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“Advocating Nuclear Disarmament as NATO Members—
Lessons from the Past and Possible Routes ahead for Finland and Sweden”

by Thomas Jonter, Stockholm University, and Emma Rosengren, Swedish Institute of International Affairs

In the aftermath of Russia’s full-scale military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Finland and Sweden applied for membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This constitutes the most fundamental security shift in the Baltic Sea region since the end of the Cold War. As members of NATO, the two Nordic neighbors will intensify their transatlantic military relations and join an alliance that is reliant on nuclear weapons. This will put an end to their historical legacies as neutral and militarily non-aligned states, which were a central feature of Cold War security policy and, to various degrees, will alter the concept of national identity in both countries.¹ Some have stated that by joining NATO, Finland and Sweden will in the future be unable to pursue nuclear disarmament advocacy, which is a historical legacy in both countries.² In this essay we argue that in fact Finland and Sweden can, and should, strengthen their advocacy for nuclear disarmament as members of NATO.

Since the NATO decisions in both Finland and Sweden were made remarkably hastily and without thorough societal debate, it is more urgent than ever to think critically about the different routes the Nordic neighbors can choose to take as members of NATO. That is what we aim to do in this essay. We show that while the Finnish and Swedish NATO decisions might appear as a sudden turn of events, a closer look at a longer time-period makes clear that they are, in fact, the continuity of a security policy path, which dates back to the mid-1990s. Furthermore, we show that while nuclear disarmament was a central feature of Finnish and Swedish security policy during the Cold War, it diminished as a policy priority during the post-Cold War era, especially from 2009 and onwards. As for the possibility of the two nations to perform nuclear disarmament advocacy in the future, lessons from the past show that it is also a matter of political will, commitment, and resources. Increased efforts in the disarmament field would both be compatible with traditional foreign-policy priorities in Finland and Sweden and contribute positively to the security situation in the region.

The first part of this essay looks closer at the historical dimensions of Finnish and Swedish neutrality and nuclear disarmament engagement. It is followed by an analysis of the post-Cold War period, with a focus on Finnish and Swedish relations with NATO and nuclear disarmament advocacy during this era. The third part elaborates on possible routes ahead for Finland and Sweden, which could contribute to the establishment of a continuity between historical foreign policy and disarmament ambitions and contemporary NATO membership. In the concluding part we reflect upon how our findings can feed into contemporary disarmament policy advocacy.

¹ On Swedish neutrality and national identity, see Ulf Bjereld, Alf W. Johansson and Karl Molin, *Sveriges säkerhet och världens fred: svensk utrikespolitik under kalla kriget* (Stockholm: Santérus, 2008); Per Lundin and Niklas Stenlås, “Technology, State Initiative and National Myths in Cold War Sweden. An Introduction,” in Lundin, Stenlås and Johan Gribbe, eds., *Science for Welfare and Warfare. Technology and State Initiative in Cold War Sweden* (Sagamore Beach, MA: Science History Publications/USA, 2010); Marie Cronqvist, “Survival in the Welfare Cocoon, The Culture of Civil Defense in Cold War Sweden,” in Annette Vowinckel, Marcus M. Payk, and Thomas Lindenberger, eds., *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 198. On Finland, see Juhana Aunesluoma and Johanna Rainio-Niemi, “Neutrality as Identity? Finland’s Quest for Security in the Cold War,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18.4 (Fall 2016): 51–78; Johanna Rainio-Niemi, *Ideological Cold War: the Politics of Neutrality in Austria and Finland* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

² See for example Rolf Ekéus, “Ett Nato-medlemskap kan bli en historisk tragedi för Sverige,” *Dagens Nyheter*, 10 May 2022, <https://www.dn.se/kultur/rolf-ekesus-ett-natomedlemskap-kan-bli-en-historisk-tragedi-for-sverige/>.

Cold War Disarmament Legacies

During the Cold War, both Finland and Sweden made themselves known as neutral and non-aligned countries in an international setting that was characterized by tension between the United States and its NATO allies on the one hand, and the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact states on the other. While Sweden's neutrality policy dates to the early nineteenth century, Finland declared its neutrality in 1955, a decade after the end of its Second World War battles with the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Even so, it remained under pressure from the Soviet Union for another three decades. For example, the bilateral Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance from 1948 between the Soviet Union and Finland prohibited Finland from joining organizations that were considered to be hostile towards the USSR.³ No matter their different origins, neutrality and military non-alignment were central features of Cold War security policy and, to various extent, national identity in both countries.⁴

In both Finland and Sweden, the neutrality policies were combined with comparably large national armed forces. The armed dimension of neutrality was a central feature of Cold War nation-building in both countries, and relied on a conviction, and practice, that it was men's duty to protect the nation through the policy of male conscription.⁵ Swedish military expenditure was among the highest per capita in Europe, considerably larger than in most NATO member states.⁶ The figure below shows military expenditures in the European neutral states as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) between 1960 and 1989. The figure shows that even though Swedish military spending decreased as a share of GDP, it remained the highest among the European neutrals. While Finnish military expenditure peaked as share of GDP in the early 1960s, it was at a relatively stable share throughout the period.

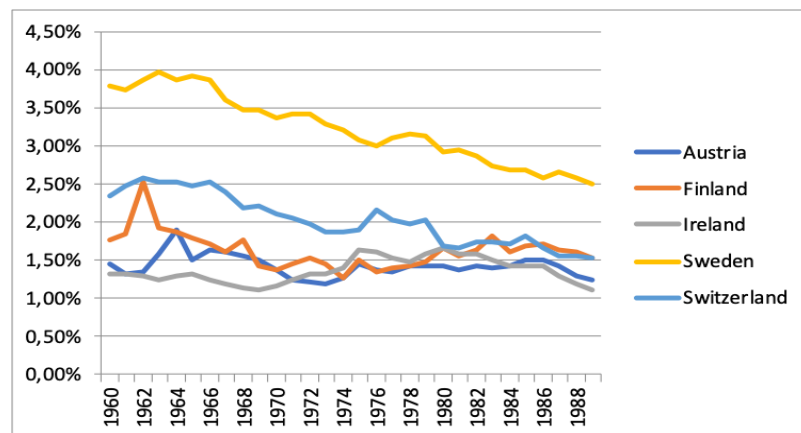
³ On Swedish Cold War security policy, see Bjereld, Johansson and Molin. For an overview and comparison of neutrality and non-alignment in Europe during the Cold War, see Mark Kramer, Aryo Makko and Peter Ruggenthaler, *The Soviet Union and Cold War Neutrality and Nonalignment in Europe* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021). On the position of Finland in early Swedish Cold War security policy, see Olof Kronvall, *Den bräckliga barriären: Finland i svensk säkerhetspolitik 1948–1962* (Stockholms universitet, 2003). On Finnish neutrality and the *Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance* from 1948, see Keijo Kerhonen, "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the Soviet Union and Finland: Some Aspects of International Politics," *Cooperation and Conflict* 8.3 (1973): 183–188.

⁴ On Sweden, see Christine Agius, *The Social Construction of Swedish Neutrality: Challenges to Swedish Identity and Sovereignty* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Mikael af Malmborg, *Neutrality and State-building in Sweden* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); Cronqvist, "Survival in the Welfare Cocoon"; Lundin and Stenlås. "Technology, State Initiative and National Myths in Cold War Sweden." On Finland, see Aunesluoma and Rainio-Niemi, "Neutrality as Identity?"

⁵ On the historical roots of male conscription in Finland and Sweden, see Anders Ahlbäck, *Manhood and the Making of the Military: Conscription, Military Service and Masculinity in Finland, 1917–39* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014); Fia Sundevall, *Det sista manliga yrkesmonopolet: genus och militärt arbete i Sverige 1865 – 1989* (Stockholm: Makadam, 2011).

⁶ Willhelm Agrell, *Fredens illusioner. Det svenska nationella försvarets nedgång och fall 1988–2009* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2010).

Figure 1. Military spending in neutral European states, 1960–1989, as share of GDP



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). *Military Expenditure Database*. <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex> (available 2019-08-05).

While Finnish and Swedish Cold War security policy relied on notions of military protection through comparably large national armed forces, both countries were engaged in multilateral disarmament diplomacy. Sweden's nuclear disarmament policy took form in the 1960s, in the aftermath of an intense debate about whether the country should acquire its own nuclear weapons arsenal. In fact, Sweden was one of few countries that had the technical capability and the political will to manufacture nuclear weapons in an era without international regulation of these weapons.⁷ The debate about Swedish nuclear weapons sparked off in the mid-1950s, and it caused a national split in the parliament, among the public, and in the ruling Social Democratic Party (SAP).⁸

In an international context marked by the fear that nuclear weapons would be used and that additional states would acquire nuclear weapons, however, nuclear disarmament was a goal which both sides of the nuclear weapons debate could stand behind. In 1961, Sweden's Foreign Minister Östen Undén asked Alva Myrdal, who together with Mexican diplomat Antonio García Robles received the Nobel Peace Prize for her work on disarmament in 1982, to investigate the possibility for developing a Swedish disarmament program.⁹ Her work resulted in a proposal to establish a nuclear weapon-free club on a voluntary basis, the Undén plan. This was the first out of many Swedish initiatives in the sphere of nuclear disarmament. The Undén plan met

⁷ Thomas Jonter, *The Key to Nuclear Restraint. The Swedish Plans to Acquire Nuclear Weapons during the Cold War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁸ Emma Rosengren, *Gendering Nuclear Disarmament. Identity and Disarmament in Sweden during the Cold War* (Diss. Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2020).

⁹ On Alva Myrdal and nuclear disarmament, see Peter Wallensteen and Armend Bekaj, *Alva Myrdal: a Pioneer in Nuclear Disarmament* (Cham: Springer, 2022).

opposition from the United States and the NATO allies, except Canada, Denmark, and Norway.¹⁰ The Finnish response was positive.¹¹

Sweden's ability to have an impact on nuclear disarmament was furthered when it joined the Eighteen Nations Disarmament Committee (ENDC) as a non-aligned state in 1962. In this capacity, Sweden focused on technical solutions to various disarmament related problems and pushed for negotiations of a test ban treaty.¹² Disarmament engagement evolved into a key feature of Sweden's active foreign policy in the 1960s; under Myrdal's leadership Sweden played an important role in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Sweden's neutral position was argued to give strength to Sweden's disarmament position. Over time, both disarmament and neutrality became associated with values and traditions of the SAP, such as support for international cooperation, detente, and international law.¹³ Due to its focus on technological expertise, nuclear disarmament engagement was made compatible with highly valued traits related to science and technology at the national level.¹⁴

While Sweden's early disarmament engagement overlapped with a national debate about nuclear weapons acquisition, Finland has a different experience. After the end of the Second World War and Finland's defeat by the Soviet Union, Finnish neutrality evolved with strong pragmatic undercurrents. Due to its position in the Soviet sphere of influence, Finland was sensitive to developments between the superpowers. IR scholar Tapio Juntunen argues that Finland prioritized "détente between the superpowers," assuming that its own security was dependent on "peace between the two superpowers."¹⁵ In 1963, President Urho Kekkonen proposed the establishment of a Nordic Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NNWFZ), and this became the first Finnish initiative in multilateral nuclear disarmament diplomacy.¹⁶

In the 1960s, both Finland and Sweden were part of international conversations about the regulation of nuclear weapons. After the conclusion of the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) in 1963, both were engaged in the processes that led to the conclusion of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1968. As a non-aligned member of the ENDC, Sweden pushed for additional undertakings by the nuclear weapon states, in the form of a package-deal solution composed of a non-proliferation treaty, a comprehensive test ban treaty, and a fissile material cut off treaty.¹⁷ Finland, on the other hand, with observer status in the ENDC, acted as a "bridge-builder" between the nuclear haves and the nuclear have-nots in

¹⁰ Stellan Andersson, *Den första grinden. Svensk nedrustningspolitik 1961–1963* (Stockholm: Santérus, 2004); Annika Norlin, *Undénplanen - ett lyckat misslyckande?: en studie om genomförandet av en svensk utrikesfråga* (Göteborg: Statsvetenskapliga institutionen, Göteborgs university, 1998).

¹¹ Tapio Juntunen, "Finland: From Curious Observer to Active Accommodator of the NPT Process," in Pascal Lottaz and Yoko Iwama, eds., *Neutral Europe and the Creation of the Nonproliferation Regime 1958–68* (Routledge, forthcoming).

¹² Emma Rosengren, "Gendering Sweden's Nuclear Renunciation. A Historical Analysis," *International Affairs* 98.4 (July 2022):1231–1248.

¹³ The first period of Sweden's more active foreign policy has been referred to as "the Undén line", and the second as "the Palme line". See Olof Kronvall and Magnus Petersson, *Svensk säkerhetspolitik i supermakternas skugga 1945–1991* (Stockholm: Santérus, 2005). For previous research on the launch of an activist foreign policy, see Hans Löden, *"För säkerhets skull": ideologi och säkerhet i svensk aktiv utrikespolitik 1950–1975* (Stockholm: Santérus, 2001). See also Bjereld, Johansson and Molin, *Sveriges säkerhet och världens fred*.

¹⁴ Rosengren, "Gendering Sweden's Nuclear Renunciation."

¹⁵ Juntunen, "Finland."

¹⁶ Juntunen, "Finland."

¹⁷ Rosengren, "Gendering Sweden's Nuclear Renunciation."

negotiations. The ambition was not to jeopardize the consensus that had evolved between the superpowers, and to pursue a less radical disarmament diplomacy compared with that of Sweden.¹⁸

While the superpowers were hesitant to follow Sweden's suggestions about a package deal, they did agree to include a vaguely phrased disarmament commitment in the NPT, as suggested by the Mexican delegation. Even though the NPT did not become the package deal envisioned by the Swedish government, Sweden signed the treaty in 1968. Finland was the first signatory of the treaty. The inclusion of what we now know as Article VI, calling on the nuclear-weapon states to negotiate nuclear disarmament "in good faith," was important for gaining a Swedish signature. The NPT is still considered to be the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and a key feature of the contemporary hegemonic nuclear order.¹⁹ Throughout the Cold War, disarmament remained a core element of Finnish and Swedish foreign and security policy.²⁰

Disarmament in the Post-Cold War Era

The post-Cold War period has been characterized by parallel tracks in international security. In the 1990s, both Finland and Sweden decreased their military expenditures, opened their armed forces to women's voluntary participation, and advocated a broadened approach to security in international affairs.²¹ Gender equality evolved as a central pillar of Swedish foreign policy and national identity in the 1990s.²² In parallel with the evolution of a broadened approach to security, both Finland and Sweden increased their military cooperation with NATO member states. By signing a cooperation agreement with NATO in 1994 (Partnership for Peace), and joining the European Union (EU) in 1995, both embarked on paths towards increased military transatlantic cooperation and Western European integration. Both participated in NATO-led military operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan during the 1990s and 2000s, and operational planning and joint Nordic military exercises evolved in the 2000s.²³

After Russia's military annexation of Crimea in 2014, both Finland and Sweden signed a comprehensive defense agreement with NATO (*Värdlandsavtalet*).²⁴ When Russia launched its full-scale military intervention of Ukraine in 2022, both countries applied for NATO membership. Hence, while the decisions to apply for

¹⁸ Juntunen, "Finland."

¹⁹ On the hegemonic nuclear order, see Nick Ritchie, "A Hegemonic Nuclear Order: Understanding the Ban Treaty and the Power Politics of Nuclear Weapons," *Contemporary Security Policy* 40.4 (August 2019), 409–434. See also Laura Considine, "Contests of Legitimacy and Value. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Logic of Prohibition," *International Affairs* 95.5 (September 2019): 1075–1092.

²⁰ Jonter, *The Key to Nuclear Restraint*; Juntunen "Finland"; Jan Prawitz, "Det svenska spelet om nedrustningen," *Framsyn* 1 (2004); Jan Prawitz, "Non-nuclear is Beautiful or Why and How Sweden Went Non-nuclear," *Kungl. Krigsvetenskapsakademiens handlingar och tidskrift* 198.6 (1994); Jan Prawitz, *From Nuclear Option to Non-Nuclear Promotion: The Swedish Case* (Stockholm: Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 1995).

²¹ Pirjo Jukarainen, "Men Making Peace in the Name of Just War: The Case of Finland," in Annica Kronsell and Erika Svedberg, eds., *Making Gender, Making War: Violence, Military and Peacekeeping Practices* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Annica Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Postnational Defense: Militarism and Peacekeeping* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²² Ann Towns, "Paradoxes of (In)equality. Something is Rotten in the Gender Equal State of Sweden," *Cooperation and Conflict: Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association* 37.2 (2002): 157–179.

²³ Magnus Petersson, "Nye forutsetninger for Norge i det nordiske forsvarssamarbeidet," *Forsvarets forum* 23 (November 2022); Rainio-Niemi.

²⁴ Kjell Engelbrekt, Arita Holmberg and Jan Ångström, *Svensk säkerhetspolitik i Europa och världen* (Stockholm: Norstedts juridik, 2015); Thuomas Forsberg, "Finland and NATO: Strategic Choices and Identity Conceptions," in Andrew Cottey, ed., *The European Neutrals and NATO: Non-alignment, Partnership, Membership?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Petersson, "Nye forutsetninger".

NATO membership last year might appear as a sudden turn of events, it is in fact the continuity of a policy orientation towards Western European and transatlantic integration, which had started in the early 1990s. In this process, national identity representations in both Finland and Sweden were increasingly associated with the western sphere.²⁵ The same pattern stands out in nuclear disarmament advocacy.

While disarmament was a central Cold War security policy priority especially in Sweden, it slowly deteriorated during the post-Cold War era. One early example is that no representative for disarmament was elected after Social Democrat politician and Sweden's disarmament representative from 1982 to 1991 Maj-Britt Theorin left her post in 1991, when the Conservative Party won the national elections. When the Social Democrats were re-elected in 1994, they did not appoint a new disarmament representative. By joining the EU, both Finland and Sweden aligned their voices with two nuclear weapon states—France and the United Kingdom. Michal Onderco and Clara Portela argue that as members of the union, both Finland and Sweden acted as “bridge-builders between adepts of nuclear deterrence and pro-disarmament abolitionists [...] occupying an intermediate position between the mainstream of NATO members and the group of disarmament advocates.”²⁶ In 2003, Sweden initiated the “EU Strategy against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction.”²⁷

While EU membership entailed that the Nordic neighbors had to consider the will of European nuclear weapon states, other arenas remained important for nuclear disarmament advocacy. In 1998, Sweden co-founded the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) with Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia and South Africa. The aim of NAC was to elaborate on “a new nuclear disarmament agenda” leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.²⁸ In 2003, late Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh asked Hans Blix, an experienced disarmament diplomat who had been involved in the founding years of Swedish disarmament engagement, and former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to set up and chair a commission tasked to “investigate ways of reducing the dangers from nuclear, biological, chemical and radiological weapons.” This led to the establishment of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, which presented its report “Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms” to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2006.²⁹ Together with Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, and Switzerland, in 2007 Sweden established the de-alerting group, with the aim of encouraging the nuclear-weapon states to decrease the operational readiness of their nuclear arsenals.³⁰

Hence, while EU membership put both Finland and Sweden in a new position, this did not rule out non-proliferation initiatives such as the EU strategy within the union, or disarmament initiatives at the international arena. In 2009, however, Foreign Minister Carl Bildt and his conservative government left the de-alerting group.³¹ A few years later, in 2013, Sweden also left NAC.³² This decision was condemned by civil-society actors in Sweden, who saw it as a sign of the government's lack of interest in nuclear

²⁵ Aunesluoma and Rainio-Niemi, “Neutrality as Identity?”; Linus Hagström, “Text and body in the Swedish NATO debate,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 56.2 (2021): 141–162.

²⁶ Michal Onderco and Clara Portela, “NATO's Nordic Enlargement and Nuclear Disarmament: the End of Bridge Building,” *War on the Rocks* (February 2023).

²⁷ Onderco and Portela, “NATO's Nordic Enlargement and Nuclear Disarmament.”

²⁸ “New Agenda Coalition,” *Nuclear Threat Initiative*, <https://www.nti.org/education-center/treaties-and-regimes/new-agenda-coalition/>.

²⁹ “Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission,” *The Simons Foundation*, <https://www.thesimonsfoundation.ca/projects/weapons-mass-destruction-commission>.

³⁰ “Sverige går med i nedrustningsgrupp,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, 3 March 2015, <https://www.svd.se/a/aaf6c788-6da5-3194-af34-299a928fec87/sverige-gar-med-i-nedrustningsgrupp>.

³¹ “Sverige går med i nedrustningsgrupp.”

³² “New Agenda Coalition.”

disarmament. The reluctance of the Swedish government to sign a statement initiated by South Africa and signed by 80 states on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons the same year was seen as yet another example of Sweden's lack of interest in disarmament.³³

The South African statement was an early expression of what became known as the humanitarian initiative. This initiative dates back to the 2010 NPT Review Conference, where governments expressed their “deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons.” Reaffirming “the need for all states at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law,” this initiative put humanitarian consequences and international humanitarian law at the center of nuclear disarmament discourses.³⁴ In 2012, Switzerland followed up with a statement signed by 16 states, including Denmark and Norway. Neither Finland nor Sweden belonged to the signatories.³⁵ In 2013, 80 states signed South Africa's statement, and 125 states joined the initiative in the First Committee.

While the Swedish government showed limited interest in the humanitarian initiative at the outset, Social Democrat Foreign Minister Margot Wallström re-introduced nuclear disarmament as a key component of her feminist foreign policy in 2014. In October the same year Sweden joined the humanitarian initiative. The following year, Wallström re-instituted the position of disarmament ambassador and an advisory board on international humanitarian law and disarmament, organizational features that were dismantled in the 1990s.³⁶ Wallström also announced that Sweden would re-join the de-alerting group.³⁷ In parallel with the above, governments, international organizations, and civil-society actors met to discuss the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, first in Norway in 2013,³⁸ and after that in Mexico in 2014.³⁹ Both Finland and Sweden participated in these conferences.⁴⁰ In December 2014, Austria hosted a third conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, and launched a humanitarian pledge signed by 127 states. Neither Finland nor Sweden belonged to the group of signatories.⁴¹ During 2015 and 2016, an open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament convened in Geneva, and in March and June 2017 more than 135 governments and members of civil society met in New York to negotiate a legally binding treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

The Swedish government, as opposed to its Finnish counterpart, participated in negotiations that led to the conclusion of the TPNW in 2017. Juntunen argues that the Finnish decision to remain outside of negotiations and not to sign the treaty can be understood as expressions of small-state realist considerations, and more liberal-oriented principles around the importance of the existing NPT regime, what Juntunen calls small-state

³³ “Sverige ställer sig utanför nedrustningssamarbete,” *Fria tidningen*, 2 May 2013, <https://www.fria.nu/artikel/97631>.

³⁴ “HINW,” *Reaching Critical Will*, <https://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/disarmament-fora/hinw>.

³⁵ “2 May IHL,” *Reaching Critical Will*, https://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/prepcom12/statements/2May_IHL.pdf.

³⁶ “Regeringen återupprättar en folkrätts- och nedrustningsdelegation,” *Regeringskansliet*, December 2015; “Regeringen tillsätter en MR-ambassadör samt en nedrustningsambassadör,” *Regeringskansliet*, 20 May 2016.

³⁷ “Sverige går med i nedrustningsgrupp.”

³⁸ “Conference: Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons [HINW],” *Regeringen*, 4 March 2013, https://www.regjeringen.no/en/historical-archive/Stoltenbergs-2nd-Government/Ministry-of-Foreign-Affairs/humimpact_2013/id708603/.

³⁹ “HINW.”

⁴⁰ “Participants,” *Regeringen*, https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/ud/vedlegg/hum/hum_participants.pdf; “Participants,” *Reaching Critical Will*, <https://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/nayarit-2014/Participants.pdf>.

⁴¹ “2014 Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons,” *Federal Ministry Republic of Austria*, <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/european-foreign-policy/disarmament/weapons-of-mass-destruction/nuclear-weapons/2014-vienna-conference-on-the-humanitarian-impact-of-nuclear-weapons/>.

liberalism.⁴² In Swedish debates, those against the TPNW worried that Swedish relations with NATO would be negatively affected. The news that US Defense Minister James Mattis had warned Swedish Defense Minister Peter Hultqvist that Sweden's ability to cooperate militarily with the US and NATO would suffer should Sweden sign the TPNW in 2017 added fuel to the fire.⁴³ Hence, relations with the Western alliance were a key element of Swedish TPNW debates.⁴⁴

While Sweden participated in negotiations of the TPNW, it did not sign the treaty. Instead, the government appointed Lars-Erik Lundin, a former diplomat, to investigate the consequences of a Swedish signature. In 2019, Lundin concluded that a signature would undermine Swedish security interests.⁴⁵ In July 2019, shortly before her resignation from the post as foreign minister, Wallström declared that Sweden would not sign the TPNW.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, she maintained that nuclear disarmament remained a “key priority of the Government’s foreign and security policy.”⁴⁷ Remaining an observer to the TPNW; continuing efforts to strengthen the NPT (through the Stockholm Initiative); establishing a Swedish knowledge centre on nuclear disarmament (what we now know as the Alva Myrdal Centre for Nuclear Disarmament at Uppsala University); and support for an international nuclear disarmament UN secretariat, were put forth to demonstrate Sweden’s commitment to the issue. In February 2020, and with Ann Linde as Sweden’s foreign minister, representatives from sixteen countries convened in Germany to discuss how nuclear disarmament could be strengthened through the NPT as part of the Stockholm Initiative.⁴⁸ During the 2022 NPT RevCon, the Stockholm Initiative, on behalf of sixteen states, proposed concrete measures on nuclear risk reduction.⁴⁹

In conclusion, a closer look at Finland’s and Sweden’s disarmament engagement in the post-Cold War era shows that it has shifted over time, depending on political will, commitment, and resources rather than structural factors or membership in international cooperation. In the following we discuss why disarmament is an important policy priority in the present, and how Finland and Sweden can strengthen their disarmament ambitions as members of NATO.

⁴² Tapio Juntunen, “Harmaantuva pienvaltoliberalismia: Suomi, ydinaseiden kieltosopimus ja ulkopolitiikan koulukuntavaikutteet,” *Kosmopolis* 48.4 (2018).

⁴³ Jonas Gummesson, “USA:s försvarsminister varnar Sverige för kärnvapenstopp,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, 30 August 2017, <https://www.svd.se/a/Wrk5d/usas-forsvarsminister-varnar-sverige-for-karnvapenstopp>; Karin Enström and Hans Wallmark, “Skriv inte på ett tandlöst kärnvapenförbud,” *Göteborgsposten*, 1 September 2017, <https://www.gp.se/debatt/skriv-inte-p%C3%A5-ett-tandl%C3%B6st-k%C3%A4rnvapenf%C3%B6rbud-1.4590598>.

⁴⁴ Emma Rosengren, “A Feminist Reflection on Nuclear Disarmament and Change,” in *Svenska läkare mot kärnvapen, I skuggan av makten, Skuggutredning till utredning av konsekvenserna av ett svenskt tillträde till kärnvapenförbudskonventionen* (Stockholm, 2018).

⁴⁵ Lars-Erik Lundin, “Utredning av konsekvenserna av ett svenskt tillträde till konventionen om förbud mot kärnvapen,” *Regeringskansliet*, 18 January 2019, <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/departementsserien-och-promemorior/2019/01/utredning-av-konsekvenserna-av-ett-svenskt-tilltrade-till-konventionen-om-forbud-mot-karnvapen/>.

⁴⁶ “Utrikesministern redogör för regeringens arbete för kärnvapenedrustning,” *Regeringskansliet*, 12 July 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tDaibocMuM>.

⁴⁷ “The government’s continued work for nuclear disarmament,” *Regeringskansliet*, 12 July 2019, <https://www.government.se/s/2019/07/the-governments-continued-work-for-nuclear-disarmament/>.

⁴⁸ “Ministerial meeting of the Stockholm initiative for nuclear disarmament,” *Regeringskansliet*, 27 February 2020, <https://www.swedenabroad.se/en/embassies/un-geneva/current/news/stockholm-initiative-for-nuclear-disarmament/>.

⁴⁹ Tytti Erästö and Wilfred Wan, “Looking beyond the NPT: Next Steps in Arms Control and Disarmament,” *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute* (2022).

Possible Disarmament Routes Ahead

States are members of military alliances for various reasons and with different priorities and interests over time.⁵⁰ Hence, there is nothing static about how members behave. William Alberque and Benjamin Schreer identify three possible ways to be NATO members for Finland and Sweden. The first option, involving “low level ambition,” would conceptualize NATO membership primarily as a way to defend the national territory. This path would involve a low-key relationship with NATO’s nuclear deterrence, and both countries would join their Nordic neighbors Denmark, Iceland, and Norway in refraining from hosting NATO nuclear weapons on their territories in times of peace. The second option, based upon a medium level of ambition, would mean that Finland and Sweden would not only focus on the defense of their own national territories, but also on the Baltic allies. This would include participating in NATO nuclear consultations, including the “integration of conventional and nuclear planning and exercises.” Within this option, refusing the stationing of nuclear weapons on their territories would be ruled out. High-level ambition, the third option, would mean that both Finland and Sweden would commit to all aspects of NATO cooperation and integration, including nuclear planning and sharing.⁵¹

In choosing what kind of NATO members Finland and Sweden want to become, it is necessary to elaborate upon policies which are legitimate at the national level. Since legitimacy is often established through references to policy priorities in the past, it is important to consider the historical past in each national context. Furthermore, it is also worth considering how others perceive these Nordic neighbors, states that have made themselves known as champions for nuclear disarmament in the past. In this final section, we elaborate further on how Finland and Sweden can honor their historical nuclear disarmament legacies, choosing a low-level ambition towards NATO membership. Our point of departure is that even though NATO membership has consequences in terms of the room to maneuver of its member states, nothing prevents them from trying to change the organization from within, or advocating nuclear disarmament within and outside of the organization. In fact, even though NATO members have possessed nuclear weapons since the founding of the organization, prior to 2010 the alliance was not described as a nuclear alliance.⁵² Hence, NATO’s present reliance on nuclear weapons, and its branding as a nuclear alliance, can be renegotiated. NATO’s most recent strategic concept also includes the goal of a world free from nuclear weapons.⁵³ This is a goal towards which the Nordic states can choose to work.

In the following we discuss potential paths Finland and Sweden can take. Our focus is on Russia’s potential reliance on nuclear weapons in the Baltic Sea and the Arctic regions; US and NATO expectations for Finland and Sweden; and a potential increased role for Nordic cooperation within NATO. In our discussions of disarmament policy possibilities, we depart from a broad definition of disarmament policy, ranging from non-proliferation and risk reduction initiatives to more transformative advocacy opportunities.

Russia and Nuclear Weapons in the Baltic and Arctic Regions

While Russia has embarked upon a modernization process of its nuclear arsenals over the last decades, its reliance on nuclear weapons has become increasingly urgent since the invasion of Ukraine, including

⁵⁰ Alexander Lanoszka, *Military Alliances in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022).

⁵¹ William Alberque and Benjamin Schreer, “What Kind of NATO Allies Will Finland and Sweden Be?,” *Survival* 64.6 (2022): 123–136.

⁵² Kjølv, Egeland, “Spreading the Burden: How NATO Became a ‘Nuclear Alliance,’” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 31.1 (2020): 143–167.

⁵³ “Strategic Concept,” *NATO*, 2022, <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>.

aggressive threats to use nuclear weapons.⁵⁴ Should Finland and Sweden join NATO, Russia has threatened to strengthen its defences in the Baltic Sea region by deploying nuclear weapons. Russia supposedly already stores nuclear weapons in the enclave of Kaliningrad, which lies close to the Latvian and Lithuanian border.⁵⁵ The stationing of nuclear weapons in Belarus increases the nuclear threat level.⁵⁶ Since NATO enlargement in the Baltic Sea region will turn the Baltic Sea into a NATO sea, there are reasons to believe that Russia will increase its reliance on nuclear weapons in the region. The lack of military-to-military dialogue between Russia and the West regarding the Arctic region has exacerbated the situation. The result is an Arctic security dilemma which threatens stability and increases the danger of unintended armed conflict resulting from accidents or misunderstandings.⁵⁷

Given the above, the Nordic states should pursue a policy which does not escalate tension and conflict. This is especially important in relation to the hosting nuclear weapons as part of NATO's nuclear sharing policy. Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey have nuclear weapons on their soil as part of this sharing policy, with the aim of strengthening the alliance's deterrence capabilities. Other members, such as Denmark, Lithuania, Norway and Spain, have policies which forbid the stationing of nuclear weapons within their borders. In their view, it would increase their vulnerability and make them obvious targets in a nuclear war.⁵⁸ As members of NATO, Finland and Sweden should strive for de-escalation and stability in the region by refusing to store nuclear weapons on their territories.

In fact, Finland already has legislation that forbids nuclear weapons on its soil.⁵⁹ To ensure that the Baltic Sea and the Arctic region do not turn into a highly conflictual area, which would enhance the risk of miscalculations and accidents and the potential use of nuclear weapons, Sweden should look into the possibility of similar national legislation. Former Swedish prime minister Magdalena Andersson stated the following as a requisite for joining NATO: "We think that Sweden should clearly declare that we do not want nuclear weapons or permanent bases on Swedish territory. It is an attitude from Norway and Denmark that has always been respected, and the corresponding Swedish line is natural." It is worth noting that the opposition leader at the time, who is now the new conservative Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, pledged his support to this position in the same debate.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Jessica Rogers, Matt Korda and Hans M. Kristensen, "The Long View: Strategic Arms Control after the New START Treaty," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 78 6 (2022): 347–368; Hanna Notte, Sarah Bidgood, Nikolai Sokov, Michael Duitsman and William Potter, "Russia's Novel Weapons Systems: Military Innovation in the Post-Soviet Period," *The Nonproliferation Review* 28.1–3 (2021): 61–93.

⁵⁵ "Russia Says it Will Reinforce Borders if Sweden and Finland join NATO," *The Guardian*, 14 April, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/14/russia-says-it-will-reinforce-borders-if-sweden-and-finland-join-nato>.

⁵⁶ "What Did Putin Say on Tactical Nuclear Weapons and Belarus?," *Reuters*, 25 March, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/what-did-putin-say-tactical-nuclear-weapons-belarus-2023-03-25/>.

⁵⁷ James Kenneth Wither, "An Arctic Security Dilemma: Assessing and Mitigating the Risk of Unintended Armed Conflict in the High North," *European Security* 30.4 (2021): 649–666.

⁵⁸ On how NATO members view nuclear weapons on their territory, see Dan Reiter, "Security Commitments and Nuclear Proliferation," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 10.1 (2014): 61–80.

⁵⁹ Robin Forsberg, Aku Kähkönen and Jason Moyer, "If Finland joins NATO, it Needs a New Nuclear Weapons Policy," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (8 December 2022).

⁶⁰ Jens Petersson, "As Sweden Gets Ready for NATO, Will its Approach to Nuclear Weapons Change?," *The Bulletin for Atomic Scientists* (27 July, 2022).

Reconciling US and NATO Expectations at the National Level

In joining NATO, both Finland and Sweden will have to consider, and maneuver in relation to, expectations in the US and in NATO. The long border to Russia stretching from Finland and over the Baltic states, including the Arctic area, will be an important new feature of NATO-Russia relations. Finland and Sweden's membership decisively changes the correlation of forces into NATO's favor. In this light it is arguably believed within NATO that Sweden and Finland can, and will, play an important role in strengthening the so-called Northern flank militarily. Furthermore, it is likely that Finland and Sweden will be expected to take a larger responsibility for the defense of the Baltic states and the Arctic. How, and under what conditions, remains to be settled.

In the past, the neutral positions of Finland and Sweden made it possible to stand outside of internationally tense relations, acting as mediators between the two blocs when they could. As members of one of these blocs, however, the Nordic neighbors will have to renegotiate this historical position. Alongside the above changes in the security setting in the region, and increased pressure from partners within the NATO alliance in relation to the Russian border and the Northern flank, for the governments in Finland and Sweden must to try to establish some kind of continuity with past security policy priorities. This is especially important regarding legitimacy at the national level. While the military dimension of the matter is not necessarily that problematic since both Finnish and Swedish security policy has relied upon armed force for decades, alignment itself, and having to navigate according to the will of others, might be more of a challenge. To ensure legitimacy among citizens at the national level it is necessary to strengthen societal knowledge about government's security priorities, and to ensure broad societal participation in future debates about peace and security.

In the past, knowledge production has been a key feature of Swedish priorities, for example in relation to peace and nuclear disarmament. In 1966, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) was established to produce high quality research about conflicts, armaments, arms control and disarmament. SIPRI remains a leading think tank on these topics globally.⁶¹ More recent initiatives that are more recent are also worth mentioning. In 2021, the Swedish government established the Alva Myrdal Center on Nuclear Disarmament at Uppsala University, "to promote teaching, research, and policy support on nuclear disarmament."⁶² Strengthening existing research environments and establishing new ones is one way to ensure high-quality input from decisionmakers in the coming years. Furthermore, both Finland and Sweden have a history of supporting civil society organizations. In Sweden, the government agency the Folke Bernadotte Academy has funded organizations working on issues related to peace, disarmament and security since the 1980s.⁶³ The Finnish Foreign Ministry also supports various civil society initiatives working on these topics.⁶⁴ Continued investments in, and Nordic cooperation around, such work not only enables crucial input from broader audiences, but also contributes to democracy, transparency, and legitimacy at the national levels.

The Possibilities for Nordic Cooperation

The Nordic countries have a long history of cooperation. During the Cold War, the Scandinavian states developed ambitious cooperation in a wide range of areas. This period has been described as foundational for Nordic cooperation with the establishment of the Nordic Council in 1952. The security dimension was never

⁶¹ "About," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, <https://www.sipri.org/about>.

⁶² "Alva Myrdal Centre," *Uppsala University*, <https://www.uu.se/alvamyrdalcentre/>.

⁶³ "Stöd," *Folke Bernadotte Academy*, <https://fba.se/sa-arbetar-vi/stod/>.

⁶⁴ "Utvecklingssamarbete och stöd till finländska civilsamhällesorganisationer och stiftelser," *Utrikesministeriet*, <https://um.fi/utvecklingssamarbete-stod-till-finlandsk-civilsamhallsorganisationer-och-stiftelser>.

added to the efforts to create an extended Nordic cooperation. Today, security and defence cooperation has risen to the top of the agenda of Nordic cooperation, resulting in several joint military projects.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, Nordic cooperation should not be limited to military strategy, and Nordic cooperation could be one way forward for Finland and Sweden to contribute to nuclear disarmament as members of NATO.

Lessons from the past show that nothing hinders NATO members from taking bold initiatives on nuclear disarmament. For example, Norway hosted the first humanitarian initiative conference, a starting point of the process that led to the conclusion of the TPNW. IR scholar Kjølvs Egeland argues: “the humanitarian initiative, including the pursuit of a new legal instrument, was products of a carefully deliberated policy of strategic social construction” by the Norwegian government.⁶⁶ Since the humanitarian initiative was a Norwegian initiative, and since nuclear disarmament advocacy is a historical legacy in both Finland and Sweden, one possibility is that countries in the Nordic region elaborate on a joint strategy to continue the work set out by the Norwegians in the past. The Stockholm initiative already includes countries that are NATO members. The purpose of the initiative was from the beginning to find small steps that would lay a foundation for future disarmament efforts. It would be hard to find reasons for Sweden not to fulfil this strategy in the current situation, even if Sweden will most likely adjust its rhetoric in order not to provoke new and old friends within the NATO alliance.⁶⁷ Both political will and the allocation of resources is necessary for efficient and influential nuclear disarmament advocacy in the future.

Concluding Remarks

Last year, Finland and Sweden declared their decisions to apply for NATO membership, thereby abandoning neutrality and non-alignment, which were central features of Cold War security policy and national identity in both countries. These decisions have led some to argue that the Nordic neighbors will be unable to remain advocates for nuclear disarmament in the future. Our analysis shows that in fact both Finland and Sweden have embarked upon paths towards increased Western European and transatlantic military cooperation since the mid-1990s, and that disarmament engagement has varied during the post-Cold War era. Rather than being contingent on structural factors and membership in various forms of international cooperation, disarmament advocacy seems to be contingent on political will, commitment and resources at the national level.

In the contemporary present which is marked by tension and conflict after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, it is increasingly urgent to intensify efforts to reach a world that is free of nuclear weapons. Arguing that the central position of nuclear disarmament in both national identity and security policy in Finland and Sweden in the past should inform policy initiatives in the present, we have identified some possible lines of action for governments in both countries to consider. If both states advance their nuclear disarmament ambitions, this will establish continuity between historical national identity perceptions and contemporary security policy, which is important for legitimacy. First, given contemporary security challenges, it is vital for both countries to decrease the nuclear-threat level in the region by declaring their territories free from nuclear weapons. Second, investments in knowledge production and civil-society participation would ensure the basis for well-informed, democratic, and transparent decisionmaking about security in the future. Third, innovative disarmament initiatives could very well be performed in coordination with Nordic neighbors.

⁶⁵ About transition of Nordic cooperation, see the special issue “Rediscovering Nordic Cooperation,” *Policy and Governance* 8.4 (2020).

⁶⁶ Kjølvs Egeland, “Oslo’s ‘New Track’: Norwegian Nuclear Disarmament Diplomacy, 2005–2013,” *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 2.2 (2019): 468–490.

⁶⁷ Petersson, “As Sweden Gets Ready.”

Just as there are many ways of being a member of NATO, there are different ways to work for nuclear disarmament. The Stockholm Initiative has so far been focused on issues related to nuclear risk reduction. Continued efforts in this field are necessary to deal with the risks related to nuclear weapons as long as they exist. Meanwhile, it is also possible to take steps to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in world affairs. For example, de-escalation efforts related to no-first-use policies are possible policy priorities that would serve this purpose. Finally, more transformative initiatives can certainly contribute to delegitimize nuclear weapons altogether. Risk reduction, de-escalation, and de-legitimization can be understood as a scale of policy possibilities that could guide future Nordic co-operation on nuclear disarmament. No matter the level of ambition, our analysis of lessons from the past shows that political will, societal commitment and support, and the investment of resources into disarmament knowledges are key ingredients for future disarmament initiatives to be successfully performed by governments.

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Commentary by S.M. Amadae, University of Helsinki

Thomas Jonter and Emma Rosengren's welcome article addresses the potential pathways for Finland and Sweden to continue advocating for nuclear disarmament once they become NATO members in view of their historical legacies of neutrality. It provides rich detail and analysis of the past stances and policy advocacies of these nations to identify three potential levels of ambition in their integration into NATO. Low ambition is primarily defensive of national territory. Medium ambition signifies a contribution to the defense of Baltic allies and includes the two nations joining NATO nuclear consultancies, crucially those involving conventional and nuclear planning and related military exercises. High ambition requires commitment to all facets of NATO integration, which itself entails nuclear sharing and planning. Throughout the essay an overriding theme is Finland's and Sweden's historical commitment to nuclear disarmament, which is illustrated by numerous examples. In presenting the histories of Finland and Sweden on nuclear disarmament, "Advocating Disarmament as NATO Members" is an important contribution to this literature.

Jonter and Rosengren's article also takes a clear policy stance exploring "how Finland and Sweden can honor their historical nuclear disarmament legacies" by taking the path of low-level ambition in joining NATO (10). The underlying motivation for, and justification of, this position rests on Finland and Sweden maintaining consistency with their historically expressed national interests that are anchored in democratic politics and past legacies. As well, given that NATO's mission should serve the security interests of its constituent states, these two Nordic countries are positioned to help explore and define NATO's security policies.

It was only recently in 2010 that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization branded itself as a "nuclear alliance." As well, NATO's 2022 "Strategic Concept" states the aim of creating "the security environment for a world without nuclear weapons."¹ Jonter and Rosengren adopt the perspective that risk reduction of conflict escalation should be a goal and they point to NATO members Denmark, Norway, Spain, and Lithuania, which do not allow nuclear weapons to be stationed on their territories. These examples clarify that even currently it is possible to opt out of playing a role in nuclear elements of NATO's alliance. Hence the authors propose that upon joining NATO, "Finland and Sweden should strive for de-escalation and stability in the region by refusing to store nuclear weapons on their territories" (11), and that political will is fundamental to adopting this course of action. Taking steps to de-escalate tensions is consistent with the large strategic shift resulting from NATO's newly gained dominance in the Baltic Sea region.

In the time since the writing of "Advocating Disarmament as NATO Members," while Finland has ascended into NATO on 4 April 2023, Sweden's NATO membership is still waiting for Turkey's parliamentary approval, as well as Hungary's ratification. Hence the two states are currently in different positions respecting their means of impacting NATO's security posture and policies. Looking backward to their period of neutrality, with Sweden's going back to the early nineteenth century and Finland adopting neutrality in 1955, there is much nuance in their respective approaches to nuclear disarmament. Even though the authors stress the two states' commitment to neutrality, non-alignment and nuclear disarmament, their article makes clear that Sweden demonstrated the latter commitment with more persuasive acts. It was more closely associated with disarmament diplomacy and Finland adopted a more pragmatic tack guided by its cautious approach in order to avoid antagonizing its Soviet Union neighbor. While both nations signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in 1968, Sweden's support was associated with Article IV requiring that nuclear armed states take good-faith efforts toward nuclear disarmament. After the Cold War, Sweden provided momentum for the "EU Strategy against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction," and established the de-alerting group. It also participated in finalizing the Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, and has the

¹ "Strategic Concept," NATO, 2022, <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>, 1.

Alva Myrdal Center for Nuclear Disarmament, with no equivalent in Finland. However, Finland does continue to hold legislation prohibiting nuclear weapons on its territory.²

Given the historical differences in the Swedish versus Finnish stance toward disarmament, their current contrasting positions in and out of NATO, and my better grasp of the Finnish case as a faculty member of the University of Helsinki since 2016, my commentary is directed toward the latter case. While addressing challenges to Jonter and Rosengren's analysis that are relevant to the Finnish case, two overarching points are relevant more generally. The authors adopt a strongly normative approach, although they refer to realist considerations in two places in their article. These both entail rationalizing Finland's pragmatism due to its long border with Russia (5, 9). Although I agree with the importance of a normative motivation for national security policies to support the attainment of encompassing security goals, including those of deescalating the risk of nuclear war, I would argue that the authors could have more directly confronted an impending realist critique more directly. Thus, the realist perspective also deserves some attention. Both Sweden and Finland are under pressure to accommodate NATO allies' perspectives and interests, and this plays a role in limiting their degrees of freedom in promoting nuclear disarmament. The authors allude to this reality in observing that the US warned Sweden in 2017 that its "ability to cooperate militarily with the US and NATO would suffer should Sweden sign the TPNW" (9).³

A second important point involves the prevailing strategic doctrine that is supported by Washington, as is evident in the United States' nuclear war fighting posture. The nuclear war-fighting strategy is "designed to bolster the feasibility of using nuclear weapons in combat," and has been crucial to the US-NATO posture.⁴ Underlying this strategic posture is both the military capacity for coercive nuclear escalation to secure advantage at any rung of the escalation ladder and superiority in brinkmanship which refers to "a state's willingness to run risks in international conflict."⁵ A counterpoint to international relations realism that argues that NATO's security is guaranteed by nuclear deterrence examines the attendant risks of nuclear war via escalation, accident, or inadvertent nuclear war.⁶ Consider the NATO allies' reliance on the role of nuclear deterrence in halting Russian aggression in Europe. The question remains as to how NATO's nuclear deterrence is interrelated with an encompassing larger geopolitical contest between the United States and the Russian Federation with respect to their competing for superior brinkmanship in the resolve to accept the risk of catastrophic nuclear war, and vying over the conventional escalatory capability in Eastern Europe.⁷ We must confront the fact that, "the more risk...[of nuclear war a state] is willing to accept, the more likely the

² Robin Forsberg, Aku Kähkönen and Jason Moyer, "If Finland Joins NATO, It Needs a New Nuclear Weapons Policy," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (8 December 2022); available online <https://thebulletin.org/2022/12/if-finland-joins-nato-it-needs-a-new-nuclear-weapons-policy/>

³ For similar pressures that may now fall on Finland see Matti Pesu and Tuomas Iso-Markku, "Finland as NATO Ally: First Insights into Finnish Alliance Policy," *Finnish Foreign Policy Paper 9*, Finnish Institute for International Affairs, December 2022, 37.

⁴ Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, *The Myth of the Nuclear Revolution: Power Politics in the Atomic Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 111.

⁵ Matthew Kroenig, *The Logic of American Nuclear Strategy: Why Strategic Superiority Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 3.

⁶ Scott Douglas Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons* (Princeton University Press, 1993); Richard Ned Lebow and Benoît Pelopidas, "Facing Nuclear War: Luck, Learning and the Cuban Missile Crisis," in Mlada Bukovansky, Edward Keene, Christian Reus-Smit, and Maja Spanu, eds., *Oxford Handbook of History and International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 705-719.

⁷ See, e.g., Nadezhda Arbatova, "Reaching an Understanding on Baltic security," *Survival* 60.3 (2018): 115-132, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2018.1470766>; Robert Powell, "Nuclear Brinkmanship, Limited War, Military Power," *International Organization*, 69.3 (2015): 589-626; Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, "The Rise of US Nuclear Primacy," *Foreign Affairs* 85 (2006), 9-49; Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, "The End of MAD? The Nuclear Dimension of U.S. Primacy," *International Security* 2006; 30 (4): 7-44. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2006.30.4.7>

other side is to back down first. But the more it bids [on accepting the risk of uncontrollable escalation], the more likely events are to go out of control.”⁸ As well, regarding the application of conventional military force, “bringing more power to bear makes the conflict less stable in that it increases the potential risk that events will go out of control” with every new round of escalation.⁹ Uncertainty regarding the opponent’s degree of resolve to accept risk adds additional potential for miscalculation, and an outcome with uncontrollable escalation into nuclear war, if the estimate of their resolve is appraised to be lower than it actually is.¹⁰

Thus, so long as nuclear deterrence is viewed by public officials, defense intellectuals, and the Finnish public as providing the best guarantee of security, then it is unlikely that Finland will promote nuclear disarmament. This is consistent with the US commitment to nuclear weapons supremacy in order to ground its strategic posture of flexible response, escalation dominance, and coercive bargaining.¹¹ It also dovetails with Finland’s assertive support of Ukraine, and its argument that only victory over Russia in this armed conflict is sufficient to end hostilities. The little evidence, discussed below, that exists so far suggests that some Finnish defense intellectuals are persuaded by the nuclear war-fighting logic that is upheld by the mainstream US defense establishment.

The Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA) finds that Finland joined NATO to a significant degree in order to benefit from nuclear deterrence. An FIIA policy briefing evaluating Russia’s use of nuclear threats states that,

the West should understand the limits of Russia’s nuclear coercion and remove self-imposed restrictions regarding the weapons it delivers to Ukraine. The delivery of HIMARS [rocket launchers] has shown what advanced weapons can do for Ukraine’s war effort. The next step is to tailor the military aid to Ukraine’s operational needs, and with the intention of defeating Russia.¹²

The FIIA seems to accept the US position of escalation dominance, suggesting that NATO can provide Ukraine with any military support that is necessary to achieve the overall aim of “defeating Russia” based on their appraised lack of credibility of Russian nuclear threats coupled with lack of conventional military capability. This path forward seems consistent with confidence in superior levels of escalatory capability from the tactical to the nuclear domains of combat, demonstrating greater resolve to face risks of catastrophic nuclear war, and the confidence that risks of accidental nuclear explosions or inadvertent escalatory events are acceptable.¹³

⁸ Powell, “Nuclear Deterrence Theory, Nuclear Proliferation, and National Missile Defense,” *International Security*, 27.4 (2003): 86-118, 95.

⁹ Powell, “Nuclear Brinkmanship, Limited War, Military Power,” 519.

¹⁰ Robert Powell, “Escalation, Crisis Bargaining, and MAD,” *American Political Science Review*, 81:3 (1987): 717-736, 721.

¹¹ Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, *The Myth of the Nuclear Revolution: Power Politics in the Atomic Age* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2020); S.M. Amadae, *Prisoners of Reason: Game Theory and Neoliberal Political Economy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016), 102-142.

¹² Jyri Lavikainen, “Nuclear Deterrence in the Ukraine War: Diplomacy of Violence,” FIIA Briefing Paper, Feb. 2023, No. 355, 7-8.

¹³ For confidence in the United States’ strategic guidance by “superiority brinkmanship synthesis theory”, see Matthew Kroenig, *The Logic of American Nuclear Strategy: Why Strategic Superiority Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). Implicit in Kroenig’s position is despite Russia’s keen interest in Eastern Europe, the United States’ strategic superiority in nuclear weapons should enable it to dominate in situations of nuclear brinkmanship, such as that unfolding now with the Ukraine war; see also Powell, “Nuclear Brinkmanship, Limited War, and Military Power”;

Finland has two additional challenges in its efforts to uphold a national nuclear disarmament or adopting a tactic of low-level ambitions in joining NATO. The first is explicit in its long-held pragmatism toward the Soviet Union which subsequently became referred to “Finlandization.”¹⁴ This was a controversial term, initially coined by German theorists to reflect the appeasement of a smaller state to a larger state’s foreign policy objectives, referring to Finland’s Cold War approach to the Soviet Union.¹⁵ Finland’s 1948 Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, and its generalized caution toward its more powerful neighbor as expressed in press self-censorship and neutrality toward the USSR, are examples of this pragmatic approach. In retrospect such pragmatism may be viewed dimly as having signified national humiliation and the lack of a secure basis for national self-determination, despite the apparent success of that policy.¹⁶ Today there is a mandate for Finnish leaders to act as leaders of a sovereign power that is unafraid of antagonizing its Russian neighbor and has confidently joined NATO as a means to realize Finland’s security objectives.

Additionally, Finland’s population perceives an existential threat from Russia as a matter of historical experience.¹⁷ US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was able to tug on these deeply held convictions in making an analogy between Russia’s current invasion and occupation of Ukraine, and its invasion of Finland in 1939 referred to as the Winter War, stating that, “it wasn’t hard for Finns to imagine themselves in the Ukrainians’ shoes. They’d walked in them in November 1939, when the Soviet Union invaded Finland.”¹⁸ The Finnish Institute of International Affairs best captures the Finnish embrace of NATO and nuclear deterrence as a means of obtaining security:

The war of aggression launched by Russia in February 2022 put nuclear deterrence and the possible use of nuclear weapons at the forefront of international security. During 2022, nuclear weapons issues have also been placed on the agenda of Finland’s foreign and security

Lebow and Pelopidas, “Facing Nuclear War: Luck, Learning and the Cuban Missile Crisis” in Mlada Bukovansky, Edward Keene, Christian Reus-Smit, and Maja Spanu, eds., *Oxford Handbook of History and International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 705-719.

¹⁴ For a comprehensive synoptic history and definition of the term Finlandization see Vasile Rotaru, “The Neo-Finlandization—A Theoretical Review,” in Mircea Brie, Polgár, István Polgár, and Floretina Chirodea, eds., *European Union: Identity, Diversity and Integration* (Annals of the University of Oradea - International Relations and European Studies, Suppl., Oradea: Ed. Univ. din Oradea, 2012), 193-202. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-329489>

¹⁵ Reid Standish, (28 June 2018). “The Meaning of a U.S.-Russia Summit in Helsinki,” The Atlantic Monthly Group, 28 June 2018, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/06/finland-helsinki-russia-trump-united-states-summit/564074/>; for examples of the term used by Kurt Birrenbach, see Samuel J. Baurkot, Jr. (2014). “Kurt Birrenbach and the Evolution of German Atlanticism,” PhD Dissertation, New York: Columbia University, 2014, 252 (fn 62), 550 (fn 72), 584, 586 (fn 145). doi:10.7916/D8QR54JV.

¹⁶ Vasile Rotaru, “The Neo-Finlandization—A Theoretical Review,” in Mircea Brie, István Polgár, and Floretina Chirodea, eds., *European Union: Identity, Diversity and Integration* (Annals of the University of Oradea - International Relations and European Studies, Suppl., Oradea: Ed. Univ. din Oradea, 2012), 193-202. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-329489>, 200.

¹⁷ “Poll: Citizens’ Willingness to Defend Finland, Support for Nato Hit All Time High,” Yle, 1.12.2022 15:35. Updated 3.12.2022 12:39 <https://yle.fi/a/74-20006876> ; Phelan Chatterjee, “How Sweden and Finland went from Neutral to Nato,” BBC, 11 July 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61397478> ; for more recent public opinion poll showing strong public support for NATO, see S. M. Amadae, Hanna Wass, Mika Hentunen, Janne Tukiainen, Albert Weckman and Marianna Laine, “Top Gear Security: Finns’ Expectations for NATO Membership,” Policy Brief 1/23, NATOpoll-tutkimushanke | NATOpoll research project, University of Helsinki, available at: https://www.helsinki.fi/assets/drupal/2023-07/NATOpoll%20policy%20brief%201_2023%20English_6.7.2023.pdf.

¹⁸ “Speech by Secretary Blinken: “Russia’s Strategic Failure and Ukraine’s Secure Future,” speech by Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, 2 June 2023, Helsinki, Available online US Embassy and Consulates in Russia, <https://ru.usembassy.gov/secretary-blinken-russias-strategic-failure-and-ukraines-secure-future/> .

policy. As a reaction to Russia's military assault against Ukraine, Finland decided in May 2022 to apply for NATO membership. Nuclear weapons were one of the factors influencing Finland's decision. Russia's aggression showed how a nuclear-armed state can acquire freedom of action for itself against a country that is not protected by a nuclear umbrella. Among other things, Finland aims to make up for this shortfall through NATO membership.¹⁹

The possibility does exist for Finland, Sweden, and the other Nordic nations to push for disarmament and to downplay or retract NATO's prevailing identity as a nuclear alliance. However, time will tell whether the political will rather embraces nuclear deterrence as the guarantor of security, or whether Finland's historical legacy of prohibiting nuclear weapons on its territory and being open to supporting nuclear disarmament retain their relevance in the country's contemporary domestic politics. However, the FIIA duly notes the secrecy surrounding nuclear planning in NATO, concluding that "importantly, Finland's eventual role in NATO nuclear policy will neither be publicly disclosed nor result from public deliberations."²⁰

In conclusion, the Finnish and Swedish cases are unique, with Sweden having had greater commitment to and latitude for advocating nuclear disarmament during the Cold War and the post-Cold War period. As well, Finland bears the brunt of its 1340 km border with Russia which was compromised in the nineteenth century with Russia's 1808–1809 war with Sweden that resulted in Finland's integration into the Russian Empire, and again in 1939 Winter War. Jonter and Rosengren's optimism that Finland's leaders and citizens will have the political will to pursue disarmament policies confronts the fact of many Finns' visceral repulsion at Russia's past displays of force on their nation, as well as of Russia's current war against Ukraine. FIIA theorists Matti Pesu and Tapio Juntunen express optimism that Finland can both embrace the positive security guarantees of nuclear deterrence and simultaneously remain committed to strong support for the NPT regime, support of arms control initiatives, and using arms control to advance security issues.²¹ Finland's recent agreement to purchase the David's Sling anti-ballistic missile system from Israel points in the direction of taking onboard historically provocative military technology that affect the balance of strategic deterrence.²² There is the further complication that if Finland opts to participate in nuclear sharing and planning, this could be considered as a form of nuclear proliferation because nuclear weapons are then supported by and deployed in more, rather than less, states.²³

¹⁹ Stated on the Finnish Institute of International Affairs website under the heading "NATO Nuclear Deterrence and its Implications for Finland," at <https://www.fia.fi/en/project/nato-nuclear-deterrence-and-its-implications-for-finland>, accessed 17 December 2023.

²⁰ Matti Pesu and Tuomas Iso-Markku, "Finland as NATO Ally: First Insights into Finnish Alliance Policy," Finnish Foreign Policy Paper 9, Finnish Institute for International Affairs, December 2022, 36.

²¹ Matti Pesu and Tapio Juntunen, "Finland in a Nuclear Alliance: Recalibrating the Dual-Track Mindset on Deterrence and Arms Control," FIIA Briefing Paper 375, Nov. 2023, available online at with a graphic missile image: <https://www.fia.fi/en/publication/finland-in-a-nuclear-alliance>.

²² Vladimir Rukavishnikov, 2008. "The US–Russian Dispute Over Missile Defense." *Connections*, 7.4 (2008): 81-94; Emanuel Fabian and TOI Staff, "Israel signs landmark deal to sell David's Sling air defense system to Finland," *The Times of Israel*, 12 November 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-signs-landmark-deal-to-sell-davids-sling-air-defense-system-to-finland/>; for a historical overview of the significance of ABM systems and strategic balance of nuclear deterrence see Bruce, Elton C. Bruce, and Army War College Carlisle Barracks, *National Missile Defense and the Anti-ballistic Missile Treaty* (US Army War College, PA, 1997).

²³ Martin Butcher, Otfried Nassauer, Tanya Padberg, Dan Plesch, *Questions of Command and Control: NATO, Nuclear Sharing and the NPT*. Project on European Nuclear Non-Proliferation, PENN Research Report 2000.1; Mika Hiyashi, "NATO's Nuclear Sharing Arrangements Revisited in Light of the NPT and the TPNW," *Journal of Conflict and Security Law*, 25 Sept. 2021, doi:10.1093/jcs/krab015

Furthermore, given that the United States' nuclear-security doctrine, and its large arsenal of nuclear weapons, anchors NATO's nuclear deterrence beyond that afforded by the United Kingdom and France, it remains to be seen how Finland can embrace the security guarantees of NATO while simultaneously questioning the United States' nuclear war-fighting doctrine. A case in point is the potential nuclear sharing of the B61 gravity bombs that can be carried in the dual purpose F-35 fighters which Finland has procured and will be operable later this decade, and the fact that "Finland and its airspace constitute a possible gateway for allied nuclear operations."²⁴ In order for "risk reduction, de-escalation, and de-legitimization...[to] guide future Nordic co-operation on nuclear disarmament (14), "knowledge production and civil-society participation" must inform effective democratic and transparent security decisions. This, then, must be a focus for those actors who worry that nuclear arms potentially pose at least as great of a threat to security through escalatory risks and the risks of accidental and inadvertent use. They may provide strategic benefits through the approach of superiority-brinkmanship synthesis theory and a willingness to escalate on all rungs of the escalation ladder from convention to nuclear.²⁵

²⁴ Matti Pesu and Tuomas Iso-Markku, "Finland as NATO Ally: First Insights into Finnish Alliance Policy," Finnish Foreign Policy Paper 9, Finnish Institute for International Affairs, December 2022, 36, available online at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4481296 ; On the escalatory potential of dual use weapons systems see James M. Acton, "Escalation through Entanglement: How the Vulnerability of Command-and-Control Systems Raises the Risks of an Inadvertent Nuclear War," *International Security* 43.1 (2018): 56-99.

²⁵ On the superiority-brinkmanship synthesis theory, see footnote 13.

Commentary by Kjølvs Egeland, Norwegian Seismic Array

The distinguished Swedish scholars Thomas Jonter and Emma Rosengren have written an insightful article about the past and future of Nordic nuclear disarmament advocacy. The topic is as important as it is topical: Triggered in large measure by Russia's brutal and nuclear-tinged onslaught against Ukraine, Sweden and Finland have opted to abandon their long-standing neutralist positions in favour of seeking formal membership in NATO, a self-declared "nuclear alliance."¹ All the while, the doomsday clock of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists stands at 90 seconds to midnight, and there is widespread agreement among experts that the international community finds itself on the cusp of a new arms race² that the world simply cannot afford to undertake if the goal of keeping the global average temperature below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels is to stand any chance of success.³

On my count, Jonter and Rosengren make six central claims. First, they argue that the two states' respective decisions to formally seek NATO membership were hastily made and subject to limited public debate. In this context, it is incumbent on analysts to systematically scrutinize the prevailing assumptions and to think critically about the potential choices at hand.

Second, the authors contend that while the Finnish and Swedish decisions to pursue NATO membership might in one view appear sudden, a closer look at the historical record reveals that the two states' respective choices fall into longer trends of increasing military cooperation with the West.

Third, with respect to disarmament diplomacy, the authors maintain that while the engagement of the two states in nuclear disarmament diplomacy has waxed and waned, the overall picture is this engagement faded for both states after the end of the Cold War. To be fair, beyond the "Kekkonen proposal" to establish a Nordic nuclear-weapon-free zone, Finland was never much of a locomotive or major player in disarmament diplomacy. Sweden's transformation has been more marked. A pointed but perhaps not entirely inaccurate observation would be that, in recent years, Sweden has seemed less worried about nuclear weapons than about upsetting the powers that be. While Jonter and Rosengren use more diplomatic language, this seems to be the import of what they are arguing in the section on "Disarmament in the Post-Cold War Era."

Fourth, the authors suggest that Sweden and Finland should maintain or even ramp up their advocacy for nuclear disarmament. In any realistic scenario, nuclear use would engender disastrous humanitarian and environmental impacts. A wider nuclear war would by all accounts trigger devastating consequences on a global scale. While the day-to-day likelihood of a nuclear conflagration may be small or even tiny, "[t]he

¹ See Kjølvs Egeland, "Spreading the Burden: How NATO Became a 'Nuclear' Alliance," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 31.1 (2020): 143–67. DOI: 10.1080/09592296.2020.1721086.

² See, e.g., Madelyn Creedon, "Testimony Before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, US Nuclear Strategy and Policy," 30 Sept. 2022, <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Creedon%20Opening%20Statement%20SASC%20Hearing%2020-222.pdf>; *The Economist*, "A New Nuclear Arms Race Looms," 29 Aug. 2023, <https://www.economist.com/international/2023/08/29/a-new-nuclear-arms-race-looms>; John Mecklin, "A Time of Unprecedented Danger: It Is 90 Seconds to Midnight," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 24 Jan. 2023, <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/current-time/>.

³ See, e.g., Robert S. Litwak, "Geostrategic Competition and Climate Change: Avoiding the Unmanageable," Wilson Center, 15 Sept. 2021, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/geostrategic-competition-and-climate-change-avoiding-unmanageable>; Kjølvs Egeland, "Climate Security Reversed: The Implications of Alternative Security Policies for Global Warming," *Environmental Politics* 32.5 (2023): 883–902. DOI: 10.1080/09644016.2022.2146934.

combination of anarchy and arsenals portends an eventual nuclear war.”⁴ Sweden and Finland are rich countries with capable diplomats, advanced academic communities, and healthy civil society organisations. The pair are, in other words, well placed to play constructive roles in the struggle to reduce nuclear threats and, ultimately, get rid of nuclear weapons altogether.

Fifth, the authors aver that there is diplomatic room for maneuver also within NATO; Norway and Denmark, both founding members of the alliance, have at various points in time been active proponents of nuclear arms control and disarmament, taking stances that were at odds with the more pro-nuclear mainstream within the alliance. Other US allies, such as the Philippines, have gone further still, championing and ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Sixth, and finally, Jonter and Rosengren propose that Sweden and Finland declare that they will not host nuclear weapons on their territories. This, the authors suggest, would be a meaningful and realistic demand that could help reduce tensions in the Arctic and Baltic Sea regions.

On the whole, I find the authors’ main arguments wise and well supported. The remainder of this response will thus take the form of a small set of rejoinders—as well as a small gripe with the final of the six points outlined above. To begin in reverse order, and leaving the merits or desirability of nuclear restraint and disarmament to one side, I think it would be an error for Swedish and Finnish disarmament advocates to spend much or any political capital raising and “winning” a debate about whether or not the states in question should allow the deployment of nuclear weapons on their territories. In sharp contrast to the situation that existed in the second half of the 1950s, when much of NATO’s defense planning presupposed that tactical nuclear weapons would be readily available to all members,⁵ there is as of 2023 absolutely no expectation in Brussels, Washington, or anywhere else that Sweden and Finland would host US nuclear arms. I would be greatly surprised if the American government actually wanted to deploy nuclear weapons to either of the states in question, and it is not clear to me that there would be weapons available for the implied mission. To the extent that they wanted to have meaningful impact or push the boundaries of the disarmament debate, Swedish and Finnish disarmament advocates would have to demand much more than that the United States agree not to deploy nuclear arms to their territories.

Jonter and Rosengren’s suggestion that Nordic states might work together for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament is a good one. The states in the region share an interest not only in reducing nuclear dangers on a global level, but also in maintaining the low-tension system that prevailed in the north of Europe throughout much of the Cold War and post-Cold War periods. Perhaps, in due course, the Kekkonen plan for a Nordic nuclear-weapon-free zone could be revamped.

Nordic military cooperation could also prove beneficial. While many have argued that the entry into NATO of Sweden and Finland will inevitably provoke Russia, fostering a negative security spiral in the region,⁶ it can reasonably be argued that enhanced security cooperation amongst the Nordic countries, facilitated by the fact

⁴ Campbell Craig, “Solving the Nuclear Dilemma: Is a World State Necessary?” *Journal of International Political Theory* 15.3 (2019): 349.

⁵ See, for example, Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), Chapter 4; Jan Melissen, “Nuclearizing NATO, 1957–1959: The ‘Anglo-Saxons,’ Nuclear Sharing and the Fourth Country Problem,” *Review of International Studies* 20.3 (1994): 253–75.

⁶ See, e.g., Nicholas Lokker and Heli Hautala, “Russia Won’t Sit Idly by after Finland and Sweden Join NATO,” *War on the Rocks*, 30 March 2023, <https://warontherocks.com/2023/03/russia-wont-sit-idly-by-after-finland-and-sweden-join-nato/>; Haleema Sadia, “NATO’s Eastward Expansion and Security Implications,” *The Diplomatic Insight*, 13 July 2023, <https://thediplomaticinsight.com/natos-eastward-expansion-and-security-implications/>.

that all five Nordic states would be members of NATO, could in fact help reduce frictions in the region. The argument here would be that greater military capacity and collaboration on the part of the Nordic states would attenuate any need or case for allied major powers such as the United States to maintain or assume a forward-leaning military presence in the region. In a nutshell, tensions are less likely to spiral out of control if key security tasks in the north of Europe can be performed by northern European and not American forces.

While on a formal level NATO membership does not entail a position on the legitimacy or lawfulness of any kind of specific weapon system, there is no doubt that the most powerful players in NATO expect their allies to back their basic policies, including their policies on nuclear weapons and deterrence. That said, Jonter and Rosengren are right to point out that the United States clearly affords its allies a certain amount of freedom when it comes to nuclear policy; and note, here, that what the United States *does* often seems to be a better guide on this than what it *says*.

As for arms control and disarmament initiatives that Sweden, Finland, and other Nordic states could take in the future, the low-hanging fruit would be things like capacity building, the provision of research funding for institutes focusing on nuclear arms control and disarmament, and the further development of nuclear disarmament verification techniques. Such activities would be relatively uncontroversial, and could conceivably play a meaningful role by helping to lay out the intellectual infrastructure for a future disarmament process. The difficulty lies in building the political will to enact such a process in the first place. This would involve putting pressure on allies and pushing the boundaries of the debate. The fact remains that the current nuclear powers have no intention of giving up their arsenals. And in the case of the nuclear powers in NATO, in particular the United Kingdom and the United States, the alleged demand of allies and partners to be protected with nuclear weapons forms a central justification for enduring nuclear deployments and modernization projects. On a basic level, Swedish and Finnish citizens and policymakers must ask themselves whether or when they think the use of nuclear weapons on their behalf is legitimate, necessary, and credible, and then draw the corresponding conclusions.

I am grateful to Jonter and Rosengren for their fine article and for having been given the opportunity to comment on this deeply serious matter.

Commentary by Paal Sigurd Hilde, Institute for Defence Studies, Norwegian Defence University College

“As Long as Nuclear Weapons Exist, NATO Will Remain a Nuclear Alliance”

In “Advocating Nuclear Disarmament as NATO Members—Lessons from the Past and Possible Routes Ahead for Finland and Sweden,” Thomas Jonter and Emma Rosegren examine the history of Finland’s and Sweden’s nuclear arms control and disarmament advocacy. They go on to argue that both countries should uphold their tradition of disarmament advocacy as members of NATO. In the authors’ view, the factors that triggered the membership applications also underline the need for this. They assert that “In the contemporary present which is marked by tension and conflict after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, it is increasingly urgent to intensify efforts to reach a world that is free of nuclear weapons.” They write as scholars, but clearly also as advocates.

For those unfamiliar with the history of the two countries’ nuclear arms control and disarmament advocacy, like I am, the well-referenced historical part of the paper is very informative. Given that Sweden’s history in the field is richer than that of Finland, it receives the most attention. As the authors write, while “[d]isarmament engagement evolved into a key feature of Sweden’s active foreign policy in the 1960s,” Finland favored “a less radical disarmament diplomacy compared with that of Sweden.”

In the paper’s second part the authors “discuss why disarmament is an important policy priority in the present, and how Finland and Sweden can strengthen their disarmament ambitions as members of NATO.” This section unsurprisingly raises the questions most worth debating in this response. I will address three questions, or rather three of the arguments the authors make in favor of their policy recommendation.

The first is the authors’ argument about policy and “legitimacy at the national level.” They argue that “nuclear disarmament” is a central feature of “both national identity and security policy in Finland and Sweden in the past” and that if “both states advance their nuclear disarmament ambitions [as NATO members], this will establish continuity between historical national identity perceptions and contemporary security policy, which is important for legitimacy.”

While disarmament advocacy clearly has deep political roots in Sweden, and somewhat less so in Finland, the historical survey in the article also shows that the government coalition that led Sweden from 2006 to 2014 showed a “lack of interest in disarmament.” Under Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, Sweden withdrew from key disarmament initiatives and refused to join new ones. This begs the question as to whether Jonter and Rosegren consider the policies of this government to be illegitimate. More importantly, it begs the question to what extent disarmament advocacy is an issue where political parties in Sweden differ. The paper clearly suggests as much, but the authors do not directly address the issue.

Norway, with which this author is more familiar, also has a long history of disarmament advocacy. Nevertheless, Norwegian political parties differ clearly in their views of nuclear disarmament.¹ While no party has challenged the “no nuclear weapons in Norway in peacetime” line that was first formulated in 1957, both historically and today, the Labor Party, which is social-democratic, has taken a more activist line in disarmament policy than its main conservative counterpart, Høyre (the Right). Like in Norway, the Social

¹ See e.g. Kjølvi Egeland, “Oslo’s “new track”: Norwegian Nuclear Disarmament Diplomacy, 2005–2013,” *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament*, 2.2 (April 2019): 468-490, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/25751654.2019.1671145>.

Democratic Party has historically had a dominant role in Swedish politics—it was in government, alone or in a coalition, continuously from 1936 to 1976.² Foreign Minister Östen Undén, who in 1961 laid the foundations for the heyday of Swedish disarmament advocacy according to the article’s historical survey, was a Social Democrat. I am thus left with the question of what role political ideology played and plays in Swedish (and Finnish) disarmament advocacy. The authors would have enriched the paper with even a brief discussion of this point.

The second question is the authors’ argument about the urgency for Finland and Sweden to declaring that they refuse “to store nuclear weapons on their territories.” It is, according to the authors, no less than “vital for both countries to decrease the nuclear-threat level in the region by declaring their territories free from nuclear weapons.” While there might be political benefit in reassuring Russia as well as domestic audiences by making such declarations, nothing suggests that the storage of nuclear weapons in Finland and Sweden is actually on the cards. And it is hard to imagine that the Russian government does not see and understand this, making the case for urgency an unconvincing one.

While Poland joined NATO in 1999, according to Ryszard Zięba, the Polish government demanded already in 1995 “that Washington deploy nuclear weapons on Polish territory,” based on the fear “that Poland might become a second-class NATO member.”³ Calls by Polish leaders for Poland to participate in NATO’s nuclear sharing by stationing US B61 nuclear gravity bombs—and making Polish aircraft nuclear capable—have appeared repeatedly since, most recently in summer 2023.⁴ In a 2020 article entitled “US Nukes in Poland are a Truly Bad Idea,” Steven Pifer argued that they “would be expensive, militarily unwise because it would make the weapons more vulnerable to preemptive attack, unduly provocative, and divisive within NATO.”⁵ There is no evidence to suggest that the issue of moving nuclear weapons to Poland has ever been seriously considered either in Washington or in NATO discussions.

The 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act stated that the “member States of NATO [...] have no intention, no plan and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members.”⁶ The “three nos” have been a key argument against deploying nuclear weapons to new member states. It is therefore worth noting that even after Russian president Vladimir Putin launched the full-scale attack on Ukraine in February 2022, allies have not publicly declared the Founding Act dead, despite pressure from member states such as Poland to do so.⁷ History thus provides no evidence for the claim of urgency in Finland and Sweden declaring that they

² “Previous Formations of Government and Prime Ministers,” *riksdagen.se*, no date (last consulted 6 September 2023), <https://www.riksdagen.se/en/how-the-riksdag-works/democracy/forming-a-government/previous-formations-of-government-and-prime-ministers/>. For a short history of social democracy in the Nordics, see Mary Hilson, “Nordic Social Democratic Parties during the Twentieth Century,” *nordics.info*, 27 February 2019, <https://nordics.info/show/artikel/social-democratic-parties-during-the-twentieth-century>.

³ Ryszard Zięba, “The 20th Anniversary of Poland’s Accession to NATO,” in Daniel S. Hamilton and Kristina Spohr, eds., *Open Door: NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security after the Cold War* (Washington DC: Johns Hopkins University, 2019), 197-214; https://transatlanticrelations.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Open-Door_full.pdf.

⁴ See e.g. Hans Kristensen, “Polish F-16s In NATO Nuclear Exercise In Italy,” *fas.org*, 27 October 2014, <https://fas.org/publication/steadfastnoon/>; Joseph Trevithick, “Poland Wants to Host NATO Nukes To Counter Russia,” *The Drive*, 30 June 2023, <https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/poland-wants-to-host-nato-nukes-to-counter-russia>.

⁵ Steven Pifer, “US Nukes in Poland are a Truly Bad Idea,” *Brookings Commentary*, 18 May 2020; <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/us-nukes-in-poland-are-a-truly-bad-idea/>.

⁶ “Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France,” *nato.int*, 27 May 1997, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm.

⁷ Daniel Fried and Aaron Korewa, “Poland Makes its Case for European Leadership,” *New Atlanticist*, 5 May 2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/poland-makes-its-case-for-european-leadership/>; also Dan

will not accept nuclear weapons on their territories. Even if they were to come out in favor of actively participating in NATO's nuclear sharing, they would most likely not be allowed to do so.

The final question I would like to address is arguably the most interesting one in Jonter and Rosengren's paper, but one the authors do not really devote much attention to: What limits, if any, does NATO membership put on Finnish and Swedish nuclear disarmament advocacy? In the introduction, the authors state that the Finnish and Swedish decisions to join NATO has led "some" to state that "by joining NATO, Finland and Sweden will in the future be unable to pursue nuclear disarmament advocacy, which is a historical legacy in both countries." They make a similar claim in the conclusion.

Putting aside the fact that the authors only offer one reference for this assertion, an op-ed article by Rolf Ekéus in the Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter* in May 2022, they conclude that membership is not the decisive factor. They write: "even though NATO membership has consequences in terms of the room to maneuver of its member states, nothing prevents them from trying to change the organization from within, or advocate nuclear disarmament within and outside of the organization." But is it really this simple?

One of the most contentious issues in the nuclear armament debate in later years has been the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Jonter and Rosengren describe in some detail the developments that led to the adoption of the treaty in 2017.⁸ They note that Sweden participated in the treaty negotiations, but eventually declined to sign the final document. "[R]elations with the Western alliance were a key element of Swedish TPNW debates," they emphasize, including worries "that Swedish relations with NATO would be negatively affected," and a direct warning from U.S. Secretary of Defence James Mattis to his Swedish counterpart Peter Hultqvist about the consequences of Swedish accession to the TPNW for US-Swedish military cooperation.

The consequences of accession for Sweden's "significant ambitions in terms of cooperation with NATO and its member states and with Finland," was a key point also in the official inquiry commissioned by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to evaluate the TPNW. As the inquiry head, former ambassador Lars-Erik Lundin, wrote: "In the view of this Inquiry, the consequences of a Swedish accession to the Treaty in its current form and in this context are going to be very negative in these respects."⁹

The then Swedish foreign minister, Margot Wallström, was in favor of acceding to the TPNW.¹⁰ Her party, the ruling Social Democratic Party, had declared itself in favor of signing the treaty in its party program: "Vi socialdemokrater vill ha ett globalt kärnvapenförbud" (we social democrats want a global ban on nuclear weapons), and the government was under strong pressure from party members fulfil this pledge.¹¹

Fried, Steven Pifer and Alexander Vershbow, "NATO-Russia: It's Time to Suspend the Founding Act," *The Hill*, 7 June 2022, <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/3514801-nato-russia-its-time-to-suspend-the-founding-act/>.

⁸ See UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, "Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons," *disarmament.unoda.org*, no date (last consulted 6 September 2023), <https://disarmament.unoda.org/wmd/nuclear/tpnw/>.

⁹ Regeringskansliet, *Inquiry into the Consequences of a Swedish Accession to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, January 2019, 45; https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/756164e2ca3b4d84a3070a486f123dbb/rapport_l-e_lundin_webb.pdf.

¹⁰ Jonas Gummesson, "Wallström förlorade sin sista politiska strid," *Svenska Dagbladet*, 7 September 2019; <https://www.svd.se/a/mRpOWO/wallstrom-folorade-sin-sista-politiska-strid>.

¹¹ Socialdemokraterna, "Vi bygger landet—Antagna riktlinjer Kongressen 2021," November 2021, 37; <https://www.socialdemokraterna.se/download/18.53bb164d17db7b888924e6b/1640099924405/Vi%20bygger%20landet%20Antagna%20Riktlinjer%202021.pdf>; "Vi måste skriva under förbud mot kärnvapen," *Aftonbladet*, 5 November 2021; <https://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/a/66WAWQ/vi-maste-skriva-under-forbud-mot-karnvapen>.

It did not have sufficient support in the Swedish parliament, however, where particularly the main opposition party, the pro-NATO conservative Moderaterna (the Moderates), opposed accession to a “toothless” treaty that would harm Sweden’s most important security and defense interests.¹² Evidently, not only was party politics significant, but even maintaining good relations with NATO and the United States put limits on Sweden’s—the Social Democratic government’s—ability to “pursue nuclear disarmament advocacy.”

Norway is again an instructive comparison. As Jonter and Rosengren note, Norway played an active role in the process preceding the TPNW negotiations, most concretely in organizing the Oslo Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in March 2013. The Labor-led, centre-left government coalition that was in power at the time, lost the September 2013 elections and was replaced by a coalition of the conservative Høyre party and the right-wing Progress Party. As Kjølv Egeland notes, the “new government quickly changed course on nuclear disarmament, disassociating from the humanitarian initiative (not only the ban effort) and slashing or discontinuing nuclear disarmament-related funding for a range of organizations.”¹³

As with Sweden, the Norwegian government commissioned an inquiry into the consequences of acceding to the TPNW. Its conclusion was clear: “It is clear that if Norway ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, it would acquire new obligations that would be incompatible with its political obligations under Nato.”¹⁴ Given this, acceding to the treaty would “weaken our defence and our security.”

Nevertheless, when Labor returned to government in 2021, both it and its coalition partner, the Centre Party (an agrarian party), stated in their party programs that Norway should join the TPNW. The Labor Party’s program stated somewhat vaguely that this “should be an aim for Norway and other NATO allies,” whereas the Centre Party was more direct: “Norway shall sign and ratify the UN-treaty banning nuclear weapons and strive to have other countries do the same.”¹⁵

The document stating the new government’s political platform made it clear that Norway would “participate as an observer” in the meetings of states parties to TPNW.¹⁶ According to press reports at the time, this drew not only immediate questions from the US government, but also sharp criticism from the conservative party.¹⁷ In spring 2022, Norway was pressured both bilaterally and in NATO settings to step back from the decision.¹⁸ Eventually, however, Norway was joined by Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands, as well as

¹² Hans Wallmark, “Freden i Östersjön säkras med tydlighet,” *Expressen*, 21 July 2017; <https://www.expressen.se/kvallsposten/debatt-kvp/freden-i-ostersjon-sakras-med-tydlighet/>; Karin Enström and Hans Wallmark, “Inga länder med kärnvapen stöder initiativet,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, 26 August 2017; <https://www.svd.se/a/92k9p/inga-lander-med-karnvapen-stoder-initiativet>.

¹³ Egeland, “Oslo’s “new track”...,” 480.

¹⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Review of the Consequences for Norway of Ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons,” 28 November 2018, https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/review_tpnw/id2614520/.

¹⁵ Arbeiderpartiet, “Atomvåpen,” no date (last accessed 6 September 2023), <https://www.arbeiderpartiet.no/politikken/atomvapen/>; Senterpartiet, “Atomvåpenforbud,” 6 July 2021, <https://www.senterpartiet.no/politikk/A-%C3%85/politisk-sak/Nedrustning>.

¹⁶ “Hurdalsplattformen,” no date (2021), 78, <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/cb0adb6c6fee428caa81bd5b339501b0/no/pdfs/hurdalsplattformen.pdf>.

¹⁷ Alf Bjarne Johnsen and Gisle Oddstad, “Støre-regjeringen reiser til atomforbud-konferanse: USA stiller spørsmål,” *VG*, 14 October 2021, <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/mr33pE/stoere-regjeringen-reiser-til-atomforbud-konferanse-usa-stiller-spoersmaal>.

¹⁸ This author worked on NATO issues in the Norwegian Ministry of Defence in the spring of 2022 and could thus follow this from the inside.

then NATO applicants Finland and Sweden, as observers at the first Meeting of State Parties in Vienna in June 2022.¹⁹

As in Sweden, there has been substantial pressure from civil society groups on the Norwegian government to join the TPNW.²⁰ Also as in Sweden, NATO and bilateral security and defense cooperation have been decisive arguments against doing so. As a NATO member, acceding to the TPNW is clearly a bridge too far—one that would incur significant political costs and oblige the member to disassociate itself from NATO’s nuclear decision-making bodies. Being a loyal NATO member does put limits on a country’s nuclear disarmament advocacy.

As shown above, Jonten and Rosengren are optimistic on the prospects for Finland and Sweden’s future advocacy as NATO members. Indeed, they stress, “NATO’s most recent strategic concept also includes the goal of a world free from nuclear weapons.”

The “goal of creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons” actually became an aim already in NATO’s 2010 Strategic Concept—at least partly inspired by President Barack Obama’s speech in Prague in April 2009.²¹ However, both the 2010 and 2022 concepts emphasize the *but* in this aim: “as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance.”²² Few areas of NATO official documents are more fiercely fought over than the text on nuclear weapons and disarmament—which very often leads allies to fall back on already agreed language.

Finland and Sweden will be free to join their Nordic NATO neighbors and other proponents of arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation, or ADN in NATO lingo, in the Alliance. By strengthening this camp, they can help shift the consensus position in the Alliance. The aim of fundamentally renegotiating “NATO’s present reliance on nuclear weapons, and its branding as a nuclear alliance,” will, however, be a very, very tall order.

¹⁹ Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor, “The status of the TPNW,” 29 March 2023, <https://banmonitor.org/tpnw-status>.

²⁰ See e.g. ICAN’s page on Norway: ICAN, “Norway,” no date (accessed 6 September 2023), <https://www.icanw.org/norway>.

²¹ NATO, “Active Engagement, Modern Defence,” November 2010, 5, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf; The White House, “Remarks By President Barack Obama In Prague As Delivered,” 5 April 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-prague-delivered>.

²² “Active Engagement, Modern Defence,” 5; NATO, “NATO 2022 Strategic Concept,” 29 June 2022, 1, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf. The 2022 formulation is the title of this essay.

“A Dead Horse, Not a Trojan Horse: Sweden, Finland and Nuclear Disarmament Advocacy in NATO”

In their essay, Thomas Jonter and Emma Rosengren argue that as NATO members, Sweden and Finland “should strengthen their advocacy for nuclear disarmament.” On the surface, this argument would seem to appeal to advocates of nuclear disarmament as well as raise red flags within the NATO “nuclear alliance” that its two newest members are going to be a disruptive influence. Upon closer examination, however, the reverse is more likely to be the case.

The principal reason for this is the lack of precision about what constitutes nuclear disarmament advocacy. As a term, nuclear disarmament has been used to characterize a broad spectrum of policies.¹ Indeed, it is so broad that it can conceivably incorporate NATO’s existing policy on nuclear weapons, such as its publicly stated support for the Non-Proliferation Treaty, specifically Article VI. The 2022 NATO Strategic Concept refers to the Alliance being “strongly committed” to the NPT’s “full implementation, including Article VI,” with NATO’s role defined as creating “the security environment for a world without nuclear weapons.”² As Jonter and Rosengren note, Sweden and Finland can work towards this goal, though the authors do not really elaborate on what novel approaches the two countries can take as NATO members, or what sort of added value they can contribute.³ Towards the other end of the spectrum are those supporters of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Most other types of nuclear disarmament advocacy exist somewhere in between, including various step-by-step approaches, local and regional nuclear weapon-free zones, individual state declarations on no stationing of nuclear weapons within their borders, supporting disarmament education, and so forth.

For NATO, member-state support to the TPNW is particularly contentious as it directly contradicts the Alliance’s agreed policies and reliance on nuclear deterrence. In this sense, the joining of the TPNW by NATO members would constitute crossing a proverbial “red line,” or at least it is typically discussed in these terms, even if the penalties for doing so are not entirely clear. To date, not only have none of the NATO states joined the TPNW, but the vast majority are reluctant to participate at TPNW meetings even in observer roles. “Lesser” forms of disarmament, such as the “no stationing of nuclear weapons policies” of Norway, Denmark, and Spain, whilst controversial, nevertheless are considered “acceptable” by the Alliance’s other members. Likewise, among the members of the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament are Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, and Norway.⁴ In other words, many of the existing nuclear disarmament initiatives that Sweden and Finland participate in, or lead, already include other NATO members.

¹ See, for instance: “G7 Leaders’ Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament,” 19 May 2023. According to this joint statement, “We reaffirm our commitment to the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons...achieved through a realistic, pragmatic and responsible approach.”

² The text can be found at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf

³ Michal Onderco and Clara Portela characterize Sweden and Finland as “bridge-builders between adepts of nuclear deterrence and pro-disarmament abolitionists” and that they occupy “an intermediate position between the mainstream of NATO members and the small group of disarmament advocates.” See Onderco and Portela, “NATO’s Nordic Enlargement and Nuclear Disarmament: The End of Bridge Building,” *War on the Rocks*, 20 February 2023.

⁴ See, for instance: Shervin Taheran, “Officials Urge Disarmament ‘Stepping Stones,’” *Arms Control Today* (July/August 2019). Available at: <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-07/news/officials-urge-disarmament-stepping-stones>

The prospect of Sweden and Finland joining the TPNW, at least in the foreseeable future, is extremely unlikely. There are at least three reasons why this is so. First, despite their ostensible nuclear disarmament credentials, both countries have proven quite reluctant to press forward. This was the case prior to Russia's February 2022 large-scale invasion of Ukraine, and since then it has become harder to contemplate. It should therefore not be assumed that political support for the TPNW is as strong in either country as it is often portrayed. Second, having sought to join a "nuclear alliance," to include providing assurances to NATO that nuclear weapons play an "essential role," it would simply be regarded as extremely bad form to then do a complete about-turn.⁵ At the very least, it would constitute nothing short of a diplomatic disaster, and result in isolation within the Alliance, thereby negating many of the security benefits derived from joining in the first place. Swedish and Finnish policymakers are no doubt well aware of this, which also helps explain their relative disinterest prior to 24 February 2022 in joining the TPNW, when they prioritized the prospect of keeping open the possibility of NATO membership over a more activist policy on nuclear disarmament. As with other NATO members who are sympathetic to the cause of nuclear disarmament, such as Germany, maintaining alliance cohesion has always come first.

Third, as both countries already promote "acceptable" forms of nuclear disarmament, they can continue their advocacy without fear of rocking the NATO boat. Their policy preferences will also be shaped by the wider context and direction of the nuclear field, which in recent years has been characterized by a trend towards re-armament rather than arms control, much less disarmament. In these circumstances, joining the TPNW is probably viewed as a pointless gesture whose immediate political costs outweigh any practical benefit. For Sweden and Finland to reverse course on this issue, there would have to be some radical change in the transatlantic security landscape, a plausible possibility that joining the TPNW will result in positive change in the nuclear field more generally, or the accession to power in either country of a government that is willing to ignore diplomatic and bureaucratic opposition and press forward regardless. In the latter scenario, it is almost certain that the obligation to consult with other NATO members before taking such a radical step would provide opponents an opportunity to push back.⁶ Therefore, as a practical matter, belonging to NATO will intensify the degree of opposition to joining the TPNW and further reduce the prospect of this occurring in these two countries.

Leaving aside the TPNW option, how else might Sweden and Finland try to advance nuclear disarmament within the Alliance? For example, are they likely to pursue some updated version of a Nordic or Baltic nuclear weapon-free zone, place restrictions on NATO's ability to station or deploy nuclear weapons on their territories, avoid participation in Alliance nuclear policymaking and nuclear exercises, seek to change the language used in official NATO public documents to describe the Alliance's views on nuclear weapons, and similar types of actions? Only time will tell, but there seems little likelihood this will be the case, with the exception of a decision not to host nuclear weapons in peacetime since a precedent for this already exists.⁷ Moreover, from NATO's perspective, this conveniently aligns with its longstanding policy not to station nuclear weapons closer to Russia. Ironically, the bigger challenge for NATO has been reining in the desire of a country such as Poland to station nuclear weapons further east.

⁵ Letter from Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, 5 July 2022. Available online at: <https://www.svtstatic.se/image-cms/svtse/1657542892/nyheter/inrikes/article35953569.svt/BINARY/L%C3%84S%20Ann%20Lindes%20brev%20%20juli%202022>

⁶ A discussion of some relevant historical precedents can be found in: Stanley R. Sloan, "Arms Control Consultations in NATO" in Hans Guenter Brauch and Duncan L. Clarke, eds., *Decisionmaking for Arms Limitation: Assessments and Prospects* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1983): 219-236.

⁷ For a discussion of the nuances of peacetime stationing, see Osmo Apunen, "Three 'Waves' of the Kekkonen Plan and Nordic Security in the 1980s," *Bulletin of Peace Proposals* 11:1 (1980):16-32

When attempting to assess how a hypothetically extreme pro-nuclear disarmament member of NATO, be it Sweden, Finland or some other country, could advance this agenda within the Alliance, it is crucial to stress the natural limits of NATO policy change. On this point, I take issue with Jonter and Rosengren's suggestion that Sweden and Finland can try to "change the organization from within." Traditionally, the status quo principle dominates Alliance policy, even in cases where radical external changes in the security environment, or the strong preferences of leading member states, might be deemed sufficient to shift to some new status quo. Since NATO is a consensus-based alliance, the official policy line does not change unless all members agree to a new policy line. The voting power that comes from being a NATO member is most frequently exercised by those states that want to restrict change rather than to advocate for it. As was recently illustrated with the debate about Swedish and Finnish membership, the ability of a single country, in this case Turkey, to hold up their entry into the Alliance can be a major impediment to change.

Just as some members may want nuclear weapons to be stationed in Eastern Europe, the opposition of other members who don't want this will ultimately ensure that it never happens. It is only when this opposition is lifted, due to a change of circumstances, or as a result of successful horse-trading, that progress is possible. This lack of change is observable when comparing NATO's nuclear policy, as expressed in official statements, especially in the aftermath of Russia's initial aggression against Ukraine in 2014. These statements tend to be cut and pasted word for word from one communiqué to the next, with no indication of any policy shift despite the radically changed security environment. As difficult as it was to achieve a change in NATO nuclear policy during the Cold War, it appears to be more difficult in the post-Cold War period. As such, the prospects for Sweden and Finland to "de-legitimize" nuclear weapons within NATO are very limited indeed. For example, whereas Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde stated in 2021 that reducing "the role of nuclear weapons in doctrines and policies is crucial," it is unclear how this could be achieved in relation to NATO nuclear doctrine and policy, as it would almost certainly be impossible to gain a consensus on this.⁸

Rather than being viewed wholly in sceptical terms, it is theoretically possible to conceive of circumstances in which Swedish and Finnish nuclear disarmament advocacy might receive backing rather than censure. During the Cold War, although proposals for establishing a Nordic nuclear weapon free-zone were generally frowned upon, they did receive tepid support when the regional boundaries were extended to include parts of the Soviet Union, especially the Baltic republics and the Kola Peninsula.⁹ Whilst there was very little expectation these proposals would be acceptable to Moscow, their rejection was viewed as useful in its own right as it would undermine attempts by Soviet leaders to cast themselves as proponents of nuclear disarmament.

Reassuring Russia that the Nordic region does not constitute a nuclear threat may also be perceived by most NATO members as beneficial to the Alliance as a whole, especially when considering the longer-term NATO-Russia relationship. Unfortunately, what is often left out of the discussion about regional nuclear disarmament initiatives is that they focus on nuclear weapons rather than nuclear-relevant weapons. Put another way, Russian strategists are likely to be just as concerned about NATO conventional weapons that can target Russian nuclear weapons, especially the strategic systems, and therefore are almost certain to insist that limiting disarmament only to nuclear weapons will be insufficient. Sweden and Finland may find that by joining NATO the more pressing disarmament priority, especially in relation to risk reduction, will be

⁸ "Can Disarmament Be revived? An Interview with Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde," *Arms Control Today*, May 2021. Available at: <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2021-05/features/disarmament-revived-interview-swedish-foreign-minister-ann-linde>

⁹ Rein Taagepera, "Inclusion of the Baltic Republics in the Nordic Nuclear-Free Zone," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 16:1 (1985): 33-51; Johan Jorgen Holst, "A Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone in the Nordic Area: Conditions and Options – A Norwegian View," *Bulletin of Peace Proposals* 14:3 (1983): 227-237. One recent proposal focused on Kaliningrad. See Barry Blechman, Alex Bollfrass and Laicie Heeley, "Reducing the Risk of Nuclear War in the Nordic/Baltic Region," Stimson Center, 2015. Available at: <https://www.stimson.org/2015/reducing-risk-nuclear-war-nordicbaltic-region-0/>

restrictions on certain types of highly accurate long-range conventional weapons rather than the stationing of nuclear weapons on their territories.

In contrast to the arguments advanced by Jonter and Rosengren about the prospects for Sweden and Finland to promote their “disarmament ambitions” as NATO member states, to the extent that these ambitions exist in practice rather than as a taken-for-granted narrative, the challenges of significantly altering the status quo are so formidable as to be insurmountable. Whilst there are many possible nuclear disarmament “routes,” some contain more difficult-to-traverse terrain than others. It is therefore probable that for the foreseeable future, Sweden and Finland will select the routes that offer the least resistance.

Response by Thomas Jonter, Stockholm University, and Emma Rosengren, Swedish Institute of International Affairs

We would like to thank the commentators, S.M. Amadae, Paul Sigurd Hilde, Jeffrey H. Michaels and Kjølvs Egeland for insightful reflections on our article. We are also grateful to Jennifer Erickson for facilitating this exchange of ideas, and to Diane Labrosse for her careful editing. In this short response we will only be able to grasp on the surface of some of the important issues raised by the commentators. We do hope, however, that this roundtable will inspire future conversations about the state of nuclear disarmament.

As most of the commentators note, we wrote our article with a normative take on the importance of nuclear disarmament. As Egeland correctly points out, “[i]n any realistic scenario, nuclear use would engender disastrous humanitarian and environmental impacts.” We want to emphasize, however, that when we write about the need for Finland and Sweden to continue advocating nuclear disarmament, and possibly intensifying their efforts, we use the term “nuclear disarmament” in a broad and pragmatic sense. This approach to disarmament is also in line with how both the Finnish and Swedish governments pursued their disarmament policies during the Cold War. While the ultimate goal is the total elimination of all nuclear weapons, the road to realizing this vision is paved with obstacles that vary over time due to changing circumstances that range from domestic discourses to geopolitical contexts. Therefore, other tools, including non-proliferation and arms control efforts, must be added to the toolbox in order allow states to reach the goal of general and total disarmament. The political situation at hand will determine which steps will contribute to progress in the disarmament field. The central argument of our paper is that such an approach to disarmament is not only possible to reconcile with NATO membership, but also desirable and consistent with traditional Finnish and Swedish traditional disarmament policies.

Our background chapter shows that both Finland and Sweden have the financial resources, diplomatic competence, level of expertise, and civil society support to “play constructive roles in the struggle to reduce nuclear threats and, ultimately, get rid of nuclear weapons altogether.” While it is our hope that both governments will do so, we are well aware that it does involve certain constraints, which has correctly been pointed out by the commentators. The shape of these constraints, however, rely on what we consider nuclear disarmament to entail. In this response we will elaborate further on some of the comments made, focusing on aspects related to party politics; priorities and constraints; and most likely scenarios, from our point of view.

Party Politics

In our article, we show how Sweden’s approach to nuclear disarmament varied during the post-Cold War period, and how some governments were more reluctant to certain initiatives than others. For example, the conservative government led by Fredrik Reinfeldt 2006–2014 withdrew from Social Democrat initiatives such as the de-alerting group and the New Agenda Coalition (NAC). Hence, Hilde is correct in pointing out that the political will to work for nuclear disarmament, and the forms such work has taken in the past, has varied between political parties. However, this is only part of the story. If we look back at the Cold War, such differences were less apparent. When center-liberal government constellations replaced the Social Democrats in 1976, Inga Thorsson, a Social Democrat politician, and a life-long nuclear disarmament activist, remained Sweden’s representative for disarmament affairs. During this period, disarmament priorities remained much the same, no matter the party-political origins of government constellation.

In fact, since the Cold War, Swedish foreign and security policy has relied on broad political consensus between all parties in parliament, except for the communist party. The conviction was that the neutrality

policy required broad political consensus.¹ While conservatives in Sweden intensified their NATO advocacy after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Social Democrats remained committed to the non-aligned policy until some months after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. When they declared their intention to apply for membership, Social Democrat Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson made a joint statement with conservative leader Ulf Kristersson, emphasizing the degree of consensus between the conservatives and the social democrats, the parties that are the historical antagonists in Swedish party politics. While this culture of consensus might change, it was a central feature of narratives about Sweden applying for NATO membership. What we see, however, as a bigger problem, however, and which Egeland also notes, is that Finland's and Sweden's NATO decisions were made with remarkably haste and without thorough debate, and the nuclear dimension of the issue was barely touched upon. It is time to think carefully about which policies are at hand. This is also the reason why we find it urgent to re-vitalize the conversation about nuclear disarmament in the Nordic countries today.

Priorities and Constraints

In our article, we argue that Sweden, like Finland, should adopt a policy which prohibits nuclear weapons on Swedish soil. At the same time, we do agree with all the commentators that the stationing of US nuclear weapons in Finland and Sweden is an unlikely scenario. As Hilde notes, “[e]ven if [Finland and Sweden] were to come out in favor of actively participating in NATO’s nuclear sharing, they would most likely not be allowed to do so.” Egeland argues that no one in NATO expects Finland and Sweden to host nuclear arms, and that disarmament advocates should prioritize other issues. While we do agree with the lack of expectations among NATO allies, we maintain that it is important for the Swedish government to publicly declare Swedish territory to be a nuclear weapon-free space, especially in relation to the Swedish population, or what Hilde calls “domestic audiences.” Publicly declaring that Sweden will not accept nuclear weapons in the country would be an important signal to the domestic population, and would enable societal disarmament engagement to remain alert. It would also reduce tensions in the Baltic Sea region should international circumstances change.

Furthermore, in our article we argue that nothing prevents NATO members from advocating nuclear disarmament within and outside of the organization. Following up on this, Hilde asks if it is really that simple. Elaborating further on NATO related constraints, Amadae recognizes that both Finland and Sweden will find themselves “under pressure to accommodate NATO allies’ perspectives and interests,” and that “this plays a role in limiting their degrees of freedom in promoting nuclear disarmament.” Furthermore, regarding Finland, Amadae convincingly argues that “so long as nuclear deterrence is viewed by public officials, defense intellectuals, and the Finnish public as providing the best guarantee of security, then it is unlikely that Finland will promote nuclear disarmament.” Emotions related to shame over what some refer to as “Finlandization,” and fear based upon the historical experience of Russia being an existential threat towards Finland, also play into this. Furthermore, Hilde, Amadae, and Michaels all recognize that Sweden’s decision not to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), and the role that pressure from the US played in this decision, is an example of such constraints. Michaels emphasizes that “[t]he prospects of Sweden and Finland joining the TPNW, at least in the foreseeable future, is extremely unlikely.” In response to these comments we do not hesitate to state: yes, it is definitely not that simple, and, yes, joining the TPNW is not a likely scenario for either country, at least not in the near future. Departing from a broad definition of nuclear

¹ Ulf Bjereld, Alf W. Johansson and Karl Molin, *Sveriges säkerhet och världens fred: svensk utrikespolitik under kalla kriget* (Stockholm: Santérus, 2008): 29; Thomas Jonter, *The Key to Nuclear Restraint. The Swedish Plans to Acquire Nuclear Weapons during the Cold War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016): 49–50.

disarmament, however, we maintain that Finland and Sweden should explore the various ways in which they can continue, and possibly intensify, disarmament engagement as members of NATO.

Most Likely Scenarios

The above-mentioned constraints do not mean that change is not possible. In line with Alexander Wendt's classical piece "Anarchy is what States Make of it," we argue that both the role of nuclear weapons, and the potential for nuclear disarmament, are the results of what states do.² Given the constraints discussed above and in depth by the commentators, it is reasonable to assume that Finland and Sweden, if they prioritize nuclear disarmament engagement as NATO members, will choose what Michaels refers to as "the routes that offer the least resistance." Such routes are likely to center around what Egeland brands "low-hanging fruit" such as "capacity building, the provision of research funding for institutes focusing on nuclear arms control and disarmament, and the further development of verification techniques." While such measures are compatible with ongoing efforts such as the Stockholm Initiative, nothing guarantees that such initiatives will continue. As Egeland recognizes, "[t]he difficulty lies in building the political will to enact such a process in the first place." We hope that our conversation in this forum will contribute to such political will.

In addition to those mentioned above, there are other ways in which the Nordic countries can contribute to disarmament. Egeland proposes the Kekkonen plan for a Nordic nuclear-weapon-free zone as a possible route ahead. A center-liberal government constellation in Sweden decided to work for this initiative in 1981, a decision which was supported by a unanimous Swedish parliament.³ Furthermore, the Nuclear Weapons Monitoring Group, a group of independent experts in Finland, has called upon Finland to strive to "reduce the importance of nuclear weapons in international and military security." As part of this, they suggest that Finland should enhance a no-first use policy in NATO, and globally.⁴ While there are other possible initiatives that Nordic countries can engage in, we agree with Egeland that at the present the nuclear weapon powers in NATO seem to have no intention of giving up their nuclear arsenals. That is why "Swedish and Finnish citizens and policymakers must ask themselves whether or when they think the use of nuclear weapons on their behalf is legitimate, necessary, and credible, and then draw the corresponding conclusions." Our hope is that this roundtable discussion inspires citizens and policymakers in the Nordic region and beyond to do exactly that.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the commentators for engaging in this conversation about the future of nuclear disarmament and to reemphasize that a broad approach to disarmament is necessary for keeping the issue alive. While arms control and non-proliferation efforts do not automatically mean that the end-goal of getting rid of all nuclear weapons has come closer, they are nevertheless important in a contemporary present where the risks related to nuclear weapons need to be reduced. In a situation where the United States and Russia, which are the major nuclear weapon states, do not even talk, it is even more important that other states contribute. When the geopolitical situation is more stable, there will be opportunities to push for initiatives that are more transformative. It is our conviction that the Finnish and Swedish governments would be wise to learn from the simultaneously pragmatic and innovative approach which guided Swedish

² Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46.2 (Spring 1992): 391–425.

³ Emma Rosengren, *Gendering Nuclear Disarmament. Identity and Disarmament in Sweden during the Cold War* (Diss. Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2020).

⁴ "Statement by Nuclear Weapons Monitoring Group (Finland)," *Nuclear Weapons Monitoring Group (Finland)*, 17 March 2023, <https://pugwash.org/2023/03/17/statement-by-nuclear-weapons-monitoring-group-finland/>.

disarmament engagement during the Cold War and to do what they can to keep the vision of a world that is free from nuclear weapons alive.