

The odd one out?

*A Comparative Analysis of the evolution of Norway's and Allies' Defense
Budgets*

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Abstract

This thesis investigates defense expenditures dynamics in NATO member states, primarily focusing on Norway, with a brief comparison with Poland, and Denmark. Employing a framework encompassing five perspectives based on theoretical and analytical foundations—GDP, threat perception, historical experiences, strategic culture, and burden-sharing—the research explores factors influencing defense budget decisions within the alliance.

The empirical analysis unfolds in three steps. Step one is an examination of how the five perspectives align with NATO's overview of allies' defense spending as a percentage of GDP establishes foundational insights into defense spending patterns. Step two comprises a detailed exploration of Norway's defense expenditure evolution, considering historical context, threat perceptions, GDP considerations, and NATO commitments, provides a deeper understanding of its approach.

Step three involves a brief comparative analysis, contrasting Norway's defense spending with Poland and Denmark. Each perspective is applied to scrutinize the distinct approaches these nations adopt, shedding light on their divergent geopolitical positions, historical legacies, and defense priorities. This comparative lens aims to contribute nuanced insights into the multifaceted nature of defense expenditure decisions of NATO allies and the varying influences that shape member states' contributions to collective security efforts.

In conclusion, the findings provide insights into how NATO member states navigate defense expenditure decisions. The ambition is to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities shaping contemporary defense strategies and the evolving dynamics of collective security initiatives within the alliance.

Keywords: *NATO, threat perception, defense spending, comparative analysis, Norway*

Foreword/Acknowledgements

Writing a master's thesis is a tedious process with a lot of feelings of hopefulness as well as hopelessness, getting things right as well as getting things wrong. There have been endless emails between me and my supervisor, where I have expressed that I am stuck and do not know how to proceed, and him breaking things down for me and telling me that I am in fact on the right track.

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Secondly, I would like to thank my father for the encouragement during this challenging time when I was lost. He would always be there for me whenever I needed support and guidance and motivated me to keep going.

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Thank you to all of the people who have been there alongside me during my years at University of Oslo, thank you for believing in me and thank you for a memorable time.

List of abbreviations

NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NOU	: Norwegian Official Report (Norges Offentlige Utredninger)
FFI	: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (Forsvarets Forskningsinstitutt)
NUPI	: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt)
GDP	: Gross Domestic Product
FOCUS	: The Norwegian Intelligence Service's annual report

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1. Introduction

In the aftermath of World War II, Europe witnessed significant geopolitical tensions, culminating in the establishment of NATO in 1949—a collective security alliance with the core mission of safeguarding its member states. While NATO's primary objective of protecting its members has endured, the nature of threats has evolved from the Cold War era to the dynamic geopolitical landscape of today.

This thesis explores the question: Does Norway's approach to defense spending differ from that of other NATO countries in close proximity to Russia? If so, how?

Norway's defense budget decisions have been explored through five distinct lenses, each offering a unique vantage point. The GDP perspective delves into the intricate relationship between economic factors and military spending, challenging conventional wisdom and introducing a nuanced understanding. The threat perception angle sharpens the focus on the contemporary security landscape, particularly in proximity to Russia, illuminating how these dynamics intricately shape Norway's defense strategy. Exploring historical experiences helps reveal the origins of the nation's defense priorities, offering a historical context that enhances our understanding. The strategic culture perspective immerses in Norway's commitment to collective defense, unraveling the threads that weave its military postures and resource allocations within the broader NATO framework. Lastly, the burden-sharing perspective casts a discerning eye on Norway's role in NATO, dissecting the intricacies of responsibilities and costs distributed in collaborative endeavors. Together, these perspectives compose a comprehensive framework, offering a profound understanding of the diverse factors guiding Norway's defense budget decisions.

Threat is the obvious driver of defense budgets. The literature on threat perception illuminates the multifaceted nature of this critical factor in the defense budgeting decisions of NATO member states. Threat perception is not only central to shaping states' security policies but also directly impacts their resource allocation choices. As this thesis delves into the variations in defense budget behavior among NATO member states, it underscores the significance of threat perception as a key determinant in the decision-making process. However, threat perception is not the only determinant of defense spending.

Utilizing a comparative research design, the thesis investigates the distinctive characteristics of Norway's defense spending within NATO by contrasting it with neighboring countries—Poland and Denmark. Each perspective is employed to scrutinize the distinct approaches adopted by these nations, shedding light on their divergent geopolitical positions, historical legacies, and defense priorities. Through this comparative lens, the study aims to provide nuanced insights into the multifaceted nature of defense expenditure decisions among NATO allies and the diverse influences shaping member states' contributions to collective security efforts.

Norway is chosen as the primary case due to its unique standing within NATO. Given its proximity to Russia, one might expect Norway's defense spending behavior to mirror that of other countries in close proximity to Russia, such as Poland. This assumption is based on the premise that neighboring countries to Russia, like Norway, typically emphasize defense due to historical experiences, geographical location, and perceived threats. However, as we delve into this study, it becomes apparent that Norway deviates from this anticipated trend. Poland is included as a case selection due to its acute threat perception, shaped by historical experiences and its close proximity to Russia. This offers a significant variable for comparison, allowing an exploration of how threat perception influences defense spending. Denmark serves as an additional case to provide a well-rounded

perspective. While Denmark is not bordering Russia, it offers insights into how countries with a different threat environment approach defense spending within NATO.

The primary research questions guiding our comparative analysis are as follows:

1. What insights does the overview of NATO countries' defense budgets as a percentage of GDP provide regarding the applicability of various explanatory models to defense expenditure patterns?
2. Which explanatory models most effectively capture the nuances of Norway's approach to defense spending within NATO?
3. How do the defense budget behaviors of Poland and Denmark align with distinct explanatory models when compared to Norway's strategy within NATO?

The geographical proximity to potential security threats plays an essential role in shaping a nation's defense priorities, strategic assessments, and policy decisions within NATO (Blank, 1998) This is particularly pronounced for countries in close proximity to potential sources of instability. These questions are designed to guide the exploration of Norway's defense spending strategy in comparison to Poland and Denmark, employing various explanatory models within the NATO context.

1.1. Methodology

This study employs a methodological approach aimed at thoroughly investigating defense spending within NATO, with a specific emphasis on Norway, and to a lesser extent, Poland and Denmark. The methodology combines primary and secondary data collection strategies, focusing on official government publications, defense budget reports, and policy documents. This section outlines the

strategies for data collection and analysis, ensuring a comprehensive examination of the factors influencing defense spending decisions within the NATO alliance.

1.1.1. Data Collection

The primary data for this study has been collected from various sources, including official government publications, defense budget reports, and policy documents. The analysis is based on official data provided by NATO and the defense ministries, along with relevant government agencies of Norway, Poland, and Denmark. Primary data sources will include: The Norwegian Ministry of Defense for Norway; The Ministry of National Defense for Poland; and The Danish Ministry of Defense for Denmark. These sources provide detailed information on defense budgets, military capabilities, and defense policies for each respective country.

A range of secondary data sources are also utilized, including academic research, international organizations, and defense-related publications. These secondary sources support and enrich the analysis by providing historical context, expert opinions, and global perspectives on defense spending. Secondary data sources include academic articles and books on defense policies and NATO strategies; reports and publications from international organizations such as NATO; and expert analyses and commentaries on defense spending and international security matters.

Data analysis in this study relies exclusively on figures and numbers obtained from NATO. While this approach introduces a potential source of bias, it is chosen to ensure the use of official and standardized data provided by the alliance. By utilizing NATO as the primary source for defense contribution figures, consistency and comparability across member states are maintained. It is important to acknowledge that alternative perspectives and potential discrepancies might be missed by exclusively relying on NATO's data. However, for the purpose of determining defense

contributions within NATO, the utilization of NATO-sourced figures provides a reliable and standardized foundation for analysis.

1.1.2. Data Analysis

The comparative analysis involves a systematic examination of defense spending decisions of Norway, and to some degree of Poland and Denmark. Various data analysis techniques are employed to identify patterns, trends, and differences among these countries. Qualitative analysis will be conducted to understand the strategic culture, historical experiences, and threat perceptions that shape each country's defense budget decisions. This involves content analysis of official documents and policy statements. Quantitative analysis focus on the economic and budgetary aspects of defense spending. Key indicators, such as defense spending as a percentage of GDP and military expenditure trends are compared.

The comparative analysis is guided by the exploration of strategic elements shaping defense budget decisions. This approach ensures a nuanced understanding of multifaceted factors influencing each country's approach within the NATO framework. The study aims to provide a comprehensive examination of defense spending dynamics in alignment with its overarching objectives.

1.2. Limitations

This study recognizes several limitations that may affect the interpretation and generalizability of its findings. The accuracy and reliability of data are vital for comparative analysis. While efforts are made to use official government publications and reliable sources, data may be subject to errors or variations in reporting standards between countries. Defense spending is influenced by numerous internal and external factors. Political dynamics, public opinion, and international events can impact defense budget decisions, making it challenging to isolate specific variables' effects.

As aforementioned, the study exclusively relies on data provided by NATO for defense contribution figures. While this data ensures comparability, it may not fully represent countries' perspectives on defense spending. While this study provides valuable insights into Norway, Poland, and Denmark, the conclusions might not be entirely generalizable to all countries within NATO or similar alliances.

The analysis identifies correlations between variables, but it may not definitively establish causation. Multiple factors can influence defense budget decisions, and the study's scope will not delve deeply into all causal relationships.

1.3. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured to systematically investigate defense spending in NATO states, unfolding in a logical sequence. Chapter 2 serves as the theoretical foundation, presenting five key perspectives that is employed throughout the analysis: GDP, threat perception, historical experiences, strategic culture, and burden-sharing.

In chapter 3, the core analysis takes place, comprising three distinct steps. The first step involves an examination of how the theoretical perspectives align with NATO's broader overview of defense spending, providing valuable insights into overarching patterns among member states. The second step delves specifically into Norway's defense spending evolution, taking into account factors such as historical context, threat perceptions, economic considerations, and the country's commitments within NATO. The third step extends the analysis to include a brief comparative study of Norway's defense spending alongside that of Poland and Denmark. This comparative exploration focuses on

understanding the varying positions, historical trajectories, and defense priorities of these countries within the NATO framework.

Lastly, the conclusion, synthesizes the key findings from the analysis. The conclusion offers a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing how NATO countries, with a specific emphasis on Norway, make decisions regarding defense spending. The structured approach employed in this thesis ensures a thorough exploration and examination of the aspects that contribute to defense spending dynamics within the NATO alliance.

2. What Determines a Country's Defense Spending?

The literature on defense budgeting offers comprehensive insights into the complex factors that influence states' military spending. Naturally, threat perception in various forms will be the backbone of any defense budget decision. Biddle (2004, p. 78) argues that countries decide on their budgets based on their strategic needs. In other words, they focus on what kind of military capabilities they believe are necessary for their security. This thinking considers factors like how they see potential threats, what is happening in their region, and their long-term security goals. Within NATO, where countries work together for collective defense, there is an expectation that defense budget choices match these strategic priorities.

Scholarly discussions on defense budgeting offer valuable insights into the factors that influence states in allocating resources to their military capabilities. These considerations encompass strategic outlook, adaptability, and collective defense commitments, which all play a role in shaping defense budget decisions. As this thesis explores the variations in defense budget behavior among NATO member states, it underscores the significance of these factors in understanding their choices in defense spending.

This chapter embarks on an exploration of multiple perspectives, including the GDP perspective, threat perception theory, historical experiences, strategic culture, and burden-sharing theory. Each theory offers unique insights into the resource allocation decisions of NATO member states. As Jervis (1978, p. 167) insightfully emphasizes, accurate threat perception acts as a linchpin guiding states' decisions on defense spending. The subsequent sections delve into theoretical perspectives, unraveling their relationships and discerning their collective impact on shaping defense budgeting within NATO.

2.1. GDP Perspective

The GDP perspective presents a theory that suggests smaller countries tend to allocate less of their economic resources to defense compared to larger countries within NATO. This perspective, as articulated by scholars Plümper and Neumayer (2015), explores the correlation between a country's economic size, often measured by GDP, and its defense budget allocation. Economic capacities, while significant, do not singularly dictate defense budget decisions (Looney & Mehay, 1990).

Small countries are generally expected to spend a lower percentage of their GDP on defense, primarily due to resource constraints and the inability to match the defense expenditures of larger countries. Plümper and Neumayer's research highlights how economic capacity can significantly influence a country's defense budgeting decisions. This perspective offers a lens to understand why some NATO member states may have smaller defense budgets than others.

2.2. Threat Perception Theory

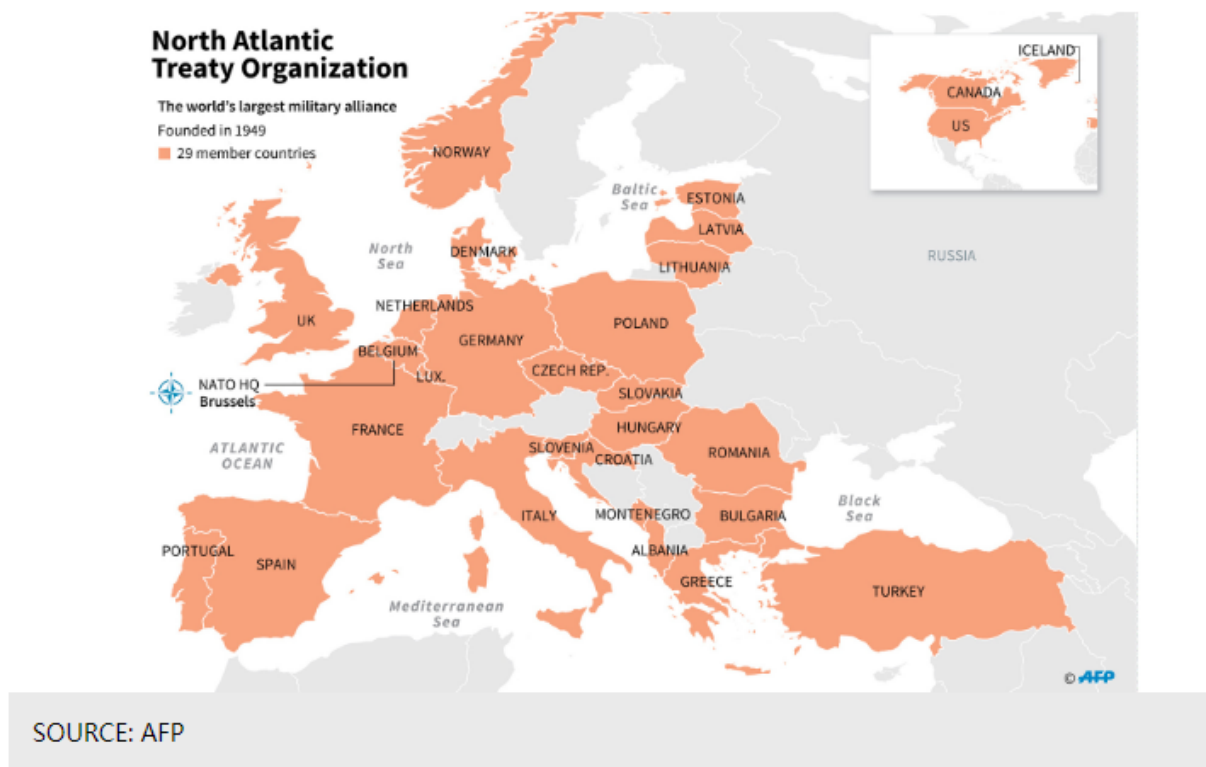


Figure 1 Map with NATO countries indicated in orange.

Source for Figure 1:

(<https://newsus.cgtn.com/news/2019-12-04/Here-s-what-NATO-member-states-are-paying-into-the-alliance-M8w4xdJew0/index.html>)

Threat perception, a multifaceted concept in defense policy literature and security studies, encompasses the assessment of both an adversary's capabilities and perceived intent. The perception of a credible and proximate threat serves as a compelling catalyst for states to enhance their defense capabilities, often resulting in increased defense spending. This section delves into the dynamics of threat perception and its significant influence on defense spending decisions, particularly highlighting the diverse threat perceptions among member states.

Walt (1987) points out the significance of understanding how states assess the intentions and capabilities of potential adversaries, emphasizing that these assessments guide a state's security policies. This theory is underpinned by the idea that states engage in continuous evaluations of

security threats, both in terms of the threat's military capabilities and the perceived intent to use them. The perceived threat's credibility, coupled with its proximity, motivates states to allocate substantial resources to defense (Jervis, 1978). Threat perception theory is especially relevant in the context of NATO, where collective defense is a core principle and shared threat perception drives the development of the alliance.

The geographical proximity of NATO member states to potential security threats emerges as a critical factor influencing their behaviors (Plümper & Neumayer, 2015). Countries situated closer to perceived security challenges tend to exhibit higher sensitivity to security risks, prompting active engagement in alliance defense efforts. Conversely, states positioned farther from potential threats may display varying behaviors, influenced by perceptions of reduced immediacy or direct relevance to their national security interests. According to Blank (1998), nations situated in close proximity to potential sources of instability may prioritize specific defense capabilities over others due to their immediate exposure to these threats. This theory posits that physical closeness to potential security threats intensifies the perceived risk, compelling states to escalate defense spending. Plümper and Neumayer (2015) augment this theory by emphasizing the impact of military capacity and economic strength on proximity-driven defense behavior. In line with the proximity theory, states closer to potential threats perceive them as more immediate and credible, motivating active responses to alliance defense efforts.

Plümper and Neumayer (2015) provide a comprehensive framework that incorporates a broader set of variables and advanced statistical techniques. This theory offers a nuanced understanding of the influence of threat perception on countries' behaviors within NATO, recognizing that threat perception exists along a continuum with variations in degrees of response. According to this theory, countries may exhibit different degrees of behavior based on factors such as their

geographic proximity to potential threats, military capacity, and economic strength (Plümper & Neumayer, 2015).

Additionally, threat perception within NATO goes beyond specific adversaries and encompasses a broader range of security challenges. This includes hybrid threats, cyber warfare, and regional instability. How states perceive these multifaceted threats also plays a role in determining their defense budget priorities, reflecting their commitment to addressing evolving security challenges. Walt (1987, p. 259) posits that threat perception serves as a linchpin in determining a state's security policies. States within NATO and similar alliances can be sensitive to perceived external threats, given their commitments to collective defense. States often allocate significant resources to bolster their military capabilities in response to perceived external threats, underlining the importance of an accurate assessment of these threats.

Jervis (1978) introduces the concept of the security dilemma, which further underscores the significance of precise threat perception. The security dilemma highlights a paradoxical situation where states' efforts to enhance their own security can inadvertently escalate tensions and lead to conflict. In international relations, collective defense commitments emphasize the importance of nuanced threat perception. A misjudgment of security threats can have profound consequences in any alliance or international setting, potentially leading to increased tensions and instability.

Therefore, threat perception is essential in mitigating the risks associated with the security dilemma and promoting stability across various contexts.

NATO, as a collective security alliance, plays an important role in shaping how member states perceive, assess, and respond to common threats (Duffield et al., 1999). Duffield et al. delve into the complex dynamics of how NATO member states perceive and respond to shared threats. This research underscores the significance of the alliance in shaping the security policies of its member

states. NATO's shared commitment to collective defense fosters a collaborative approach to threat assessment, encouraging member states to align their threat perceptions and coordinate responses.

2.3. Historical Experiences

While the GDP perspective and threat perception theory offer valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge that defense budgeting is influenced by a range of factors. Historical experiences may play a crucial role in shaping a country's defense budget priorities and can create a sense of threat and influence how resources are allocated for defense. Understanding the historical contexts of NATO member states can help elucidate variations in their defense budgeting. This perspective provides a broader view on the intricacies of resource allocation.

Historical experiences, particularly in relation to past conflicts or security challenges, may exert a substantial influence on the defense spending decisions. States that have faced recent conflicts or threats prioritize defense expenditures to enhance their security and protect against future risks, given the stark reminders of the need for robust military capabilities.

Historical experiences can help explain variations in defense spending among NATO member states. These experiences serve as catalysts for increased defense investments, driven by the imperative to prevent a recurrence of past threats. It is crucial to note that historical experiences encompass a broad range of events, including not just conflicts but also security crises, territorial disputes, and strategic shifts. These experiences mold states' perceptions of the security environment and their readiness to allocate resources to defense. Moreover, historical experiences are interconnected with threat perception. States that have faced conflicts or security challenges are more likely to perceive specific threats as credible and immediate, further motivating defense

spending. This convergence of historical experiences and threat perception reinforces the prioritization of defense within NATO member states.

2.4. Strategic Culture

Strategic culture, as introduced by Katzenstein (1996), provides a crucial perspective for examining defense budgeting within NATO. It serves as a lens through which we can understand how a country's fundamental beliefs, values, historical experiences, and national narratives shape its approach to defense policies and resource allocation decisions. This concept underscores the diversity among NATO member states, each having a distinct strategic culture that prioritizes specific defense capabilities and emphasizes certain security concerns.

Analyzing strategic culture contributes an additional dimension to our comprehension of defense budgeting behavior within NATO. The influence of strategic culture is particularly evident in how states perceive and respond to security threats. Understanding the role of strategic culture is essential for deciphering the diversity of threat perceptions within the alliance and how these perceptions influence the allocation of defense budgets. For instance, states with assertive strategic cultures may prioritize strong military postures and allocate significant resources to defense. In contrast, those with more defensive cultures may emphasize diplomacy and conflict avoidance, potentially leading to lower defense expenditures. Strategic culture, therefore, emerges as a fundamental driver of defense spending variations within NATO.

Steinsson & Thorhallsson (2017) contribute to the literature by examining the strategies of small states within NATO, such as Norway. Small states often face unique challenges in balancing their alliance commitments with other security interests. Steinsson and Thorhallsson's analysis sheds light on how small states navigate these complexities, including their efforts to align their threat

perception with the alliance while considering their individual security priorities. This research is particularly relevant to the case of Norway.

Strategic culture also impacts alliance dynamics within NATO. Member states with varying strategic cultures may have different expectations regarding the alliance's role and their own contributions to collective defense. These cultural differences can lead to variations in defense spending behavior. Furthermore, a state's strategic culture influences its preferred military capabilities and readiness. It may prioritize specific capabilities based on what it deems most effective for achieving security objectives.

2.5. Burden-sharing Theory

The theory of "burden-sharing" is introduced as an additional perspective to explore defense budgeting. This theory suggests that countries may increase their defense spending to fulfill their share of the burden within an alliance like NATO. It acknowledges that defense spending decisions can be driven independently of threat perception, as countries aim to contribute their allocated share to collective defense efforts.

Central to NATO's mission is the principle of burden-sharing, which calls for member states to contribute proportionately to the collective defense efforts. Burden-sharing is based on the idea that security is a collective responsibility, and each member should bear a fair share of the costs and efforts required to maintain the alliance's effectiveness (Ikenberry, 2018, p. 12). The principle of burden-sharing is enshrined in Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which emphasizes the need for equitable distribution of responsibilities.

Free-riding within an alliance occurs when a member state contributes less than what is deemed a fair share to collective efforts. In essence, it involves a situation where certain alliance members benefit from the security provisions and resources provided by the collective, without proportionately sharing the burden of responsibilities or costs. This term often surfaces in discussions about defense alliances, such as NATO, where equitable contributions are crucial for maintaining the alliance's effectiveness (Plümper & Neumayer, 2015). Free-riding can manifest in various forms, including lower defense spending, limited military commitments, or a disproportionate reliance on the security guarantees provided by other alliance members. It's akin to enjoying the benefits of a team project without putting in your fair share of the work. Addressing the issue of free-riding is essential for fostering a sense of shared responsibility and ensuring the sustainability of collaborative security arrangements. In the context of burden-sharing, understanding and mitigating free-riding is particularly relevant, as it directly impacts how responsibilities and costs are distributed among NATO members, shaping the dynamics of alliance operations.

The motivation of a hegemon to compensate for smaller states aligns with the obligations of collective defense. When the hegemon actively participates in collective defense efforts, it not only safeguards its own interests but also reinforces the stability of the broader international system (Plümper & Neumayer, 2015). This perspective resonates with the notion proposed by Olson and Zeckhauser (1966) that free-riding behavior emerges from the collective action problem, where states are incentivized to reap the benefits of defense efforts undertaken by others without fully sharing the associated costs (Plümper & Neumayer, 2015; Olson & Zeckhauser, 1966). The hegemon recognizes that allowing free-riding behavior could weaken the overall defense posture of the alliance, compromising its deterrence capabilities and potentially elevating the risk of conflicts or threats to its own security. Consequently, the hegemon is inherently motivated to bear the burden

of free-riding, contributing to the collective good of defense to ensure the alliance's strength and effectiveness.

Understanding alliance behavior in international relations is crucial for understanding states' engagement within alliances like NATO and its implications for defense budgeting. This focus lies on how states perceive, adapt to, and interact within these alliances. Snyder (1997, p. 213) underscores the significance of collective defense commitments within alliances, emphasizing their expected influence on states' defense budget decisions. In alliances like NATO, where members pledge mutual defense in the event of aggression, the commitment to collective security is supposed to be a key driver in shaping defense budgets. States are expected to allocate resources not only to enhance their own military capabilities but also to fulfill their obligations to the alliance, ensuring that NATO's collective defense capabilities remain robust. However, empirical evidence may reveal variations in the extent to which NATO member states allocate resources to defense, potentially showing discrepancies between commitments and actual resource allocations.

Walt (1987, p. 256) highlights the significance of threat perception in driving states to join and maintain alliances, influencing their collective defense commitments. In NATO, threat perception plays a crucial role in shaping states' decisions to be part of the alliance, subsequently impacting their defense budgeting choices. Mearsheimer (2001, p. 98) further delves into balancing and bandwagoning within alliances, explaining states' responses to shared threats. Balancing involves states aligning to counterbalance perceived threats, while bandwagoning means aligning with the threatening power. Snyder (1997, p. 135) explores the collective defense commitments that bind states in alliances like NATO, shaping both their security policies and defense budget decisions. Understanding the impact of alliance politics on defense budgeting is crucial, especially in NATO, where collective defense is fundamental.

2.6. Critiques and Limitations

While threat perception and proximity to threat theories offer valuable insights into defense budgeting, it's essential to recognize that they are not the sole determinants of defense spending. The GDP perspective, which posits that smaller countries tend to allocate less of their economic resources to defense compared to larger countries within NATO (Plümper & Neumayer, 2015), introduces an additional layer of complexity. Critics argue that these theories oversimplify the multifaceted factors influencing defense budgeting decisions. Duffield et al. (1999) suggest that the collective nature of NATO and the alliance's shared commitment to defense also contribute to defense spending patterns. Moreover, the historical experiences of states and their strategic cultures, as highlighted by Katzenstein (1996, p. 42), add further dimensions to defense behavior.

Threat perception, the GDP perspective, historical experiences, strategic culture and burden-sharing theory provide fundamental frameworks for understanding defense budgeting decisions within NATO. These theories, as highlighted by prominent scholars such as Walt, Jervis, Blank, and Plümper and Neumayer, emphasize the importance of accurate threat assessment, the amplifying effect of proximity to potential security threats, and the economic capacity of nations. However, these theories should be considered alongside other influential factors, such as alliance dynamics, historical experiences, and strategic culture. These theories collectively provide a comprehensive framework for understanding defense budgeting decisions within NATO. They emphasize the multifaceted nature of resource allocation, influenced by economic capacity, threat perception, historical experiences, strategic culture, and burden-sharing dynamics. This theoretical foundation is essential for the forthcoming analysis, where we will apply these theories to gain nuanced insights into NATO member states' defense budgeting.

Plümper and Neumayer (2015) introduce a nuanced dimension to the analytical framework by incorporating the growth in military spending over time as a key metric (p. 247). This temporal aspect enables a more comprehensive and dynamic analysis of countries' contributions to collective defense efforts within NATO. The measurement provides valuable insights into the evolving commitment of nations to defense, offering clarity on the motivations behind specific behaviors within the alliance. By tracking changes in defense expenditure patterns, it unveils whether countries are intensifying or diminishing their defense investments relative to economic capacity and perceived threats. The incorporation of this measurement recognizes that defense spending trends over time significantly impact a country's dedication to alliance defense efforts. Plümper and Neumayer's method seeks to capture the temporal dynamics of countries' behaviors, providing a deeper understanding of their enduring contributions to collective defense. Their research supports the argument that countries positioned farther from potential security threats may exhibit a lower inclination to contribute to the alliance, driven by perceptions of reduced immediacy or relevance to their national security interests (Plümper & Neumayer, 2015; Gartzke, 1998).

3. Empirical Analysis

NATO consists of democratic countries where military expenditures are subject to political considerations (Keohane, 1984, p. 182). In democratic societies, defense spending decisions are influenced by domestic political dynamics, public opinion, and the perception of national security interests. Democratic countries face political constraints and considerations when it comes to military expenditures. Leaders may be reluctant to make election promises that involve increased taxes or higher military spending without a clear and immediate perceived threat. To unravel the complexities and variations in member states' approaches, a structured three-step methodology is used. Each step peels back layers of understanding, offering insights into the interplay of factors that shape defense decisions within the alliance.

Step 1: Overall Assessment of the Explanatory Models

Our first step involves a panoramic exploration, providing an overall view of NATO's defense landscape through the lens of five comprehensive perspectives—GDP, Threat Perception, Historical Experiences, Strategic Culture, and Burden-Sharing Theory. This initial overview serves as a canvas, mapping the contours of defense expenditures relative to economic capacities, the influence of historical legacies, the nuanced interplay of strategic cultures, and the dynamics of burden-sharing principles.

Step 2: Norway in Focus

Then the focus will be on Norway. Norway's geographical proximity to Russia, historical experiences, and threat perceptions converge to shape a unique approach to defense spending. By dissecting Norway's defense strategy within the alliance, we delve into the nation's economic considerations, historical underpinnings, and strategic choices. This focused examination aims to

unearth the factors that set Norway apart within NATO, providing a foundation for comparative analysis.

Step 3: Comparative Analysis - Poland and Denmark

With Norway as the benchmark, the third step invites a comparative exploration with two NATO counterparts: Poland and Denmark. By juxtaposing their defense behaviors against the backdrop of the five perspectives, we aim to highlight distinctions and commonalities. Poland, with its assertive response to historical and regional threats, and Denmark, emphasizing collaborative security and diplomatic solutions, present contrasting narratives. Through this comparative lens, we seek to unravel how varying threat perceptions, historical contexts, and strategic cultures influence defense decisions within NATO.

By systematically applying the explanatory models and focusing on specific case studies, it is then possible to decipher the underlying dynamics that shape member states' defense postures. The empirical analysis chapter stands as a testament to the nuanced interplay of factors within NATO, shedding light on the diverse approaches that contribute to the alliance's collective strength.

3.1. Overall Assessment of the Explanatory Models

Graph 3 : Defence expenditure as a share of GDP (%)

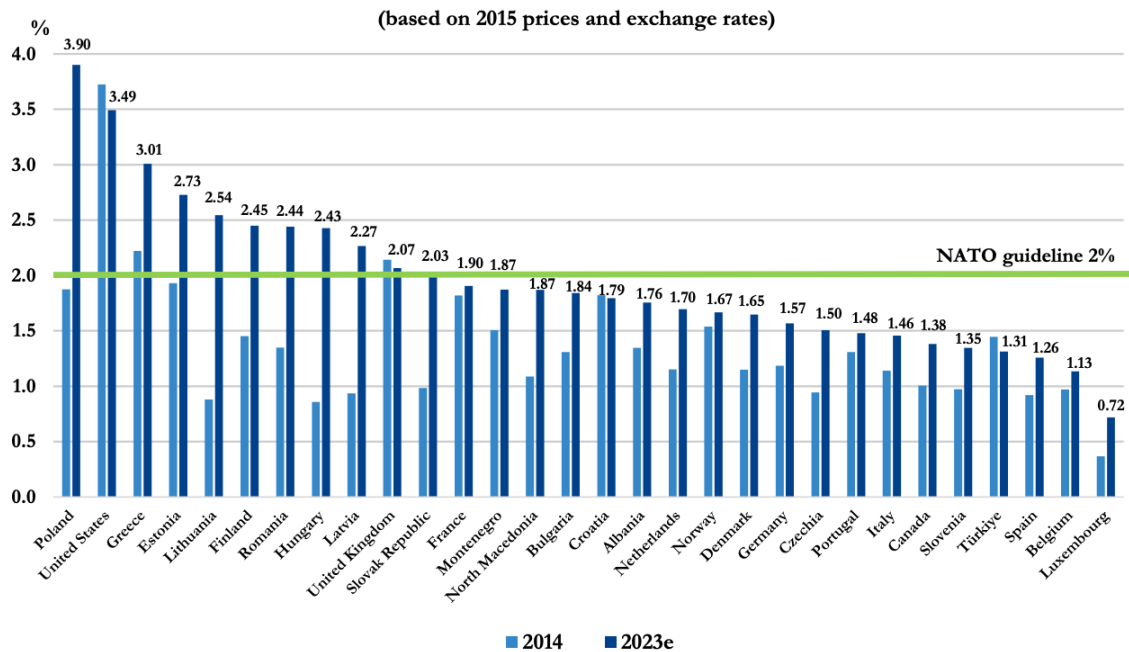


Figure 2 Defense expenditure as a share of GDP 2014 and estimate for 2023

Source for Figure 2:

(NATO press release 7 July 2023, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_216897.htm)

Figure 2 illustrates the annual defense spending as a share of GDP for NATO countries in 2014, a pivotal year marked by Russia's annexation of Crimea, and offers estimates for 2023. In 2014, only three NATO countries met the 2% guideline, a stark contrast to the projected 11 countries meeting the guideline in 2023. This shift prompts an exploration into the nuanced patterns shaping defense expenditures within the alliance.

The threat perception theory gains prominence as member states respond to evolving security landscapes (Walt, 1987; Plümper & Neumayer, 2015). The subjective nature of perceived threats, heightened by geopolitical events like Russia's actions in Crimea, becomes a crucial determinant in defense budget decisions. Alliance behavior, characterized by diverse geopolitical contexts,

witnesses varied responses to perceived threats, reflecting in defense postures. The surge in defense spending among frontline and former Soviet Union states, particularly Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania, aligns seamlessly with the threat perception theory. Proximity to Russia, accentuated by the geopolitical events in 2014, has heightened perceived threats, driving these nations to bolster their security capabilities. This resonates with the theory's premise that states closer to potential threats tend to allocate a higher proportion of resources to defense (Walt, 1987; Plümper & Neumayer, 2015). The complexities of Russian proximity and the presence of Russian-speaking populations compound these nations' security challenges, contributing to increased defense expenditures in response to these specific threats. Research underscores a consequential correlation between states' threat perceptions and their defense spending decisions. Notably, the closer states are to perceived security challenges, the greater resources they allocate to defense. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Eastern European NATO members like Poland and the Baltic states, which view Russia as a more immediate and tangible threat due to their proximity. The proximity to a potential adversary, such as Russia, profoundly influences these states' defense spending behavior. The closeness of the threat accentuates the urgency of being prepared and secure, driving them to prioritize military expenditures. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the existence of diverse threat perceptions among NATO member states, leading to distinct resource allocation patterns based on their varying perspectives of the security environment.

Within NATO, the GDP Perspective, conventionally linking economic size to defense spending, requires a nuanced interpretation. The alliance's diverse membership, encompassing economies of various sizes, prompts a reevaluation of this perspective. Member states, mindful of collective security obligations, navigate a complex landscape where shared responsibilities and geopolitical considerations influence defense allocations. Contrary to the GDP perspective, which posits that smaller countries allocate less to defense, the observed trends challenge this economic size-based

explanation. For instance, countries like Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia, despite their relatively smaller economies, have exhibited substantial increases in defense spending as a share of GDP from 2014 to 2023. The trends suggest that geopolitical threats and historical experiences wield more influence on NATO defense spending decisions, rendering the GDP perspective less explanatory in this context.

Historical experiences play a lasting role in shaping defense strategies. The alliance's membership, characterized by diverse historical encounters, is evident in the distinct defense expenditure patterns exhibited by its member nations. Notably, Cold War legacies continue to influence the defense behaviors of countries with historical ties to that era. A clear illustration of this is observed in the significant surge in defense spending by nations like Poland and the Baltic states, all of which have historical connections to the Cold War. This uptick in defense expenditures aligns seamlessly with the historical experience perspective, indicating that these countries, shaped by historical interactions with the Soviet Union, prioritize defense spending in response to enduring security concerns. This alignment reinforces the enduring impact of historical experiences on defense behavior within NATO, echoing the findings of previous research on this subject.

NATO's tapestry of member states weaves together diverse strategic cultures, influencing defense postures and budgetary choices (Katzenstein, 1996; Johnston, 1995). Powerful nations like the UK and France contribute unique perspectives to the alliance's collective security dynamics. The analysis delves into the manifestation of these strategic cultures in defense spending decisions, unraveling how distinct beliefs and values shape the broader NATO framework. The interpretative lens of strategic culture adds depth to our understanding, especially in the cases of the UK and France. As these nations consistently exhibit assertive strategic cultures, emphasizing robust military postures and substantial defense allocations, it elucidates the observed trends in defense

spending. Analyzing the figure in this context may offer valuable insights into how distinct strategic cultures shape defense budgeting decisions among NATO member states (Katzenstein, 1996).

The burden-sharing theory assumes heightened significance (Ikenberry, 2018). Member states navigate a delicate balance between national interests and collective responsibilities. Alliance behavior, influenced by a sense of responsibility and commitment to equitable distribution of burdens, is a focal point of our analysis. By scrutinizing defense spending decisions through the lens of burden-sharing, we aim to unravel the complexities of collective responsibility within the NATO framework. The interplay between alliance behavior and burden-sharing dynamics provides insights into the intricate dynamics that define the alliance's resource allocation. The observed rise in defense spending among countries not immediately under direct threat, exemplified by instances like the Netherlands and Denmark, aligns with the burden-sharing theory. These nations may be contributing to collective defense efforts within NATO, reflecting a commitment to the equitable distribution of responsibilities (Ikenberry, 2018). This underscores that defense spending decisions are not solely driven by immediate threats but also by a sense of responsibility within the alliance.

3.2. Norway in Focus

Norway, as a member of NATO, plays a considerable role in the alliance's defense efforts due to its strategic position as a frontline state bordering Russia. The country relies on collective defense and the solidarity of its alliance partners to ensure its security (Cooper & Zycher, 1989). Being a NATO member provides Norway with the reassurance that it can count on the support and assistance of other member states in the face of any potential security threat.

Norway's defense strategy within NATO is intricately woven into its geographical proximity to Russia and shaped by historical experiences. Examining Norway's history, current threat

perceptions, and budgeting choices allows us to unravel the factors influencing its approach to defense spending. This preliminary exploration sets the stage for a broader comparative analysis with neighboring countries like Poland and Denmark. By dissecting what sets Norway apart from its counterparts, we aim to gain deeper insights into how elements such as proximity to threats, threat perceptions, and defense commitments impact a nation's defense budget decisions.

As one of NATO's founding members and a frontline state bordering Russia, Norway holds a strategic position in the alliance's defense architecture. On the other hand, Norway relies on collective defense and the solidarity of alliance partners to ensure its security (Cooper & Zycher, 1989). Norway actively participates in NATO missions, exercises, and other alliance activities, demonstrating its commitment to fulfilling collective defense obligations and strengthening the cohesion of the alliance (Bergersen, 2017). Norway's engagement in NATO missions beyond its borders (Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Kosovo etc.) highlights its willingness to contribute to international security efforts and share the burden of collective defense. After the end of the Cold War, Norway's engagement in international operations somewhat changed character. They were more often led by NATO rather than the UN. After 2000 a further change took place where Norway's contribution to international NATO operations more often comprised combat units like special forces as well as fighter planes. The contributions to international operations have kept increasing in intensity, complexity, and manpower during the period from 1990 to 2015 – at the same time as the total manpower in the Norwegian armed forces has been reduced. (Gustaven, Lien, and Tollefsen, 2017, p. 4)

To uphold a good relationship with NATO (in particular with the US) and secure the relevance of the NATO alliance has been the main goals for Norway's contribution to NATO and US led anti-terror efforts in Afghanistan. (Norges offentlige utredninger. 2016: 8, p. 9). This indicates that

demonstrating that Norway is a good ally and one to count on for NATO's collective defense efforts, has been viewed as important. Norway has thus put a lot of emphasis on building up goodwill across the alliance and has not held back in assisting in international NATO operations. This reflects Norway's dependence of the alliance.

Norway's Defense Spending Behavior over Time

The objective is to reevaluate Norway's defense spending behavior within the NATO framework while extending the analysis over a more extensive timeframe. Covering the period from 1988 to 2023 offers a comprehensive context for comprehending the evolving patterns and trends in Norway's defense investments. The annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 emerged as a pivotal juncture, prompting Norway to reevaluate its defense posture and increase its contributions to collective defense efforts.

Norway's defense spending decisions are influenced by domestic political dynamics and the perception of national security interests. In the absence of a perceived threat, democratic countries, including Norway, might have leaned towards free-riding behaviors, driven by political considerations. However, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 drastically shifted threat perceptions, leading to increased concerns about Russia's activities in the Baltic Sea region.

An analysis of defense spending from 2014 to 2022 reveals a nuanced shift in Norway's defense investments. Empirical findings indicate an increasing trend in defense investments during this period. Norway has actively modernized its military capabilities and enhanced its contributions to NATO missions and exercises. This trend suggests the need to analyze defense spending over a

longer time span to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Norway's evolving defense behavior.

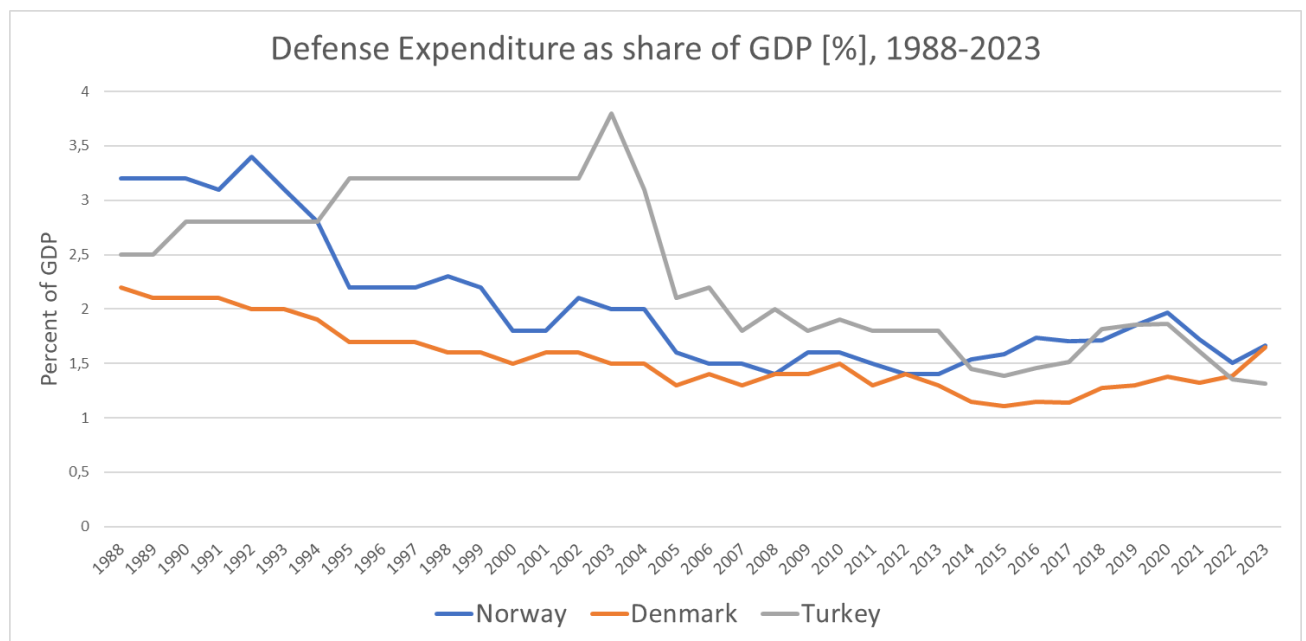


Figure 3 Defense Expenditures as percentage of GDP for the years 1988-2023. (2023 numbers are estimates.)

Source for Figure 3: Data from NATO's press releases on defense expenditures.

Figure 3 illustrates Norway's defense expenditures as a percentage of GDP for the years 1988-2023, including Denmark and Turkey. Examining this graph alongside data from NATO's press releases on defense expenditures reveals that during the Cold War, Norway consistently allocated up to 3% of its GDP to defense. This figure, not notably low, contrasts with other NATO members such as Denmark and Turkey, the latter being the only other country with a land border with the Soviet Union. The inclusion of these comparative figures emphasizes that Norway has the capacity to allocate substantial resources to defense when deemed necessary.

Examining defense spending beyond the designated timeframe unveils valuable insights into Norway's shifting defense behavior. Encompassing the years from 1988 to 2020, it becomes evident that defense expenditures gradually decreased after the Cold War's conclusion but displayed a clear resurgence from 2013 onwards (Figure). This broader perspective accentuates the dynamic nature of defense spending and underscores theories that prioritize proximity to the threat and aligning defense efforts with national security interests.

In response to the evolving threat landscape, Norway intensified its defense investments, modernized its military capabilities, and expanded its contributions to NATO missions and exercises from 2014 to 2022. This underscores the critical importance of proximity to the threat and the necessity of aligning defense efforts with national security interests. By examining a more extensive timeframe and delving deeper into the data, a more comprehensive image emerges of the interrelationship between defense spending, threat perception, and national security interests. This enhanced understanding significantly contributes to the broader discourse on free-riding dynamics and the factors that shape Norway's participation in collective defense efforts within NATO.

These trends in defense expenditure patterns indicate a shift in priorities. After the end of the Cold War, there was a perception that traditional military forces became less relevant, leading to a decrease in military equipment spending. However, the evolving security landscape has prompted Norway to reevaluate its defense requirements, leading to an increased focus on military equipment investment and a corresponding decline in emphasis on personnel.

3.2.1. Norway's Perception of Russia Pre 2014

Norway's stance toward Russia pre-2014, particularly before the Crimea annexation, reflected a nuanced interplay of cooperation and caution. While fostering diplomatic and economic ties, Norway remained vigilant regarding Russia's military undertakings and regional ambitions. By 2013, a growing sense of unease regarding Russia's conduct started to permeate Norwegian perspectives. The decision to prominently feature the FOCUS reports in this analysis stems from their significance as official expressions of Norwegian threat assessment. These reports serve as comprehensive and authoritative documents that analyze Russia's aspirations, military activities, and foreign policy objectives. Given the nuanced nature of Norway's stance toward Russia, particularly leading up to the Crimea annexation in 2014, the FOCUS reports provide a unique and invaluable insight into the Norwegian perspective. They not only shed light on the intricacies of Russia's conduct but also capture the evolving dynamics of diplomatic, economic, and military relations between Norway and Russia.

The 2013 FOCUS report on Russia presented a detailed analysis of Russia's aspirations, emphasizing its pursuit of great power status and the rise of authoritarianism within its political structure. The report highlighted Russia's foreign policy objectives of regional integration, with a notable interest in fostering collaboration with Norway in the northern regions. However, given Norway's NATO membership, the nation's viewpoint could not solely be shaped by bilateral relations, as Russia tended to engage European nations bilaterally rather than strengthening connections with NATO and the EU.

The FOCUS report also outlined Russia's complex relationship with NATO. Skepticism toward NATO activities, such as military deployments in countries bordering Russia, and contentious issues like the European missile defense system and Georgia's NATO aspirations, were identified as

sources of tension. Despite these, Russia expressed a willingness to cooperate with NATO on shared interests, such as facilitating NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan. While the FOCUS report did not explicitly signal a perceived threat from Russia in Norway's eyes, it highlighted Russia's inclination toward cooperation and low tensions in the northern regions. However, Norway's NATO affiliation suggested that certain conflict issues with Russia might be viewed through a broader alliance perspective.

Norway's apprehensions were further fueled by Russia's military intervention in Georgia in 2008, raising concerns about potential future actions. The deteriorating security situation in Ukraine in 2013 and early 2014, culminating in the Crimea annexation, heightened unease and uncertainty among Norwegian policymakers and defense officials.

From 2014 to 2022, Russia underwent significant transformations in its domestic and foreign policies, as well as military activities, amidst challenges, power ambitions, and strained relationships with the West. The FOCUS reports by the Norwegian Intelligence Service have been instrumental in unraveling these developments, providing a rich source for examining defense contributions and burden-sharing within NATO.

In 2014, the FOCUS report spotlighted Russia's annexation of Crimea and involvement in the Ukraine conflict, resulting in strained relations with the West and subsequent economic sanctions. Despite budget constraints, Russia continued its military modernization with investments in mobile systems, special forces, and precision-guided weapons.

Simultaneously, the reports stressed Russia's intensified focus on the Arctic, driven by its strategic importance, contributing significantly to Russia's GDP and exports. Domestically, the reports noted

Vladimir Putin's solid victory in the 2018 presidential election, ensuring political continuity. While highlighting stability, challenges such as oil dependence persisted, restraining growth potential. Tensions with the West recurred, marked by a critical view of institutions like NATO and the EU. Russia sought alternative partnerships, particularly with China, India, and Brazil, as it prepared for enduring Western sanctions.

In 2020, constitutional amendments consolidated power in the presidency, signaling Putin's continued influence. The FOCUS reports highlighted declining popularity, sparking opposition demands for transparency and democratic reforms. Russia's Middle East policy aimed at circumventing sanctions and establishing alternative security partnerships, while conflicts with Ukraine and influence in global politics continued. The 2021 reports emphasized Russia's increasing power ambitions, aggressiveness, and societal homogenization, focusing on intelligence and influence activities. By 2022, overt use of force domestically and internationally became evident, challenging the West through military, economic, intelligence, and influence operations. The Arctic retained strategic importance, and Russia's armed forces underwent modernization.

Analyzing these trends, the FOCUS reports offer a crucial lens into the evolution of Norway's threat perception. Delving into Russia's ambitions, actions, and their implications for NATO and its members, the reports underscore a dynamic security landscape. The changing nature of these threats emphasizes the necessity for cooperation and burden-sharing within NATO to effectively address challenges posed by Russia. The transformative phase experienced by Russia from 2014 to 2022 significantly influenced global geopolitics.

In the context of Norwegian perspectives, the FOCUS reports illuminate a discernible shift in threat perception. While not as pronounced as in neighboring countries sharing a border with Russia, the

reports reveal a noteworthy adjustment in how Norway perceives and responds to security challenges. Consequently, they provide substantive grounds for advocating an increase in defense appropriations. This call aligns with observed shifts in the threat landscape, even if not as robust as the responses from neighboring nations. The insights derived from these reports should inform strategic decisions, guiding the allocation of resources to navigate the evolving security challenges posed by Russia.

Norway's defense spending will further be explored within NATO through the lenses of five key frameworks: GDP perspective, threat perception, historical experiences, strategic culture, and burden-sharing. The analysis encompasses historical foundations, contemporary threat dynamics, and defense budgeting behaviors to offer a comprehensive understanding.

3.2.2. GDP Perspective

Norway's defense spending decisions, rooted in its economic capacity, defy conventional expectations that link defense allocations to the size of a nation's GDP. Despite traditional theories suggesting that smaller nations would contribute less to defense, Norway's distinctive factors, such as its robust economy and geopolitical position, challenge the notion that GDP significantly influences its NATO contributions.

Rongved (2019) delves into the "2% target," emphasizing the importance of NATO members working towards spending 2% of GDP on defense. This target can be considered a tool rather than a goal itself, intended to enhance defense capabilities collectively. There's a discussion about the achievability of the 2% target, considering Norway's economic status and historical defense spending. There are also concerns about the drawbacks of nominal goals and the 2% target, questioning whether this target is the best approach, drawing parallels with other policy areas where

nominal goals have had both positive and negative effects. The potential downsides of the 2% target could possibly create financial imbalances and inefficiencies in defense spending. Additionally, the discussion touches on the challenges of reaching the 2% target, addressing potential issues related to overspending without proportional improvements in defense capabilities, and exploring the possibility of specialization within NATO member countries and the need for better coordination of defense spending (Rongved, 2019).

Despite the criticisms, Rongved argues that Norway should still strive to meet the 2% target by 2024, considering it as an insurance premium that the country has committed to paying as part of the NATO alliance. He acknowledges the political significance of the 2% target and suggests that Norway should fulfill its commitment, albeit with a cautious approach to avoid inefficient or harmful spending (Rongved, 2019). The size of GDP, often considered a primary factor, has poor explanatory power regarding Norway's defense budget decisions. Notably, the nation's high GDP per capita, despite its smaller size, diminishes the relevance of GDP alone in understanding its defense expenditures. This reveals a nuanced and convoluted relationship where economic prosperity, particularly GDP per capita, takes precedence over the simplistic link between GDP size and defense spending. Thus, the prevalent GDP perspective fails to offer a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics guiding Norway's defense budget decisions.

3.2.3. Threat Perception

Geopolitical challenges, particularly in Norway's proximity to Russia, contribute to distinctive threat perceptions. How has Norway's contemporary assessment of security risks influenced defense budgeting decisions? Unraveling the narrative of threat perception unveils the motivations behind Norway's defense strategy.

Norway's geographical position, situated in close proximity to Russia, inherently shapes its threat perception. The thesis delves into current geopolitical dynamics, considering Russia's resurgence as a military power and its assertive actions in Eastern Europe. By evaluating Norway's responses to regional shifts, such as Russia's annexation of Crimea and ongoing activities in Ukraine, the aim is to uncover the nuanced drivers behind Norway's contemporary threat perception. While it is important to acknowledge that other factors, such as political considerations and economic constraints, do play a role in shaping Norway's defense priorities, we will focus on the profound influence of threat perceptions, particularly the perceived proximity to potential security threats, on Norway's defense spending choices (Cooper & Zycher, 1989).

Recent security challenges, such as cyber threats and hybrid warfare, contribute to the evolving threat landscape, and thus this analysis seeks to provide insights into why Norway may stand out in its threat perception within the broader NATO context. Brusgaard (2019) discusses the challenges posed by Russia, focusing on the perspectives in Norway and NATO. There is a consensus on the need to deter Russia, but there is disagreement on the nature of the challenge it presents. The annexation of Crimea and ongoing conflict in Ukraine have raised concerns about Russia's aggressive foreign policy. There are different interpretations of Russia's intentions, ranging from a revisionist and expansionist view to a more defensive perspective. The possibility of Russia attacking a NATO member, similar to its actions in Ukraine, is considered, and therefore the understanding of Russia's security interests is important to comprehend the nature of the challenge (Brusgaard, 2019).

When looking at Norway's reassurance policy in the wake of NATO's Nordic enlargement, it becomes imperative to delve into the multifaceted nature of its functions. The recent public

conversation between NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt underscored the pressing need to reevaluate Norway's approach in the face of heightened geopolitical tensions, epitomized by Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine (Nortvedt, 2023). The historical backdrop of Norway's security policy, characterized by a delicate balance between deterrence and reassurance, has been integral to its standing as NATO's historic northern frontline with Russia. The roots of this policy stretch back to the post-World War II era when Norway, recognizing its vulnerability in the proximity of the Soviet Union, opted for the Atlantic Treaty as a shield against potential threats. This early commitment was marked by self-imposed restrictions on Allied military activity on Norwegian territory, a strategy often referred to as a "balancing act" between deterrence and reassurance.

The potential scenarios involving Russia and Norway, including limited bilateral conflicts, conflicts between Russia and NATO with implications for Norway, and situations outside Norway that could affect its security and thus the importance of NATO solidarity and the role of Norwegian capabilities in influencing Russian behavior is more crucial. The discussion burrows into Russia's military capabilities, emphasizing its modernization efforts and experiences gained from operations in Ukraine and Syria. Russia's strategy is described as focusing on disrupting the enemy's political and military systems through both kinetic and non-kinetic operations. There is a need for Norwegian defense planning to consider various scenarios of Russian intentions, acknowledging that some situations may be influenced by Norway's ability to resist political and military pressure, while others may be beyond its control (Brusgaard, 2019).

Hilde (2019) discusses the historical context and shifts in Norway's defense policy, focusing on the reception and support of allied forces on Norwegian soil. In the late 1980s, Norway was a priority area for approximately 24,000 allied soldiers and 200 to 300 aircraft. The Defense Study of 1985

highlighted the extensive task of receiving and supporting these forces, emphasizing the need for infrastructure development, pre-positioning of equipment, air defense, and building operational and administrative support systems (Hilde, 2019)

With the end of the Cold War, the importance of such investments diminished, and a significant restructuring of the Norwegian defense began around the millennium. The concept of "innsatsforsvaret" (operational defense) was introduced in the early 2000s, shifting the focus from hosting allied forces to participating in international operations. The attention and prioritization of allied reinforcements declined over the years, leading to the reduction of certain support battalions. However, the Russian foreign policy shift in 2007 and subsequent events in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014) prompted a change in Norwegian security policy. The "nærområdeinitiativ" (neighborhood initiative) in NATO and the introduction of "terskelforsvaret" (threshold defense) in the 2013–2016 defense plan reflected this shift, emphasizing deterrence and renewed attention to allied reinforcements (Hilde, 2019).

The current challenge (as of the article's publication in 2019) involves the resurgence of the importance of collective defense and allied reinforcements in Norwegian and NATO planning. There is a need to update defense plans for the period 2021-2024, considering the evolving security situation. The Norwegian Defense presented a concept for receiving allied reinforcements in 2019, emphasizing the vital role of such support for Norway's defense (Hilde, 2019).

Two external drivers influencing this shift are NATO's Graduated Response Plans, focusing on the NATO Response Force, and the U.S. European Deterrence Initiative (EDI), which aims to enhance American military presence in Europe. The U.S. has identified Norway as a strategic location for its

increased engagement, contributing to the importance of receiving allied reinforcements (Hilde, 2019).

Then there are the financial implications of preparing for allied reinforcements, highlighting the resource-intensive nature of infrastructure development and maintenance. The role of NATO and the U.S. in funding such initiatives are discussed and suggests that Norway must bear the majority of the investment and operating costs. There is a need for Norway to balance its military self-sufficiency with the capacity to receive and support allied reinforcements. It anticipates challenges in funding and suggests that political decisions will be crucial in determining the prioritization of resources in the upcoming defense planning period. The author urges the government to make strategic choices that align with Norway's security interests and to navigate the political challenges associated with funding defense capabilities and allied support structures (Hilde, 2019).

In light of the evolving security environment and the Nordic NATO enlargement, it is pertinent to scrutinize the three primary functions that constitute Norwegian reassurance policy: crisis management, deterrence calibration, and conciliation. These functions, though interconnected, each play a distinct role in shaping Norway's response to the dynamic geopolitical landscape (Nortvedt, 2023).

The increasing militarization of the High North and the potential for unintended incidents necessitate a continued emphasis on crisis management within Norway's reassurance policy. Measures such as the hotline between Norwegian and Russian military headquarters and the INCSEA agreement stand as tangible examples of efforts to mitigate risks, avoid misunderstandings, and prevent unwanted escalations. In a climate where mutual trust between

Russia and the West erodes, upholding crisis management aspects remains crucial, reflecting not only Norway's interests but also contributing to regional stability (Nortvedt, 2023).

3.2.4. Strategic Culture

Norway's strategic culture, characterized by a commitment to collective defense efforts, influences its military postures and resource allocations. How does Norway's adherence to NATO's goals and values shape its defense budget decisions, and how does it distinguish itself from other member states? To gain a comprehensive understanding of how Norway shapes its defense budget decisions, it's essential to conduct a critical analysis of the impact of its strategic culture.

Strategic Hedging

By exploring the unique strategies employed by small states, particularly Norway, within the NATO context, we gain essential insights. Strategies like strategic hedging, bridge-building through multilateral diplomacy, and adaptive security play a pivotal role in shaping defense budget behavior. These approaches illustrate how small states effectively manage their alliance commitments alongside other security interests and regional dynamics. This exploration contributes to a comprehensive understanding of Norway's distinctive defense budgeting approach within NATO.

Strategic hedging is a nuanced strategy characterized by its emphasis on flexibility and a reluctance to over-depend on NATO for security (Tunnsjø, 2011). It seeks to strike a careful balance between NATO obligations and other regional or global security partnerships and priorities. Tunnsjø suggests that strategic hedging is an important aspect to consider when analyzing Norway's defense budgeting behavior. This strategy enables Norway to judiciously manage its commitments within

NATO while also accommodating other security interests. It has the potential to influence how Norway allocates its defense budget when compared to larger NATO states (Tunsjø, 2011).

Furthermore, Norway's security strategy places a strong emphasis on adaptability and resilience rather than solely relying on sheer military capabilities. This approach involves preparing for a diverse range of security challenges, including hybrid threats, and prioritizes agility and adaptability in responding to evolving security landscapes. It is pertinent to investigate whether Norway's security strategy indeed focuses on adaptability and resilience, and this exploration aims to reveal how this approach influences defense budget allocations, providing insights into why Norway's budget behavior differs from that of other NATO member states.

The Norwegian balancing act between Deterrence and Reassurance

Regarding military capabilities, a crucial element in defense policy, Norway's strategy may prioritize specific capabilities such as maritime, arctic, or cyber capabilities, aligning with its distinctive security needs and regional positioning, as suggested by Biddle (2004). To thoroughly assess Norway's defense budget, it's imperative to evaluate these specific military capabilities, enabling comparisons with those of its NATO counterparts (Biddle, 2004). Additionally, security strategies, including Norway's emphasis on comprehensive security and hybrid threats play a central role in influencing the allocation of defense budgets. These strategies serve as guiding frameworks for a state's approach to security challenges, subsequently determining how resources are allocated.

Bjerga (2019) discusses the prerequisites for a defense concept in Norway, emphasizing the need for political consensus on whether such a concept is necessary and at what level it should operate, highlighting the complexity of linking the military structure to security goals, advocating for a total defense approach that includes non-military elements. He also stresses the importance of NATO

and the alliance guarantee in any Norwegian defense concept, addressing challenges in predicting the nature and timing of allied reinforcements. Question comes into play whether or not Norway needs a defense concept, considering the challenges in its development and implementation. Two fundamental questions are identified: whether Norway should have a defense concept and, if so, at what level. Further, the practices of neighboring countries like Finland, Sweden, and Denmark is explored, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of detailed national defense concepts versus alliance-based approaches (Bjerga, 2019).

The historical context of Norway's defense concepts, from the Cold War era to the present, is examined. It is suggested that the current security situation necessitates a new, guiding idea for Norway's defense, especially with increased defense funding. It argues for a binding and guiding concept that influences defense development, infrastructure, competence, and training. The question of the level at which the defense concept should operate is discussed, favoring a top-down approach embedded in the upcoming long-term defense plan. There are challenges posed by a bottom-up approach that historically led to rivalry and suboptimal defense efforts, and Bjerga contemplates the possibility of a total defense concept owned by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, acknowledging the need for political decisions on ownership and overarching concepts (Bjerga, 2019).

Before addressing the content of a defense concept, decisions on whether Norway needs one and at what level must be made. It calls for careful consideration by government officials, military experts, and politicians, stressing that a defense concept lacking legitimacy or functionality would be futile. If a defense concept is to be developed, various aspects need closer evaluation, particularly in the context of the new long-term defense plan (Bjerga, 2019).

The core principle of deterrence calibration, aimed at maintaining a low-tension status quo, remains relevant. However, the changing dynamics of NATO's posture, especially with the inclusion of Finland and Sweden, demand a recalibration of this strategy. The geographical aspects of self-imposed restrictions on Allied military presence, while pivotal in the past, may require nuanced adjustments. As we navigate this recalibration, the interconnectedness of NATO measures becomes paramount, emphasizing the need for a cohesive Nordic approach (Nortvedt, 2023).

The transformative element of reassurance, marked by acts of conciliation, faces challenges in the present geopolitical climate. Efforts to soften and transform the nature of the conflict with Russia, once integral to Norway's reassurance policy, have diminished. The disintegration of cooperative projects, such as the Barents cooperation, reflects the current strained relations. However, as we anticipate a long-term coexistence in the High North, avenues for re-establishing cooperation should not be entirely abandoned (Nortvedt, 2023).

The principles and practices of Norway's deterrence and reassurance policy are not static entities but must evolve in tandem with the changing geopolitical landscape. While the core principles endure, the adaptability of practices becomes paramount. The task ahead involves discerning the right questions, differentiating between principles and practices, and effectively communicating these adaptations to Russia, Norway's allies, and the Norwegian public. As Norway navigates this complex terrain, the synergy between historical principles and contemporary practices will be pivotal in shaping a resilient and effective reassurance policy (Nortvedt, 2023).

The concept of "small state realism" emphasizes Norway's interest in maintaining a robust international order with universally binding rules while managing defense and security relations effectively. The role of NATO is important in providing a framework for Norwegian small state

realism, combining treaty-based commitments to UN principles with an implicit hierarchical structure with the U.S. at the top. However, challenging the regulated international order and concerns about the reliability of the U.S. as a patron in the backdrop of changes in structure, states, and actors could cause implications, and the complexity of current long-term planning is highlighted due to Norway's security being influenced by external factors and the potential erosion of strategic principles (Rø, 2019).

The concept of deterrence in the current long-term plan is the criticism of the unnuanced and undercommunicated portrayal of Norwegian deterrence policy. There is a need for a deeper explanation of deterrence and thus effective communication is essential for public understanding, support, and legitimacy (Rø, 2019). Furthermore, the significance of Norway's NATO membership as the most deterrent aspect should be emphasized, suggesting that active political NATO membership is more influential than specific military capabilities. Though the dependence on NATO should remain acknowledged, the importance of national contributions should also be considered, suggesting that well-thought-out infrastructure and support for allied reinforcements contribute significantly to deterrence (Rø, 2019).

The discussion on reciprocity raises concerns about the burden on Norway's defense structure due to contributions to NATO's various operations and initiatives. It is suggested that Norway's contributions should be strategic and mindful of the balance between national and allied commitments. It also touches on the issue of meeting the two percent defense spending target and its implications for autonomy (Rø, 2019).

The concept of the "alliance within the alliance" is emphasized through the strong political and military ties with the U.S. The importance of supporting U.S. initiatives, particularly in the face of

challenges from China, is highlighted. Demonstrating loyalty and prioritizing strategic cooperation with the U.S. is crucial for maintaining credibility within the alliance (Rø, 2019).

There is a vital aspect of vulnerability of the alliance perspective in operationalizing long-term planning, for the purpose of a more nuanced understanding and effective communication of deterrence, emphasizing the strategic balance between national interests and allied commitments, especially in the context of the U.S. as a key ally (Rø, 2019).

Tørrisplass (2019) underscores the significance of integration and joint operations among different branches of the military, emphasizing the changing dynamics of modern warfare. The rapid pace of modern warfare requires swift decision-making, necessitating a network-based defense that facilitates collaboration between various platforms. While acknowledging the challenges posed by traditional military cultures, Tørrisplass argues for a unified understanding of objectives and direction among defense branches to achieve effective joint operations (Tørrisplass, 2019).

There is a need for a scalable and flexible Norwegian defense concept that considers the evolving threat landscape, technological advancements, as well as for effective deterrence and defense. It calls for a holistic approach, combining robust force protection, joint operations, and strategic use of military capabilities to address diverse challenges in different phases of a conflict. The decisions should be made in advance, allowing for quick adaptation and utilization of resources to defend against capable and modern threats while avoiding unintended escalation (Tørrisplass, 2019).

Selvaag underlines the imperative of increased budgets to translate preceding decisions into tangible defense capabilities. It identifies a genuine need to bolster Norway's capacity to both receive and support allied activities. This is framed not only as a national interest but also as part of a broader

strategic objective to strengthen alliance defense, urging increased NATO presence in the northern regions. However, this ambition is not without its financial implications, demanding augmented budgets (Selvaag, 2019). Anticipating an evolving threat landscape, Selvaag highlights the likelihood of future challenges encompassing gray zone incidents, hybrid and cyber warfare, and the advent of sophisticated weaponry accessible to diverse actors. The extended range and formidable defense challenges posed by missiles are particularly emphasized, emphasizing the urgency of addressing these within a constrained timeframe (Selvaag, 2019).

In contemplating the transition to a new reality, Selvaag advocates for a long-term vision, urging the imperative of setting a strategic course extending ten to fifteen years into the future. It posits three foundational elements for the forthcoming long-term plan: the realization of prior investment decisions to enhance defense capabilities, innovative thinking about existing and incoming capacities, and effective accommodation of allied activities.

While acknowledging the political prioritization of allied operations, Selvaag scrutinizes the variable allocation of resources to such endeavors. It proposes a more decisive role for allied activities in shaping long-term planning decisions, impacting the structural framework, infrastructural orientation, and investment priorities. The suggested long-term plan is envisioned as concrete, spanning multiple periods and requiring increased budgetary allocations in subsequent years (Selvaag, 2019).

Selvaag advocates for an overarching theme of adaptability to confront new and evolving threats, suggesting that long-term plans should anchor themselves in a profound understanding of threat actors, establishment of clear national goals, effective resource prioritization, and a dynamic approach to adaptation, especially considering the constantly changing nature of potential challenges (Selvaag, 2019).

Håkenstad (2019) discusses the resurgence of Totalforsvaret (total defense) in Norway and its focus on civil support for military operations on Norwegian soil. There is a need for a collective effort involving civilians to provide the military with necessary resources and expertise. Despite 30 years of restructuring, the concept retains elements of mobilization defense. The main challenge lies in the moral dimension, questioning the ethical and motivational demands placed on citizens participating in total defense. The psychological aspect of mobilization is explored, highlighting the importance of trust, sense of duty, and willingness to contribute to the larger collective (Håkenstad, 2019).

In a crisis, the total defense involves a significant portion of the population, directly or indirectly, affecting various sectors like healthcare, logistics, and security. The psychological dilemma of mobilization readiness is difficult to simulate in peacetime, making it uncertain whether sophisticated preparedness plans and exercises guarantee citizen participation during a real crisis. The role of psychological preparedness and clear leadership communication in defense sector long-term plans is emphasized. Mutual expectations between authorities and the population are therefore crucial in clarifying roles and responsibilities in both military and civilian sectors (Håkenstad, 2019).

Post the 2011 terrorist attack, roles and responsibilities in crisis management have been clarified, and exercises like Trident Juncture indicate civilian willingness to participate if given clear instructions. However, one should be wary against assuming that expectations and role understanding can be improvised during a crisis; they need to be clarified and empowered in advance (Håkenstad, 2019).

Then there is the resilience of civil society in total defense, advocating for strengthened regional, local, and private preparedness. The defense sector can play a crucial role in supporting and coordinating efforts across different sectors, acknowledging the tension between the rigid sectoral division in the Norwegian administration and the seamless cross-sector collaboration required by the total defense concept. One should however be cautious against portraying total defense as a cost-effective solution, emphasizing its role as a safeguard for national values, requiring adequate financial support. It argues that, in the current situation where the threat landscape and economic conditions are different from the Cold War era, total defense should not be viewed as the only alternative. Instead, a clear economic investment in defense is deemed crucial for boosting morale and mobilization readiness. Total defense should be viewed in a broader societal context, emphasizing the importance of trust and societal cohesion. It contends that a well-functioning and adequately funded total defense can contribute to building the necessary trust and strengthening the society it aims to protect (Håkenstad, 2019).

3.2.5. Historical Experiences

The echoes of the Cold War continue to resonate in Norway's defense posture. Examining historical experiences, especially its role as a NATO frontier during the Cold War, provides insights into enduring security concerns that influence contemporary defense priorities. Norway's historical experiences, particularly its geographical proximity to Russia during the Cold War, serve as a foundational aspect in understanding the intricacies of its defense posture within NATO. The historical context will be explored to discern how Norway's past, marked by the tensions and geopolitical dynamics of the Cold War era, continues to influence its present threat perceptions and defense priorities.

During the Cold War, Norway found itself at the frontier of the NATO alliance, sharing a border with the Soviet Union. This proximity exposed Norway to unique security challenges and significantly shaped its defense policies. The historical context of this period, including the strategic importance of the Norwegian Sea and the potential threats emanating from the Soviet Union, left an enduring imprint on Norway's security outlook. Notably, while many NATO nations with borders in Eastern Europe experienced conflicts, occupations, or direct confrontations with Soviet forces, Norway's historical experience stands apart. Unlike several of its counterparts, Norway has never been at war with, occupied, or directly confronted by Russia or the Soviet Union. This historical distinction carries profound implications for Norway's defense posture and threat perceptions.

The absence of direct military conflict or occupation by Russia/the Soviet Union distinguishes Norway's historical experience from that of many other NATO countries. This divergence contributes to the nuanced nature of Norway's threat perceptions, emphasizing a focus on deterrence, cooperation, and regional stability rather than addressing past conflicts or occupations. As Norway navigates its historical experiences within the Cold War context, the absence of direct military confrontation or occupation becomes a crucial factor influencing its contemporary defense priorities. This unique historical background accentuates Norway's commitment to collective security within NATO while shaping a defense posture reflective of its distinct geopolitical context.

Norwegian security policy has a rich historical evolution deeply rooted in the classical European power system. Prior to World War II, Norway's approach emphasized strengthening international law, maintaining neutrality, and seeking protection primarily from Britain. However, the dynamics shifted significantly during the Cold War era, as Norway transitioned from a position of neutrality to active involvement in Western defense cooperation. NATO membership played a pivotal role in providing protection against the perceived Soviet threat.

This period saw the emergence of the concept of bastion defense, stressing the geopolitical significance of the North during the Cold War. Notably, NATO assumed a dual role, not only as a military alliance but also as a political entity that significantly shaped Norwegian security policy (Tamnes, 2019).

In the post-Cold War era, Norway adapted its security policy to the changing international landscape. Emphasizing flexibility and adaptability, the country actively participated in international missions, including peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans and Afghanistan. The relationship with the USA became increasingly vital, extending beyond military collaboration to encompass international security, trade, and technology (Tamnes, 2019). As the security environment continued to evolve, Norway faced new challenges, including Russia's assertiveness, hybrid threats, and disinformation campaigns. The country renewed its focus on NATO collective defense, modernizing its armed forces, and enhancing overall resilience. The geopolitical dynamics in the Arctic region also garnered increased attention, with Norway navigating a delicate balance between economic interests, environmental concerns, and security considerations (Tamnes, 2019).

Today, Norwegian security policy reflects a pragmatic approach guided by the principle of small-state realism. This approach acknowledges the challenges and complexities of the contemporary security landscape. Norway continues to engage actively in international cooperation while ensuring its ability to address evolving security threats. The Arctic region remains a focal point, with tensions requiring careful navigation to reconcile economic, environmental, and security interests. In essence, Norway's security policy has evolved dynamically over the years, demonstrating a nuanced response to global and regional challenges (Tamnes, 2019).

Norwegian security policy has been shaped by a delicate balancing act between integration and shielding measures within NATO. The roots of this policy lie in the experiences of April 9, 1940, when Norway was occupied during World War II. The subsequent realization that neutrality could not shield the country from conflicts led Norway to join the Atlantic Pact in 1949 (Hilde, 2019). The balancing act is influenced by domestic political considerations, with elements of sympathy for the Soviet social system and skepticism towards Western containment policy. Additionally, the realpolitik goal of maintaining low tension with the Soviet Union, with whom Norway shares a border, plays a significant role. This balancing act is evident in two key areas: NATO's command structure and allied presence in and plans for the reinforcement of Norway. Norway's engagement in establishing a NATO headquarters in the country aimed to bind allies to its defense. However, the dissolution of the regional command in Stavanger in 1952 showcased the limitations of Norwegian influence within NATO's command structure (Hilde, 2019).

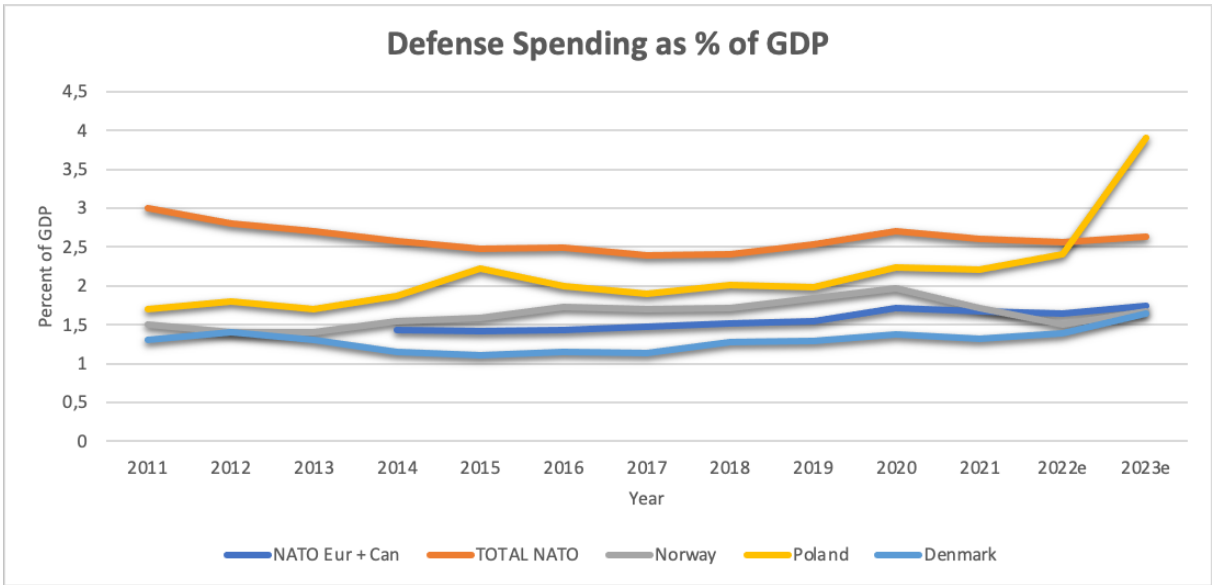
The establishment of the northern command in Kolsås in 1952, under Norwegian leadership, reflected a compromise between NATO's desire for centralized command and Norway's wish for regional influence. While it allowed Norway to integrate its defense into NATO's strategy for the northern region, the national leadership ensured control over its territory. The Suez Crisis in 1956 exposed the limitations of the northern command and emphasized the need for clarity in its role. This crisis prompted Norway to reassess its defense policy, leading to a White Paper in 1957 that prioritized the defense of Norway and highlighted the central role of the northern command (Hilde, 2019).

The balancing act has persisted over seven decades, with changes in self-imposed restrictions such as base policy, limitations on allied activity, and nuclear policy. The policy's dialectic nature is evident in the interplay between integration and shielding measures, reflecting the evolving security

context and defense policy needs. Norwegian security policy is a dynamic compromise that seeks to integrate with NATO while maintaining national control over critical aspects of defense. The focus on NATO's command structure and the northern command illustrates Norway's ongoing efforts to balance its interests in a complex geopolitical landscape (Hilde, 2019).

3.2.6. Burden-Sharing

Norway's approach to burden-sharing within the alliance extends beyond immediate threats. How does the nation contribute to collective defense efforts, and to what extent does its sense of responsibility align with NATO's objectives? An exploration of burden-sharing dynamics sheds light on Norway's commitment to equitable distribution of defense responsibilities. The article: “NATO's byrdefordelingsdebatt og norske alliansebidrag” by Ida Maria Oma, explores Norway's position in NATO's burden-sharing debate, focusing on historical contexts, evolving expectations, and the impact on the country's reputation as an ally. The NATO summit in 2014 set the two percent of GDP on defense as a target, linking it to Article 5 obligations (Oma, 2019).



Figure

4 Defense Spending as percentage of GDP for the years 2011-2023 (2023 are estimates).

Source for Figure 4: Data from NATO's press releases on defense expenditures:

(NATO press release 7 July 2023, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_216897.htm and NATO press release 24 Feb 2014, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_107359.htm)

Rongved (2019) discusses Norway's security policy foundation, emphasizing its reliance on NATO and particularly the United States. He explores the historical context of burden-sharing within NATO and the significance of Article 5 of the Atlantic Treaty. The focus is on the pressure for NATO member states to meet the 2% of GDP defense spending target, with the USA advocating for increased contributions. The Trump administration's approach was framing it as demanding protection money from allies. While burden-sharing is a priority, it is not a new concept in American politics, dating back to the Eisenhower era. With the evolving international tensions, including the Ukraine crisis and increased defense budgets in response to growing threats, the pressure on European countries to contribute more to their defense is unlikely to diminish (Rongved, 2019).

The burden-sharing debate in NATO has evolved through phases, from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era and the recent focus on European defense. The discussion encompasses defense expenditure, capabilities, and contributions to both in-area and out-of-area operations, which are all influenced by geopolitical shifts and changing security priorities (Oma, 2019). Norway's role during the Cold War was known as a "net importer of security", emphasizing its territorial importance and contributions to collective defense against the Soviet threat. The post-Cold War period saw a shift to crisis management and "out of area" operations, with Norway actively participating in NATO missions. Despite Norway's smaller defense budget, its willingness to contribute to international stability is something that needs to be recognized (Oma, 2019).

Rø (2019) discusses the integration of ongoing Norwegian long-term planning into an alliance perspective, emphasizing the alliance perspective in Norwegian security policy as a fundamental norm similar to *jus cogens*, highlighting the dependence on allies, particularly NATO, as a cornerstone for defense planning. The analysis focuses on the tension between national capabilities and alliance-promoting measures in the current long-term planning process. Three aspects of alliance cooperation relevant to Norway are discussed: deterrence, reciprocity, and the "alliance within the alliance." Rø suggests that alliance-promoting measures should take precedence in long-term planning, particularly emphasizing reinforcement-enhancing measures with a clear deterrent effect (Rø, 2019).

In 2018, Norway reaffirmed its commitment to collective defense and intentions to meet NATO spending targets during talks with U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis (Stewart & Doyle, 2018). Despite defense spending below the two percent target, Norway is valued by the United States as an ally actively contributing to NATO through intelligence sharing, military partnerships, and the procurement of advanced U.S. weaponry. Mattis commended Norway's commitment to the two percent goal, acknowledging its leadership in the Nordic region and significant contributions beyond its size, particularly as "NATO's sentinel" in the Arctic (Stewart & Doyle, 2018). The renewed emphasis on collective defense in Europe has brought the two percent target to the forefront. Norway's efforts to increase defense spending are explored, along with challenges in balancing national priorities. The government's Long-Term Defense Plan is discussed, and the likelihood of reaching the two percent target by 2024 is analyzed. The article emphasizes the pressure faced by Norway from both the U.S. and NATO regarding its defense efforts (Oma, 2019).

The delicate balance between national priorities and collective responsibilities is emphasized, highlighting the need for continuous dialogue and adaptation within the alliance. Norway's

reputation as a reliable ally is discussed in the context of its international contributions and the challenges it faces in meeting alliance expectations (Oma, 2019). Oma provides insights that can be connected to various perspectives within international relations and security studies. From a realist perspective, it discusses the historical context of NATO as a security alliance and the power dynamics shaping burden-sharing expectations. From a liberal perspective, it explores the evolving nature of the alliance, emphasizing cooperation and collective responses to security challenges. The challenges Norway faces in meeting the two percent target can be analyzed from both realist and liberal viewpoints, considering the interplay between national interests and alliance commitments. Additionally, the article touches on the constructivist perspective by highlighting the importance of reputation in international relations, particularly how Norway's actions and contributions shape its image as an ally within NATO (Oma, 2019).

Norway's heightened focus on defense and security, triggered by concerns about Russia's activities, is evident in its hosting of NATO exercises and plans to increase the number of U.S. Marines stationed in the Norwegian Arctic. While facing political pressures to increase defense spending, Norway stresses the importance of broader alliances and its valuable contributions, including intelligence gathering on Russian military activities (Stewart & Doyle, 2018). The empirical findings highlight Norway's commitment to meeting NATO spending targets and active involvement in various aspects of collective security, extending beyond defense spending. Recognizing the broader importance of key allies, such as Norway, is crucial, considering their specific regional security concerns and contributions beyond defense spending (Stewart & Doyle, 2018).

3.3. Comparative Analysis - Poland and Denmark

This section delves into brief comparative snapshots of Poland and Denmark, countries that, like Norway, share distinct regional and geopolitical considerations within the alliance. By exploring key aspects of their defense perspectives, including historical experiences, economic foundations, threat perceptions, and strategic cultures, we aim to illuminate the nuanced dynamics influencing defense expenditure decisions. As Norway takes center stage in our study, a brief comparative lens on Poland and Denmark provides valuable insights into the broader landscape of NATO member states' defense behaviors and priorities.

Poland

Eastern European countries like Poland and the Baltic states have historical experiences living under the shadow of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The occupation of Eastern European nations by the Soviet Union significantly influences their threat perception and defense policies, leading them to prioritize defense spending to safeguard their sovereignty and deter potential adversaries.

Poland's commitment to defense within NATO is underpinned by its robust economic foundation. The nation's GDP perspective reveals a consistent effort to meet and exceed the NATO 2% GDP guideline. Poland's economic resilience, demonstrated through sustained GDP growth, has allowed for substantial defense allocations. As of 2023, Poland has consistently surpassed the NATO benchmark, reflecting a strategic economic commitment to collective defense (International Trade Administration, 2022; Strzelecki & Pawlak, 2023).

Poland's threat perception dynamics are shaped by its geopolitical context, particularly concerning Russia. Proximity to potential threats prompts Poland to continually reassess and adapt its defense

strategies. Recent geopolitical events, including Russia's assertive actions, have heightened Poland's threat perception. The nation's agile response involves not only bolstering conventional capabilities but also investing in modernizing its armed forces to counter emerging threats (Cimbala, 2013; Kamiński & Śliwa, 2023).

Poland's historical experiences during the Cold War continue to influence its defense posture. Situated in the Eastern Bloc, Poland's strategic importance and the potential threats it faced have left an enduring impact. The historical context, including the role of the Warsaw Pact and the significance of the Eastern Bloc, contributes to a unique security outlook. The echoes of the Cold War legacy influence Poland's contemporary defense policies and its commitment to NATO (Kupiecki, 2022; Terry, 2000; Clarke & Duber, 2020).

Poland's strategic culture manifests in an assertive military posture and active engagement within NATO. The nation places a premium on maintaining robust military capabilities and actively participating in alliance missions. This strategic inclination is deeply embedded in Poland's defense policies, influencing its collaborative efforts to bolster the overall strength and capabilities of the NATO alliance (Doeser, 2018).

Poland emerges as a key player in NATO's burden-sharing dynamics, actively contributing to the alliance's collective security. The nation's commitments extend beyond immediate threats, showcasing a sense of responsibility in upholding NATO's strength. Poland's defense budgets align with its obligations to NATO, participating in joint exercises and initiatives that contribute to the equitable distribution of responsibilities within the alliance (Terlikowski, 2022).

Denmark

It should be emphasized that Denmark does have some security concerns related to Russia, primarily associated with its proximity to Russian territory in the Arctic region, which includes Greenland, an autonomous territory of Denmark. Their concerns may not be as immediate as those of countries that have close proximity to or share a direct land border with Russia, such as Norway or Poland, it does have a distinct security interest in the Arctic and the defense considerations associated with its territories in that region. These concerns may influence aspects of its defense and security policies.

Denmark's defense strategy within NATO is deeply intertwined with its economic stability. The GDP perspective illuminates Denmark's commitment to meeting NATO's defense spending targets. Despite its smaller economic size compared to some NATO counterparts, Denmark consistently allocates a significant portion of its GDP to defense. This reflects a strategic alignment with the alliance's economic guidelines and underscores Denmark's commitment to collective defense (European Commission, 2023, European Commission 2022).

Denmark's threat perception dynamics are shaped by regional security considerations. Proximity to potential threats and a commitment to regional stability guide Denmark's defense decisions. The nation maintains a flexible approach to adapt to evolving security challenges. Recent regional developments, including changes in the Arctic and Baltic regions, influence Denmark's threat perception. The nation's response involves not only traditional defense capabilities but also strategic adaptations to counter emerging threats (Sørensen, 1986; The Danish Ministry of Defence, 2022).

Denmark's historical experiences, particularly during the Cold War, play a crucial role in shaping its contemporary defense posture. As a NATO member on the frontline during the Cold War, Denmark

faced unique security challenges. The nation's historical context, including its role in NATO's defense strategies, continues to influence Denmark's present threat perceptions and its commitment to the alliance (Gebhard, 2017; Saxi, 2010).

Denmark's strategic culture emphasizes partnership and cooperative security within NATO. The nation prioritizes collaborative efforts and actively engages in multinational operations. Denmark's military posture aligns with the alliance's cooperative security framework, focusing on interoperability and joint initiatives. This strategic culture contributes to Denmark's role as a reliable ally in NATO (Rasmussen, 2005; Struwe, 2012).

Denmark actively participates in NATO's burden-sharing dynamics, contributing to the alliance's collective security. The nation's defense budgets align with NATO commitments, demonstrating a sense of responsibility in upholding the alliance's strength. Denmark's emphasis on cooperative security extends beyond immediate threats, reflecting a commitment to equitable distribution of responsibilities within the alliance (Ringmose, 2009, NATO Watch, 2020).

3.4. Norway, Denmark and Poland

GDP Perspective

In evaluating defense expenditures relative to GDP, Norway, Denmark, and Poland present varying approaches within the NATO framework. Norway, while maintaining a steady defense budget as a percentage of its GDP, emphasizes the economic capacity for its contributions. Denmark, with proportional defense spending aligned with its economic capabilities, emphasizes international collaboration. Poland, experiencing a surge in defense spending, challenges the conventional expectation that smaller economies allocate less to defense.

These divergent patterns underscore the complex relationship between economic factors and defense spending decisions within NATO. While GDP remains a key influencer, the three nations demonstrate different interpretations and implementations of burden-sharing, reflecting their unique economic contexts and strategic priorities.

Threat Perception

Norway, with its proximity to Russia, exhibits a nuanced threat perception, emphasizing the importance of credible deterrence. In contrast, Denmark, despite facing potential security challenges, maintains a threat perception that fosters international cooperation. Poland, situated in Eastern Europe, experiences an acute threat perception due to historical factors and regional dynamics, leading to increased defense spending to counter perceived threats.

This divergence reflects the intricate interplay between geography, historical experiences, and threat assessments in shaping each country's approach to defense within NATO. While Norway prioritizes deterrence, Denmark focuses on collaborative security, and Poland responds assertively to historical and regional threats.

Historical Experiences

Norway's historical context, marked by Cold War tensions, continues to influence its defense posture, particularly in managing Russia-related security challenges. Denmark, with its Cold War history, emphasizes diplomatic solutions, reflecting a commitment to conflict resolution. Poland, shaped by its history with the Soviet Union, places a premium on defense expenditures, driven by enduring security concerns.

These historical legacies contribute to divergent defense behaviors, illustrating how past experiences shape contemporary approaches. Norway's cautious stance contrasts with Denmark's diplomacy-centric approach and Poland's assertive posture, highlighting the enduring impact of historical experiences on NATO member states.

Strategic Culture

The strategic culture of these nations further delineates their defense approaches. Norway, with a focus on credible deterrence, aligns its strategic culture with its threat perception. Denmark's strategic culture emphasizes international collaboration and conflict prevention, reflecting a commitment to diplomatic solutions. Poland, with a history of military interventions, demonstrates a strategic culture rooted in defense preparedness and assertive responses to security challenges.

These varying strategic cultures illuminate the diversity of perspectives within NATO, showcasing how member states' values and approaches influence their defense strategies. Norway's emphasis on deterrence, Denmark's collaborative ethos, and Poland's assertiveness underscores the multifaceted nature of strategic cultures within the alliance.

Burden-Sharing

The burden-sharing dynamics among Norway, Denmark, and Poland offer insights into their commitment to collective defense efforts. Norway, contributing steadily in proportion to its GDP, adheres to burden-sharing principles while addressing immediate threats. Denmark's commitment to international collaboration exemplifies a nuanced burden-sharing approach that extends beyond geographical considerations. Poland's surge in defense spending aligns with burden-sharing principles, driven by its threat perception and historical experiences.

These distinct burden-sharing dynamics underscore the intricate balance between national interests, alliance commitments, and geopolitical considerations. Norway's measured contributions, Denmark's collaborative ethos, and Poland's assertive stance provide a comprehensive view of burden-sharing practices within NATO.

The comparative analysis of Norway, Denmark, and Poland within the NATO alliance reveals a rich tapestry of diverse perspectives and strategic choices. From GDP considerations to threat perceptions, historical legacies, strategic cultures, and burden-sharing dynamics, these nations contribute to the alliance in unique ways. Understanding these distinctions enhances our comprehension of NATO's collective defense efforts and the complex interplay of factors influencing member states' defense behaviors.

3.5. Limitations

While this study provides a comprehensive exploration of Norway's defense spending decisions, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations that may affect the generalizability and depth of the findings. These limitations stem from various factors, including political considerations and economic constraints.

One significant limitation lies in the inherent complexities of political considerations. Norway's defense spending decisions are intricately linked to political elements such as voter popularity, foreign policy objectives, defense strategies, and alliances. The political landscape is dynamic, and decisions on defense allocations can be influenced by short-term political considerations that may not fully align with long-term security needs. Political shifts, changes in leadership, and evolving international relations pose challenges in predicting consistent defense spending patterns.

Despite Norway's robust economy, economic constraints can present limitations in resource allocation. Budget limitations and fiscal priorities, influenced by domestic economic conditions and global economic uncertainties, may impact the extent to which Norway can allocate resources to defense. While the country's economic strength provides a solid foundation, competing demands from various sectors may impose constraints on defense budgets. Economic considerations also extend to broader NATO dynamics, where financial commitments are subject to economic fluctuations and differing national economic priorities (Duffield et al., 1991).

Another limitation involves the temporal dimension of the analysis. The study is based on data available up to [insert date], and defense spending decisions are subject to change over time. Political, economic, and security dynamics evolve, and new developments may impact Norway's future defense spending decisions. Therefore, the findings are reflective of the specific time frame considered and may not capture potential shifts in the country's strategic outlook beyond that period.

While this analysis offers valuable insights into Norway's defense spending decisions, the influence of political considerations, economic constraints, and the temporal context should be considered when interpreting the findings. These limitations underscore the need for ongoing research and analysis to capture the dynamic nature of defense decision-making within the evolving geopolitical landscape.

4. Conclusion

This study has examined five different perspectives on the relative defense spending of NATO countries, focusing on Norway, Poland, and Denmark within the alliance. Each perspective—GDP,

threat perception, historical experiences, strategic culture, and burden-sharing—has provided valuable insights into the complex factors influencing these nations' defense choices. The research scrutinized how these perspectives align with NATO's collective overview and conducted a detailed exploration of Norway's unique context. Additionally, brief comparative analyses with Poland and Denmark were included to offer practical insights into the nuanced landscape of defense expenditure decisions. This thesis enhances our comprehension of the subtle dynamics that shape contemporary defense strategies within the alliance, contributing to a deeper understanding of the complex factors influencing NATO member states' defense choices.

Geopolitical realities cast a significant shadow, intricately influencing strategic considerations. Norway's Arctic concerns, Poland's historical tensions, and Denmark's Baltic Sea focus all contribute to the geopolitical landscape shaping defense priorities. Historical experiences, weaving into the fabric of security outlooks, further enrich our understanding of the nuanced landscape of defense decision-making. Economic capacities, as seen in Norway's robust economy, Poland's modernization commitments, and Denmark's balanced approach, are inherently linked to the perceived threats each nation faces, adding layers of complexity to their defense strategies.

GDP serves as a significant indicator, reflecting the economic capacity of nations and signaling their ability to allocate resources for defense. Norway, boasting a robust economy, exemplifies the connection between economic strength and defense investment. Poland's dedication to modernization accentuates the role of economic capacity in shaping defense decisions, showcasing the nation's commitment to allocating resources for defense in line with its modernization objectives. It is important to note that the pursuit of modernization may influence the willingness to allocate resources rather than directly augmenting economic capacity. This subtlety highlights the complex relationship between economic factors and defense spending decisions. The comparative

analysis emphasizes that GDP alone doesn't fully elucidate the variations in defense spending; instead, it interacts intimately with factors such as threat perception and historical experiences.

Undoubtedly, threat perception emerges as the paramount explanatory factor. Norway's measured response, despite its proximity to Russia, brings forth the nuanced interplay between perceived threat levels and defense contributions. Poland, drawing from historical tensions, showcases an augmented defense budget aligned with its threat assessment. Denmark, strategically positioned in the Baltic Sea, reflects a defense posture in harmony with its perceived regional threats. The centrality of threat perception transcends other factors, steering defense choices within NATO.

Historical experiences, deeply ingrained in the security outlook of nations, weave a narrative that shapes defense priorities. Norway's Cold War legacy and Poland's historical conflicts contribute significantly to their defense postures. Denmark's engagements in the Baltic Sea region reflect a historical consciousness that influences its strategic considerations. While not singularly determinative, historical experiences enrich the understanding of security outlooks, adding layers to the rationale behind defense spending decisions.

Strategic culture manifests in the distinctive approaches of nations within NATO. Norway's Arctic concerns, Poland's historical perspectives, and Denmark's Baltic Sea focus highlight how strategic culture influences defense postures. It is evident that the unique strategic cultures of these nations contribute to the nuances in their defense priorities. Although not the sole determinant, strategic culture remains an indispensable factor in comprehending the intricacies of defense budgeting.

Burden-sharing within NATO serves as a mechanism to foster alliance strength and fairness. The 2% GDP defense contribution goal is a manifestation of this burden-sharing ethos. Norway's

nuanced response to this goal, considering its threat perception and specific circumstances, underscores the intricate balance required in burden-sharing mechanisms. The goal, while promoting fairness, needs to accommodate the diverse threat perceptions and capacities of member states.

The analysis undertaken highlights that each perspective offers valuable insights into the complex landscape of defense spending decisions within NATO. It's the combination of these factors that provides a nuanced understanding of this intricate terrain. Recognizing the diverse influences at play becomes imperative for fostering cohesion and adaptability among member states as the alliance evolves in response to geopolitical shifts.

The examination of threat perception in Norway, particularly in light of the 2% GDP defense contribution goal, prompts a compelling question: Does threat perception fundamentally drive defense decisions within NATO, or does Norway, owing to specific circumstances, demonstrate a nuanced sensitivity to its threat level? The answer lies in recognizing that threat perception indeed shapes defense choices, yet the nuances in Norway's response underscore a strategic calculation based on threat assessments, introducing a layer of complexity to its decision-making.

Norway's defense posture, shaped by its proximity to Russia, meticulously considers security challenges. Yet, the absence of major changes along the Norwegian-Russian border and a desire to avoid provoking Russia may contribute to a perceived lower immediate threat level, impacting the urgency in defense contributions. While threat perception undeniably influences defense decisions, Norway's measured response suggests a nuanced prioritization or strategic calculation based on threat assessments (Bergersen, 2017).

Yet, it is crucial to view this nuanced response through the lens of threat perception, as it serves as the prism coloring all other considerations. Norway's proximity to Russia, Poland's historical vulnerabilities, and Denmark's Baltic Sea location converge in a shared concern for regional stability. This shared concern is the linchpin shaping defense postures that anticipate potential threats. In essence, defense budgeting behaviors across these nations are reflections of threat perceptions, with Norway consistently allocating resources to deterrence, Poland increasing budgets in response to perceived challenges, and Denmark contributing in alignment with its threat assessment.

Addressing the central question – "Does Norway's approach to defense spending differ from that of other NATO countries in close proximity to Russia? If so, how?" – unveils Norway's distinctiveness in various dimensions. Contrary to conventional expectations tied to GDP, Norway's economic considerations, emphasized by a high GDP per capita, diverge from simplistic correlations with defense spending. In comparison to neighboring countries, where economic strength more directly influences defense investment, Norway stands out. Geopolitically, Norway's close proximity to Russia significantly shapes its threat perceptions, setting it apart from neighboring nations. This is particularly evident when contrasting it with countries in close proximity with Russia but exhibiting different threat perceptions based on varying geopolitical contexts. Moreover, Norway's historical trajectory in defense policy, transitioning from a passive role to active participation in international operations, underscores its unique adaptability compared to its more static neighbors. Crucially, Norway's commitment to collective defense efforts within NATO, embedded in its strategic culture, distinguishes it from other member states. For instance, Norway's distinct military postures and resource allocations, shaped by its strategic culture, differ noticeably from those of neighboring countries. Simultaneously, the burden-sharing perspective accentuates Norway's dedication to shared responsibilities in NATO operations, contributing further to its uniqueness within the

alliance. An essential factor contributing to Norway's exceptional approach is its status as a small state within NATO, making it the "odd one out" among countries in close proximity to Russia. The distinctiveness becomes even more apparent when compared to other small NATO countries, highlighting Norway's unique position and approach within the alliance. In summary, Norway's defense strategy differs significantly from that of its NATO counterparts in close proximity to Russia, primarily shaped by its economic considerations, threat perceptions, historical adaptability, commitment to collective defense, and its distinct role as a small state within the alliance.

This comparative analysis accentuates the centrality of threat perception in shaping defense spending within NATO, surpassing the influence of other factors. The varying threat perceptions among these nations highlight the intricate relationship between security concerns and resource allocation. As NATO adapts to changing geopolitical landscapes, acknowledging and addressing diverse threat perceptions becomes crucial for sustaining a unified and effective alliance, fostering resilience and readiness in an ever-changing world.

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