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EXERCISE/EXERCICE NEW HORIZONS

Sweden's Relationship with NATO

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Syndicate 8

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ABSTRACT

This paper will argue that Sweden should join NATO. Sweden is already co-operating with NATO on military exercises, is adopting NATO planning processes and is taking other steps to enable military interoperability. It is working under NATO command on operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, and since 1994 is a principle member of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. Sweden shares military sales and technology with the United States and with European members of NATO. It is apparent that Sweden is already acting as a de facto member of the Alliance, without the Article 5 protection of mutual defense. Full membership would provide Sweden more robust security assurances in the future world of diminishing natural resources and political uncertainty, in particular with respect to Russia. NATO Membership and the American muscle behind it offer Sweden the strongest possibility to obtain a credible deterrent to threats to its sovereignty and military actions which could threaten Swedish and its own prosperity.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past twenty years the Scandinavian nation of Sweden has been moving away from its historical political doctrine of neutrality in favour of increased military and political ties to the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). From a cultural perspective this is not overly significant, as Sweden has for its entire modern existence been a progressive European democracy, its leaders and citizenry embracing Western values and a Western style of life. However from a political perspective this is remarkable, since twenty years ago neutrality was so deeply ingrained in the Swedish psyche and self-image that it could not have been challenged by any Swedish government without risking that government's (political) annihilation. But today Sweden openly identifies itself as a Western power, and Swedish politicians debate whether Sweden should formally join NATO.¹

This paper will argue that Sweden should join NATO. Sweden is already co-operating with NATO on military exercises, is adopting NATO planning processes and is taking other steps to enable military interoperability. It is working under NATO command on operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, and since 1994 is a principle member of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. Sweden shares military sales and technology with the United States and with European members of NATO. It is apparent that Sweden is already acting as a de facto member of the Alliance, without the Article 5 protection of mutual defense. Full membership would provide Sweden more

¹ The Economist, October 13, 2001, "Swedish Neutrality: The past is past," http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=E1_RTQTDV; Internet, accessed 12 February, 2009.

robust security assurances in the future world of diminishing natural resources and political uncertainty.

The opening section of the paper will describe the background to Sweden's current political and military relationships. The threats to Sweden will then be examined and it will be argued that credible threats to Swedish sovereignty still exist. The predominant threat is from Russia, the largest and most powerful state in the region. Although the level of tension between Russia and the West is no longer of the same intensity as during the Cold War, Russia has chafed against NATO expansion into the Baltic and elsewhere. It feels threatened and isolated by the re-drawing of the previous East-West borders, especially where that involves deployments of weapons and infrastructure closer to the Russian frontier and where border disputes and mineral rights pit Russia in direct conflict with NATO nations. Russia is annoyed at recent and ongoing NATO expansion into Central Europe and the Baltics, and its future military courses of action remain uncertain. Sweden entering NATO would reduce Russia's military options in the region and thus enhance stability and security in Scandinavia and the Baltics. It would certainly protect Sweden from direct Russian aggression.

This paper will then argue that NATO membership would offer Sweden a strong and credible deterrent to potential aggressors (notably Russia) and that Sweden is already integrated into the NATO community. The Swedish military has for decades been working towards interoperability with the Alliance and has formalized its ties to NATO over the past fifteen years in particular, both at the political level and on operations. This interoperability is vital to Sweden's security, since the ability to work with the armed forces of its fellow European nations, most of whom are both NATO and EU members, is

paramount to the effective resolution of any threat that Sweden might encounter. The development of new and existing mineral resources in the north increases the likelihood of tensions in the region and likewise increases the urgency of Sweden's full integration into NATO.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SWEDISH NEUTRALITY

The policy of neutrality has served Sweden well since its adoption in 1814, keeping Sweden free from war since the end of the Napoleonic era.² Legally, Sweden has never actually been neutral, as its neutrality is not protected by international law nor by convention. It is a neutral nation only in terms of military policy, not in ideology.³ For years the cornerstone of Swedish defence policy was "freedom from alliances in peacetime, aiming at neutrality in the event of war."⁴ This kept the country out of the hostilities in the First World War and played a major role in keeping Sweden free from occupation during the Second World War, saving countless thousands of Swedish lives and allowing the small nation to maintain and improve upon its high standard of living.

This was not achieved without controversy, as there are negative connotations to neutrality. These include the risk that a nation's allies feel a state is not fulfilling its international mandate, or in other words is free-riding on the security efforts of others.

² Baroness Margaretha af Ugglas (Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs), "Sweden's Security Policy in Post-Cold War Europe," NATO Review no. 2 (April, 1994): 3; <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/1994/9402-3.htm>; Internet: accessed 15 February 2009.

³ Gunnar Jervas, "Sweden in a Less Benign Environment," in *The Neutral Democracies and the New Cold War*, ed. Bengt Sundelius, 57-74 (Boulder, Colorado: 1987), 69.

⁴ Bengt Sundelius, "Sweden: Secure Neutrality," in *The Nordic Region: Changing Perspectives in International Relations*, ed. Martin O. Heisler, 116-124 (Newbury Park, CA: 1990), 118.

Another risk is that a neutral nation must compromise its neutrality or at times parts of its sovereignty in order to maintain that sovereignty and neutrality in the broader context. Recent revelations that Sweden loaned significant amounts of money to the German government in World War Two, money which secretly benefited the Swedish steel industry, and that the Swedes made certain concessions regarding logistical support to the Germany military, are examples of such concessions.⁵ Regardless, with NAZI Germany in control of Norway, and with Russia and Finland having fought to a standstill, Sweden's neutrality and its ability to defend that neutrality (or at least to defend it enough to make invasion an unpleasant prospect for the invader) assured Sweden freedom from occupation during the 1940's.

At the end of the war, Sweden and its immediate neighbours had options regarding their political affiliations, to counter the threat posed by an empowered Soviet Union. Finland defused the Soviet threat through formal neutrality, offering security and economic guarantees to their Soviet neighbours and providing a buffer zone between the Soviet Union and Norway, which opted to join NATO.⁶ The Finnish and Norwegian decisions relieved Sweden from immediate pressure to join either Cold War bloc, and allowed them to continue in their comfortable neutrality. Despite this, Sweden had already recognized the vital importance of ongoing cooperation with the Western powers

⁵ Allan Hall, "Revealed: How 'neutral' Sweden made secret loans to Nazi Germany during WWII," Daily Mail Online (16th February, 2009), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1146462/Revealed-How-neutral-Sweden-secret-loans-Nazi-Germany-WWII.html>; Internet: accessed 26 February 2009.

⁶ George H. Quester, "Finlandization as a Problem or an Opportunity," in *The Nordic Region: Changing Perspectives in International Relations*, ed. Martin O. Heisler, 33-45 (Newbury Park, CA: 1990), 34-36.

to its security, and secret Swedish defense plans “envisaged close cooperation with NATO in the event of a war in Europe.”⁷

The end of the cold war again provided Sweden an opportunity to change its policies with respect to neutrality, and this time the country formally recognized that its prosperity was irrevocably linked to a secure and stable West. Sweden could no longer remain formally isolated from its political allies and trading partners. “Neutrality...has very little meaning in the post-Cold War world, and participation in the process of European integration has already brought (Sweden) into the Western community structure.”⁸ Sweden’s prosperity relied on the integration of its economic system with that of Western Europe, and it would now have to take steps to more deeply engrain itself in the security system that provided that stability.⁹

So, having remained relatively free from the physical, economic, and human devastation of two world wars, and having prospered during the Cold War, neutrality is shown to have served Sweden well from 1814 to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. However the relatively recent decision to abandon this policy of neutrality is an indication of Sweden’s recognition that modern security encompasses more than just the absence of war.¹⁰ The potential threats to that security will now be examined.

⁷ Stephen J. Blank, “Russia and the Baltics in the Age of NATO Enlargement,” *Parameters* (Autumn 1998): 65.

⁸ Stanley R. Sloan, NATO, *The European Union, and the Atlantic Community* (Oxford: Rowan and Littlefield, 2003), 211.

⁹ James Sperling and Emil Kirchner, *Recasting the European Order* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1997), 132.

¹⁰ Government of Sweden, “Summary: A More Secure Neighbourhood – Insecure World,” *Report of the Swedish Defence Commission*, 27 February 2003, 13; <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/02/56/70/e756f798.pdf>; Internet, accessed 16 February 2009.

THE THREATS TO SWEDEN

Sweden's departure from neutrality roughly coincided with the end of the Cold War. With the direct threat of a large-scale Soviet invasion largely muted, Sweden (and Finland) were able to openly move closer to their Western allies and to NATO. However the end of the Cold War has not been the end of history, as some pundits have suggested. Instead, Russia is still recovering from the consequences of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, resulting in a considerable degree of turbulence.¹¹ Moderate instability in Northern Europe and the Baltics, coupled with existing and expected future disputes over borders and natural resources in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean, and Russian re-assertion of its influence on the world stage are matters of considerable concern to Sweden and its Nordic neighbours.¹²

This section of the paper will argue that credible military threats to Sweden still exist at this point in history, and will set the conditions for the argument that NATO membership is Sweden's best course of action to effectively counter these threats.

Russia is still searching for its role in the post-Cold War world. It has not blossomed into a Westernized democracy as many had hoped. Instead it still resembles a centralized authoritarian state.¹³ Its international position is "...ambiguous and the basic lines of foreign policy are uncertain, which makes it difficult to predict Russia's

¹¹ Capt(N) Georgij Alafuzoff, "Russia's Security-Political Interests in the Baltic Area After the Cold War," in *Security-Political Prospects in Northern Europe at the Beginning of the Millennium*, ed. Pekka Sivvonen, 51-62 (Helsinki, Finnish National Defence College: 2000), 54.

¹² The Economist, February 22nd, 2007, "Sweden's growing worries about Russia fuel a love-in with Norway," http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?Story_ID=E1_RSQQVPN; Internet, accessed 12 February 2009.

¹³ Alafuzoff, *Russia's Security...*, 54.

international behaviour.”¹⁴ Events in Chechnya, Georgia, Ukraine, and Estonia provide evidence that the situation is not likely to stabilize in the near to medium-term future. Russia has ongoing border disputes with each of its Baltic neighbours, is enlarging its Baltic fleet, and is installing a controversial undersea pipeline that will run too close to Swedish territorial waters for Stockholm’s comfort. All this contributes to Nordic fears in regards to their Russian neighbour’s intentions.¹⁵

Within Russia, the continuation of centralized decision making is not conducive to the development of a sophisticated post-industrial economy, and precludes the type of economic development that would allow deeper integration with the rest of Europe and the inherent incentives for cooperation and stability that would accompany it. Russia is troubled by “aging infrastructure and the lack of investments, effective banking system and law enforcement – all necessary elements to support the transformation to a modern state...”¹⁶ This too adds to the instability and uncertainty.

This instability, naturally, is a major concern to Russia’s immediate neighbours. “The war in Georgia shows that the security situation in our region changes at a faster pace than the government writes policy reports,” according to Jyky Katainen, Finland’s Finance Minister.¹⁷ Sweden, currently caught between the neutrality it has abandoned

¹⁴ Capt (N) Georgij Alafuzoff, “Russian Military Policy seen from a Nordic-Baltic Perspective,” in *Security in the North – Change and Continuity*, ed. Mika Kerttunen, 21-30 (Helsinki, Finnish National Defence College: 2000), 25.

¹⁵ The Economist, *Boots...*

¹⁶ Bengt Andersson, “National, European, or Transatlantic Defence?” in *Sweden and Finland: Security Perceptions and Defence Policy*, ed. Tomas Ries and Axel Halestam, 27-31 (Helsinki, Finnish National Defence College: 2000), 28.

¹⁷ Government of Sweden, *Altering European borders by force of arms, in the twenty-first century, is a surprising turn of events,* (Swedish Armed Forces: 24 October 2008),

and the NATO membership it has not yet sought, must be prepared to deal with conflicts that might arise from this instability. It is not militarily strong enough to fend off a direct Russian attack, and it does not yet have the Article 5 assurances available to NATO members. It may need such assurances as diminishing global resources lead to territorial disputes in coming years.

As is the case in Canada's own Arctic, territorial disputes regarding natural resources are already underway in Russia's northern waters. Of particular interest, Russia and NATO member Norway are at odds regarding the delimitation of their shared Arctic waters and the oil, gas, and other minerals beneath them.¹⁸ These tensions are somewhat intensified by the proximity of Norway's borders to Russia's strategically vital Kola Peninsula, an intensely militarized part of the country that is Russia's gateway to the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans, and home to a significant portion of Russia's nuclear arsenal.¹⁹ Russia also feels constrained by NATO expansion into three of its former satellite states, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. This now brings NATO's borders into direct contact with Russia's Leningrad Military District. Norway and the three Baltic states, however, enjoy Article 5 protection, deterring Russia from direct action or use of excessive military pressure in the resolution of these disputes. This is not the case with Sweden, who is not assured America's intervention on their behalf, should they be attacked.

<http://www.mil.se/en/News/Mission-and-defence/Altering-European-borders-by-force-of-arms-in-the-twenty-first-century-is-a-surprising-turn-of-events>; Internet, accessed 24 February 2009.

¹⁸ The Economist, *Back on the Block...*

¹⁹ Alafuzoff, *Russia's Security-Political Interests...*, 53.

What are the likely scenarios that would cause Sweden to seek NATO's assistance? Large-scale invasion aimed at the complete occupation of the country is no longer an ongoing concern in Sweden.²⁰ Russia, despite its instability, aggression, and recent actions in its border regions, has given no indication that it intends to take up large scale offensive operations against the West. Indeed, all indications are that Russia recognizes that its future prosperity is tied to economic integration with the rest of the world.²¹ As well, Russia would not be able to conduct the massive, time consuming preparations required to position large numbers of conventional invasion forces near its western borders in secret. However smaller actions are both achievable and feasible. Russian actions in Georgia demonstrate Russia's willingness to use its military to achieve political goals.

In the north, Russia has several military courses of action it could employ to achieve its aims. Military pressure and the threat of use of force is one possibility. This could include mere presence operations, shows of force such as naval or air operations in the Barents Strait, or blockades of commercial shipping lanes, oil fields, or Norwegian ports. Any of these actions would impact Sweden's own economy. The same actions in the Baltic Sea would directly impact Sweden. However should future mineral or territorial disputes degenerate into direct military confrontation between Russia and NATO, Sweden faces a more worrisome threat.

²⁰ Andersonn, *National...*, 30.

²¹ Robert J. Art, "Creating a Disaster: NATO's Open Door Policy," *Political Science Quarterly* 113, No. 3 (Autumn 1998), 389.

Although large-scale invasion might be difficult and is not an expected threat, it is feasible that strategic strikes on specific targets within Sweden might be undertaken.²² Russia could realistically assume that non-NATO Sweden would take longer to acquire outside military assistance, and therefore choose to initially seize Swedish soil for its use during operations against other states.²³ Most likely targets are air bases in northern Sweden, which would provide Russia forward staging to reach into NATO areas of operations, including Norway, the Barents Sea, and Britain, as well as across all of Scandinavia. This gross violation of Swedish sovereignty would be achieved through the concentration of specific forces at one point in time and space, and would be entirely achievable. In these circumstances, Sweden would not be able to defend against its much larger neighbour. Even if the operations were temporary in nature and did not lead to further military action against Sweden, Swedish deaths incurred in the strikes and the disruption to the Swedish economy, forward momentum, and daily life, would be staggering and costly.

Sweden has transformed its military forces to better position itself as a key contributor within the global security arena. They have moved "...from a large mobilized defense against a large-scale invasion to smaller, more flexible forces intended to be used as more available tools for the government's security and defense policy, also in peacetime."²⁴ This is highly suitable in terms of providing Sweden capable, sustainable

²² Lieutenant-General Ilkka Hollo, Finnish Chief of Defence Staff, "Finnish Defence Forces – The Present and the Future," in *Security in the North – Change and Continuity*, ed. Mika Kerttunen, 31-40 (Helsinki, Finnish National Defence College: 2000), 33.

²³ Gervas, *Sweden...*, 62-63.

forces to contribute to NATO or other coalition operations. However this change can be construed to be achieved at the cost of a higher degree of risk assumption regarding homeland defense. This seemingly higher vulnerability increases the need for Sweden to have access to other NATO forces to participate in the defense of Swedish soil. The trade-off seems equitable: Sweden will contribute to broader global security and stability; in exchange, NATO offers security guarantees to the Swedes at home.

Sweden's capable and professional military forces could not withstand a Russian surgical strike like the one described above. The next section of the paper will present the argument that NATO membership would afford Sweden a credible deterrent against such aggressions, since any future aggressor would approach Sweden considerably more cautiously if it was a member of the Alliance.

SWEDEN AND NATO

This section of the paper will argue that close cooperation and interoperability with NATO provides Sweden the optimal circumstances to defend its interests against the threats that nation faces. NATO underpins the security goals of an undivided Europe that continues to deepen its members' economic and political integration,²⁵ and NATO membership will permit Sweden to more fully capitalize on the benefits of its EU membership. Under American leadership during the Balkan crises, NATO has already

²⁴ Capt(N) Sven Rudberg, "Sweden's Defence Policy," in *Sweden and Finland: Security Perceptions and Defense Policy*, ed. Tomas Ries and Axel Halestam, 17-21 (Helsinki, Finnish National Defence College: 2000), 18.

²⁵ John Woodliffe, "The Evolution of a New NATO for a New Europe," *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 47, No. 1 (January 1998) 181; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/761487>; Internet, accessed 15 February 2009.

shown itself willing to act in order to protect the integrity of political or economic systems, the very type of threat which is most likely to be realized in Sweden. The Swedish military is already quite advanced in terms of its interoperability with NATO and is moving towards even closer integration. Formal membership would provide Sweden credible representation at a forum which would otherwise make decisions impacting Sweden's security, regardless of whether the Swedes were present to speak on their own behalf.²⁶

NATO is first and foremost a political alliance. However NATO is also the only organization able to “act decisively to preserve international peace and security through conflict prevention and crisis management.”²⁷ Sweden is not able to defend its sovereignty on its own, and they recognize this. The Swedish assumption was always that their nation would be a secondary or tertiary theatre of operations in a clash between any great alliances. Thus their intent was to present a significant enough military defense that an attack on Sweden would seem “unprofitable” to an aggressor.²⁸ As discussed earlier in this paper, the threat of broad scale conventional war in Europe is now minimal, and an aggressor would be more likely to concentrate overwhelming forces to conduct strategic attacks against specific targets in Sweden. Sweden's capable military alone is not enough of a deterrent to prevent this. What is needed is the formal protection offered by Article 5, requiring NATO members to go to war if another NATO member state is attacked. In

²⁶ Bjorn Olav Knutsen, “The Nordic Dimension in the Evolving European Security Structure,” in *Security-Political Prospects in Northern Europe at the Beginning of the Millennium*, ed. Pekka Sivvonen, 35-49 (Helsinki, Finnish National Defence College: 2000), 36.

²⁷ General Joachim Spiering, Commander in Chief, AFNORTH, “The Nordic-Baltic Security Situation seen from NATO's Perspective,” *Security in the North – Change and Continuity*, ed. Mika Kerttunen, 7-20 (Helsinki, Finnish National Defence College: 2000), 19.

²⁸ Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States*, Worcester, Billing and Sons, 1988, 40.

particular the Swedes perceive the commitment of the United States to Northern Europe as a key aim of NATO and NATO enlargement.²⁹ This logic led to the Swedish Minister of Defence declaring in February of 2008 that NATO membership is “natural” for Sweden and that “mutual security guarantees lie first in NATO membership.”³⁰

NATO operations in the Balkans during the 1990’s demonstrate the importance of having the support of the United States (U.S.) in a military alliance, to be assured that action will be taken. Sweden is a member of the EU; however that does not guarantee them the military support of EU nations in time of crisis. NATO membership and the direct support of the U.S. obtained through that membership are the strongest and most credible deterrents Sweden can acquire. Operations in the Balkans demonstrated how NATO was able and willing to take direct action in a crisis when European nations were not willing to engage in combat.

There was no direct threat to Western Europe during the Bosnian war or its aftermath. In a physical sense, the conflict was contained within the borders of the Former Yugoslavia and did not threaten to spill over into established, stable European neighbours such as Austria or Hungary. This provided little incentive for the European community to assume any risks beyond the provision of United Nations peacekeepers, whose mandate allowed combat operations to be prosecuted only in self-defense. As tensions escalated and Russian involvement became a possibility, the Europeans were still unable to obtain consensus regarding courses of action in a small-ish nation in their

²⁹ Government of Sweden, *Summary...*, 3.

³⁰ The International Herald Tribune, “Sweden's Defense Minister Says Joining NATO Would Be Natural,” *The International Herald Tribune Online Edition* (The Associated Press, February 16th 2008), <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/02/16/europe/EU-GEN-Sweden-NATO.php>; Internet, accessed 15 February 2009.

backyard.³¹ It took American pressure and leadership to obtain NATO involvement in the form of air strikes then the deployment of NATO ground troops to bring the war and the crisis to an end.

Swedes must therefore consider whether membership in a European political organization, the EU, would provide them military assistance should a crisis occur on Swedish territory. The European states, many of which are less well-armed than Sweden, proved unwilling to take action in the Balkans. NATO, by deploying to Bosnia and then to Kosovo fourteen years later, demonstrated its willingness to intervene decisively in Europe. This demonstrates that NATO is the mechanism through which to obtain kinetic military support in a crisis. Sweden's membership in the European Union clarifies and enhances Sweden's international position, but it is not a guarantee of security.³² With the influence, decisiveness and combat power of the United States driving NATO to action, Sweden would clearly enhance its security guarantees through formal membership in the Alliance.

The Swedish military has undergone a transformation process to increase its ability to work seamlessly with NATO forces. This will greatly facilitate the acquisition of membership status in NATO, should a future government choose to do so. Interoperability in the realms of equipment, planning processes, and operating procedures remains high on the political and funding agendas of the Swedish military.³³ Sweden's

³¹ Art, *NATO's Open Door...*, 396.

³² Jan-Erik Enestam, Finnish Minister of Defence, "Finland and the Common European Security and Defence Policy," in *Sweden and Finland: Security Perceptions and Defence Policy*, ed. Tomas Ries and Axel Halestam, 1-3 (Helsinki, Finnish National Defence College: 2000), 1.

³³ Rudbeg, *Sweden's Defence Policy...*, 19.

ongoing work at achieving interoperability has made that nation well-placed to acquire membership and it must continue.

The first post-Cold War step towards closer ties with NATO was joining the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program in 1994.³⁴ Some of the key objectives of Partnership for Peace include "...the development of forces that are better able to operate with those of NATO members States; and, above all, the development of co-operative military relations with NATO for the purpose of joint planning in order to strengthen their ability to undertake missions...".³⁵ Sweden has contributed sustained battalion-sized forces under NATO command to the NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) and Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia from 1995, the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Kosovo from 1999, and the International Assistance Security Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan since 2003.³⁶ A PfP training center was established in Sweden in 1994, focusing on training NATO and PfP partners in peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, rescue services, civil emergency planning and democratic control of the armed forces.³⁷

In 2008 Sweden formally expressed intent to contribute forces to the NATO Response Force (NRF).³⁸ The NRF's role is to provide collective defence for all NATO states, and for Sweden this is a clear move away from neutrality towards military

³⁴ Stratfor Today, "Finland, Sweden and the Lure of NATO," *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, May 2007, http://www.stratfor.com/finland_sweden_and_lure_nato; Internet, accessed 26 February 2009.

³⁵ Woodliffe, *The Evolution...*, 177.

³⁶ NATO, "NATO's Relations with Sweden," <http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-sweden/index.html>; Internet, accessed 23 February 2009.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

alignment.³⁹ Membership had traditionally comprised NATO member States only. The entry of Sweden (and neighbouring Finland) to the NRF indicate the high degree of interoperability of those two nations' militaries with their NATO friends, as well as NATO's acceptance of their political acceptability within NATO, should they choose to join.

Sweden has already established deep political and practical ties to NATO. It contributes forces, education assets and political support to the Alliance, and in many respects is operating as though it were already a full member. Full membership would help Sweden deepen its influence at the various strategic decision-making processes within NATO.

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a tendency towards centralization in decision-making within Western Europe. Although nations naturally retain considerable sovereignty and the right to choose their own course of action in many circumstances, policies and agreements (both binding and voluntary) are made in tighter circles of influence, whether that is in the EU and its Ministries or within NATO.⁴⁰ Nations which are not full participants in the process risk being marginalized or not having their views heard. It is vital to be seen to be participating effectively, in order to leverage political, military, and economic gains from allies and trading partners. This access to the decision making process is to a large extent what keeps Canada in NATO: "...by being present at the table we can serve as the spokesman for our own interests. If

³⁹ Stratfor, *Finland, Sweden...*

⁴⁰ Knutsen, *The Nordic Dimension...*, 36-37.

we are not present, our voice will not be heard.”⁴¹ The same condition rings true for Sweden.

For economic, cultural and political reasons it is imperative that Sweden remain influential in the decision-making core of the European community. Sweden’s economy is “entirely fused with the community of postindustrial states that won the Cold War...all of whom are vitally dependent on the free movement of trade, investments, people, ideas and creativity.”⁴² Although the Finnish bureaucrat who wrote this was speaking of his own nation’s requirements to remain linked to the decision-making processes of Europe, the statement is equally applicable to Sweden. European stability is good for Sweden, and Swedish stability is in turn good for Europe. NATO is the primary military instrument through which Westerners secure the freedom of movement needed to sustain their societies.

The final element that supports Sweden’s formal ascension to full NATO membership is the requirement for an exchange of sensitive but vital technologies in order to keep pace with the latest equipment platforms and an understandable desire to maintain a strong defense industrial base. The Nordic nations have in the past attempted to achieve efficiencies through common procurement, but with poor results.⁴³

Today, modern weapons systems and their platforms are exponentially expensive when compared to systems of previous decades. While Sweden has traditionally been

⁴¹ R.J. Sutherland, “Canada’s Long Term Strategic Situation,” *International Journal* 17, No. 3 (Summer 1962), 222.

⁴² Tomas Ries, “Finland: The Case for NATO,” in *Security-Political Prospects in Northern Europe at the Beginning of the Millennium*, ed. Pekka Sivvonen, 75-94 (Helsinki, Finnish National Defence College: 2000), 79.

⁴³ Andersson, *National...*, 30-31.

able to acquire about 70% of its military hardware through domestic companies,⁴⁴ recent increases in equipment costs and an increase in concentration of worldwide arms producers has reduced the viability of much of Sweden's domestic arms industry. The defense industry is thus on a quest for larger markets and greater cooperation with Sweden's allies.⁴⁵

Much of the market dominance is by American companies. Thus Sweden, like many other nations, has had to enter into proprietary agreements with the United States in order to obtain access to many systems.⁴⁶ Sweden spends approximately 3.6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on defense, a sizeable percentage that has allowed the Swedes to maintain a credible deterrent force.⁴⁷ But as costs continue to increase without being matched by increases in GDP, Sweden will have to acquire even greater percentages of its military hardware abroad, largely from the United States. "The political and military ambition to sustain close defense technological relations with the USA will remain strong in Sweden. This could influence Sweden's choices between European and transatlantic equipment solutions in favour of the latter."⁴⁸ NATO membership would bring Sweden

⁴⁴ Joseph Kruzal, "Sweden's Security Dilemma," in *The Committed Neutral: Sweden's Foreign Policy*, ed. Bengt Sundelius, 67-93 (London, Westview Press: 1989), 85.

⁴⁵ Rudberg, *Sweden's Defence...*, 20.

⁴⁶ Sundelius, *The Committed Neutral...*, 85.

⁴⁷ James C. Murdoch and Todd Sandler, "The Political Economy of Scandinavian Neutrality," *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 88, No. 4 (December 1986), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3440432>; Internet, accessed 15 February 2009.

⁴⁸ Björn Hagelin, "Hardware politics, 'hard politics' or 'where, politics?': Nordic defence equipment cooperation in the EU context," in *The Nordic Countries and the European Security and Defence Policy*, ed. Alyson J. K. Bailes, Gunilla Herolf and Bengt Sundelius, 167-184 (London, Oxford University Press: 2007), 182.

closer to the U.S., and the ensuing deeper relationship would benefit the Swedish defense industry.

As well, Sweden is deeply engaged in working within the NATO system in order to better manage its defense industry's relations with all members of the Alliance. It has deployed a permanent Mission to NATO Headquarters, continues to support organizations such as the Swedish Security and Defence Industry Association (SOFF), which represents the Swedish defense industry in the Aerospace and Defense Industries Association of Europe (ASD) and in the NATO Industrial Advisory Group/Partnership for Peace (NIAG/PfP). Most recently, SOFF is investigating the industrial and commercial benefits that might accrue to Sweden as it continues to move even closer to NATO, and how formal membership might translate into a stronger domestic defense industry.⁴⁹

Given that credible threats to Sweden still exist, NATO membership offers the Swedes a credible deterrent to those threats. Article 5 protection is the key to this deterrence. NATO has taken military action in the past when the EU would not, and Sweden needs the credible protection afforded by formal alliance with an American-led organization. Sweden has transformed its military to move towards closer interoperability with NATO and is a contributor of combat elements to several NATO missions. The economies of Europe and Sweden are deeply intertwined and decisions taken in Europe will impact Sweden considerably. To protect their own interests the Swedes therefore have to maintain a strong voice at the European table. NATO

⁴⁹ Lieutenant-Colonel Anders Svensson, Assistant National Armaments Director Representative, Swedish Mission to NATO, email conversation, 3 March 2009.

membership is the vehicle that would ensure Sweden has full input to the decision making forums that will impact Sweden's continued prosperity.

CONCLUSION

Since the end of the Cold War Sweden has faced diminished, yet significant threats. Russia has not been integrated into the Western world and remains both unstable and powerful. Of late, Russia is re-asserting its power in its border areas. This has resulted in increased uncertainty regarding Russia's future intentions or potential actions in the Baltics, Northern Scandinavia and the Arctic. Despite a capable and modern military, Sweden is a relatively soft target that offers Russia specific strategic objectives which might be required for Russian use as tensions over diminishing natural resources intensify. Sweden cannot repel this threat alone.

Currently, due to its integration into the EU and its cooperation with NATO, Sweden has little credibility with regards to a claim of neutrality, and thus cannot rely on that status as a safeguard against sovereignty violations. Indeed Sweden no longer presents any claim to be a neutral nation. However as a non-NATO member, Sweden cannot be assured of NATO's protection in the event of crisis or war.

The EU has not demonstrated a willingness to act in a military capacity. NATO has demonstrated this willingness, and it remains the sole military agency offering security to the deeply inter-connected political and economic systems that enable Western prosperity. The economies of Sweden and the other members of the EU are intrinsically intertwined, broadening the definition of security beyond a mere military

context. So, whether Sweden is a formal member of NATO or not, a threat to one of its European partners will have significant or severe consequences within Sweden. The converse is also true. Thus Sweden must be able to participate in the common defense of European interests, and NATO is the vehicle for that defense.

Sweden is aware of this and in recent decades has been moving closer to NATO. The Swedish military has deep links to the Alliance, has been working towards greater interoperability with NATO and has contributed maneuver elements under NATO command to missions in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. The Swedish defense industry has formal ties to NATO and sees increased cooperation with the United States and the European members of NATO as a vital tool for the preservation of Sweden's domestic defense industry.

NATO Membership and the American muscle behind it offer Sweden the strongest possibility to obtain a credible deterrent to threats to its sovereignty and military actions which could threaten Swedish and its own prosperity. Formal membership in NATO would be the capstone instrument needed to guarantee Sweden's security and ongoing prosperity.

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