and radiological weapons".[104] This contributed to the creation of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, which presented its report "Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms" to the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2006.[105] In 2007, the Swedish government, together with Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, and Switzerland established the de-alerting group, aiming to contribute to decreased operational readiness regarding the launch of nuclear weapons.[106]

However, such disarmament initiatives were not prioritized by the subsequent Liberal-Conservative governments of 2006-2014. Indeed, under Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, Sweden left the de-alerting group in 2009[107] and withdrew from the NAC in 2013.[108] Following this, government officials also showed great reluctance in signing the South African statement on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, signed by 60 states in 2013. The South African statement would become part of what is now known as the humanitarian initiative, which first emerged at the 2010 NPT Review Conference as participants expressed "deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons".[109] While Nordic countries like Norway and Denmark engaged with the humanitarian initiative by signing statements by Switzerland (2012) and South Africa (2013) and deciding to join the First Committee initiative, Sweden remained generally disengaged.[110]

[100] Onderco M and Portela C (2023) NATO's Nordic Enlargement and Nuclear Disarmament: the End of Bridge Building. *War on the Rocks*.
[101] Onderco and Portela (2023).
[102] Jonter and Rosengren (2024).
[103] Nuclear Threat Initiative (n.d) New Agenda Coalition. Available at: https://www.nti.org/education-center/treaties-and-regimes/new-agenda-coalition/ (accessed 2025-02-14).
[104] The Simons Foundation (n.d.) Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission. Available at: https://www.thesimonsfoundation.ca/projects/weapons-mass-destruction-commission (accessed 2025-02-14).
[105] The Simons Foundation (n.d.).
[106] Von Hall G (2015) Sverige går med i nedrustningsgrupp. *Svenska Dagbladet*, 3 March 2015. Available at: https://www.svd.se/a/aaf6c788-6da5-3194-af34-299a928fec87/sverige-gar-med-i-nedrustningsgrupp (accessed 2025-02-14).
[107] Von Hall (2015).
[108] Nuclear Threat Initiative (n.d.).
[109] International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (2010) Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. Available at: https://www.icanw.org/nuclear_non_proliferation_treaty_npt_review_conference (accessed 2025-02-14).
[110] Jonter and Rosengren (2024).

This changed considerably in 2014, when newly appointed Foreign Minister Wallström of the Social Democratic government re-introduced nuclear disarmament as a central component of her feminist foreign policy. Indeed, under Wallström's leadership, Sweden promptly joined the humanitarian initiative, re-instituted the national position of disarmament ambassador and the advisory board on international humanitarian law and disarmament,[111] and re-entered the de-alerting group.[112] In 2017, Sweden participated in the negotiations that led to the establishment of the humanitarian initiative the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). However, following mounting political pressure domestically, Sweden ultimately refused to sign the treaty. Opponents to signing the TPNW argued that it would greatly endanger Sweden's cooperation with NATO. At the bequest of the government, former diplomat Lars-Erik Lundin also finalized an investigation which concluded that Swedish security interests would be undermined by a TPNW signature.[113] Before resigning shortly thereafter, Wallström upheld the decision not to sign the treaty, but nevertheless maintained that nuclear disarmament would remain a government priority.[114]

In the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the context for Swedish nuclear disarmament advocacy transformed in profound ways. In the years prior, Wallström's successor Foreign Minister Ann Linde had maintained Sweden's status as an observer to the TPNW; propelled efforts to strengthen the NPT through the Stockholm Initiative; established a Swedish knowledge centre on nuclear disarmament (the Alva Myrdal Centre for Nuclear Disarmament, AMC); supported the establishment of a UN secretariat on international nuclear disarmament; and proposed concrete measures on nuclear risk reduction on behalf of sixteen states at the 2022 NPT RevCon.[115] Less than two months after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Social Democrat Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson announced that the Social Democrats had reversed a century-long commitment to neutrality and non-alignment, and that Sweden would apply for NATO membership. Today, as Sweden approaches its first anniversary as an official NATO member, the future of Swedish nuclear disarmament advocacy faces a context of new challenges and opportunities that have yet to be determined.

Present Challenges and Future Opportunities

As long as NATO is a primary security arrangement for the Nordic countries, extended nuclear deterrence ensured by US dominance will be an inevitable component of any Nordic security strategy. Nuclear deterrence is a central feature of NATO's security strategy, and US nuclear weapons are stored in several European states through the policy of nuclear sharing. In

[111] Swedish Government (2015) Regeringen återupprättar en folkrätts- och nedrustningsdelegation; Swedish Government (2016) Regeringen tillsätter en MR-ambassadör samt en nedrustningsambassadör.
[112] Von Hall (2015).
[113] Lundin LE (1019) Utredning av konsekvenserna av ett svenskt tillträde till konventionen om förbud mot kärnvapen. Available at: https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/departementsserien-och-promemorior/2019/01/utredning-av-konsekvenserna-av-ett-svenskt-tilltrade-till-konventionen-om-forbud-mot-karnvapen/ (accessed 2025-02-14).
[114] Swedish Government (2019) The government's continued work for nuclear disarmament. Available at: https://www.government.se/articles/2019/07/the-governments-continued-work-for-nuclear-disarmament/ (accessed 2025-02-14).
[115] Jonter and Rosengren (2024).

contrast to Finland, Sweden does not have any preexisting legislation prohibiting the presence of nuclear weapons on domestic soil. Moreover, a few months after Sweden's NATO membership was ratified in March 2024, the Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) between Sweden and the US entered into force. This agreement established the lawful status of American forces, military material, and other personnel on Swedish soil, especially their unhindered access to seventeen Swedish military bases.[116] In comparison with similar agreements made with Norway[117] and Denmark,[118] the agreement signed by the Swedish government involved no explicit restrictions on American nuclear weapons being stored in Sweden[119]. However, Prime Minister Kristersson has maintained that the DCA, stipulated on trust, implies that there should be no reason for American nuclear weapons to be stored on Swedish soil during peace time.[120]

The question of whether Sweden could be obliged to store nuclear weapons under NATO's nuclear sharing policy remains contentious. Indeed, Kjølv Egeland (2024) argues that there is "absolutely no expectation in Brussels, Washington, or anywhere else that Sweden and Finland would host US nuclear arms".[121] Even further, Egeland contends that there seems to be little if any desire or indeed capacity for the US to suggest such deployment at present. Similarly, Paal Sigurd Hilde (2024) argues that "nothing suggests that the storage of nuclear weapons in Finland and Sweden is actually on the cards" and, therefore, arguments that there is an urgent need for prohibitive legislation are "uncompelling". [122] This argument is based on the present security context, where the amount of American nuclear weapons stored in Europe are more than sufficient to ensure NATO's interests. However, the understanding of deterrence and what is required in different scenarios are subject to change. Considering President Trump's statements on the potential that the US could use military means against its fellow NATO member Denmark (--) and the general animosity and antagonism exhibited by his administration towards US allies, existing guarantees against the placement of nuclear

[116] Government Offices of Sweden (2024) Defence Cooperation Agreement with the United States. Available at: https://www.government.se/government-policy/military-defence/defence-cooperation-agreement-with-the-united-states/ (accessed 2025-02-14).
[117] Government Offices of Norway (2022) Defence cooperation between Norway and US essential for our security. Available at: https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/sdca_submitted/id2907892/ (accessed 2025-02-14).
[118] Danish Ministry of Defence (2023) New agreement strengthens defence cooperation between Denmark and the United States. Available at: https://www.fmn.dk/en/news/2023/new-agreement-strengthens-defense-cooperation-between-denmark-and-the-united-states/ (accessed 2025-02-14).
[119] Wrange P. (2024) Perspektiv på Sverige och Nato: DCA-Avtalet – stort beslut på bräcklig grund. *Mänsklig säkerhet*. Available at: https://manskligsakerhet.se/2024/11/28/perspektiv-pa-sverige-och-nato-dca-avtalet-stort-beslut-pa-bracklig-grund/#:~:text=I%20denna%20artikel%20g%C3%B6r%20professor%20P%C3%A5l%20Wrange%20en,ett%20klart%20samband%20med%20att%20Sverige%20blivit%20Nato-medlem (accessed 2025-02-14).
[120] SVT Nyheter (2024) Kristersson stänger ej kärnvapen-dörr. *SVT Nyheter*, 13 May 2024. Available at: https://www.svt.se/nyheter/snabbkollen/kristersson-oppnar-for-karnvapen (accessed 2025-02-14).
[121] Egeland K (2024) Commentary by Kjølv Egeland, NORSAR. *H-Diplo RJISSF Policy Roundtable* III(2).
[122] Hilde PS (2024) Commentary by Paal Sigurd Hilde, Institute for Defence Studies, Norwegian Defence University College. *H-Diplo RJISSF Policy Roundtable* III(2).

weapons in Sweden may need to be reconsidered. Can Sweden truly foresee how the US will understand its future obligations as a leading military power in and outside of NATO? To what extent will the US respect the laws and regulations of member states, especially with the current Trump administration dictating foreign policy? Indeed, against this backdrop, there seems to be few compelling arguments as for why enacting a national prohibition against nuclear weapons would be either strategically harmful or legally superfluous.

This raises a broader issue around the ability of Swedish officials to influence the nuclear policy of current and future defence alliances and international agreements. As a member of NATO, Sweden does retain the ability to enact domestic legislation and engage in international agreements on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Even so, experts have highlighted the considerable challenges for doing so, especially as a new member. As Jeffrey H. Michaels (2024) argues, even during more radical geopolitical shifts and increased willingness of leading NATO members to enact change, still "the status quo principle dominates Alliance policy".[123] Despite such constrains, nuclear disarmament engagement can be made easier by pursuing pragmatic measures. As Thomas Jonter and Emma Rosengren (2024) argue, Sweden has the "financial resources, diplomatic competence, level of expertise, and civil society support" necessary to support efforts for nuclear disarmament both within and outside of NATO.[124] Moreover, Swedish officials can draw on a legacy of Swedish participation in concrete nuclear non-proliferation and arms control efforts, such as the Stockholm Initiative, that align well with such a pragmatic strategy.

In this effort, there is a rich history and infrastructure of Swedish knowledge production on nuclear non-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament that can be utilized in advantageous ways. Since its founding in 1966, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has become a leading global research centre on issues like peace, conflict, arms control and disarmament.[125] More recently, the establishment of the AMC at Uppsala University in 2021 ensures further high-quality research on the topic. Moreover, civil society organizations continue to be indispensable for ensuring well-informed citizens and democratic legitimacy. Finally, strengthening Nordic cooperation on issues of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control is an indispensable tool for navigating the challenges and possibilities presented above. This would empower the position of the Nordic countries in and beyond NATO, including their role in nuclear disarmament efforts within the alliance and other multilateral agreements. As parties to NATO's Nuclear Planning Group (NPG), for example, Nordic collaboration could help shift consensus towards the pursuit of de-escalation and risk reduction, especially against mounting tensions in the Baltic and Arctic region. Developing joint strategies to ensure the security in the region has a long legacy in the Nordics and remains an area where initiatives towards nuclear disarmament are easily accessible and can prove especially fruitful areas of action.

[123] Michaels JH (2024) Commentary by Jeffrey H. Michaels, Institute Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals. *H-Diplo RJISSF Policy Roundtable* III(2).
[124] Jonter and Rosengren (2024).
[125] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (n.d.) About SIPRI. Available at: https://www.sipri.org/about (accessed 2025-02-14).

Concluding points

- The current geopolitical context marks a new era of Nordic security cooperation. The rich history of pragmatic nuclear disarmament engagement in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden and their existing political, intellectual and technological infrastructure in the area makes this an especially fruitful area for future collaboration.

- Fostering Nordic cooperation on nuclear disarmament advocacy can leverage shared traditions and normative power to position the Nordics as a leading unit for nuclear risk reduction and de-escalation in and beyond NATO. For instance, a joint Nordic strategy can advance issues related to non-proliferation, verification, nuclear testing and transparency in the Baltic and Arctic region through existing avenues like the Stockholm Initiative.

- Nordic cooperation on nuclear disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation could benefit from the considerable experience and further empower the present capacity of the Nordics as facilitators of pragmatic diplomacy and as security providers in an increasingly destabilized European context.

About UI

Established in 1938, the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI) is an independent research institute on foreign affairs and international relations. Any views expressed in this publication are those of the author. They should not be interpreted as reflecting the views of the Swedish Institute of International Affairs. All manuscripts are reviewed.

The Swedish Institute of International Affairs
Visiting Address: Amarilitetsbacken 1, 111 49 Stockholm
Postal Address: Box 3163, 103 63 Stockholm
Phone: +46 8 511 768 00
www.ui.se info@ui.se X: @UISweden