

Beyond the State?

The Establishment of Integrative Commitments in European Security  
and Defence Cooperation

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## Preface

International relations and European integration literature traditionally assumes that states will not enter into agreements that constrain their authority, because to do so would conflict with the state's ultimate purpose to preserve its sovereignty and integrity. However, in the last decade European states have entered into cooperation that involves integrative commitments in the field of security and defence, which is a core state power. In this thesis, I ask what has enabled the establishment of interstate cooperative formats involving integration both inside and outside the EU. The thesis consists of an introductory chapter, which sets out the research agenda, and three research articles which are titled as follows:

- Beyond the 'lowest common denominator'? Mutually binding commitments in European security and defence cooperation: the case of the Nordic states
- A 'Europe of defence?' The establishment of binding commitments and supranational governance in European security and defence cooperation
- Reconsidering sovereignty in security and defence cooperation: The case of European 'great powers'

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## List of abbreviations

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| CARD       | Coordinated Annual Review of Defence   |
| CFSP       | Common Foreign and Security Policy   |
| Commission | European Commission  |
| Council    | The Council of the European Union  |
| CSDP       | Common Security and Defence Policy   |
| DG         | Director General   |
| ECJ        | European Court of Justice  |
| EDF        | European Defence Fund  |
| EDA        | European Defence Agency  |
| EDIRPA     | European Defence Industry Reinforcement Through Common Procurement Act           |
| EEAS       | European External Action Service   |
| EP         | European Parliament  |
| EU         | European Union   |
| GDPR       | General Data Protection Regulation   |
| IR         | International Relations  |
| LHTs       | Lancaster House Treaties   |
| NATO       | North Atlantic Treaty Organisation   |
| NESH       | National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities |
| NORDEFECO  | The Nordic Defence Cooperation   |
| PESCO      | Permanent Structured Cooperation   |
| US         | The United States of America   |



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## Part 1: Introduction to the articles



## 1. Summary

This thesis represents a contribution to the ongoing debate on European security and defence cooperation in the literature on international relations and European integration. States have generally been reluctant to relinquish sovereignty to supranational European institutions or through bilateral and multilateral treaties in the field of security and defence. The explanation usually given for the absence of integration in this policy field has been that states are unwilling to enter into agreements that would involve constraints on their authority, because it would mean to act contrary to the ultimate purpose of the state, which is to preserve its sovereignty and integrity (Hoffman 1966). However, in the last ten years, European states have increasingly entered into security and defence agreements that involve integrative commitments, both within the European Union (EU) and in different regional and bilateral formats. How has this been possible?

Drawing on literature that has identified a move beyond intergovernmental cooperation in EU foreign and security policy, I argue that we need to employ a comprehensive approach if we are to account for why states have opted to establish integration in the field of security and defence. The particular focus of this thesis is on understanding why states establish cooperative formats involving integrative commitments in two different constellations: (1) the delegation of authority through the establishment of interstate treaties and (2) the delegation of authority to EU institutions.

The thesis comprises an introductory chapter and three research articles. The first article is a case study of Nordic security and defence cooperation, formalised primarily through the establishment and development of the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF). The Nordic Defence Cooperation involves a mixture of cooperative and integrative commitments that I endeavour to account for. I find that such integrative commitments would not have come about in the Nordic context without a sense of 'Nordic togetherness'. In the second article, I account for the positions and perspectives of EU member-states that led to the establishment of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the Coordinated Annual Review of Defence (CARD) in the EU. These initiatives have constrained individual EU member-states' ability to veto decisions regarding the development of their individual military capabilities. As a result of the analysis presented in the article, I conclude that identity and norms together with material and strategic interests are important for understanding how integration is possible in the field of security and defence. Finally, the last case study examines bilateral security and defence cooperation between France and Britain, formalised through the 2010 Lancaster House Treaties (LHTs). Here, I account for the decision made by France and Britain

to establish Anglo-French cooperation in the nuclear sphere. France and Britain have tied the sustainability and viability of their respective nuclear deterrence to each other by pooling their resources and establishing a common means to store, maintain and test their nuclear weapons through the construction of two shared nuclear facilities, one each in France and Britain. In this article, I find that material and strategic interests alongside the obligations that result from adhering to a role as 'great powers' were significant for the establishment of integrative commitments between France and Britain.

## 2. Introduction

Literature on European integration has often highlighted the *absence* of integration in European security and defence cooperation (Howorth 2001, 2019; Menon 2011). The argument in this literature is that states will not enter into agreements that infringe on the authority of states, because to do so would conflict with the state's ultimate purpose which is to preserve its sovereignty and integrity (Hoffman 1966; Menon 2013). The historical development of security and defence cooperation between European states has been different from that of European economic integration. Prior to the Lisbon Treaty of 2009, the field of security and defence policy was a separate pillar in the institutional structure of the European Union and decisions were made through unanimous votes in an intergovernmental format. In the last decade, however, European states have increasingly entered into interstate cooperative arrangements that involve integrative commitments in the field of security and defence, which is a core state power. This thesis asks: *What enabled the establishment of integrative commitments between European states in the field of security and defence?*

The term 'core state power' refers to three central components of the modern state that played (and continue to play) a vital role in its political organisation and consolidation: (1) control over the military and police; (2) monetary and fiscal sovereignty (which makes it possible to finance the military and police); and (3) the establishment of durable administrations to control fiscal revenues and the means of coercion (Tilly 1975, p. 1990; Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2013, p. 9). Core state powers are thus among the existential foundations of the modern state, and it is therefore important to understand why states have ceded sovereignty in such an integral area as national security and defence.

In this thesis, I examine the extent to which the sovereignty of states has been constrained in relation to three central components of national security and defence: (1) the acquisition, development and maintenance of military capability; (2) responsibility for defending national borders; and (3) the planning, coordination and operationalisation of national armed forces. The term 'sovereignty' is widely used in international relations and political science, and there is debate over its precise definition. For the purposes of this thesis, I rely on a definition of sovereignty that views it not as a variable of state control but as measure of the state's ability to exercise authority (Thomson 1995; p. 214). In this perspective, sovereignty is contingent not only on the fundamental authority of a state in the political realm, but also on its authority to transfer 'activities, issues, practices to the economic, social, cultural and scientific realms of authority or to the states own realm – the political' (Thomson 1995, p. 214).

Furthermore, to better understand the kind of commitments states may establish in security and defence cooperation, I propose a distinction between two different forms of commitments:

cooperation and integration. As it is used in this thesis, 'cooperation' is understood as a type of interaction between states in which 'actors adjust their behaviour to the actual or anticipated preference of others through a process of policy coordination' (Keohane 1984, p. 51). Cooperative commitment may involve mutually binding commitments, but these commitments do not significantly change national defence structures or practices. Thus, in purely cooperative formats, the sovereignty of states is not considerably constrained. Different from 'cooperation', 'integration' is '... concerned with explaining how and why states cease to be wholly sovereign, how and why they voluntarily mingle, merge and mix with their neighbours as to lose the factual attributes of sovereignty' (Haas 1970, p. 610). Integrative commitments between states involve de facto changes in national institutions, procedures, short term and long-term fiscal and military planning and access and use of technology that results in a situation in which the state's ability to act alone has been constrained. Accordingly, integration involves a loss of authority for states. In determining the degree to which states have moved beyond cooperative commitments, I also make use of Sjursen's (2011a) criteria, which require an analysis of: "1) the nature of the actors involved in making decisions; 2) the procedures through which decisions are made; 3) the scope and type of powers that are delegated; 4) the *raison d'être* of the cooperative endeavour." (Sjursen 2011a, p. 1081–1082). I further specify these as criteria for the specific purposes of the analyses in this thesis. I thus consider that integration will have occurred if commitments between states result in one or more of the following outcomes: 1) states are unable to veto decisions, 2) actors aside from those specific to a given state (i.e. EU institutions or another state) are involved in making decisions that affect this state, 3) a transfer of power over a specific issue which cannot be reversed and, 4) situations in which the purpose of commitments is not reducible to the interests or values of a single state. The analysis in this thesis will investigate the extent to which state sovereignty in the field of European security and defence has been constrained through three different case studies. I further aim to understand how such developments in interstate cooperation in Europe in the field of security and defence have been possible. I examine cooperative endeavours both inside and outside the EU.

While the literature on EU foreign and security policy that argues that sovereignty resides in the hands of member-states continues to be prevalent (Menon 2003; Howorth 2019), there is also a body of literature that points in another direction. Within this literature, it is argued that the nature of cooperation between states in the field of EU foreign, security and defence policy is increasingly difficult to square with the notion of intergovernmentalism (Mérand and Angers 2013; Sjursen 2011b; Hoeffler 2023). Researchers have highlighted the significant role of non-state actors such as EU experts (Cross 2013; 2015) and EU institutions (Howorth 2010; Juncos and Reynolds 2007) in the development of the

Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Neofunctionalist literature has argued that external dynamics have expanded the role and remit of the European Commission and the European Court of Justice in the field of defence because of functional spillover resulting from their role in regulating the EU's internal market (Håkansson 2021; Haroche 2020; Weiss, 2013). Constructivist literature has argued that the CFSP and the CSDP have moved beyond intergovernmentalism, highlighting norms (Riddervold 2016; Sjørusen 2011b; Mauer et al. 2023), national roles and identity (Aggestam 2006; Elgström and Smith 2006; Tonra 2003; 2019) and rules (Strikwerda 2017) as important factors in this development. Accordingly, there is an assertion in the literature that EU foreign and security policy may be something beyond intergovernmental. What is missing in this literature is an account of *what kind of commitments* (i.e. cooperative or integrative) have been made in the field of security and defence in the EU and the implications of the establishment of these commitments for the sovereignty of its member-states.

Thus, missing from the international relations literature and the literature on European integration are analyses of the *integrative* nature of commitments between European states in the field of security and defence. With respect to the most recent developments in EU security and defence affairs, the literature has focused on the establishment of either the European Defence Fund (EDF) or Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) without analysing how or why these initiatives work alongside each other and, importantly, how they also reinforce one another. The limitation of this approach is that the EDF and PESCO work to incentivise member-states to pursue common military capability development together, which in practice means that if member-states take part in PESCO projects the Commission, through the EDF, is often involved.

There are studies that have analysed the changing role of the European Commission and the European Court of Justice in relation to defence by looking at the establishment of the European Defence Fund (EDF) (Hoeffler 2023; Haroche 2020; Sabatino 2022), but without examining how or why PESCO and the Coordinated Annual Review of Defence (CARD) work alongside it. A recent study on European security and defence noted that PESCO was an attempt by the EU to enhance European strategic autonomy (Sweeney and Winn 2020) without noting the concomitant role of CARD and the EDF. It has also been argued that PESCO is different from other CSDP initiatives because the commitments states make to each other within the PESCO framework are legally binding (Biscop 2018, p. 162), and that PESCO may represent a transformative change in EU defence because it has the potential to improve member-states' military capabilities (Nováky 2018). Additionally, while individual PESCO projects are mainly financed by the member-states involved in them, the EDF can provide an additional 10% monetary

bonus to member-states for the completion of PESCO projects that reach and fulfil their targets (Biscop 2018, p. 163), which demonstrates that the EDF works in concert with PESCO. Therefore, the fact that PESCO, CARD and the EDF have been treated as separate entities in the literature on European integration leaves gaps in our understanding of the development of the field of security and defence in the EU. In order to understand how decisions are made with respect to what kind of capability EU member-states should acquire, renew and invest in, the format of cooperation and/or integration on which these initiatives are based, and the consequent effects on the sovereignty of member-states, these initiatives need to be considered together. The significance of this point is reinforced when research suggests (Biscop 2016, Haroche 2020) that, in and of themselves, both PESCO and the EDF represent a significant change in EU security and defence cooperation.

Thus, with the establishment of the EDF, PESCO, and CARD a new question has emerged which concerns the extent to which the individual state's sovereignty remains unconstrained in the development of EU member-states' military capabilities. The field of security and defence in the EU has undergone unprecedented changes since 2016. In that year, the EU's *Global Strategy* declared that strategic autonomy was an ambition for the Union (EEAS 2016). Shortly thereafter, in 2017, EU member-states established the EDF, PESCO and CARD. In 2021, we witnessed the creation within the Commission of the post of Director-General (DG) for Defence Industry and Space. The establishment of these initiatives means that member-states can pursue common defence capability development with financial support from the EU budget. Accordingly, the initiatives have introduced supranational governance in the field of security and defence for EU member-states. Accounting for the breakthrough in EU defence cooperation is therefore crucial if we are to understand the establishment of integrative commitments in security and defence – a central objective of this thesis.

In the area of European regional, trilateral and bilateral security and defence cooperation, scholars have also noted an increase in the depth, scope and ambition of cooperative arrangements on security and defence (Forsberg 2013; Hyde-Price 2018; Brommesson 2018b Saxi 2019; Pannier 2013, 2020). For example, in 2015, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands decided to establish joint surveillance of their airspace (Maurice 2015). The establishment of joint surveillance has led to an arrangement under which Dutch and Belgian forces take turns monitoring the airspace between the three states, de facto removing national airspace borders between the different countries. This defence practice is very different from one where national militaries are responsible for the protection of national airspace. The Nordic states have also established integrative commitments in the field of security and defence. It therefore seems that cooperation may be evolving 'beyond the state' not only in the development of



EU security and defence policy, but also in the establishment of regional and bilateral cooperative formats between states in Europe.

In addition, the debate about security and defence in Europe is often predominantly focused on NATO. Meanwhile, while less attention has been given to cooperative developments not just in the EU but also between states in different regional, mini- and bilateral formats. The focus on NATO is evident in research on the development of Nordic defence cooperation. Literature on Nordic defence cooperation has often focused on differences in and between the Nordic states in order to assess on how significant Nordic cooperation is in relation to NATO, or the significance of Nordic cooperation in the domestic policies of the Nordic states (Græger 2018; Ojanen and Raunio 2018; Thorhallsson 2018; Wivel 2018; Brommesson 2018b). However, an emphasis on the differences between the Nordic states is of limited use for efforts to understand what has driven Nordic security and defence cooperation and why the Nordic states agreed to such extensive cooperation in the first place. In fact, such a focus makes it harder to understand how integrative commitments between the Nordic states came about.

### *2.1. Contribution*

Thus, there is a gap in the literature in international relations and European integration with respect to why states establish cooperative formats involving integrative commitments. In this thesis, I address this gap by providing a distinction between cooperative and integrative commitments and further specifying criteria that can be used to identify integration between states. I apply these criteria to analyses of three cases of interstate cooperation where European states have established cooperation involving integrative commitments. The specification of criteria for integration between states in the field of security and defence is a novel contribution to international relations and European integration literature. Furthermore, the thesis findings suggest we need to reconsider arguments in the literature regarding what kinds of commitments states make in the field of security and defence. The impossibility of security and defence integration between states in Europe is rebuked. New questions emerge from the findings in this thesis in relation to the advent of defence integration along similar lines as economic integration in the EU; the emergence of European mini-lateral defence integration; and bilateral defence integration extending to nuclear capabilities. I present a more detailed discussion of the thesis' findings in the conclusion of the introductory chapter.

In theoretical terms, the thesis contributes to the existing literature through its application of a comprehensive approach involving the use of three different analytical perspectives. The use of such a

comprehensive approach demonstrates not just the significance of strategic and material interests in accounting for why states decide to integrate their national defence and thereby yield sovereignty to supranational institutions or other states, but also the importance of an alternative analytical perspective that emphasises the significance of identity and norms to the policymaking process of states (March and Olsen 1998; Aggestam 2006; Elgström and Smith 2006). I find that interests are not sufficient to explain why integration occurs in the field of security and defence, states also make decisions on the basis of adherence to a particular role or identity. It is the combination of the three different analytical expectations that makes it possible to account for the establishment of integration in the field of security and defence. The application of a combination of analytical approaches is not novel in IR and political science (Allison 1971, Checkel 1997), but what is new is its application to the study of cooperative formats involving integrative commitments. Thus, the analysis presented in this thesis constitutes a novel approach to the study of cooperation and integration in the field of security and defence.

## *2.2. Thesis outline*

Common to all the case studies in this thesis is that they examine developments in which states have decided to constrain their sovereignty in the field of security and defence. The three case studies provide an opportunity to analyse why states integrate in different areas of national security and defence policy, as well as the ways in which state sovereignty may be constrained as a result of such integration. The analysis of the thesis is focused on understanding why states have established cooperative formats that involve integrative commitments in two different forms: (1) delegation of authority through the establishment of interstate treaties and (2) delegation of authority to supranational institutions in the EU.

The first case study examines Nordic security and defence cooperation, formalised primarily through the establishment and development of NORDEFECO. Nordic defence cooperation involves a mixture of cooperative and integrative commitments that I endeavour to account for. The Nordic states represent a case where sovereignty has been constrained in a regional format through the establishment of different international agreements that involve integration. Nordic defence cooperation is an example of states committing to collective protection of national borders through the unification of parts of their armed forces, and integration is also present in the coordination and operationalisation of national militaries.

The second case study seeks to account for the positions and perspectives of EU member-states that led to the establishment of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the Coordinated Annual Review of Defence (CARD) in the European Union (EU). These initiatives have constrained the ability of individual EU member-states to veto decisions regarding the development of their individual military capabilities. In this case, there has been a devolution of power to supranational institutions in the EU in the field of security and defence.

Finally, the third case study examines bilateral security and defence cooperation between France and Britain, formalised through the 2010 Lancaster House Treaties (LHTs). Here, I account for the decision made by France and Britain to establish Anglo-French cooperation in the nuclear sphere. France and Britain have tied the sustainability and viability of their respective nuclear deterrents to each other by pooling their resources and establishing a common means to store, maintain and test their nuclear deterrents through the construction of two shared nuclear facilities, one each in France and Britain. This is a case where two states, France and Britain, have ceded autonomy in arguably the most integral part of their national security and defence.

In attempting to account for the emerging authority structures beyond the state in the field of security and defence in Europe, I have adopted a comprehensive approach. I have conducted case-study research that employs diverse analytical perspectives or models within the same study (Allison 1971). Through the use of multiple explanatory models in the same case study, it is possible to trace decision-making through different analytical perspectives to reveal the significance of various logics or structures that played a key role in the achievement of a particular outcome (Allison 1971, pp. 251–252). In turn, this enables a more comprehensive account of the evidence subject to consideration by accounting for evidence that might be overlooked or excluded in a one-model account. In the thesis, I develop analytical expectations derived from realism, liberal institutionalism and constructivism. Attention will now turn to presenting the rationale behind the theoretical framework employed in the thesis.

### 3. Theoretical framework

#### *3.1. Accounting for emerging authority structures beyond the state*

As noted above, literature on European integration and interstate cooperation has argued that states have increased the depth, scope and commitments in cooperative formats both in the EU and in different regional and bilateral formats (Pannier 2020; Forsberg 2013; Hoeffler 2023; Haroche 2020; Brommesson 2018b). A range of explanations has been offered as to how and why this has occurred. There are realist accounts of developments in EU security and defence that have argued integration remains 'close to zero' because it conflicts with the state's ultimate purpose, which is to preserve its sovereignty and integrity (Hoffman 1966; Menon 2013; Howorth 2019). These kinds of neorealist perspectives cannot account for integration and are therefore of limited help in understanding how integration occurs between states in Europe. It is of significance to note that there are parts of Nordic security and defence cooperation, Franco-British cooperation in the LHTs, as well as parts of PESCO and CARD that do not go beyond intergovernmental cooperation (though this is less true of the EDF). Thus, consideration of neorealist perspectives is warranted in an attempt to provide a comprehensive account of the establishment of cooperative formats that also involve integrative commitments, because such a perspective can shed light on the why states cooperate. In the first article on Nordic defence cooperation, I have utilised a structural or neorealist theoretical expectation (Waltz 1979): this article considers the extent to which the Nordic states were motivated by strategic self-interests in relation to the parts of the Nordic cooperative format that do not extend beyond cooperation.

Furthermore, realist theory is multifaceted and consists of different strands. Neoclassical or classical realism offers a perspective on states that tempers some of the neorealist assumptions regarding state behaviour in international relations (Snyder 1996; Ripsman et al. 2016; Foulon and Meibauer 2020). Neoclassic realism is different from neorealist theory because it argues that small states can enact policy independently of big states and has a more moderate view of the effect of anarchy on state behaviour (Foulon and Meibauer 2020, p. 1207). Classical realism also takes into account the influence of domestic factors (Carr 2001 Morgenthau 1948). In these accounts, factors such as geopolitical location, new military technology, and the presence and absence of regional alliances all shape the way in which the international environment affects state behaviour (Foulon and Meibauer 2020, p. 1207; Snyder 1996; Ripsman et al. 2016). In neoclassical realism, integration may be a possible outcome if this is in line with state interests and if the concessions required are smaller than the corresponding risk to sovereignty (Snyder 1996). In the second and third articles in the thesis, I have therefore constructed theoretical expectations derived from neoclassical realism in order to consider the extent

to which states were guided by strategic self-interests in the establishment of not only cooperative but also integrative commitments between states.

In addition, literature on European integration and literature on European interstate cooperation have emphasised the significance of another rationalist perspective which asserts that states enter into cooperative and integrative commitments based on cost-benefit calculations (Moravcsik 1993, 1998; Keohane 1984; Pannier 2013, 2016, 2020; Hyde-Price 2018). The notion that states act in line with their material self-interests is well established in international relations and European integration literature (Moravcsik 1993, 1998; Schimmelfenning 2018; Keohane and Nye 1977). In order to provide a comprehensive account of why European states have decided to establish integration in security and defence affairs, I have therefore also considered whether states were acting in line with their material interests.

However, the application of realist and cost-benefit perspectives leaves gaps in accounts of the establishment of cooperative and integrative commitments between states. These perspectives cannot explain instances where states have committed to integration when it is not in their material or strategic interest to do so. Furthermore, multilateral agreements can often be more inefficient than bilateral agreements, and therefore the cost-benefit explanation might struggle to account for certain areas of security and defence cooperation and integration that involve multiple actors (Hartley 2011). There is also some uncertainty regarding whether it is truly possible to calculate the actual economic benefits of cooperative arrangements of this kind, although states may still act on the assumption that this is achievable.

In order to fill the gaps left by the rationalist perspectives, I have made use of alternative perspectives. Constructivist literature on European foreign and security policy has argued that identity, roles and norms are crucial for understanding developments in European foreign affairs (Aggestam 2006; Elgström and Smith 2006; Sjursen 2006). This thesis will therefore also make use of an analytical perspective that stresses the significance of identity and norms in the formation of national security and defence policy (Katzenstein 1996; Checkel and Katzenstein 2009). Here, I follow March and Olsen (2006, p. 689) in the assertion that 'actors seek to fulfil the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices and expectations of its institutions. Embedded in a social collectivity, they do what they see as appropriate for themselves in a specific type of situation'. According to this line of thinking, then, in the policy-making process, state actors may draw on a specific role when they make decisions.

### *3.2. Philosophy of science*

The theoretical framework employed in this thesis is not derived from one single theory: I make use of both rationalist and constructivist perspectives. In rationalist accounts, norms are seen as constraining the decision-making of actors. In contrast, constructivism is built on the basic proposition that we look at how actors defined 'issues and alternatives, what they believed about the situation and each other, what they aimed to achieve and how' (Hollis and Smith 1990, p. 1; see also Wendt 1992). Accordingly, norms are seen as constitutive: they inform the environment in which the decision-making of actors takes place. The application of both rational-choice and constructivist perspectives makes it possible to capture the empirical reality of complex decision-making processes in which norms act both to constrain and to constitute actors (Finnemore 1996; Katzenstein 1996; Checkel 1997).

The drawback of employing both rationalist and constructivist analytical expectations is that these approaches cannot be fully reconciled into a neat epistemological and ontological paradigm. However, scholars have argued that the metaphysical delineation between rationalist and constructivist perspectives should not act as barrier for researching the complexity of intricate empirical problems in a multifaceted way (Allison 1971; Checkel 1997; Carlsnaes 1994, 2002; Hay 2002). The starting point of this thesis is an empirical research question, in relation to which analytical expectations are derived from different strands of theory: realism, liberal institutionalism and constructivism. The expectations are analytically distinct. The three case studies provide contexts through which to investigate, through the lens of each theoretical orientation, a selection of European states and the decisions of state actors to enter into agreements involving integration in the field of security and defence. Both rationalist and constructivist perspectives are applied consistently in the three case studies, which allows for a consideration of the explanatory merit of the different analytical expectations across the case studies.

I consider the relative importance of each theoretical perspective. The use of different analytical expectations in the cases examined also makes it possible to research and analyse whether a stronger case for rationalist interests reduces the need for a normative and identity-based dimension for the establishment of integrative commitments between European states – or, alternatively, to what extent a stronger sense of shared identity and norms reduces the need for strong rationalist interests. Accordingly, I argue that researching the presence and strength of normative and identity-based justifications alongside material and strategic justifications for cooperation and integration in the field of European security and defence may serve to expand our understanding of how integration is possible in in the field of security and defence.

I will now turn to discussing the specific theoretical perspectives in more detail and the analytical expectations/hypotheses and subsequent indicators that have been employed in the analysis of the three case studies that comprise the main body of this thesis.

#### 4. Analytical expectations and indicators

##### 4.1. Realism

One of the analytical perspectives employed in this research is realism. In the realist tradition, states are understood to act in line with their first-order interests, the most important being safeguarding their own national security and survival (Hyde-Price 2008). States, it is argued, are self-interested actors that seek to maximise their interests in a context of anarchy (Mearsheimer 1994/1995). Within such a system, states cultivate military power and capability in order to exert influence in international affairs (Mearsheimer 2001). According to realist thinking, if states perceive an increase in threats to their survival, this will lead to increased incentives for states to cultivate military capability.

In the context of the establishment of cooperative commitments in the case studies considered in this thesis, the analytical expectations were formulated in ways that were specific to the case studies in question. In the first article on the establishment of Nordic defence cooperation, I relied on the following neorealist analytical expectation: *The Nordic states established Nordic defence cooperation in order to maximise their individual security*. Indicators that would substantiate such a claim include commitments to cooperation based on geopolitical considerations related to Russia or similar perceptions of external threats. In the second article, on the establishment of PESCO, CARD and the EDF, I constructed the following neoclassical realist expectation: *EU member-states established PESCO, CARD and the EDF owing to a perceived need to defend the territories of the European Union*. Indicators that would support the neoclassical realist expectation in the second article would be justifications given by EU member-states for the establishment of PESCO, CARD and the EDF that are focused on the need to strengthen member-state defence capabilities, such as justifications that refer to a changing security landscape – as a result, for example, of a shift in the focus of important alliance partners like the United States – or to perceived weaknesses in current defence capabilities – such as gaps or weaknesses in existing collective defence mechanisms.

For the third article, the neoclassical realist expectation is that *France and Britain entered into the LHTs because each believed this was the best way to achieve their national security objectives*. Indicators that would substantiate such a claim would be justifications for the LHTs which emphasise changes in the

perception of external threats, changes in existing security alliances and partnerships, perceived weaknesses in the current security setup or shifting security objectives and goals.

#### *4.2. Liberal institutionalism*

The notion that states seek to cooperate out of economic self-interest is well established in the literature on European integration (Moravcsik 1993, 1998; Schimmelfennig 2018). In the liberal institutional tradition, states are considered rational actors that make decisions based on cost–benefit calculations (Elster 1986). Cooperation is the result of states seeking to advance their own interests in the context of economic interdependence (Keohane 1984). A core principle of liberal institutionalism is that cooperation can lead to integration (Keohane and Nye 1977). It is therefore important to consider the extent to which cost–benefit calculations can account for the establishment of integrative commitments in European security and defence cooperation and integration.

The potential for economic benefits from security and defence cooperation is typically found within defence procurement, capability development, military training, operational efficiency and military integration. The expectations I developed for each of the case studies were consistent with the notion that states established cooperative and integrative commitments on the basis of cost–benefit calculations.

For the first article on Nordic defence cooperation the indicators that might substantiate such a claim would be evidence that states have accelerated their cooperation through binding commitments in order to minimise national defence expenditures and maximise the use of resources through collective armament procurement. Indicators for the second article comprise justifications given by member-states for the establishment of PESCO, CARD and the EDF that are focused on the need for or opportunity to realise economic gains through joint military capability development. This expectation is different from the realist expectation, which is grounded in a perceived need to generate an absolute increase in defence capabilities. Cost–benefit considerations could be directly related to the scale of defence spending – such as references to general budget constraints and defence technology inflation – or broader economic considerations such as the need to create a competitive and efficient defence-industrial base. For the third article, indicators that would support the assumption that states decided to engage in integrative commitments on the basis of a cost–benefit calculation are justifications which centre on the expected material benefits or a reduction in costs, such as pressure to generate savings due to budget constraints or cost increases, industrial development opportunities and the relative costs and benefits of different cooperative formats.



#### 4.3. *The logic of appropriateness*

The first case study examines the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF), which has been described in the literature as a novel development in Nordic security and defence affairs, exemplified by the emergence of 'Nordicness' or a shared Nordic identity (Forsberg 2013; Hyde-Price 2018). While the concept of 'Nordicness' does seem to hold promise as an explanatory factor in this context, it remains underspecified and requires further unpacking. I suggest that, if we are to substantiate the claim that a sense of shared Nordic identity might help explain the depth of the Nordic security and defence cooperation, it is necessary to specify how such an identity helped to trigger the agreement entered into by the Nordic states. This involves considering the extent to which the different states established Nordic defence cooperation due to a shared sense of identity and norms.

The logic of appropriateness asserts that 'action involves evoking an identity or role and matching the obligations of that identity or role to a specific situation' (March and Olsen 1998, p. 951). Within such a perspective, social norms are seen not just as working to constrain actors but also as constitutive (Soysal 1994; Checkel 1997). A focus on how identity entails corresponding obligations may make it possible to further specify what has previously been identified as 'Nordicness'. This kind of analytical approach understands identity and norms as entailing corresponding obligations. It may be that there are certain 'Nordic' norms of solidarity that evoke a sense of corresponding obligations in the field of security and defence. It is therefore important to investigate the extent to which commitments may be driven by a sense of obligation to a specific 'Nordic' role or identity. The expectation for the first article is that *there are specific obligations that encourage the Nordic states to pursue cooperation within a Nordic format*. The indicator for this is whether Nordic states decided to cooperate in a Nordic format because they believe that Nordic cooperation is a 'safer' choice owing to a sense that 'we are alike' in the Nordic region.

#### 4.4. *Role theory*

In article two and three I have developed analytical expectations derived from role theory (Holsti 1970). Literature on foreign policy analysis asserts that states' foreign and security policies may be formed on the basis of national roles (Holsti 1970; Elgström and Smith 2006; Aggestam 2004), identity and culture (Katzenstein 1996), or norms and rules (March and Olsen 1998; Sjursen 2006) that are not solely derived from strategic or material self-interest. The extent to which the establishment of PESCO, CARD and the EDF was the result of shared role conceptions between member-states in the EU will also be

considered alongside a neoclassical and a liberal institutionalist perspective. A role consists of 'patterns of expected behaviour or appropriate behaviour' (Elgström and Smith 2006, p. 5; see also March and Olsen 1998). Accordingly, the analytical expectation in the second article is that *EU member-states agreed to establish PESCO, CARD and the EDF because of a shared understanding of the role they seek to play in international relations*. Indicators that would support this expectation would be justifications for the idea that European states have specific duties as Europeans. These justifications are not rooted in achieving specific policy objectives, such as enhanced security and or material benefits. Examples of obligations include arguments that the EU project must also extend to military power and that Europe needs to be significant and influential on the international stage. In the third article, I also developed an analytical expectation from role theory. The expectation is that *France and Britain entered into the LHTs due to a shared self-understanding of the role they occupy on the international stage*. Indicators that would substantiate such a claim would be justifications for the LHTs that do not identify specific policy objectives in pursuit of strategic or material interests but are premised on an understanding of the appropriate actions corresponding to each country's duties in international relations and their mutual overlap in carrying out such obligations (March and Olsen 2006). Examples of such duties include maintaining full-spectrum military capabilities, exercising global leadership in international relations, taking an active stance on military interventions and showing a willingness to use military force.

## **5. Research design and methodology**

### *5.1. Case study research*

For this thesis, I have conducted case-study research, which is an established approach in social science (Gerring 2007, 2008; Yin 2009). A case study is an 'intensive study of a single case for the purpose of understanding a larger class of cases' (Gerring 2008, p. 1138). I conducted studies of three cases in which European states have agreed to establish integrative commitments in the field of security and defence. The thesis provides a mechanistic account of these cases, using an established approach in case study research (Elster 1986; Dessler 1991; Gerring 2008). There is debate about the precise definition of a causal mechanism in social science research (Gerring 2008; Elster 1989). However, that debate lies outside the scope of discussion for this thesis. For the purpose of this thesis, I have relied on a definition of causal mechanisms as 'unobservable physical, social or psychological processes through which agents with causal capacities operate, but only in specific contexts or conditions, to transfer energy, information, or matter to other entities. In doing so, the causal agent changes the affected entity's characteristics, capacities, or propensities in ways that persist until subsequent causal

mechanisms act upon it' (George and Bennett 2005, p. 137). Mechanistic accounts are different from explanations based on scope conditions in that they are concerned with the 'how' of causality (Elster 1986; Gerring 2008). Accordingly, a mechanistic approach provides an answer to the question: if X causes Y, how did this occur? (Elster 1989). Scope conditions are predicated on the nature of a general theoretic proposition and the identification of conditions upon which the proposition applies (Hedström and Sweberg 1998, p. 8). In a mechanistic account, the challenge for the researcher is to distinguish which mechanism created a certain outcome and to unearth the conditions under which the causal mechanism was activated (Hedström and Sweberg 1998, p. 8). The researcher is thus 'trying to control for or rule out the effects of mechanisms other than the mechanisms being investigated' (George and Bennett 2005, p. 137). In order to control for and/or rule out the effect of other mechanisms on the dependent variable (in this case, integration), I have constructed analytical expectations and indicators, derived from different theoretical approaches, that are consistent with a mechanistic account. Below, I will present the rationale for the selection of cases and discuss in more detail why I have used process tracing in the analysis of the data for this study.

## *5.2. Case selection*

Case selection is often divided into two categories: most likely and least likely cases (George and Bennett 2005; King et al. 1994). The three cases considered in this thesis are examples of least likely cases and have been selected on the basis of the dependent variable (i.e. integration). Least likely cases are cases where one assumes support for theories that fit where, at the outset, one would assume that support for those theories should be weak in the studied case (George and Bennett 2005, p. 121). The three case studies considered in this thesis represent instances where states have constrained sovereignty in a core state power, which is contrary to a traditional understanding of how states act in international cooperative arrangements. A standard expectation in international relations is that states will not enter into agreements that infringe on the sovereignty and integrity of the state, because to do so conflicts with the ultimate purpose of the state, which is to preserve its sovereignty and integrity (Hoffman 1966; Menon 2011, 2013). The case studies are therefore examples of least likely cases of integration (Hoffman 1966).

I have conducted three case studies that are examples of states in Europe establishing cooperative formats that involve integration. The first case study is of regional defence cooperation between the Nordic states. Prior to the establishment of NORDEFECO in 2009, there was very little defence cooperation between the Nordic states. Thus, the formation and development of NORDEFECO makes it

possible to study why the Nordic states decided to establish cooperative and integrative commitments in the field of security and defence, where there was previously an absence of integration. The second case study is of integration in the EU, and specifically the establishment of PESCO, CARD and the EDF. While there had been efforts to increase defence cooperation in the EU in previous years – one notable example being the establishment of the Defence and Security Procurement Directive (Strikwerda 2017) – the scope, depth and ambition of defence cooperation in the EU changed with the establishment of PESCO, CARD and the EDF in 2017. These initiatives constitute a change that involves integrative commitments for member-states in relation to the development of national military capability. The case therefore allows for analysis of why member-states decided to establish integrative commitments in military capability development. Lastly, the third case study is of bilateral nuclear cooperation between France and Britain. While France and Britain have historically cooperated in security and defence matters both inside and outside the EU and NATO, the two states had not previously cooperated bilaterally with respect to their nuclear deterrents. Since the establishment of the LHTs in 2010, there have been major roadblocks to cooperation, Brexit being a key example. However, the bilateral cooperation on their nuclear deterrent has endured. Thus, the case of France and Britain represents an opportunity to research and analyse why the two states established integrative commitments in an area where there previously was none, as well as why those commitments have endured. All three cases are therefore examples of European states deciding to establish cooperation involving integrative commitments.

### 5.3. *Process tracing*

The value of using the process-tracing method in this research thesis is that it makes it possible to ‘identify the intervening causal processes – the causal chain and the casual mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable’ (George and Bennet 2005, p. 206; see also Beach and Pedersen 2013). In other words, process tracing makes the researcher ‘consider the alternative paths through which the outcome could have occurred, and it offers the possibility of mapping out one or more potential causal paths that are consistent with the outcome and the process-tracing evidence in a single case’ (George and Bennet 2005, p. 207). The kind of process tracing I have used is inductive process tracing, which involves the use of different independent variables in order to consider different avenues for why a certain outcome came about (George and Bennet 2005, p. 219). The independent variables are derived from the theoretical perspectives I have applied in this thesis. The research findings in the thesis may therefore allow for *theoretical*

generalisations to other developments in security and defence in which states make cooperative and/or integrative commitments.

By nature, case studies are analytical in-depth studies of a specific case, which is why case-study research relies on internal rather than external validity. Thus, questions concerning the representativeness of findings in case study research are valid. In terms of ensuring internal validity, I have endeavoured to define the scope of my research clearly and transparently. In the case study on Nordic defence cooperation and integration, I have included the perspectives of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. In the second case study, I have included a selection of European perspectives while being clear about the limits of the potential for generalisability of my findings. In the third case study, on Franco-British cooperation in the LHTs, I have included both the French and the British perspectives.

The time period studied in the thesis varies according to the case study in question. The total period of the developments examined in the thesis ranges from 2008 to 2022. In the first case on Nordic defence cooperation, I studied the period 2009–2021. NORDEFECO was established in 2009, and since then there have been several steps towards greater cooperation and integration for which I seek to account. With respect to the establishment of the EDF, PESCO and CARD, I have focused my research on the period between 2016 and 2023. As already noted, the EDF, PESCO and CARD were established in 2017, and there have since been continuous developments within these initiatives that I endeavour to analyse. The third case study, regarding Franco-British cooperation on nuclear deterrents, looks primarily at one part of a two-treaty international agreement, the LHTs, which were signed and ratified in 2010. In this case study, I examine the timeframe between 2008 and 2022. I have selected the time period of the research conducted for this thesis based on the timing of relevant events that are significant to the policymaking processes in the states in question. The value of using a specific timeframe of events is that it makes it possible to reconstruct the actions, positions and perspectives of actors in decision-making processes (Rieker 1990, p. 169). In each of the timeframes for the different case studies, there was a change from an absence to a presence of integration.

I have used the method of interpretation and sorted the data into different analytical categories (Weber 1978). I have analysed statements, arguments, positions, perspectives and justifications, and sorted these into analytical categories. I sorted the data according to *a priori* expectations derived from the theoretical perspectives employed in the thesis. Thus, the distinction between norms and identity and material interests and strategic interests is an analytical one. The use of the interpretative method

makes it possible to trace and uncover the decision-making of policymakers. The theoretical frameworks have been used consistently in each of the case studies, which means that the independent variables have been similar in the case studies that make up this research. The use of similar independent variables in the different case studies strengthens the support for the conclusions I draw for the establishment of integrative commitments in European security and defence.

#### 5.4. Data

The analysis draws on three different data sources: elite semi-structured interviews, official documents and secondary literature. I have conducted data triangulation, which is a method of ensuring data reliability by cross-checking data sources and collection techniques in order to provide validity and consistency in research findings (Bennet and Checkel, 2015).

I have collected and analysed more than 300 official documents. These documents have been gathered from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Spain, Italy, Britain and France as well as from the European Commission, the European Defence Agency (EDA), the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Parliament, NATO and the Council of the European Union.

For the first article on Nordic defence cooperation, I collected and analysed official Norwegian 'NOU-er' (a term that translated as 'Norwegian Official Reports') on Nordic defence cooperation, all existing official documents from NORDEFECO, Swedish official documents from the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Swedish Parliament, Danish official documents from the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Danish Parliament and Finnish official documents from the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Finnish Parliament. I have also gathered and analysed documents related to the establishment of NORDEFECO and relevant tri- and bilateral defence cooperative and integrative arrangements within NORDEFECO.

The documents I have used in the second article are official records from the French *Assemblée Nationale*, the French Senate, the German *Bundestag*, the Spanish *Cortes Generales* and the Italian *Camera dei deputati*. I also extensively collected and analysed documents from the European Commission, the EDA, the EEAS, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union related to the establishment of the EDF, PESCO and CARD, as well as speeches made by European heads of state and ministers.

For the last article, on bilateral cooperation between France and Britain on their nuclear deterrents, I drew on official records from the UK House of Commons, the UK House of Lords, the French *Assemblée Nationale* and the French Senate, as well as official documents related to the establishment of the LHTs from the British Ministry of Defence, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the French *Ministère des Armées*. I also collected and analysed the text of the treaty on the LHTs and supplemental documents that were published in France and Britain related to the establishment and ratification of the LHTs.

The timeline of the document analysis is consistent with the process-tracing timeline for each of the case studies. I located the documents online and accessed the documents on the websites of the relevant institutions. I have relied on the open availability of sources, which was sufficient for gathering the documents that were necessary for the research. Where official translations were not available and I have needed to translate key words or transcripts from one language to another, I used Google Translate. I verified translations with people with the necessary language requirements. Most of the parliamentary records have been found by using search functions on the respective online sites, which makes it easier to search for relevant dates or key words depending on what prior information I had on the topic in question. The same approach was used when gathering information from other official sources.

In order to verify findings from the documents and secondary literature, I conducted 27 elite interviews as part of the research.<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this research, an elite participant is defined as a person with extensive knowledge of the decision-making process surrounding the establishment of the relevant commitments studied in the different articles, or a person directly involved in that process, or a person working on the relevant portfolio within the relevant institution or ministry. I interviewed senior government and military officials from the following European states: Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Britain, France, Germany and Belgium. I also interviewed senior officials in the EEAS, NATO and the EU delegation to Norway.<sup>2</sup> There are two interviews that have been used for two different

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<sup>1</sup> The interviews were conducted between 2014 and 2021. Interviews were conducted in person in London, Paris, Brussels and Oslo. I also conducted interviews by telephone and via Zoom.

<sup>2</sup> Article 1: 5 Norwegian senior government officials from the Ministry of Defence, 1 senior Swedish government official from the Ministry of Defence, 1 Danish government official from the Ministry of Defence, 1 Finnish government official from the Ministry of Defence, 1 Norwegian NATO senior official, 1 former high-ranking Norwegian military official.

Article 2: 1 senior German government official in the EEAS, 1 senior German military official, 1 senior French government official from the Ministry of Defence, 2 senior French military officials, 1 senior British official from the Ministry of Defence, 2 senior officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1 senior Belgian official from the Ministry of Defence.

Article 3: 1 British MP, 1 member of the French *Assemblée Nationale*, 1 French senior military official, 1 representative of the Ministry of Defence in Britain, 1 former representative of the Ministry of Defence in

articles: an interview with a Norwegian military official in NATO and an interview with a French senior military official. With the exception of those two interviewees, all interviewees were selected only for the specific case study and its corresponding article. Interview participants were selected on the basis of their knowledge of and involvement in the establishment of NORDEFECO, the EDF, PESCO, CARD and the LHTs. Most of the interviews were conducted with senior officials and senior military officials in national ministries and institutions. The rationale for this is in line with the research question of the thesis, which pertains to understanding the establishment of interstate treaties or defence initiatives in the EU from the perspective of states. Interview participants both filled in missing pieces of information and confirmed findings I had made through process-tracing analysis (Aberbach and Rockman 2002). I asked open-ended questions that were based on topic guides for the respective cases, each guide containing relevant questions pertaining to the decision-making process in the three case studies that make up this thesis.<sup>3</sup>

I found relevant interviewees to contact through online CVs (Linkedin), and in some cases I found or was able to trace the names of relevant individuals in legislative texts and official documents. I also attended the Franco-British summit on 12 March 2015 at the French embassy residence in London, where I was able to identify relevant government officials working on bilateral relations between France and Britain in the ministries of defence and parliaments of the two countries. I extensively relied on the snowballing sampling method, where interview subjects were able to direct me to and initiate contact with other relevant interviewees. The interview participants were able provide insight into decision-making process and negotiations around the establishment of NORDEFECO, the EDF, PESCO, CARD and the LHTs that could not have been anticipated or given in such detail in a standardised survey (Gerring 2011, p. 15). Below, I will discuss questions related to research ethics that are of relevance for the inclusion of the interview participants that provided some of the data for this thesis.

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Britain, 1 expert on French foreign and security policy, 1 French government official, 1 French senior (top-level) government official.

<sup>3</sup> See the Appendix for the topic guides for the three different articles



### *5.5. Research ethics*

The research conducted for this thesis complies with research ethics guidelines established by the Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH). The use of interview participants involves ethical obligations that are addressed in the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and NESH guidelines. I submitted a research proposal to the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) that included a detailed description of the research design and methodology and the data used in for this thesis. The NSD has reviewed that proposal and certified that the project is in line with data protection laws (reference number for project proposal: 380163).

I have ensured that the research conducted for this thesis is in line with participants' right to free and informed consent, right of anonymity, and right of withdrawal. These factors are important to address in order to ensure that research is conducted in line with ethical obligations. Interview participants were given information regarding the research project, and the empirical and theoretical aims and purposes of the research were disclosed to them. Accordingly, interviewees were well informed about the research in which they participated. Interviewees were also provided with information regarding the project's duration and were given details of how the interview data would be handled, through which it was made clear that the data would be stored in a manner consistent with GDPR and NESH guidelines. In addition, interview participants were given full anonymity and informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time upon request, which is consistent with the right of withdrawal and the right of anonymity. Interviewees that agreed to be recorded gave a verbal confirmation of this on the recording. Interview participants that did not consent to being recorded were not recorded, and in these cases I took notes, for which I also received consent.

## 6. Articles

The thesis consists of three original research articles, each pertaining to a distinct case study. The first article is a case study of the establishment of Nordic defence cooperation in NORDEFECO. In the second article, I account for the positions and perspectives of the EU member-states that led to the formation of the EDF, PESCO and CARD. In the third article, I account for the establishment of integrative commitments between France and Britain on their respective nuclear deterrents in the establishment of the LHTs.

### 6.1. *Summary of Article 1*

#### **'Beyond the lowest common denominator': Mutually binding commitments in European security and defence cooperation: The case of the Nordic states**

Published in *European Security*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 42–61 (published online ahead of print on 24 March 2022).

The first article in the thesis explores why the Nordic states decided to establish cooperation beyond the 'lowest common denominator' in the field of security and defence. While the Nordic states had a longstanding history of cooperation – such as a passport and toll union between them – defence had been an area where there was no close cooperation between these states. This changed with the establishment of NORDEFECO in 2009. The aim of this case study was to account for why the Nordic states decided to establish cooperation on security and defence involving integrative commitments. In examining this question, evidence suggested that similar strategic interests in and between the Nordic states as well as cost–benefit calculations were significant triggers for the establishment of Nordic defence cooperation. However, the broader push towards Nordic defence cooperation seems to have been grounded in a shared sense of identity and norms that was crucial for the emergence of cooperation in a Nordic format.

The article distinguishes between cooperative and integrative commitments, and explores why Nordic security and defence cooperation involves both. Cooperative commitments are generally understood as taking the form of joint military training along with exchange of security intelligence and information. These kinds of commitments do not infringe on the sovereignty of states. However, integrative commitments involve de facto military integration and thus have implications for the authority and governance of states. For example, Swedish–Finnish defence cooperation has evolved into de facto

integration, based on the planning, coordination and operationalisation of bi-national defence capabilities. In seeking to account for these commitments, I developed three distinct analytical expectations derived from structural realism, liberal institutionalism and constructivism. I analysed whether and to what extent these expectations could be substantiated.

While there is evidence that supports both the realist and the liberal institutionalist cost–benefit expectations, there are also clear gaps in the accounts provided by rationalist approaches that are addressed by considering the identity- and norm-based perspective. First, I found evidence that suggested that Denmark initially did not want to be part of Nordic defence cooperation because it was not clear why Nordic cooperation was in line with the country’s own interests. Second, evidence suggests that cost–benefit calculations seem to drive states to pursue cooperation with other states on the basis of the compatibility of their military systems. It is therefore necessary to incorporate a perspective that can account for the solidarity that exists between the Nordic states if we are to understand not only the depth of commitments the Nordic states have made in the field of security and defence, but also the push towards ensuring that all the Nordic states are part of the cooperative format. Material interests cannot account for the continued push towards a broader, multilateral Nordic defence cooperation. The perception of a shared identity coupled with the creation of habits of cooperation between Nordic states proved to be significant factors in accounting for integrative commitments between the Nordic states, as well as for NORDEFECO’s continued development. Considering the observed sense of ‘Nordic togetherness’ makes it possible to more fully understand the integrative commitments that have been established within this policy field. Lastly, Nordic security and defence cooperation consists of de facto military integration, of which the most prominent example within the Nordic framework is the case of bilateral integration of the Swedish and Finnish air force. Such de facto military integration challenges prevailing assumptions about the depth of commitments states make with respect to cooperation in the field of security and defence.

## 6.2. Summary of Article 2

### **A 'Europe of defence'? The establishment of binding commitments and supranational governance in European security and defence cooperation**

Article currently under review in *Journal of European Integration*.

The nature of cooperation between EU member-states in the field of security and defence is increasingly difficult to reconcile with the notion of intergovernmentalism. The decisions to establish the EDF, PESCO, CARD and, most recently, EDIRPA have resulted in integrative commitments between EU member-states.

Thus, the second research article in this thesis asks why EU member-states decided to establish integration in the field of security and defence. The analysis examines the positions and perspectives of EU member-states and suggests that a comprehensive approach is required if we are to understand what enabled agreement on integrative commitments in this field. Following the trajectory of literature that has observed a move beyond intergovernmentalism in the field of EU foreign and security policy, I developed a realist, a liberal institutionalist and a constructivist expectation of why PESCO, CARD and the EDF were established. The evidence suggests that the establishment of PESCO, CARD and the EDF would not have been possible without a shared understanding between key EU member-states regarding what kind role the EU should occupy on the international stage.

Evidence suggests that the security and geopolitical threats facing EU member-states were best addressed through closer cooperation in the field of security and defence in the EU. Both the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the US pivot to Asia were justifications given for why increased EU-based cooperation in security and defence was in line with the self-interests of EU member-states. There are also clear economic justifications for increased cooperation between EU member-states for the purpose of increasing efficiency and military capability. However, the economic case for closer cooperation, coordination and development of European military capability had been clear for decades. The establishment of PESCO, CARD and the EDF also suggests that EU member-states believed it was significant for the EU to play a role in the defence of Europe.

The case of EU cooperation and integration in the field of security and defence thus confirms the significance of identity and norms for understanding why states deliberately enter into integrative commitments related to core state powers. The potential importance of this conclusion extends beyond the cases studied here. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to new commitments between EU

member-states in the field of security and defence, with EDIRPA being a prominent example. Relevant questions for future research include whether a stronger case for cost–benefit and strategic-interest rationales reduces the need for a normative and identity-based rationale for the establishment of integrative commitments between EU member-states, or, alternatively, to what extent a stronger sense of a shared understanding reduces the need for strong material or strategic incentives.

### 6.3. *Summary of Article 3*

#### **Reconsidering sovereignty in security and defence cooperation: The case of European ‘great powers’**

Article currently under review in *Contemporary Security Policy*.

The establishment of integrative commitments between states in the field of security and defence is an underexplored issue in international relations. This article presents a case study of Franco-British security and defence cooperation in the LHTs. I argue that to account for the French and British decision to establish integrative commitments, we cannot solely rely on rationalist explanations. The article contributes to the debate on international cooperation by suggesting that complementary self-understandings as ‘great powers’ made it possible for France and Britain to integrate their ability to maintain their nuclear deterrent. This conclusion is significant because it suggests that parallels in states’ national roles are also important for understanding how integration between states is possible in the field of security and defence.

The case of Anglo-French security and defence cooperation in the LHTs demonstrates that states establish mutually binding commitments also in the realm of ‘high politics’. Evidence suggests that integrative commitments between France and Britain on questions of defence came about owing to a combination of factors. In the lead-up to the establishment of the LHTs in 2010, it became clear that French and British security and geopolitical interests were aligned in many ways. However, both Russia’s more aggressive posture under Vladimir Putin’s leadership and the USA’s ‘pivot to Asia’ were also relevant for other European states with NATO membership. Thus, in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of how agreement between France and Britain on integrative commitments was possible, additional factors must be taken into account. Furthermore, evidence also suggests that France and Britain perceived the LHTs as economically beneficial – as a means to counter decreasing defence spending as a result of austerity policies. There was also a recognition, particularly in Britain, that bilateral cooperation had the potential to secure economic benefits in military procurement projects where previous experiences with larger-scale multilateral procurement

projects had failed. Instead of seeing their role on the global stage diminish as a result of decreasing defence spending, France and Britain decided to integrate their ability to maintain their nuclear deterrents through the establishment of shared facilities.

In analysing official documents, secondary literature and interviews with senior government officials, it became evident that France and Britain have complementary self-understandings as 'great powers'. The corresponding obligations they considered such a role to entail were crucial for triggering the establishment of integrative commitments between France and Britain on their nuclear deterrent. The case of Anglo-French security and defence cooperation in the nuclear sphere confirms that states agree to integration in the field of security and defence, thereby constraining their national sovereignty. This conclusion is important because it suggests the need for a reconsideration of the kinds of commitments states make with respect to retaining sovereignty in the establishment of cooperative formats and a broadening of the theoretical framework required to account for integrative developments in European security and defence cooperation.

## **7. Conclusion**

In this thesis, I have conducted case-study research on the establishment of cooperative arrangements that involve integrative commitments in three different European formats. In all three cases, I have endeavoured to account for why states have constrained their sovereignty in the field of security and defence. I argue that the establishment of PESCO, CARD and the EDF, along with elements of Nordic defence cooperation and parts of the Anglo-French nuclear cooperation in the LHTs, constitute integration. Accordingly, it seems that states are willing to relinquish sovereignty in a core state power. Common to each of the case studies in the three research articles is that it is not possible to account for the establishment of integrative commitments without the application of a comprehensive approach.

In all three articles, I have identified integrative commitments on the basis of the four specific criteria developed in this thesis: 1) states are unable to veto decisions 2) actors aside from those specific to a given state (i.e. EU institution or another state) are involved in making decisions that affect this state 3) a transfer of power over a specific issue which cannot be reversed and, 4) situations in which the purpose of the commitments is not reducible to the interests or values of a single state.

The first and third articles examine the establishment of a cooperative arrangement in security and defence involving integrative commitments outside the EU. In both articles, I suggest that parts of

NORDEFECO and the LHTs represent integration. The Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFECO) contains both cooperative and integrative commitments. In the first article, I argue that Swedish-Finnish cooperation constitutes de facto military integration. Sweden and Finland have, through the integration of their air force, established a degree of interdependence based on the planning, coordination and operationalisation of binational defence capabilities that involves a transfer of power over a specific issue (air defence) to another state which cannot be reversed. The broader push towards Nordic defence cooperation seems to have been grounded in a shared sense of identity and norms that was crucial for the emergence of cooperation in a Nordic format, thus elements of NORDEFECO also satisfy the fourth criterion in which the purpose of the commitments cannot be reduced to the interests and values of a single state.

Furthermore, in the third article I argue that cooperation between France and Britain on their nuclear deterrents involves integrative commitments. For France and Britain to maintain their nuclear deterrents while upholding their commitments under the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1996 to not conduct explosive nuclear tests, each country required advanced radiographic and hydrodynamics facilities to enable them to perform simulations to verify the safety and performance of their ageing nuclear stockpiles. Rather than duplicating these facilities in each country, Britain and France committed to build and jointly operate a radiographic/hydrodynamic facility in France and a facility in Britain for the development of the technologies required to underpin the operation of the French facility (Treaty Between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the French Republic on Joint Radiographic/Hydrodynamic Facilities 2010). Such facilities take years to design and build, and were due to be commissioned into use in several stages between 2014 and 2022. While the treaty allows for each country to perform independent work within each facility and does not mandate that all work or data be shared, the fact remains that in the case of a discontinuation of the nuclear between France and Britain, neither country would independently possess the facilities or capabilities required to maintain their nuclear deterrence. Accordingly, I argue that Franco-British security and defence cooperation involves integration on the basis of a transfer of power over a specific issue (nuclear deterrence) which cannot be reversed.

In the second article I analysed the establishment of integrative commitments in the field of security and defence within the EU. The analysis follows the literature that has identified a move beyond intergovernmentalism in the field of EU security and defence (Sjursen 2011a, 2011b Strikwerda 2017; Haroche 2020). The establishment of the EDF, PESCO and CARD have given supranational institutions in the EU a role in member-states security and defence affairs. The three initiatives have given the EEAS,

the EDA and the European Commission leadership roles as both initiators and evaluators for the kinds of military capabilities member-states should acquire, renew, invest in and develop. Member-states who follow through on PESCO projects have the potential to receive additional funding from the Commission through the EDF. EDIRPA takes this even further by providing funds from the EU to member-states so that they can acquire new materiel and upgrade their individual military capabilities. Such a degree of involvement of supranational actors in the development of member-states' military capabilities – based on the role of EU institutions in the planning, funding, decision-making and development of such capabilities – has arguably constrained member-states' ability to veto decisions regarding the development of their military capabilities, although to a lesser extent than is the case for the other integrative criteria. While it is true that member-states lack the ability to veto decisions regarding how their financial contribution to the EU budget is allocated to defence, they still retain the ability to independently decide on strictly national capability development. The three initiatives have also created a situation in which the development of EU member-states' military capabilities has become a 'European' endeavour, thus constituting a situation in which the purpose of commitment cannot be reduced to the interests and values of each EU member-state alone. These changes constitute integrative commitments according to the second and fourth criteria developed for analysis. There is some support for the argument that the first criterion is also satisfied, although the case for this is more limited.

The analysis reveals that changes in the international system – such as weaknesses in the collective defence mechanism in NATO and the Russian annexation of Crimea – formed part of member-states' motivation to expand defence initiatives in the EU. EU member-states were also driven by an interest in decreasing fragmentation in the European defence-industrial base and creating synergies through joint armament procurement. However, the analysis ultimately suggests that the breakthrough in defence integration in the EU in 2017 would not have come about without a shared understanding between EU member-states regarding their roles as 'Europeans', specifically between the four member-states that were significant in the establishment of PESCO, CARD and the EDF (France, Germany, Spain and Italy).

One of the thesis's distinctive contributions to the literature on international relations and European integration consists of its analyses of the policymaking process in selected European states in the field of security and defence. In the first article, I have analysed the policymaking process in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark through a case study on the establishment and development of NORDEFECO. In the second, I have investigated and analysed the policymaking process in a selection of EU member-



states – mainly Germany, France, Spain and Italy. The third article presents a case study of the French and British policymaking process that led to the establishment of integration of critical nuclear weapons infrastructure through the LHTs. The thesis thus provides insight into why states establish cooperative and integrative commitments in the security and defence field.

Another significant finding is that a shared sense of identity and norms is important for understanding how security and defence integration between states is possible. Yet integration is not triggered by one factor alone. It is important to include strategic and material interests in order to provide a comprehensive of the establishment of security and defence cooperation and integration. Analysing the presence and strength of normative and identity-based justifications alongside material and strategic justifications enhances our understanding of how integration is possible in the field of security and defence.

### *7.1. Future avenues of research and policy implications*

The potential significance of the identity-based and normative drivers for cooperation and integration in the field of security and defence extends beyond the framework of this thesis. For example, we may wish to investigate the notion of mutually binding commitments with respect to developments in de facto military integration, as exemplified by the Benelux defence cooperation or that of the Visegrad Group (i.e. the defence cooperation between Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary). Relevant questions include whether a stronger case for cooperation based on strategic interests or cost–benefit rationales reduce the need for a normative and identity-based dimension, and whether such a dimension might take forms different from those observed in this thesis, such as ‘Nordic togetherness’, ‘Europeanness’ and ‘great powers’. By testing the presence and strength of the types of identity-based and normative factors, it may be possible to inform the ongoing discussion on patterns of European security and defence cooperation and integration.

The research I have conducted on EU member-states has been mainly limited to the larger member-states in the establishment of PESCO, CARD and the EDF – namely, Germany, France, Spain and Italy. Further research should include the perspectives of additional member-states. While research has been conducted on the role of supranational institutions (namely the European Commission and the European Court of Justice) in the establishment of PESCO, CARD and the EDF (Håkonsson 2021; Hoeffler 2023; Haroche 2020; Sabatino 2022), research might be extended to include a more detailed analysis of the role of experts (EDA) and civil servants (European Commission). In this context, the impact of the

newly appointed Director-General for Defence Industry and Space would be another important avenue for future research.

Furthermore, in the aftermath of the Russian war against Ukraine, we have witnessed several new developments in European defence integration. Many of these initiatives build on the integrative commitments that have been addressed in this thesis. A notable example is the establishment of EDIRPA in the EU. EDIRPA provides capital from the EU to member-states so that they can acquire new materiel and upgrade their individual military capabilities. The European Commission will invest 500 million euros in member-states' military procurement (EU 2023). The initiative is based on incentivising member-states to pursue joint procurement by addressing their most urgent capability shortfalls (ibid.). Thus, it is clear that EDIRPA builds on the already established EDF, CARD and PESCO in the sense that these initiatives are also geared towards increasing cooperation and integration in the acquisition and development of member-states' military capabilities. However, the amount of money provided by EDIRPA is substantially larger than what was previously accessible to member-states through the EDF. Relevant questions to consider that have not been addressed in this thesis may concern the implementation phase of EDIRPA in member-states and the extent which its establishment is contingent on the war in Ukraine or whether defence will become a more substantial component of the EU budget and thereby increasingly subject to additional supranational governance in the years to come.

Furthermore, in 2020, the Council of the European Union decided that third parties can participate in PESCO projects on an 'exceptional' basis if they provide 'substantial added value' (EU 2022). Accordingly, there are relevant questions regarding the role of states that are not members of the Union in light of the findings in this thesis regarding the constraints on member-states that have resulted from the establishment of these initiatives. Non-EU members do not have representation in supranational institutions in the EU, which further complicates the relationship between a non-member-state and the EU's institutions in a field that is not quite intergovernmental and that is in some ways integrative. The democratic implications of this for non-member-states are important to research. In 2021, the US, Norway and Canada participated in PESCO projects. Another relevant state to consider in this context is Britain, because it has a large industrial base, and because France and Britain have a solid base of cooperation in the defence industry – namely, through the large Franco-British (and Italian) defence contractor MBDA. The integrated nature of Nordic defence cooperation, in which Norway is the only participating member that is not an EU member, makes researching the role of Norwegian participation in PESCO of particular interest.

Sweden's and Finland's applications for NATO membership and the subsequent accession by Finland (Swedish membership is still pending approval) have led to the expansion of scope of what was previously bilateral military integration of the Swedish and Finnish air force to presently include all of the Nordic states. This introduces the prospect of Nordic unification of national air forces. This is consistent with the finding in this thesis that Nordic defence cooperation tends to start with two or three states and subsequently expand to the remaining states. The accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO makes it important to consider the implications this accession will have for other areas of security and defence policy. For example, Sweden and Finland have partially integrated elements of their naval forces. It is conceivable that other Nordic states will also want to join this integrative arrangement. Additional research should be done on the potential unification of the Nordic armed forces and the continued implications this has for the sovereignty of the Nordic states. There are also relevant questions to ask in relation to decision-making on military interventions and the ability of each state in the long term to carry out such activities alone from an operational and logistics point of view, given increasing integration of their armed forces.

In conclusion, the findings of the thesis suggest there should be continued research on developments in European security and defence integration. Whether inside or outside the EU and/or NATO, it is clear that the 'high politics' realm of security and defence cannot be considered a field that precludes the possibility of integration.

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## Part 2: Research articles



**1. Article 1: Beyond the ‘lowest common denominator’? Mutually binding commitments in European security and defence cooperation: the case of the Nordic states**

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## Beyond the “lowest common denominator”? Mutually binding commitments in European security and defence cooperation: the case of the Nordic states

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## Beyond the “lowest common denominator”? Mutually binding commitments in European security and defence cooperation: the case of the Nordic states

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### ABSTRACT

Literature on European security and defence cooperation usually asserts that differences in national security interests and security cultures prevent agreement beyond the “lowest common denominator”. I propose that it is possible for states to agree on mutually binding commitments also in this policy field. Using Nordic security and defence cooperation as a case study, I examine what characterises their mutual commitments and how we might account for them. The article adds to the literature on European security and defence cooperation by suggesting that binding commitments in security and defence would not have come about in the Nordic context without a sense of “Nordic togetherness”. This conclusion is important because it demonstrates that a shared sense of identity and norms is significant for understanding how security and defence cooperation between states is possible.

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European security and defence cooperation; constructivism; identity and norms; Nordic defence cooperation; Nordic togetherness

## Introduction

Literature on security and defence cooperation in the European Union (EU) often points to a *lack* of integration in this policy field (Howorth 2001, 2019, Menon 2011). Scholars have highlighted vast differences between European states in terms of their security interests (Hoffman 1966, Menon 2009, 2011) and security cultures (Meyer 2005, Biehl *et al.* 2013), noting that such differences make integration particularly difficult. The argument is that, in the absence of coercion, cooperation in security and defence is unlikely to advance beyond the “lowest common denominator” among states (Sjursen and Rosén 2017). However, security and defence cooperation between European states is changing. Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) became a reality in the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy in 2017. Since its establishment, it has grown to consist of 47 projects between 25 different member-states. PESCO marks the first time member states have agreed to cooperate on defence spending, investment and military operability in a binding fashion within the EU framework. In addition, regional and bilateral cooperative arrangements within security and defence are growing across Europe. Indeed, despite

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their many differences, some states have gone as far as to integrate their national militaries.

Nordic defence cooperation represents a prominent example of close interstate cooperation in Europe. The field of security and defence was traditionally an area in which the Nordic states did *not* have a tradition of close cooperation (Bengtsson 2020). This changed with the establishment of the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF) in 2009. NORDEF involves not only close cooperation but also integrative commitments, meaning commitments in the form of military integration that goes beyond traditional intergovernmental cooperation. Military integration between states involves commitments that in practice restrict national sovereignty. How is it, then, that the Nordic states have agreed to bind themselves so tightly together in the field of security and defence, the epitome of “high politics”?

This article argues that agreement between the Nordic states on commitments within defence cooperation would not have come about without a sense that the Nordic model of defence cooperation is a “safe” choice because of a shared Nordic commonality of values. This finding suggests we may need to employ a constructivist approach if we are to explain the role played by identity and norms in advancing agreement on defence cooperation beyond a minimum compromise. Certainly, both strategic interests and cost-benefit considerations were significant for the development of defence cooperation between Nordic states. However, analyses based solely on such factors fall short in terms of providing a comprehensive account of the commitments within Nordic defence cooperation. The finding that identity and norms play a prominent role in facilitating new cooperative ventures in security and defence policy has significant implications for our understanding of European security and defence cooperation more broadly. In particular, it serves to modify the expectation that state interests and security cultures limit the depth and scope of possible cooperation.

The article is structured as follows. The first section outlines the analytical approach and methodology used to analyse why the Nordic states have chosen to cooperate in security and defence within a Nordic format. Drawing on insights from structural realism (Waltz 1986), liberal institutionalism (Keohane and Nye 1977, Keohane 1984) and constructivism (Katzenstein 1996), the article outlines three theoretical expectations for why the Nordic states have established close and binding cooperation. I then discuss why the Nordic states have established mutually binding commitments in the field of security and defence in the light of each of these three theoretical expectations, focusing in particular on the establishment of integrative commitments and taking into account different constellations of cooperation within the Nordic defence cooperation (bilateral, trilateral or including all the Nordic states). Finally, I present some concluding remarks.

## The approach

The prevailing literature on security and defence cooperation often argues that the field of security and defence differs from other fields, such as trade in goods and services, because it involves questions of sovereignty related to national security and survival (Howorth 2019). It is also commonly argued that there are large differences between the security cultures of different European states and that this limits the possibility of

cooperation (Meyer 2005). Contrary to such expectations, the Nordic states appear to have succeeded in establishing close defence cooperation, ranging from collaboration to integration. The Nordic region may thus serve as a useful case in which to test the notion that differences in security cultures and security interests constitute insurmountable barriers for cooperation (Hoffman 1966, Howorth 2019). To the extent that Nordic defence cooperation includes deep and mutually binding commitments, it challenges the expectation that cooperation in the field of security and defence is unlikely to move beyond a minimum compromise. Before we may conclude that a more comprehensive approach is required to account for the commitments made between the Nordic states, it will be necessary to unpack and examine those commitments in greater detail. What kinds of commitments have the Nordic states made in the field of security and defence cooperation, and to what extent can such commitments be argued to infringe on national sovereignty?

To better understand the types of commitments states agree to in security and defence cooperation, I propose a distinction between two different forms of intergovernmental commitments: cooperation and integration. Drawing on Keohane (1984, p. 51), I define cooperation as occurring “when actors adjust their behaviour to the actual or anticipated preference of others through a process of policy coordination”. Security and defence cooperation between states may be mutually binding, but does not significantly alter national military practices or national defence structures and therefore has a limited impact on sovereignty. Examples of such cooperative commitments include joint military training, security information exchanges between states, capability development and joint military procurement. Commitments of this kind are found in Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in the EU, as well as in different bilateral and regional formats in Europe, such as the 2010 Lancaster House Treaty agreement between France and Britain. Integration, on the other hand, involves mutually binding commitments between states that place constraints on national sovereignty. Haas (1970, p. 610) defines integration as “... concerned with explaining how and why states cease to be wholly sovereign, how and why they voluntarily mingle, merge and mix with their neighbours so as to lose the factual attributes of sovereignty ...”. Commitments between states that restrict states’ ability to act alone constitutes integration. When states agree to certain levels of security and defence commitments, they create practical changes in national institutions, procedures, access and use of technology, short and long-term fiscal and military planning that may serve to restrict individual states’ capacity to act alone in security and defence matters. Agreement on a merger between states in the structures, organisation and practices of national militaries that create permanent changes to national militaries may therefore constitute integration. The case of Benelux security and defence commitments represents one such example of intergovernmental integration in security and defence matters. In 2015, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg agreed to joint surveillance of their airspace, whereby Dutch and Belgian forces take turns monitoring the airspace above the three countries (Maurice 2015). The Benelux case involves significant changes to military practices and national defence. In this example, there has been a devolution of previously strictly national defence responsibilities to a shared responsibility involving other states. In the Nordic case examined in this article, while it is true that Nordic security and defence commitments have predominantly involved cooperation, there are parts of the framework that

extend beyond cooperation to integration. Since 2014, Sweden and Finland have taken a series of steps to form partly integrated armed forces. By 2018, it was noted that the “Swedish-Finnish Naval Task Group has reached initial operational capability, the two air forces are interoperable, and the land forces are methodically building the ability to conduct high-end operations together at brigade strength” (Salonius-Pasternak 2018). In 2020, the Swedish parliament granted the government extended rights to receive and provide military support in case of territorial violation of Sweden or Finland (albeit subject to parliamentary approval in case of an armed invasion of Finland) (Swedish Armed Forces 2020 n.d.). What enabled such commitments between Nordic states?

The literature on Nordic security and defence cooperation offers a range of different accounts and perspectives. Saxi (2019), for example, has argued that Nordic defence cooperation has gone through different phases, the first being the inception of NORDEFECO in 2009. The beginning of the Nordic defence cooperation was argued to be driven by domestic interests in Norway and Sweden, where Nordic cooperation was believed to be one way of achieving a greater individual military capability (Saxi 2019). The next phase of Nordic defence cooperation identified takes place from 2014 onwards and is described as being driven by external threats, the Russian annexation of Crimea being cited as a catalyst for this change (Saxi 2019). However, the commitments made by the Nordic states at the outset of the Nordic security and defence cooperation were not abandoned at this point. Instead, Nordic security and defence cooperation has continued to develop following a cost-benefit logic while also diversifying through different paths. There is, however, little in the literature to explain what in fact triggered the deepening cooperation between the Nordic states. And while Bengtsson (2020) has argued that Nordic defence cooperation is a case of differentiated integration it is not clear why Nordic defence cooperation became differentiated.

Other scholars have argued that we must combine an examination of material factors with a focus on identity if we are to understand cooperation on security and defence within the Nordic region (Græger 2018, Ojanen and Raunio 2018, Thorhallsson 2018, Wivel 2018, Brommesson 2018b). The Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFECO) has been described as a novel development in Nordic security and defence affairs, exemplifying the emergence of “Nordicness” or a common Nordic identity (Forsberg 2013, Hyde-Price 2018). While the concept of “Nordicness” does seem to hold promise as an explanatory factor in this context, it remains underspecified and requires further unpacking. If we are to substantiate the claim that this sense of a common Nordic identity might help explain the depth of the Nordic security and defence cooperation, it will be necessary to specify how such an identity helped to trigger the agreement by the Nordic states to the relevant commitments. Furthermore, despite the identification of “Nordicness”, scholars continue to emphasise that there are considerable differences between the Nordic states in the importance they place upon Nordic cooperation on security and defence (Brommesson 2018a). Exploring the differences between the Nordic states may serve to inform a discussion on how significant Nordic cooperation is in relation to NATO, or on the significance of Nordic cooperation in the domestic policies of the Nordic states (Græger 2018, Ojanen and Raunio 2018, Thorhallsson 2018, Wivel 2018, Brommesson 2018b). However, a focus on the differences between the Nordic states is of limited help in understanding what has driven Nordic security and defence cooperation

and why the Nordic states agreed to such extensive cooperation in the first place. In fact, such a focus makes it even harder to understand how such commitments came about.

In order to examine the claim that identity and norms played an important role in the development of Nordic security and defence cooperation, a two-step approach will be applied. First, the article outlines three sets of expectations – derived from structural realism, liberal institutionalism and constructivist approaches, respectively – regarding why the Nordic states have intensified their security and defence cooperation. Subsequently, I discuss to what extent these different a priori expectations can be substantiated.

### *Method and data*

The research presented here is qualitative and draws on the case study method (George and Bennett 2005). The case study approach involves a detailed investigation of a historical event to either develop or test past explanations in order to ascertain whether findings may be generalised to other events (George and Bennett 2005, p. 5). The aim is to provide an account of what characterises the binding commitments made between the Nordic states in relation to Nordic defence cooperation and to explain why the states have made these commitments. I draw on a structural-realist perspective, a liberal-institutionalist perspective and a constructivist perspective and develop three expectations, one for each of the three perspectives. The focus of the study is on identifying what may have triggered the establishment of binding commitments in the Nordic model of security and defence cooperation, which contains both cooperative and integrative elements. Identifying the particular mechanisms that lead states to agree to specific obligations is central for any attempt to understand why different formats of European security and defence cooperation emerge in different contexts. The findings from the present study may allow for theoretical generalisations of relevance for other cases in which states have made similar commitments in European security and defence cooperation.

The analysis draws on three main sources of data: secondary literature, official primary documents and semi-structured interviews with government officials. This use and combination of data constitutes triangulation – a way of ensuring data reliability by cross-validating different data sources and data-collection techniques to verify consistency in research findings (Bennett and Checkel 2015). Qualitative research is subject to bias in different ways. Most relevant for this study is bias from interview participants as well as bias that may exist in official documents. While some level of bias is unavoidable, I have cross-checked all data by analysing documents across time and by interviewing multiple government officials from different states. I have ensured that a variety of Nordic perspectives were included, endeavouring to increase the validity and reliability of the research through the particular combination of data sources and collection techniques employed.

Specifically, I analysed the publicly available NORDEFECO documents from the inception of NORDEFECO in 2009 until 2020. I also systematically searched the governmental databases of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland and analysed over 200 documents related to Nordic security and defence cooperation. I collected strategy documents from the official databases of both the EU and NATO. I gathered official strategy documents from governmental databases in France and Britain. I also conducted 10 semi-



structured interviews with government officials from Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland, as well as NATO and EU officials, between September 2015 and May 2016. The interviewees were officials that worked directly with Nordic security and defence cooperation, thus providing additional insight into the negotiations and meetings surrounding the establishment and continued development of Nordic defence cooperation. Interviewees were given anonymity and have been numbered from one to ten to make it possible to distinguish between them.

Turning now to the analysis, I begin by specifying the different expectations derived from the three theoretical expectations employed in this study.

## Analytical expectations

### *Structural realism*

As noted above, the existing literature on European security and defence cooperation often stresses the significance of national strategic interests in determining states' foreign and security policies (Menon 2008, 2011). The classical-realist literature asserts that states seek security and survival above all else (Morgenthau 1993). Structural realism rests on the same core, namely, classical-realist assumptions concerning power and national survival. According to structural realism, the international system is characterised by anarchy, which leads states to seek security and survival above all else (Mearsheimer 1994/1995). The main actors within the international system are the so-called great powers, whose pre-eminence is largely due to their military capability and who are locked in a zero-sum game of "balancing" their power vis-a-vis other "great powers" (Waltz 1986).

In the past, Nordic security and defence policy has been described as constituting a "Nordic balance" (Brundtland 1966, 1981). The notion of a "Nordic balance" refers to three distinct geopolitical security strategies in the Nordic region. According to Brundtland (1966, p. 30), these strategies were:

- (a) membership of an alliance with one superpower,
- (b) well-armed neutrality, and
- (c) neutrality with "arms control" in the framework of a friendship treaty with the other superpower.

Taken together, these strategies were described as aiming to create a geopolitical balance in the Nordic region within an international system comprised of two superpowers – namely, the United States and the Soviet Union (Brundtland 1966). The end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union led to changes within the international system, thereby altering the Nordic geopolitical context.

Against the backdrop of the geopolitical changes since the end of the Cold War, a different set of strategic interests now needs to be considered. A structural-realist understanding of Nordic security and defence cooperation would emphasise that the Nordic states have made commitments to cooperate in this field in an effort to maximise their security within the context of the current international system. Such an analysis would focus on investigating the individual states' strategic geopolitical interests and national

security strategies. Security strategies refers to the policies these states outline for addressing what they officially identify as the most prominent threats to their national security. The expectation is that the commitments made by the Nordic states in relation to Nordic security and defence cooperation are the result of states acting in line with their own security interests and seeking to maximise their individual security. Indicators that would substantiate this expectation include commitments to cooperation based on geopolitical issues related to Russia or similar strategic issues.

An examination of the merits of the structural-realist perspective is certainly warranted in any attempt to account for the cooperative commitments within the Nordic defence cooperation. However, such a perspective also has its limitations. While the geopolitical realities facing the individual Nordic countries are similar, there are also important differences between the Nordic states with respect to NATO membership and whether or not they share a border with Russia. Furthermore, the commitments between states within the Nordic format go beyond cooperation to agreements on military integration, and the latter are more difficult to square with fundamental structural-realist assumptions regarding the kinds of commitments states make. It is therefore necessary to employ another theoretical perspective, one that takes into consideration the possibility that a state's interests may extend beyond concerns about its own security. The second set of expectations for Nordic security and defence commitments is thus derived from another rationalist approach, one that proposes cost-benefit calculations as the main driver for cooperation.

### *Liberal institutionalism*

The notion that states seek to cooperate out of economic self-interest is well established in the literature on European integration (Moravcsik 1993, 1998, Schimmelfennig 2018). States are considered rational actors that make decisions on the basis of cost-benefit calculations (Elster 1986). Cooperation is the result of states seeking to advance their own interests in the context of economic interdependence (Keohane 1984). A core principle of liberal institutionalism is that cooperation can lead to integration (Keohane and Nye 1977).

It is therefore important to consider the extent to which cost-benefit calculations can account for the establishment of integrative commitments in Nordic security and defence cooperation. The potential for economic benefits from security and defence cooperation is typically found in the contexts of defence procurement, capability development, military training, operational efficiency and military integration. Within a cost-benefit perspective, the expectation is that the Nordic states established binding commitments on the basis of cost-benefit calculations. The indicator that might substantiate such an account would be evidence that states have accelerated their cooperation through binding commitments in order to minimise national defence expenditures and maximise the use of resources through pooling, sharing and joint procurement.

Importantly, the liberal-institutional perspective provides a theoretical avenue in which integration can be accounted for and may therefore cover a prominent gap in the strategic-interests account of Nordic defence cooperation. However, this perspective also has limitations of its own. Most importantly, some scholars have argued that multilateral agreements are seen as more inefficient than bilateral agreements, and therefore the

cost-benefit explanation might struggle to account for certain parts of the Nordic format of cooperation (Hartley 2011). There is also uncertainty regarding whether it is truly possible to calculate the actual economic benefits of cooperative arrangements of this kind. In addition, scholars have suggested that security and defence cooperation in NORDEFECO is marked by a certain degree of “Nordicness” (Forsberg 2013, Hyde-Price 2018). However, it is unclear what such “Nordicness” might consist of and exactly how it might trigger cooperation in security and defence. The third expectation will therefore aim to provide further theoretical specification regarding the question of “Nordicness” and will consider whether this often-mentioned sense of commonality between the Nordic states might be able to fill some of the gaps left by other attempts to account for the nature of the commitments these states have made in the field of defence and security.

### **Constructivism**

Constructivist literature on European foreign and security policy has argued that identity and norms are crucial for understanding developments in European foreign affairs (Aggestam 2006, Elgström and Smith 2006, Sjursen 2006a). Norms and identity influence foreign policy decision-makers and the decisions they make (Holsti 1970, Aggestam 2006, 2018, Elgström and Smith 2006). Accordingly, this article will make use of an analytical perspective that stresses the significance of identity and norms in the formation of national security and defence policy (Katzenstein 1996, Checkel and Katzenstein 2009). This will involve considering the extent to which Nordic security and defence cooperation is driven by a sense of commonality between the Nordic states that makes cooperation with other Nordic states a “natural” choice.

It could be argued that the constructivist perspective is particularly relevant in the Nordic context. The logic of appropriateness asserts that “action involves evoking an identity or role and matching the obligations of that identity or role to a specific situation” (March and Olsen 1998, p. 951). Within such a perspective, social norms are seen not just as working to constrain actors but also as constitutive (Soysal 1994, Checkel 1997). The logic of appropriateness is argued to be more prevalent in situations where outcomes are difficult to predict (March and Olsen 1998, pp. 952–953). In the case under consideration here, we should note that it is difficult to calculate the strategic and material benefit of Nordic security and defence cooperation from the perspectives of each state. Furthermore, the Nordic states are broadly similar in terms of size, wealth and military capability (noting that Sweden has a larger population) and therefore there is no significant asymmetry of power between them. Thus, following March and Olsen (1998, p. 953), it may be that Nordic actors have relied more heavily on the obligations that result from a particular identity or role.

A focus on how identity entails corresponding obligations may make it possible to further specify what has previously been identified as “Nordicness”. This approach understands identity and norms as entailing corresponding obligations. It may be that there are certain “Nordic” norms of solidarity that evoke a sense of corresponding obligations in the field of security and defence. It is therefore important to investigate the extent to which commitments may be driven by a sense of obligation to a specific “Nordic” role or identity. The expectation is thus that there are specific obligations that encourage the Nordic states to pursue cooperation within a Nordic format. The indicator for this is whether



the Nordic states decided to cooperate in a Nordic format because they believe that Nordic cooperation is a “safer” choice owing to a sense that “we are alike” in the Nordic region. Insofar as this expectation holds, it may be possible to account for the commitments between Nordic states on the basis of a common sense of “Nordicness”, as well as to add more theoretical and empirical specificity regarding what such “Nordicness” might entail.

### **Nordic security interests?**

There exist strong traditions of cooperation both within the Nordic states and between them (Forsberg 2013). The Nordic Council was formed in the aftermath of World War II, for example, and a passport union allows citizens of Nordic countries to move freely across borders within the region (NORDEFECO n.d.). However, prior to the establishment of NORDEFECO, there were only limited formal arenas for security and defence cooperation between the Nordic states at the regional level. NORDEFECO was established in 2009 through (1) the merger of three previously self-standing cooperative arrangements between the Nordic states: Peace Support Education and Training (NORDCAPS), Armament Cooperation (NORDARC) and Enhanced Cooperation (NORDSUP), and (2) the expansion of their scope based on “a political ambition of a comprehensive, enhanced and long-term approach to defence related issues” and the desire to “establish a comprehensive framework for all Nordic Defence Cooperation activities within the areas of policy, capabilities and operations” (NORDEFECO MoU 2009). Since the formation of NORDEFECO, both the level of activity within and the political priority granted to Nordic cooperation have increased, as evidenced by the adoption in 2018 of a NORDEFECO Vision 2025 which introduced language on improving “defence capability and cooperation in peace, crisis and conflict” as well as “the ability to act together” (see NORDEFECO 2020).

There is evidence for the suggestion that the Nordic states sharing similar security interests was significant for the establishment of Nordic defence cooperation. During interviews, government officials made several comments that spoke to the significance of having both similar strategic interests and comparable geopolitical contexts. One interviewee commented that “there are shared geopolitical interests in the Nordic region. Geography drives interests in security and defence policy” (Interview 2). Subjects also noted the significance of the fact that Finland, Sweden and Norway all share a border with Russia (Interviews 1 and 10). There are also several references in official documents to the idea that the Nordic states share similar security strategies and geopolitical interests (Norwegian official documents 1 and 2). This evidence is in line with the expectation regarding similar geopolitical interests as a trigger of security and defence cooperation. However, a number of important caveats should be noted.

First, it is not clear how the security interests in all of the Nordic states are more homogenous than central allies in the EU and NATO. A commonly held view among interviewees was that national security was becoming increasingly complex and security threats more differentiated, while the importance of retaining a certain level of national military capability was also acknowledged (Interviews 1, 4, 5 and 9). These security interests are not only shared by the Nordic states but also consistent with the perspective held by other (certainly not all) European allied states in NATO and the EU. For example, the official British and French security strategy papers (white papers) from 2008 highlight

the same priorities (Republic of France 2008, Government of the United Kingdom 2010). These documents are dated a year prior to the establishment of NORDEFECO. Furthermore, the retention of national military capability in Europe is a strategic ambition within both the EU and NATO (see NATO 2010, European Union 2016). The security priorities in the different national and institutional security strategies therefore provide little evidence for the existence of uniform “Nordic” security interest that can be distinguished from the interests of key allied European states with which Nordic states have a history of collaboration. It thus seems less likely that shared security interests alone can account for the establishment of defence commitments in the Nordic region. We therefore need to take additional factors into account if we are to understand the patterns of cooperation that have developed in the Nordic region. We note, therefore, that while the security interests identified in the post-Cold War era do not seem to hinder Nordic security and defence cooperation, security interests alone cannot provide a comprehensive account of what has triggered cooperation between the Nordic states.

Furthermore, there is an important difference in the geopolitical realities facing different Nordic states in that Iceland and Denmark do not share a border with Russia. One interviewee noted that Denmark did not initially want to join NORDEFECO, in large part because of its different geopolitical situation (Interview 1). Denmark was also concerned that Nordic cooperation on security and defence could weaken cooperation with the United States (Saxi 2019). A similar dynamic may also be at play in cases of bilateral cooperation within the Nordic region. Sweden and Finland face similar geopolitical realities, and the two countries have established close military integration. However, there is also bilateral cooperation between Sweden and Denmark in spite of their different geopolitical contexts, as well as trilateral cooperation between Norway, Finland and Sweden (Government Offices of Sweden 2020). It would thus seem that such bilateral and trilateral patterns of cooperation between the Nordic states are also driven by something other than strategic geopolitical interests.

Finally, the need to explore additional ways of accounting for the Nordic cooperation is underlined by the fact that the Swedish–Finnish cooperation evolved into de facto military integration. Such a degree of interdependence – based on the planning, coordination and operationalisation of bi-national defence capabilities – cannot be accounted for by structural realism, as it conflicts with the latter’s assumption that the ultimate objective of state policy is to preserve the integrity and sovereignty of the state. Therefore, while there is evidence that strategic interests and geopolitics played a part in the development of Nordic security and defence cooperation, particularly since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, it seems clear that commitments were also triggered by considerations that lie outside the theoretical scope of structural realism. In order to explore and fill these gaps in the account, our focus will now shift to the potential role of cost-benefit calculations.

### **Nordic defence cooperation alongside bilateral military integration: why?**

The significance of the possibility that increased cooperation may lead to material benefits is reflected in official documents related to the establishment of NORDEFECO, in which it is stated that the main objective of NORDEFECO is to increase defence capability by exploiting “common synergies and creating efficient solutions” (NORDEFECO 2018).

Accordingly, the first official document related to NORDEFECO indicates a cost-benefit rationale for Nordic cooperation.

A high degree of military systems compatibility between individual Nordic states would appear to correlate with the establishment of integrative commitments. Increased Swedish and Finnish military cooperation was due to a sense that it would be efficient because the cooperation involved only two states that had a high degree of compatibility in their military equipment and procedures (Interview 7). The high degree of military systems compatibility thus corresponds to a perceived increase in the material benefits of security and defence cooperation. Swedish and Finnish military cooperation is partially integrated in the case of their respective air forces, and the Finnish and Swedish navies have also undergone partial military integration (Sweden/Finland *n.d.*). The expectation among the Swedish and Finnish authorities is that military systems compatibility increases the potential for material benefits from cooperation. It allows states to reduce national investments without having to change existing systems, equipment or military practices. Thus, the establishment of integrative commitments in the case of Sweden and Finland correlates with a high degree of military systems compatibility.

However, both cooperative and integrative commitments to bilateral cooperation between the Nordic states seem to co-exist with a push towards commitments within a broader, multilateral Nordic cooperation. Sweden and Denmark's commitment to cooperation within the Nordic framework provides a relevant example. This is a case of bilateral cooperation within the Nordic framework in NORDEFECO between non-NATO member Sweden and NATO member Denmark. With respect to cooperation between Sweden and Denmark, one interviewee noted the following: "Swedish and Danish cooperation is not formally connected to NORDEFECO, but it is connected to what is going on in NORDEFECO. Having a similar agreement between all the Nordic states is the ultimate goal" (Interview 4). While the initial agreement is bilateral, the interviewee declares that the ultimate goal is cooperation between all of the Nordic partners. Recently, Norway, Sweden and Finland signed a trilateral military cooperation agreement to increase military and strategic cooperation (Government Offices of Sweden 2020). In addition, while the first NORDEFECO documents were signed in 2009, the five member-states renewed and reaffirmed their commitment to Nordic cooperation in the field of security and defence in 2018 (NORDEFECO 2020).

In sum, it is difficult to fully account for the push towards a Nordic framework for defence cooperation solely by reference to the existence of shared strategic or material interests. Denmark, for example, wanted to be part of a Nordic programme of cooperation even though it did not share the same strategic interests as Norway and Sweden in 2009 (Saxi 2019). Furthermore, integrative commitments to cooperation are seemingly correlated with military systems compatibility, which varies in and between the Nordic states. In the past, Finland has had a strong tradition of cooperation with the Baltic states, more so than with other Nordic states (Männik 2002). Similarly, one informant noted that the Norwegian military in some respects has greater compatibility with the Dutch military than with other Nordic states (Interview 2). However, there are clearly parts of the Nordic defence cooperation that seem to follow from decision-making that is in large part driven by a cost-benefit logic, as can be seen in NORDEFECO's official documents as well and in other account of Nordic defence cooperation (NORDEFECO 2018, Saxi 2019). Evidence of a cost-benefit logic can also be seen in the emphasis placed by

authorities within the different Nordic states on the importance of the perceived economic benefits of military cooperation.

It seems evident, however, that we must look for an additional explanatory factor, one that is not based on security or material interests, if we are to adequately explain the existence of defence cooperation between the Nordic states. Some scholars have pointed to a certain uniformity of norms and identity within the Nordic region as a potentially relevant theoretical lens through which to examine Nordic cooperation in the security field. In what follows, then, this article will explore and further specify the notion of “Nordic togetherness” and consider the extent to which the identity/norm expectation can contribute to a more comprehensive account of the commitments made within the Nordic model for defence cooperation.

### **Nordic security and defence cooperation: an expression of solidarity?**

As we have observed, security and defence cooperation between the Nordic states has evolved over the past decade to reach a level that arguably involves a departure from traditional expectations associated with this policy field. In probing official documents, interviews with government officials and secondary literature for an account that can address gaps in our understanding of this development, I find evidence in all three of these data sources supporting the expectation that a sense of “Nordic togetherness” was important. While cost-benefit considerations, geopolitical and strategic interests are important, evidence suggests that the self-perception among the Nordic states that they share similar values and are in some way distinct from non-Nordic states has been significant for triggering decisions to strengthen cooperation on questions of defence. The sense of like-mindedness has contributed to removing barriers and even served to heighten ambitions in terms of the scope and depth of cooperation. Specifically, I have identified four elements where a sense of commonality and common values has had a major impact on the development of Nordic security and defence cooperation and the establishment of integrative commitments.

The first piece of evidence is the collective expression of solidarity in and between the Nordic states that is integral to their cooperation. There is a sense that the Nordic states are a distinct group of states and that membership in this group is based on a particular set of rights and duties. Forsberg (2013, p. 1175) argues that “a practical manifestation of this tendency is that if two or three Nordic countries are working together, as Norway and Sweden and then Finland did around NORDSUP, it is likely that the fourth or the fifth will want to join in”. This was also a recurring theme in my interviews with government officials. In describing the origins of NORDEFECO, one interviewee noted that the dialogue started out in 2007 as a discussion between the Norwegian and Swedish Chiefs of Defence, based primarily on an economic rationale of cost savings. Seeing this dialogue, Finland wanted to join in. But Denmark was not particularly interested owing to its very different geopolitical realities and priorities:

the Danish Chief of Defence was quite ambivalent about it all. “We are getting rid of submarines, and now Norway and Sweden want to see if we can cooperate on procurement of the next generation of submarines. What do we need this for?” But Denmark’s motivation ultimately was that if there is going to be Nordic cooperation there, then all the Nordic countries

need to be a part of it. There is a normative dimension: there is a sense that everyone should be a part of it. (Interview 7)

Commenting on one of the bilateral agreements within the Nordic framework, another interviewee noted that

we call it NORDEFECO cooperation when two NORDEFECO states are cooperating. Danish and Swedish cooperation is an example of that. We are going to continue to develop that cooperative framework. But that does not mean that the Nordic framework is not functioning or developing. But it is easier to start with two partners – it is more efficient – and then the other states can couple on to the framework later. It is easier to define the scope when there are only two partners initially. (Interview 5)

It seems clear that this trajectory is expected to continue – that is, that bi- or trilateral agreements will be gradually expanded to include more Nordic states, as noted by another interviewee: “while bilateral cooperation between Sweden and Denmark is not formally NORDEFECO, it is connected to what is going on in NORDEFECO. Having a similar agreement between all the Nordic countries, that is the direction things are going” (Interview 4). This rhetoric of “all of us” is also clear in official statements, such as the September 2020 statement by the defence ministers of Finland, Norway and Sweden announcing the signing of a trilateral statement of intent to enhance operational cooperation, which noted that “in the spirit of Nordic cooperation, Denmark and Iceland will be informed on a regular basis as the cooperation proceeds” (Government Offices of Sweden 2020). More importantly, the preference for broadening existing agreements to include all of the Nordic states is evident in practice, as in the case of the Alternate Landing Bases agreement that allows Nordic air forces to use each other’s air bases as alternate landing bases. The agreement was originally signed by Denmark, Norway and Sweden in 2017, while Finland and Iceland joined later (NORDEFECO annual report 2017). Similarly, when the agreement was expanded in 2019 to include armed aircraft and advance stockpiling of certain types of equipment, the agreement was first signed by Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland, while Iceland joined at a later date (NORDEFECO 2020).

Second, the significance of “Nordic togetherness” relates to how the high level of trust between the Nordic states translates into concrete policy achievements by removing barriers that might otherwise have made such achievements impossible. The Nordic states have been said to hold a “maximalist” level of trust in which they support each other’s values and interests (Ruzika and Keating 2015, p. 18, Røren 2019, p. 6). This kind of maximalist view stands in contrast to the more traditional “minimalist” level of trust where states are more neutral and the baseline is that states do not cause injury towards each other (Ruzika and Keating 2015, p. 18, Røren 2019, p. 6). Drawing on a series of interviews with Nordic diplomats, Røren (2019, p. 14) observed that “the friendship and trust among these countries, their people and their practitioners are institutionalized to a level where it seems like they are sometimes working as one country rather than five”. Similar evidence was found in my interviews with Nordic government officials, with one interviewee noting that “the Nordic states share the same culture; this benefits cooperation and is positive for the development of cooperation” (Interview 5). The significance of trust between the Nordic states and the depth of their commitment to Nordic cooperation is also evident in how the Nordic states have overcome setbacks and even major



roadblocks in larger defence procurement projects. While there have been several prominent failures, such as on submarines and the Archer artillery system, the most prominent case was the 2008 discord surrounding fighter-jet procurement. The Swedes were pushing hard for joint procurement between the Nordic states on next-generation military fighter jets, meaning that the Nordic states would purchase the Swedish-made JAS Gripen fighter. Norway ended up purchasing US-made Lockheed Martin F-35 planes instead and there was a perception that Norway had allowed the procurement process to continue for some time after the decision had in fact been made. While this was no shock due to the strategic importance to Norway of relations to the US, the case caused considerable dissension and was the subject of numerous newspaper headlines, highlighting tension and disappointment between Sweden and Norway (Aftenposten 2008). However, despite this momentary contention between the forerunners of Nordic defence cooperation, the Gripen/F-35 case did not end up derailing Nordic defence cooperation. On the contrary, the high level of mutual trust between the Nordic countries seems to make it possible for states to in fact overcome disagreement and setbacks. Twelve years later, in 2020, the defence ministers of Finland, Norway and Sweden announced a trilateral statement of intent to enhance operational cooperation. While the objectives point to common security threats, the like-mindedness and shared values of the Nordic states is highlighted as a critical foundation: “In light of the security situation, cooperation and unity among *likeminded* nations is paramount. The Nordic region is one of the world’s most integrated” (Trilateral Statement of Intent to Enhance Operational Cooperation 2020, emphasis added).

The third indicator points to the importance of a sense of “Nordic togetherness” for how Nordic defence cooperation is viewed within civil society and the effect this has on political will. In essence, it seems that a sense of “Nordic togetherness” in civil society has provided the necessary political will to prioritise Nordic defence cooperation. As one interviewee pointed out:

there is inherently a lot of institutional resistance towards military cooperation ... Future systems similarity requires joint long-term planning, which makes it harder to uphold protectionism in national defence industries. It means job cuts, layoffs and competing for the same jobs across countries. To make these types of structural changes requires support from above. It means that political leadership has to support change. Beyond these economic concerns, we have to stand together in the Nordics. It is easier for the political leadership to win backing for this rationale. (Interview 1)

Such a view is echoed by Forsberg (2013, p. 1163), who points out that “the ‘Nordic’ label makes it easier to sell international military cooperation politically to domestic audiences”. He demonstrates the significance of the notion of Nordic commonality by citing the level of support for Nordic cooperation among the general public, before continuing:

Nordic security and defence policy cooperation enjoys strong public support, although exact figures from public opinion polls are not easily available. In 2010, 42 per cent of the Nordic population, for example, regarded the idea of a Nordic Union as positive; 78 per cent of Nordic citizens held positive views of Nordic cooperation in general, while only 4 per cent expressed negative attitudes. In Finland, an amazing 91 per cent of the population supported Nordic defence cooperation in 2012, while only 45 per cent supported military cooperation with NATO. (Forsberg 2013, p. 1177)

Forsberg's analysis was supported in my own interviews. One informant commented: "It is about political will. Who you would *like* to cooperate with is a point in itself" (Interview 7). In essence, there is a tangible notion that cooperation in and between Nordic states is perceived as "safe" and "natural" by public audiences.

The fourth indicator suggesting that norms and identity have an impact on Nordic security and defence cooperation relates to the common values that permeate the work culture of the Nordic countries. Sundelius and Wiklund (1979) in Røren (2019, p. 5) write that "the numerous Nordic societal linkages have created official sub-governmental bonds which together make up a net of considerable strength". He further cites a specific example of how such a Nordic work culture plays out in practice:

As one Swedish diplomat told me, "My Norwegian colleague and I exchange reports before we send them to the ministry, like 'could you read through this, what do you think about this, and then we send it home.' Though the reports in question were not highly confidential, sharing diplomatic correspondence that is still in draft is a remarkable practice." (Røren 2019, p. 9)

Forsberg (2013, p. 1163) makes a similar point, arguing that one of the ways in which "Nordic identity" has played a role in the rise of Nordic defence cooperation is that "it facilitates informal cooperation between politicians and defence officials at various levels". He further argues that the "closely related languages are often seen as a community-building factor facilitating practical cooperation, even though the common language that is used in military cooperation today is more likely to be English than any of the Scandinavian tongues" (Forsberg 2013, p. 1175). The fact that the common language is English rather than Scandinavian is significant because it demonstrates that this linguistic commonality cannot be seen as just a practical aid to communication.

Rather, it is the commonality itself that is the key factor. Indeed, several of those interviewed for this study emphasised how having a sense of "we are alike" in the Nordics was significant for cooperation. One interviewee pointed to the "good mutual understanding of Nordic decision processes" as an important asset in the building of NORDEFECO (Interview 7). Another made it clear that NORDEFECO serves as a forum for coordinating and advancing common Nordic positions within NATO and the EU, through policy discussions and sharing of documents to the greatest possible extent (Interview 4). As this perception of common values turns working together across the Nordics into a natural choice, it is not difficult to see how such processes in turn breed mutual trust. In sum, having common values and cultures in and between the Nordic states creates an environment in which barriers are removed and there is a high level of trust, which makes it possible to establish shared procedures, working conditions, informal connections and lines of communication that serve to enhance the chances of success in formulating and enacting policies.

Taken together, these indications are in line with the expectation that a sense of common identity and values contributed to facilitating Nordic security and defence cooperation, and this must be considered analytically distinct from national security interests and material interests. There is a commitment to a particular group of states, and membership in this group involves a particular set of rights and duties. In the absence of common norms, a common work culture, and a high level of trust and tradition

between the Nordic states, security and defence cooperation could more likely be limited to separate and disparate cases of cooperation between states.

## Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to account for how the Nordic states have agreed to bind themselves so tightly together in the field of security and defence. In examining this question, evidence suggests that similar strategic interests in and between the Nordic states and cost-benefit calculations have been significant triggers for Nordic security and defence cooperation. Additionally, I have found strong support for the argument that a sense of “Nordic togetherness” has played an important role in the development of Nordic security and defence cooperation.

I first investigated the nature of the commitments made within Nordic defence cooperation, distinguishing between cooperative and integrative commitments, and showed how Nordic security and defence cooperation ranges from cooperation involving joint military training, exchange of security intelligence and information, to commitments involving de facto military integration. In seeking to account for these commitments, I constructed a structural-realist expectation, a cost-benefit expectation and an identity and normative expectation, and subsequently analysed whether and to what extent these expectations can be substantiated. While there are indications that support both the realist and the cost-benefit expectations, there are also clear gaps in the accounts provided by such approaches that are addressed by considering the identity- and norm-based perspective.

The findings of the present study show that cooperation occurred despite differences in strategic and material interests: Denmark initially did not want to be part of Nordic defence cooperation because it was not clear why Nordic cooperation was in line with the country’s own strategic and material interests. Second, Nordic security and defence cooperation provides examples of de facto military integration in the field of security and defence. The most prominent example of this within the Nordic framework is the case of bilateral integration between Sweden and Finland. This refers to the partial integration of parts of the navies and air forces of the two countries. De facto military integration of such kind challenges prevailing assumptions about the depth of commitments states make with respect to cooperation in the field of security and defence. The evidence further suggests that the bilateral military integration that has taken place between Sweden and Finland is in large part rooted in cost-benefit calculations. However, cost-benefit calculations cannot account for the continued push towards a broader, multilateral Nordic agreement. Maximising the cost-benefit balance might dictate fewer participants or seeking non-Nordic partners with greater military systems compatibility.

The sense-of-solidarity dimension that exists between the Nordic states is therefore necessary if we are to understand the depth of commitments the Nordic states have made to defence cooperation. The perception of a shared identity and habits of cooperation between Nordic states were significant for the decisions that led to the establishment of mutually binding commitments, as well as for NORDEFECO’s continued development. Developments in the Nordic framework tend to start with two or three states, with the remaining states joining the process later. Taking into account the sense of



“Nordic togetherness” makes it possible to understand the integrative commitments that have been established within this policy field. If cooperation between the Nordic states were driven by strategic and material interests alone, the Nordic defence cooperation would likely not evolve beyond a case-by-case basis.

The case of the Nordic region thus confirms the importance of identity and norms for understanding the nature of mutually binding commitments between states in security and defence cooperation. The potential significance of the identity and normative commitment to cooperation in the field of security and defence extends beyond the Nordic framework. For example, we may wish to investigate the notion of mutually binding commitments with respect to developments in the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy as well as cases of de facto military integration as exemplified by Benelux defence cooperation. Relevant questions include whether a stronger case for cooperation based on strategic interests or cost-benefit rationales reduces the need for a normative and identity-based dimension and whether such dimensions may take different forms compared to the “Nordic togetherness” observed in this case. By testing the presence and strength of the types of identity-based and normative indicators seen in the case of the Nordic states, it may be possible to augment our understanding of the development of these cases as well as to inform ongoing discussion on patterns of European security and defence cooperation.

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### **Interviews**

1. Norwegian NATO official, 02.12.2015, telephone interview.
2. Norwegian government official, Mission of Norway to the EU, 25.11.2015, Brussels.
3. Swedish government official, Ministry of Defence, 18.03.2016, telephone interview.
4. Danish government official, Ministry of Defence, 24.03.2016, telephone interview.
5. Norwegian government official, Ministry of Defence, 10.12.2015, Oslo.
6. Finnish government official, Ministry of Defence, 19.04.2016, telephone interview.
7. Former Norwegian government military official, 16.11.2015, Oslo.
8. Norwegian government official, 11.12.2015, Ministry of Defence, Oslo.
9. Norwegian government official, 11.12.2015, Ministry of Defence, Oslo.
10. Norwegian government military official, 22.03.2016, Oslo.

2. Article 2: A 'Europe of defence?' The establishment of binding commitments and supranational governance in European security and defence cooperation

Article currently under review in *Journal of European Integration*.



3. Article 3: Reconsidering sovereignty in security and defence cooperation: The case of European 'great powers'

Article currently under review in *Contemporary Security Policy*.





## Appendix



1. Appendix 1: Topic guide for interviews for Article 1

## Topic guide for Article 1

The following is the topic guide employed for the ten semi-structured interviews conducted as part of the research for Article 1.

The questions served to provide an overall structure for the interviews, while follow-up questions varied in each interview depending on the answers and views of the interviewee. Not all questions were applicable to all interviewees.

### Introduction:

1. Provide a brief introduction to the research I am conducting and underline that the interviews will be treated with anonymity with respect to ethical guidelines for research consistent with NSD (Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata) requirements
2. If relevant, request a brief introduction to the interviewee's history/experience with the specific subject matter

### Questions:

1. From the perspective of [country or organisation], what was/were the main reason(s) for intensifying Nordic security and defence cooperation through the establishment of NORDEFECO in 2009?
2. You mention [primary reason(s) mentioned]. Were there other additional reasons/motivations? Have these changed over time? Why?
3. Are there any constraints due to differences in membership status in the EU/NATO?
4. Are differences in NATO membership/affiliation a greater challenge for Nordic security and defence cooperation than differences in EU membership/affiliation?
5. What is the most significant area of cooperation for [country or organisation] and why?
6. Are [relevant bilateral agreements/cooperation] connected to NORDEFECO? What was the main reason for the bilateral nature of the agreement/cooperation (vs a broader Nordic framework)?
7. How/to what extent are national planning and Nordic security and defence cooperation coordinated? Do you keep each other informed?
8. What is the main added value of Nordic security and defence cooperation for [country or organisation]?
9. Would you say there is more or less interest in/enthusiasm for Nordic security and defence cooperation today compared to in 2009?
10. What are the key lessons learned from Nordic security and defence cooperation so far?
11. Are there any topics we have not covered today that you feel are important to explore?