

The Swedish Defence Commission's report on security policy, 2023

Excerpts

1. Swedish security policy

Because of Russia, a large-scale war is raging in Europe. The impacts of the war are not limited to Ukraine. Therefore, Swedish security policy has fundamentally changed. Russia has long considered itself to be in conflict with the entire West. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and China's increased territorial claims show that conflicts over territory by military means are once again a reality. As a result, Swedish security policy is undergoing its most profound change in modern times.

An armed attack against Sweden cannot be ruled out. Nor can it be ruled out that military means, or further threats of such military means, can be directed against Sweden. The antagonistic threats against Sweden are many and are becoming increasingly complex. Threats include, but are not limited to, improper information influence, disinformation, influence operations, cyber attacks, illegal intelligence gathering, terrorism and sabotage, threats to critical infrastructure and exploitation of economic dependencies.

Sweden is best defended within NATO. Sweden's forthcoming NATO membership increases security both for Sweden and for NATO. As a member of NATO, Sweden will be covered by the mutual defence guarantees that follow from Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Through Sweden's membership, NATO becomes Sweden's most important defence policy arena and Sweden's defence capabilities will become part of the Alliance's collective defence in accordance with Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

The Defence Commission finds that Swedish security and defence policy must be shaped to deal with the long-term threat posed by Russia to European and global security. There is a risk that the war in Ukraine will be prolonged and may escalate. An escalation could include attacks on other states.

According to the Defence Commission, Sweden's vital national security interest is to uphold its independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Ultimately, we are prepared to use armed force to defend our country, our people, our democracy, our freedom, and our way of life.

Internal and external security are two core responsibilities of the state. At the same time, protecting Sweden's security is also an obligation for all of society. In previous reports, the Defence Commission has applied a broad view of security. A wide range of threats have been taken into consideration. This includes both antagonistic and non-antagonistic threats such as armed attacks, terrorism, cyber attacks, influence campaigns, organised crime, climate change, pandemics, disruptions in energy, water and food supply, natural disasters, etc. Addressing the threats to our security involves many societal sectors and policy areas.

Swedish security policy is one of several tools needed to prevent threats and challenges to our security. However, certain types of threats and challenges can result in crises and disaster without being threats to our vital national security interest. For this reason, Swedish security policy largely embraces a broad perspective on security, but not everything. At the same time, antagonists may exploit peacetime crises. Swedish security policy ultimately aims to safeguard Sweden's vital national security interests.

Sweden must have the military capability to ensure stability and security – individually and together with others. First and foremost, Swedish security policy must be preventive and deter the emergence of threats to Sweden. Political dialogue and diplomacy make important contributions to Sweden's security and Swedish interests. Sweden's ability to address crises, threats, and antagonistic actions below the threshold of an armed attack needs to improve. The Defence Commission underlines the importance of applying a comprehensive view of the available security policy tools, whether by political, diplomatic, economic, or military means, to prevent conflicts and counter antagonistic threats to our security.

Sweden's security policy is based on an active, broad, and responsible approach to international affairs. Challenges and threats to our security must, as far as possible, be met in cooperation with other countries and organisations. Sweden's foreign and security policy is based on the cohesion within the EU and NATO, cooperation in the Nordic and Baltic Sea regions, and within the UN and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

The Defence Commission states that Sweden's long-term total defence capability should, based on our future membership in NATO, be geared towards defending Sweden and Allies against armed attacks. This will also strengthen our ability to manage other crises. The Defence Commission underlines that this approach must also apply in times when the situation globally appears more stable from a security perspective. It is not possible to satisfactorily regain total defence capability when a crisis or war is already a fact.

Swedish security policy must consider the risk that Russia's war against Ukraine escalates into a larger war in Europe. This may also involve the use of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction with catastrophic consequences for security globally, but particularly in Europe, including suffering and death of innocent people.

The extensive international support in the form of defence equipment provided to Ukraine, a state acting in self-defence, is an act of solidarity in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter. Sweden's support to Ukraine must be sustainable and long-term and include its recovery. Support in all its forms – be it humanitarian, political, economic, or military – is a clear stance.

Political, economic, and diplomatic measures directed at Russia must continue in response to Russia's war against Ukraine and Russia's violations of international law. This must include measures for demanding accountability and extensive sanctions. The Defence Commission believes that these measures should be combined with increased national defence capability. A strengthened total defence and Sweden's forthcoming NATO membership are central to achieving this.

Russia has gradually placed itself outside and violated the European security order. The Defence Commission believes that the European security order should form the basis of the relationship between all European states, including Russia. Sweden should play an active role in the further development of the European security architecture to deal with the threat from Russia and protect and maintain the European security order. Cohesion between Allies and partners who share values and respect international law is central. Cooperation between Europe and North America plays a particularly important role.

The Defence Commission believes that Swedish security policy should be adapted to a greater extent than before to meet China's claim to power and ambition to influence both individual states and the rules-based world order through political, economic and military means. Sweden's relationship with China must be formed in a way where Sweden's security is protected. To this end, close cooperation should be sought within the EU, with Allies and partners.

The UN Charter, the European security order and respect for international law remain cornerstones of Sweden's foreign policy and must be protected. A state's right to individual or collective self-defence in the event of an armed attack is a fundamental principle of international law that is set out in Article 51 of the UN Charter. This principle also provides the basis for the solidarity expressed in Article 42.7 of the Treaty of Lisbon and Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

The Defence Commission states that since 2009, the solidarity-based security policy has formed the basis of Swedish security and defence policy. Sweden must continue to build security together with others, as a loyal member of NATO and the EU. The Defence Commission believes that Sweden should pursue an alliance policy based on solidarity that should aim to strengthen security and stability in Sweden's immediate neighbourhood, as well as in the entire Euro-Atlantic area.

As a NATO member, Sweden will become part of NATO's collective security. Sweden will be covered by binding mutual defence guarantees in accordance with Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. The collective defence commitment in NATO will thus form a central part of Swedish security and defence policy.

As an Ally, Sweden must maintain a strong national defence capability to contribute both to national defence and to collective defence in accordance with Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Under Article 3, the Allies will individually and jointly, through continuous and effective self-preparedness and mutual assistance, maintain and develop their individual and collective ability to resist armed attack.

Article 4 gives each Ally the right to convene the North Atlantic Council if it considers itself to be exposed to threats or risks that may justify joint action by the Alliance. Article 4 thus enables early joint and preventive action that can deter aggression against its member states. As NATO's main mission is to keep the peace, this is a vital complement to Article 5.

Through Swedish membership, NATO will become Sweden's most important defence policy arena. Sweden's defence capabilities will be a part of the Alliance's collective defence and contribute to security both in Sweden's immediate neighbourhood and in the entire Euro-Atlantic area. That Sweden and other Allies jointly maintain confidence in the collective defence guarantees is central to NATO's deterrence and to preserving peace in the Euro-Atlantic area. The priorities concerning Sweden's forthcoming NATO membership that the Commission outlines in this report should serve as guidelines for Sweden's policy as an Ally. As an Ally, Sweden must assume its fair share of the burden sharing within NATO.

The EU is Sweden's most important foreign policy arena. Sweden has a responsibility towards the EU Member States and a duty of solidarity as an EU Member. The Treaty of Lisbon, including Article 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union, and the solidarity clause in Article 222 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union stipulate that the Member States take joint responsibility for Europe's security. For EU Member

States that are also NATO Allies, NATO provides the foundation for collective defence.

The UN is one of the key organisations in upholding a rules-based world order, global peace, and security, and is an important arena for Swedish foreign policy. During the post-war period, cooperation within the UN has many times been central to maintaining peace and contributing to de-escalation. It remains important that the UN is strengthened as an organisation, especially considering the deteriorating security situation. Sweden must be an active UN Member and contributes with valuable skills to the UN's conflict prevention.

Swedish participation in international operations has contributed to stability, more peaceful conditions, and security, and at the same time strengthened the competence of Sweden's defence. The Defence Commission notes that participation in international efforts contributes to strengthening Swedish and global security and is an important security policy instrument. Sweden must continue to participate in international civil and military crisis management and peacekeeping, and peacebuilding efforts.

The Defence Commission emphasises that diplomatic means are a central instrument for Sweden's security and an important part of Sweden's deterrence. The Defence Commission notes that the deteriorating security situation globally and in Sweden's immediate neighbourhood places greater demands on Sweden's foreign, security and defence policy. The Defence Commission underlines the importance of strengthened capacity in foreign, security and defence policy analysis, and an increased ability to identify and guarantee Swedish interests in central bilateral relations and multilateral organisations, and presence in regions of relevance to security policy.

Cooperation with strategic allies, such as the Nordic and Baltic countries, the US and UK, is of particular importance for Sweden's security. A strong transatlantic link is critical for Europe's security. It is fundamental that Sweden maintains and further develops the transatlantic link and bilateral relations with the US. Through Sweden's forthcoming membership in NATO, the conditions for deepening bilateral cooperation with the US, also outside of NATO, will improve. Sweden must work to cooperate closer with other leading NATO countries in Sweden's immediate neighbourhood such as France, Germany, and Poland, with the aim of increasing the collective deterrence.

With Sweden and Finland as part of NATO, cooperation will be expanded and deepened between countries that work to uphold international law, including the UN Charter, and European security order. It is in Sweden's interest to be an active, responsible, and credible Member of the EU and NATO Ally. By taking part in, and

responsibility for, international peace and security, we create the conditions for a safer world.

Sweden must continue to promote the fundamental values of Swedish foreign and security policy. Within NATO, and in the EU, the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, Sweden must protect the rules-based world order, the European security order, democracy, freedom, human rights, and equality.

2. Making security policy assessments

The Defence Commission notes that threats to Sweden's security have not been taken seriously enough. Misjudgements have been made regarding costs and time required for span for capability-building. Information and analyses predicting the serious threat that Russia poses to Sweden, the rest of Europe and globally have long been available. Nevertheless, management of this threat has been marked by a lack of realism and excessive hopes for a positive development.

Moreover, rapid, and partly unforeseen changes in the international security situation have taken place repeatedly. Rebuilding national defence capability when a crisis or a war is already a fact has historically proved impossible. This has been the case in the Swedish context as well as internationally. These collective experiences must be guiding principles when we build Sweden's future total defence.

The Defence Commission would like to emphasise that it is not the most likely course of events that is the most important in relation to the task of dimensioning Swedish Total Defence, but rather those that would have serious consequences if they occurred. Security policy must therefore also adapt to developments that are seen as less likely and whose consequences would be particularly serious if they occurred. This is important, not least in relation to continued assessments of Russia. China is also challenging global security and the rules-based world order, which could lead to several potentially very serious developments. A crisis or conflict in Asia would have negative consequences for the security situation, the military balance, and the economy, both in Europe and globally.

3. Global trends

The Defence Commission notes that the world is at a crossroads. The rules-based world order, based on the UN Charter, was established under the leadership of the US after the Second World War, and developed further after the Cold War. It is now being challenged by authoritarian states that seek an order based on strength.

The intensifying geopolitical power competition is leaving its mark on more and more areas of society. States use a wide range of tools to achieve their security policy objectives, which makes it more difficult to assess what constitutes a threat. The increasing geopolitical power competition also makes it more difficult to deal with transnational threats such as climate change, pandemics, attacks on strategic infrastructure, terrorism, violent extremism, and organised crime.

Globally, there is increasing antagonism between democratic and authoritarian and systemic revisionist states. Russian and Chinese actions undermine democratic governance in other states. To counteract this and promote democratic development, the Western democracies are stepping up dialogue with, and support to, vulnerable states in Europe, including those in the Western Balkans and in the Eastern Partnership, as well as globally. At the same time, several influential countries have an interest in being able to strike a balance or avoid taking a stance on these conflicting values. This includes Brazil, India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa. This group represents a significant share of the world's population and GDP.

The increasing geopolitical power competition has caused states to increasingly use economic instruments to achieve security policy objectives. This can include various types of trade barriers, control of capital, restrictions on foreign direct investment, exploitation of investments in foreign natural resources or critical infrastructure, currency manipulation and sanctions such as freezing of assets. The increasing geopolitical power competition and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine have accentuated the importance of military and civilian security of supply. Increased national defence capability requires a functioning materiel supply in times of peace, crisis, and war. The Defence Commission stresses that Sweden needs to review its own security of supply as regards food and water.

World defence spending has increased continuously since 2015. China's defence spending has increased more than sixfold since 2000. Russia has also increased its defence spending since the early 2000s, tripling it by 2021. Due to the deteriorating security situation in recent years and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine since 2022, the European NATO members have announced increased investments in defence.

However, this increase follows a long period of unchanged or decreasing defence spending, when spending as a share of GDP has been historically low. This means in many cases that states need to modernise and repair existing equipment and train existing units before new capabilities can be developed. These measures alone will require substantial funding.

More and more sectors of society are experiencing an increased digitalisation and interconnection of information systems and infrastructure. At the same time, digitalisation entails complex dependency chains where one actor's weaknesses can pose a risk to other actors. Moreover, digitalisation has brought with it a new information environment, where information operations and disinformation are actively used with the aim of affecting perceptions, behaviour, and decision-making, and weakening the resilience of states.

Technical knowledge and development of new technology are central parts of the geopolitical power competition. A race is under way to develop new technology, but also to prevent its unwanted spread to adversaries. The competition for technical knowledge also poses a major intelligence threat to industrialised countries.

Nuclear arsenals are being upgraded both qualitatively and quantitatively, above all in China and Russia. China's strategic nuclear arsenal is expected to expand significantly over the next decade, and nuclear deterrence will become more prominent in Chinese defence doctrine, which is also in line with China's economic growth and increasing geopolitical ambitions. Uncertainties surrounding the possible use of nuclear weapons have also increased because of Russia's increasingly aggressive rhetoric. The threat of nuclear weapons alone is a means of power for Russia.

The link between climate and security is clear. Climate change is a direct threat and increases international tensions and instability and deepens existing conflicts. The Defence Commission notes that climate change is both a serious and long-term threat that affects the armed forces. Adjustments for a reduced climate impact and adaptation to cope with the consequences of a changing climate both need to be considered.

Terrorism and violent extremism are a direct threat to security in Sweden, Europe and globally. Cross-border organised crime is also a threat to the open and free society and threatens to undermine confidence in the rule of law. In Europe, violent Islamist environment, the violent right-wing extremist environment, and other political extremism are the main terrorist threats.

4. Russia and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine

Russia is an authoritarian, nationalist and imperialist state that increasingly exercises domestic repression and surveillance of its own citizens. The Defence Commission stresses that Russia is the most serious and direct threat to European and Swedish security in both the short and long term. This threat involves both military and non-military means.

Russia's illegal and aggressive actions in Europe are most clearly manifested in, but not limited to, Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine since 2014. On 24 February 2022, Russia ramped up its war to a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the most extensive and brutal conventional war Europe has seen since the Second World War. A war in Europe, with the potential to rapidly escalate is today a reality and a direct threat to EU Member States, NATO Allies, and other countries.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine is a flagrant violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and of the European security order. It is an attack on Ukraine specifically and part of Russia's overall systemic conflict with the West and Russia's ambition to change the rules-based world order and the European security order. Russia considers itself to be in a long-term conflict with the West and sees its war in Ukraine as part of it.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 and the international reaction that followed mark a historic turning point for Swedish and European security. It will define Russia and Ukraine, as well as the rest of Europe and the West for a long time, and thus also have consequences for global security and balance of power.

The Defence Commission concludes that Russia's aggressive actions have led to a structural and greatly deteriorated security environment. Russia has further lowered its threshold for the use of military force and demonstrates a high inclination to take risks. A major war in Europe is a reality and Russia is focused on a long-term conflict with the West. There is a risk that the war in Ukraine will be protracted, and it may escalate. An escalation could lead to attacks on other states or the use of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction.

Sweden must therefore shape its security policy and its defence based on the scope of the threat Russia poses for a long time to come. An aggressive Russia, with both the ability and the will to wage a prolonged war, should form the main foundation for developing Sweden's total defence.

The Defence Commission concludes that defending Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity will be of fundamental importance not only for Ukraine's future, but for the whole of Europe. The outcome of Russia's war against Ukraine depends, second only to Ukraine's will and ability to defend itself, on the role of the outside world due to Ukraine's dependence on continued support from international partners. This will continue to place great demands on unity, robustness and determination from the countries that support Ukraine. Long-term endurance is of utmost importance.

Sweden's support to Ukraine must be sustainable and long-term, and it must also include the country's recovery and reconstruction. Support in all its forms – humanitarian, political, economic, and military – demonstrates a clear stance. It is the Defence Commission's view that Sweden should actively support Ukraine on its path to EU membership and that negotiations should begin as soon as possible.

Although Russia's capability in its own immediate neighbourhood has decreased to some extent due to the war in Ukraine, Russia's political objective of dominating its neighbours remains. Developments in Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the wider dynamics between Russia and the countries of the Eastern Partnership will have a decisive impact on security both inside and outside this region, with tangible consequences for European and Swedish security.

There is a clear link between Russia's external aggression and its internal repression, which has accelerated further since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The main assumption should be that Russia's current foreign and security policy will remain in place for the long-term. This makes it necessary for Sweden, together with other partners, to contribute to deterrence and continued forceful political, economic, diplomatic, and military measures to curb Russian aggressive actions. This includes measures for accountability and extensive sanctions.

Alongside the Black Sea, Sweden's immediate neighbourhood continues to be the region in Europe where Russia's interests are most clearly opposed to the interests of other European countries and the United States. The overall conflict between Russia and the West also affects the security situation in the Arctic. It shows the military strategic importance of the Arctic. As member and forthcoming member of NATO, Finland and Sweden will become part of NATO's collective defence, which changes the military strategic conditions in the immediate neighbourhood. The Defence Commission assesses that Russia will continue to have an interest in

trying to influence Sweden's and Finland's approach to their respective NATO memberships, and by extension NATO's overall capability in the region.

5. China as a geopolitical challenge

China is an authoritarian, communist and nationalist one-party state that challenges the rules-based world order. China is increasing its military capability and behaving aggressively. Moreover, China exercises increasing surveillance, control, and repression of its own citizens, in China and abroad. China's global power and influence are expected to increase over the next decade, provided that its economic strength is maintained. At the same time, the predictability of China's actions decreases as it becomes increasingly closed and authoritarian.

The Chinese Communist Party's clear goal is a systemic change of the rules-based world order, with the ambition of gaining greater freedom of action and ability to further China's own interests. China promotes an order where the rights and interests of the state, for example concerning security and the economy, take priority over individual rights, which is in violation of human rights and principles of international law.

China's geopolitical ambitions challenge global security and the rules-based world order in the long term, and thus also Swedish and European security.

The concentration of power in the General Secretary of the Communist Party has gradually increased and reaffirmed at the 20th Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in late of 2022, with Xi Jinping's election to a third term. National security and control, rather than economic growth, have increasingly come to dominate politics under Xi Jinping. China's far-reaching civil-military integration and close links between party, state, business, and other sectors of society are unprecedented. This is reflected in China's promotion of its strategic interests, where political, economic, and military tools are coordinated. With increasing self-confidence, China is using a wide range of instruments of force, exploiting dependencies, and competing using methods that are both legal and illegal.

The Defence Commission considers it important that Sweden realises the broad impact on Swedish interests that China's actions entail. This includes security and defence policy, and other areas such as economics, trade, science, technology, and infrastructure. The Defence Commission assesses that China does not pose a direct military threat to Sweden, but it must be stressed that China is challenging Swedish interests and conducting security-threatening activities in and against Sweden. The threat of Chinese intelligence activities against Sweden has broadened and deepened.

The Defence Commission underlines that Swedish and European security are greatly affected by developments between China, Russia and the US. The main factors are the relations between the US and China, the cooperation between China and Russia and the US's resource prioritisation between Europe and the Indo-Pacific region. The dynamics between China and Russia, as well as the US, will have a major bearing on global security, and the security of Europe and Sweden, for a long time to come. The potential consequences of the relations and interactions between these three countries should therefore serve as starting points for the formation of Swedish security policy and total defence. China's stance against NATO expansion in Europe and support for several Russian security interests demonstrates the security policy inconsistencies that exist between China and the US, and between Europe and China. It also demonstrates the connection between Asian and European security.

It is in Sweden's strategic interest that like-minded countries, to the greatest extent possible, jointly respond to China's claims to power and its use of political, economic, and military force and pressure to achieve political goals. Sweden's relations with China should be anchored in a common European strategy with a clear transatlantic link.

6. Security policy developments

The security situation both in Sweden's immediate neighbourhood and globally is characterised by instability and unpredictability. The Defence Commission notes that Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has fundamentally changed the security situation in Sweden and Sweden's immediate neighbourhood for a long time to come.

The security situation in Sweden's immediate neighbourhood is greatly affected by developments in Ukraine. Russia's conventional capability in Sweden's immediate neighbourhood has been partially exhausted in the war in Ukraine and will take an estimated five to ten years to fully recover. At the same time, Russia has announced an enhanced military posture in Sweden's immediate neighbourhood, including a sharp increase in the number of units in the area around Karelia and the Cap of the North.

Russia has also demonstrated an ability to mobilise and organise new units from reserve forces in a relatively short time. In Russia, an increasing social and economic change towards a society at war is currently under way, with the aim of supporting the war effort in Ukraine. Russia is therefore deemed to have military resources that can be used to achieve political goals in Sweden and Sweden's immediate neighbourhood.

Russia has a strong interest in creating divisions within NATO and the EU, and within individual Member States, with the aim of undermining Western support of Ukraine and lifting the sanctions against Russia. For example, Russia has used energy as a geopolitical weapon against Europe. Russia has sought to utilise its position as a significant exporter of energy – mainly natural gas – to several European countries to push for a more favourable policy for Russia by cancelling deliveries. These attempts at blackmail have instead resulted in adoption of a new policy by the EU, which in 2022 decided to end its dependence on fossil energy from Russia.

China is also active in Sweden's immediate neighbourhood. China seeks to gain access to technology through strategic acquisitions and investments in digital and physical infrastructure, which can serve both civilian and military purposes. Moreover, students and guest researchers in the West are used as tools to gather information and obtain knowledge. Activities in cyber space are also used for gathering information. In addition, China conducts illegal intelligence activities and attempts to influence opinion in several countries.

Through Finland's NATO membership and Sweden's forthcoming NATO membership, the military strategic conditions in Sweden's immediate neighbourhood are changing. Swedish defence will be incorporated into the framework of NATO's

collective defence. Sweden and its total defence will be an integral part of NATO's defence of Europe. Therefore, the Swedish Armed Forces must also focus on supporting other Allies and NATO's collective defence.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the intensifying geopolitical competition affect the security situation in the Arctic. Melting Arctic ice is leading to increased international interest in the region, including from non-Arctic powers such as China. Russia's growing dependence on China increases China's potential for conducting activities in the Arctic region.

The Western response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has been concerted and forceful. Western countries have shown great unity and both the EU and NATO have played important roles in responding to Russia's aggression. The Defence Commission notes that the war has highlighted the complementary roles of the EU and NATO.

At the same time, the war has underlined the importance of the leadership and military resources of the US for the defence of Europe. Further prioritisation of the Indo-Pacific region by the US and various domestic political considerations may affect US strategy and military posture in Europe. The Defence Commission notes that the demands on European countries – NATO Allies and EU Member States alike – to take a greater responsibility for Europe's security are increasing significantly.

The EU is Sweden's most important foreign policy arena. In the new security policy environment, the EU's importance for Sweden has increased, while its central role in the transatlantic community has been solidified and the value of the EU's security policy tools made clear. The EU's response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has been both historically swift and forceful. It has included political, economic, humanitarian, and military support to Ukraine, and sanctions against Russia, Belarus, and Iran.

In early 2022, Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia applied for EU membership. The Defence Commission emphasises that Sweden has a strong security policy interest in these countries' European path being fully supported on merit-based grounds.

The Defence Commission notes that the US, through its commitment and military presence, is a cornerstone of Europe's security. Europe's security rests on the combined conventional and nuclear capability of the US. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the importance of the transatlantic link has once again been manifested. The US has stated that it stands by its security guarantees in Europe.

The strong support for Swedish and Finnish NATO membership is also an expression of the security policy importance of Europe to the US.

The Indo-Pacific region is the top defence and security policy priority of the US. This prioritisation is a result of the region's major and growing importance to the world economy, China's increasing economic and military strength, and China's confrontational actions and efforts to increase its regional and global influence. In US defence strategy, China is described as an economic, technological, and military challenge to the US.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine shows that states in the Middle East directly affect European security, not least regarding energy supply. Asia has replaced North America and Europe as the main market for Middle Eastern oil and natural gas, and American influence in the Middle East has declined. For Europe to be able to reduce its dependence on Russian energy, protect its economic stability and cut off Russia's state revenues, relations with energy-rich states in the Middle East are important.

The Defence Commission notes that many of the problems that have negatively affected the security environment in Africa remain. The number of armed conflicts in Africa has increased over the past decade, and 2020 was the continent's bloodiest year since 2014. The majority of conflicts involve violent Islamism, and several countries, especially in the Sahel region and the Horn of Africa, are severely affected by increased violence.

Africa's strategic importance has increased over the past ten years, and this trend is expected to continue. States outside Africa compete for access to markets, natural resources, and strategic and political influence in Africa. The presence of international actors who do not share the West's democratic values risks leading to increased instability in parts of Africa.

The rapidly changing security environment in the Indo-Pacific region has become increasingly more important for global stability. Countries and organisations in and outside the region see an increasing need to protect and monitor their interests and influence in the area. This culminates in an increasingly intense geopolitical competition first and foremost between China and the United States – one which is simultaneously military, political, and economic in nature. Cooperation patterns in the region are developing, renewing, and deepening rapidly against the background of the changing security environment. A major war in the region cannot be ruled out.

China's strengthened role is the overarching change in region's security dynamics and is also one of the most significant changes at global level. China's movement in an increasingly authoritarian direction, its political ambitions, extensive military rearmament and aggressive military and security policy behaviour have led to a deteriorating security environment in the region and challenge the rules-based world order. China's increasing claims to power are manifested in military and political pressure on Taiwan, its far-reaching restrictions on Hong Kong's autonomy, its annexation of territories and militarisation of the South China Sea and increased economic influence in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Ocean.

7. The rules-based world order

The rules-based world order that was established after the end of the Second World War and developed further after the Cold War is under pressure. Several states, both regionally and globally, are trying to challenge international norms and parts of the rules-based world order. Multilateral collaborations and institutions are increasingly being undermined. The states that are pushing for a different world order are Russia and China. These states are working for a multipolar world order comprising several different centres of power and values and have the ambition to weaken the position of the United States and the rest of the West. They also show a lack of respect for human rights. Democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are seen by authoritarian and revisionist states such as Russia and China as existential threats to their own states, and in particular the power of the ruling regimes.

The Defence Commission notes that, as a security architecture, the European security order offers no protection against the threat from Russia. The Defence Commission emphasises that international law and a rules-based world order are central and long-term Swedish foreign and security policy interests. The European security order as a normative system is still valid and must form the basis of relations between all European states, including Russia.

The Defence Commission considers that Sweden, the European Union, and the West cannot participate in talks with Russia on an agreement that risk legitimising violations of international law and the principles and commitments of the European security order. Nor can Sweden contribute to reaching settlements and agreements based on concessions and compromises in relation to the fundamental principles of the European security order.

To restore respect for the European security order, various measures are required. This includes legal, political economic and other measures, also regarding accountability, which requires security policy persistence. If we do not demand accountability, we risk eroding the current world order, which would be tantamount to accepting the indiscriminate use of military force as a political tool.

The Defence Commission notes that there is no contradiction between a normative, rule-based order and military deterrence. Military capability and deterrence are important components of efforts to maintain and manifest the European security order, combined with political, economic, and diplomatic tools.

It is important to distinguish between, the resolute and long-term defence of the existing European security order as a normative framework and changes within the security architecture, which are about the choices and decisions needed to address Russia's aggressive actions. Examples include Finland's membership and Sweden's forthcoming membership of NATO, the Alliance's increased emphasis on deterrence and defence, the close cooperation between the European Union and the UK, and the exclusion of Russia from the Council of Europe. To deal with the threat from Russia, the Defence Commission assesses that the European security architecture will need to be developed. Sweden should continue to play an active role in this process.

8. NATO and Swedish membership

Sweden's forthcoming NATO membership is the largest change in Swedish security policy for over 200 years. As an Ally, Sweden will be covered by the rights and obligations of the mutual defence guarantees that follow from Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Therefore, there will be a treaty-based commitment from the other Allies that Sweden will receive support in the event of an armed attack. Correspondingly, Sweden will be committed to assist other Allies in their defence if they are attacked.

The Defence Commission notes that NATO's deterrence works. NATO membership strengthens Sweden's security and contributes to strengthening security and stability in our neighbourhood and in the Euro-Atlantic area as a whole. The Nordic countries become members of the same defence alliance. Finnish NATO membership increases Swedish security. Swedish NATO membership increases Swedish defence capabilities by enhancing the opportunities to cooperate with Allies in peace, crisis, and war. As an Ally, Sweden is covered by NATO's nuclear and conventional deterrence.

The forthcoming NATO membership has far-reaching political and practical implications for Sweden. NATO is the US's instrument for its defence commitments in Europe and the most important forum for security policy dialogue with Europe. Sweden's NATO membership strengthens the transatlantic link, and NATO becomes Sweden's most important defence policy arena. Sweden's defence capability will form part of NATO's collective defence.

NATO is a defence alliance with both a political and a military dimension. NATO's primary task is collective defence and the preservation of peace and security. As a member, Sweden will gain increased insight and greater opportunities for influence in matters of central importance to European and transatlantic security. As an Ally, Sweden will participate fully in security and defence policy discussions and decision making within NATO. This means that Sweden will participate actively in NATO's development as a security and defence policy actor.

With Finland's NATO membership and Sweden's forthcoming membership, the military strategic situation in Northern Europe is changing. With Finland and Sweden in NATO, all countries around the Baltic Sea, except Russia, will be members of the Alliance. NATO will therefore have a significantly longer land border with Russia. In addition, a more coherent area of operations in northern Europe will be formed. NATO will have a continuous eastern flank extending from the European part of the Arctic Ocean in the north to the Mediterranean Sea in the south.

Swedish and Finnish territory will become part of the Alliance's combined defence within the framework of both national operations planning and NATO's operations planning. It will be possible to use strategically important areas in Sweden for the defence of other Allies' territory. NATO's strategic and operational depth will increase and tie the Arctic, the North Atlantic and the Baltic Sea regions more closely together from a strategic and operational perspective.

Swedish and Finnish territory will become central to the Allies' defence of Northern Europe and the transatlantic link. It will facilitate necessary preparations, among other things for forward staging of Allied forces and logistics to and within the Baltic Sea region and the Cap of the North in the event of conflict, and regarding the defence of northern Norway and Finland.

The Cap of the North, the North Atlantic and the Danish Straits are important areas in the defence of the sea lines of communication to and from North America. Therefore, Swedish territory becomes important for the Alliance's capability to defend Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and the defence of Poland, Germany and Denmark is facilitated. With Sweden and Finland as Allies, NATO's defence capabilities and the security of all Allies will be strengthened.

NATO contributes to the multilateral and rules-based world order. As a future NATO member, Sweden will work to ensure that the European security order is upheld, and international law is respected, with the UN Charter as a basis. As an Ally, Sweden will actively work to maintain cohesion within NATO. Swedish NATO membership has broad support in the Swedish parliament. The Defence Commission notes that popular support is of great importance to our membership and willingness to defend. This work needs to involve civil society.

The Defence Commission stresses that Sweden, as a NATO member, must continue to promote the basic values of Swedish foreign and security policy, stand up for international law, human rights and equality and be a strong voice for arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation. NATO is the main forum for transatlantic security and defence policy consultations. The Defence Commission emphasises the importance of Sweden as an Ally actively participating in the security and defence policy discussion within NATO.

The Defence Commission notes that Sweden's military units are distinguished by great professionalism, expertise, and flexibility by international standards. The Swedish Armed Forces' units will become a substantial asset to NATO. As an Ally, Sweden will participate in NATO's operations and defence planning processes.

The Defence Commission considers that Sweden's geostrategic position and security policy interests should form the starting points for shaping Sweden's role as an Ally. This should include a regional assumption of responsibility, primarily based on the Baltic Sea area and the Cap of the North, with the special expertise required for operating in these environments.

A main task for Sweden within NATO should be to facilitate and effectively participate in the collective defence of Northern Europe, including the defence of Finland, Denmark, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. As an Ally, Sweden needs to strengthen its capability to operate with larger units outside Swedish territory, primarily in the neighbouring countries, to be an integral part of NATO's naval operations planning for the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and, where applicable, the North Atlantic, and as regards integrated air and missile defence.

Sweden's defence capability becomes part of NATO's collective defence, and Sweden's contribution to NATO should increase the Alliance's overall defence capability. Sweden must be able to resist an armed attack and defend its own territory within the framework of collective defence. The Defence Commission considers, therefore, that Sweden has a responsibility to continue to improve its national defence capability, including resilience, through a total defence consisting of military and civilian defence. This includes defence measures that are not necessarily directly requested by the Alliance but are important for the overall credibility and capability of Sweden's national defence.

It is in Sweden's interest to contribute to the security of NATO as a whole in accordance with the Alliance's 360-degree perspective on deterrence and defence in a manner based on solidarity and pragmatism. The Defence Commission notes that the Swedish government has already communicated several intentions regarding Sweden's future membership of NATO, for example regarding contributions to NATO Air Policing, NATO's standing naval maritime immediate reaction forces, NATO enhanced Forward Presence and contribution within the framework of the 360-degree perspective. Sweden has also committed to participate in the European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI) on closer European cooperation with the aim of strengthening NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence. In addition to this, Sweden must be an active and constructive ally in the development of NATO's deterrence and defence. Sweden will also become an integral part of the Allies' operations planning.

The Swedish ability to be able to support other Allies (including through Host Nation Support) is crucial for the Alliance's ability to operate in our part of Europe. Sweden is expected to be able to provide access to Swedish territory, for example by serving as a

staging and base area for allied ground, sea, and air combat forces, and providing supply and transit areas for Allied forces. By enabling early action even in peacetime, Sweden can contribute to strengthening the Alliance's collective defence.

Swedish ground and air combat forces will have tasks in the Baltic Sea region and on the Cap of the North, while the Swedish naval forces will have tasks as part of the Alliance's operations in the Baltic Sea and the North Sea. Swedish combat forces must also be able to participate in the defence of NATO's eastern flank and other operations in accordance with NATO's overall tasks. Sweden will still have a responsibility to defend its own land, air, and sea territory.

It will be crucial for Sweden and NATO to maintain connections to North America, including via the Swedish west coast and Gothenburg, via western Svealand to the Oslo area, via Jämtland and Norrbotten to the Norwegian ports of Trondheim and Narvik, and via the Öresund region. The transport routes through Sweden will also be key for the other Allies in the defence of eastern member states. If the sea routes in the North Atlantic are disrupted, the possibilities for the United States and NATO to strengthen and defend the northern and eastern Allies will be hindered. The sea connections to and in the Baltic Sea area are also important for NATO's reinforcement operations.

Host Nation Support and thus logistics and maintenance resources need to be developed in close cooperation with neighbouring countries, especially Norway, Finland, and Denmark. The Host Nation Support must be seen as an integral part of an overall national logistics model where the state, municipalities, regions, and the business sector are part of the planning, and includes transport, fuel and electricity supply, healthcare, electronic communications and more. The Host Nation Support will therefore also involve tasks for the civil defence. The Defence Commission wishes to emphasise that these preparations, for example prepositioning, are usually bilateral commitments between Allies and are not formally handled by NATO as an organisation.

The Swedish Armed Forces have a well-developed capability to operate in a subarctic environment and harsh environments where access to civilian infrastructure is limited. Many Allies lack such capability. Contributing military resources adapted to Nordic conditions should be a special priority for Sweden, as part of its regional expertise. Sweden also has a unique ability to operate with naval forces in the demanding environment of the Baltic Sea. This too should be regarded as unique regional expertise and should therefore be a special priority for Sweden. It will also be central for Sweden to be able to offer Allies exercise and training opportunities on Swedish territory for

ground, naval and air units. This improves interoperability within the Alliance and thus the ability to collectively defend Sweden.

With Finnish and Swedish NATO membership, Nordic defence cooperation will become a cooperation between Allies. A deepened Nordic defence cooperation strengthens security and contributes to stability in the Nordic region. In this way, the Alliance's collective defence and the security of the Euro-Atlantic area are also strengthened. Nordic defence cooperation makes a significant contribution to the Alliance's defence capabilities in northern Europe.

In the event of a crisis or war, the Nordic region may constitute a single area of operations. Nordic defence cooperation must include joint operations planning and preparations for joint or coordinated action in times of peace, crisis and war. The Defence Commission considers that the Nordic defence cooperation should include a deepened strategic dialogue, cooperation on total defence planning, Host Nation Support, military mobility, security of supply, defence materiel cooperation and logistics.

Close Nordic defence cooperation facilitates coordination of NATO's force structure, command structure, operations, and exercises. The Defence Commission considers that all Nordic countries should ultimately be part of the same NATO staff at operational level (Joint Forces Command), something that would facilitate coordination of NATO's force structure, command structure, operations, and exercises.

As an Ally, Sweden will be expected to contribute to NATO's work to manage overall threat assessment, including cyber, space, information influence, critical infrastructure, and strategic technologies. The Defence Commission underlines that Sweden is well equipped to contribute to these areas with its national capabilities, within both government authorities and the private sector.

As a space nation, Sweden has unique capabilities that can be a contribution to the Alliance. The Esrange Space Center space base is an asset from a defence and security perspective, partly because of the ability to launch satellites and partly because of its geographical proximity to the North Pole and the Arctic region.

The Defence Commission assumes that the Government will present an annual report on NATO to the Riksdag. This report can be combined with the report from the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.