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PROCEEDINGS

FFI conference:
The war in Ukraine and the future European security order

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FFI turns knowledge
and ideas into
an effective defence

Introduction

Russia's attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has caused the severest security situation in Europe since the Second World War. We are witnessing a recast of the European security order, which will have implications for the whole of Europe in the decades to come. In this situation, the NATO alliance has responded quickly, consequently and in unity with a whole set of military measures to counter Russian aggression. The purpose is to strengthen the alliance's deterrence posture, but also to avoid any kind of direct military confrontation with Russia.

This is also the reason behind Finland's and Sweden's forthcoming accession to NATO. Non-alignment based upon their EU membership and in partnership with NATO, is not enough to counter eventual future Russian aggression. In addition, the EU has implemented eight rounds of restrictive measures against Russia since the war started. For the first time ever, the Union also uses its European Peace Facility to support the capabilities and resilience of the Ukrainian armed forces. The total amount provided for is at present 2,5 billion euro.

The consequence of the war for the EU as a security actor is dramatic. We are witnessing a geo-political EU based upon the instruments in the Lisbon Treaty and in the newly adapted Strategic Compass from March 2022. Other actors, like Germany is also going through a "Zeitenwende" and thus undermines key foreign policy beliefs in this European great power. Which lessons the different actors in European security will learn from this war is, however, quite unclear. However, it is obvious that the consequences of this war will have a significant impact on the future state of the European security order.

The present collection of short papers are based upon the contributions the speakers had at the FFI conference "The war in Ukraine and the future European security order" on 20 October 2022. The purpose of the conference is to contribute to research based knowledge on how the war in Ukraine inflicts on European security from a wide set of perspectives. This is especially so since the old European security order does not exist anymore and a new one is, at present, not yet visible. Obviously, research into these issues is important since the FFI is the prime institution responsible for defence-related research in Norway.

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Defence research in times of war: Prospects and challenges

The Norwegian Parliament established the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) in 1946, acknowledging that technology played an important role in ending World War II. For 75 years, FFI has provided the Norwegian Armed Forces with insight into the military capability requirements needed to ensure an effective defence of Norwegian territory, and to provide Norway and our allies with world-leading technology. This includes supporting the Armed Forces in the acquisition of new military platforms that meet the requirements of a harsh, northern climate. With the Russian invasion in Ukraine, our work has become even more important.

New research does in general not solve immediate operational needs. However, research helps to identify and develop novel technology with military applicability, new military platforms and a deeper understanding of the future war theatre. In this way, research lays the foundation for future operational capability. Research can nevertheless meet immediate operational needs when known research results and technology are incorporated into ongoing military operations, for instance in combination with small-scale testing and experimentation. The Ukrainian use of drones for firing M72 rockets illustrates the quick adaption of well-established technology for use in combat.[1]

In the course of a war, the role of research changes, increasing in importance with time. During World War II, there were several research advances that contributed to allied victory, from the mass production of penicillin and blood plasma transfusion to increase the survival of allied soldiers, to the development of radars and electronic computers, providing the allies with a technological edge.[2]

During a long-lasting war or societal crisis, there are two keys to ensure an impact of research: A broad knowledge foundation and a well-defined and widely accepted problem to solve. The latter is easy to identify in a crisis, at least in the early stages of the crisis, and ensures maximum impact of the research in a short timeframe. The Covid-19 pandemic is a more recent example where significant research efforts on a well-defined problem made corona tests and vaccines available with impressive speed.

At the beginning of a war, there is neither the time nor the resources available to establish a broad knowledge foundation. It is imperative that we build this knowledge base during peacetime. However, this is easily overlooked, in part because prioritizing such capacity building against other budgetary needs is challenging and, in part, because it is difficult to define the appropriate level and scope of such a research capacity.

It is nevertheless important to stress that a solid knowledge foundation is in itself not sufficient, rapid results also require a clear objective for the research. Whereas basic research was a prerequisite for combating the Covid-19 pandemic, the well-defined goal to develop effective vac

[1] https://www.world-today-news.com/ukraine-appears-to-have-grasped-the-norwegian-notion-connecting-the-m72-to-a-drone/
[2] https://www.history.com/news/world-war-ii-innovations

cines ensured the rapid progress. Additionally the efforts of the international research community and the open sharing of research data facilitated the rapid development of vaccines, outweighing challenges due to restrictions on travel and the disruptions of supply chains.

The war in Ukraine has highlighted the value of sharing of intelligence information to allow for a more effective defence.[3] However, openly sharing of information to advance scientific progress is in general not possible during wartime, and it is important that a strong, trusted national and international network already be in place in order to be able to provide the most fertile ground for rapid scientific advances during war.

Control and access to essential infrastructure for research and technology development in key domains must be in place prior to war, and it is important to update and maintain this infrastructure to ensure that it continues to provide state-of-the-art research capabilities.

For a small nation like Norway, that cannot build neither capacity nor infrastructure in all research domains that could be of importance during ongoing warfare, it is essential to foster a strong international network of trusted partners and collaborators. The active participation of Norway in bi- and trilateral research collaborations as well as in the NATO Science and Technology Organization does not only benefit us in peacetime, but also improves our research resilience in case of conflict or war.

Norway is not at war. Eight months of war is a long time in terms of human suffering and death, but is a short time for new research to have an impact. The war in Ukraine has nevertheless highlighted the importance of building resilience into our research efforts. Building a strong research foundation and infrastructure for serving the needs of the armed forces during peacetime will also build research resilience.

FFI is initiation a new strategy process to identify the research needs of the armed forces in the future. We will invite relevant stakeholders to share their views on the need for research to ensure that the defence of Norway remains effective in the future. Through this process, we will further strengthen our research resilience beyond our peacetime research efforts.

[3] https://www.kcl.ac.uk/why-are-governments-sharing-intelligence-on-the-ukraine-war-with-the-public-and-what-are-the-risks

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What went wrong with Russian war-making in Ukraine? Putin's regime future is at stake

The list of Russian political miscalculations, strategic blunders and tactical mistakes committed during the eight months of the tragic and disastrous Ukraine war is too long to be examined in a short presentation – thick volumes examining these faults will be in the curricula of military colleges in the very near future. We can also assume that the flaws in the original war plan, often labelled as "blitzkrieg", are by now sufficiently exposed, even if the political decision on altering that plan and retreating from Kyiv's suburbs remains under-analyzed. What is essential presently, however, are the mistakes made by Moscow during summer, which have resulted in the on-going and fast-unfolding series of defeats. These mistakes can be grouped in three categories: political (related to the annexation of parts of Ukraine's territory); strategic (related to the planning and execution of mobilization); and operational (related to the aims and targets of combat operations).

The policy of annexation was clearly charted from the very beginning of the invasion, but its implementation in the last three weeks has delivered Moscow into an impossible and self-defeating calamity. The hard and costly offensive toward Lysychansk had yielded by the late summer full control over the Luhansk region – and made it possible to stage a referendum there and annex this region, while setting the goal of proceeding with this process in the Donetsk region and other territories as they come completely under Russia's control. Such political act would have not only established clear new borders of the Russian Federation but also made it possible to deploy battalions comprised of conscripts for consolidating the limited gain.

The decision on a partial mobilization could have followed this political "success" and produced a very different response in the society than presently, when the bad news about the war is common knowledge. The mobilization could have been limited to the men who had served in the ground forces in the last four-five years, so that the target figure would be about 150,000 personnel – a more manageable task than the on-going confusion. Execution of this strictly limited mobilization would have made it possible to proceed with the autumn draft on the usual schedule (from October 1), while an additional measure could have been the decree on prolongation of the term of service for the autumn 2021 draft by six months.

In the strategic-operational terms, the difficult but clearly necessary decision was to withdraw the grouping from the territory to the West of River Dnipro, too battered and clearly unable to resume the offensive toward Mykolaiv. Instead, the Kremlin issued the order to hold Kherson despite all odds and to reinforce the grouping, which produced a strategic trap with no escape routes. Ukraine announced the intention to liberate Kherson already in late summer, but it was perhaps possible for Moscow to negotiate two-three weeks of ceasefire, offering to deliver the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant back to the Ukrainian control. The negative impression from

this retreat could have been compensated by a new offensive push in Donbass, for which enough forces would have been available.

What has followed from these missed opportunities and bad choices is the senseless annexation, which has instantly compromised Russia's territorial integrity; the botched mobilization, which has driven perhaps as many as 750,000 Russian to flee the country; and the forced retreat of Russian motley forces from the Kharkiv region deep into the Donbass, while a rout looms in the Kherson region. Scapegoating the top brass is hardly an option for the Kremlin, since the responsibility clearly rests with the Commander-in-Chief; while a desperate resort to the first use of nuclear weapons will, hopefully, also be relegated to the category of non-options.

Confusion among the elites, which remain reluctant to criticize the decision to start the war, but feel free to criticize its conduct, while seeing no way to achieve anything resembling a victory, harbingers a political crisis. The fall of Kherson, perhaps already this autumn, may lead to the fall of Vladimir Putin, perhaps the same way as the Kremlin cabal deposed Nikita Khrushchev soon after his 70s birthday. Making himself the central part of a massive problem, Putin cannot deter his courtiers and henchmen from executing an obvious solution and putting the blame for the barely manageable economic and social catastrophe where it belongs – on the discarded leader. It is by no means certain that a new collective leadership would succeed in checking the breakdown and break-up, but at least they can have a chance.

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European Strategy in a Multipolar World

When Russia invaded Ukraine, the EU, the US, and their main partners adopted severe economic sanctions, and began to decouple their economies from Russia. However the war ends, that decoupling will probably be structural, for Russia has forfeited all trust, and a fundamental change in the nature of the regime seems unlikely. In other words, the West must prepare for a "mini cold war" with Russia.

"Mini", because the rest of the world did not follow suit. Russia certainly suffers, and is becoming increasingly dependent on China, but it remains connected to the "non-Western" part of the global economy. China has distanced itself somewhat from Russia, not wanting to be associated with either failure or nuclear threats, but it will not drop Russia because the US and the EU do. Neither will China allow Russia to determine its relations with the West – they are far too important. But it is not just other authoritarian states that continue to work with Russia. So does India, for example, which in September 2022 even participated in Russian military manoeuvres alongside China.

Meanwhile European leaders even as they are depicting the war as a global confrontation between democracy and dictatorship, hurry to negotiate new energy deals with countries such as Algeria, Azerbaijan, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

A Scramble for Satellites?

The resulting complexity is inherent to the current multipolar world. There are various great powers; some are closely linked (the EU and the US; Russia and China); but ultimately they all prioritise their national interest. There are democratic and non-democratic states; but when the national interest demands it, they cooperate regardless of different domestic systems. Not every authoritarian state is against the EU on every issue, therefore, nor is every democracy necessarily always with it.

How can the EU safeguard its interests in this complex world? Many Americans, and more and more Europeans, advocate decoupling from China as well as from Russia. They regard the rise of an authoritarian China as inherently problematic, and see it as a direct security threat.

China obviously is an gigantic economic competitor (and certainly does not always play by the rules), and an enormous political challenge (with influence in every country on the globe). But it does not pose a military threat to Europe. The real (though mostly unspoken) strategic significance of China's rise for Europe is that the US identifies it as the main military threat, and allocates resources accordingly. In the future, that will force Europeans to assume a lot more of the responsibility for their own defence.

Decoupling the West and China, however, would increase the security threat, for it triggers the inexorable logic of geopolitical rivalry. If the EU and the US were to decouple from China, things would not stop there. To limit the economic impact, both sides would inevitably seek to create

an exclusive sphere of influence, and court or coerce as many states as possible into joining their bloc.

Are the EU and the US sure that their offer to countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America is enticing enough to recruit them to their side? If forced to, more states than they may think might decide, more or less willingly, to opt for China. Key states are notably those that hold the natural resources that Europe will become ever more dependent on as it greens and digitalises its economy. Beijing definitely has a head start, thanks to its Belt and Road Initiative, and because its hold over Russian resources increases as the rift between Russia and the West deepens.

Moreover, many states really seek to work with all great powers, rather than having to choose between them and run the risk of becoming a mere satellite. Forcing that choice upon states regardless, may provoke unrest and war. That is what happened in Ukraine in 2014, when Russia (not the EU) demanded that the country grant it exclusive ties.
At the very least, a scramble for satellites would lead to a global cold war (rather than one with Russia alone), which would paralyse productive international relations, and notably render impossible any effective global climate policy.

Or an Open Door?
Decoupling from China is not the answer to the EU's economic and security challenges, and it would be enormously costly – much more so than decoupling from Russia. The better option, therefore, is for the EU to stay the course and implement Open Strategic Autonomy and the Global Gateway, which must go hand in hand.

Open Strategic Autonomy means, first, creating the protective (but not protectionist) mechanisms, such as investment screening and banning the products of forced labour, that precisely allow the European economy to remain open. Second, managing dependencies and diversifying supplies, including by re-shoring production in specific areas. Third, establishing real reciprocity and obliging China to be as-open to the EU as we are to them, if necessary by suspending future or even existing access so that not reciprocating bears a cost for China (unlike the non-ratification of the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, which has no consequences for China).

Of course, if China were to change course and adopt a similar military expansionist strategy to Russia, the EU would have no choice but to retaliate in a similar geoeconomic way. The sanctions against Russia are an implicit message aimed at deterring China as well, and are being closely watched in Beijing. The EU must be clear, therefore: if China uses force against another state, or to change the status quo on Taiwan, the economic relationship with the EU will never be the same again. There is no point, however, in decoupling preventively: that would render economic deterrence impossible and trigger instant geopolitical rivalry.

The Global Gateway must be seen as strategic investment (and not as development policy). It is the EU's Open Door Policy for the 21st century. The original 19th century Open Door Policy of the US aimed to preserve the territorial integrity of China from the appetites of the great powers that were carving out spheres of influence, and to keep China open for trade with all on an equal basis. Today's Global Gateway must do the same for third countries vis-à-vis China itself this time, making them an offer enticing enough to convince them, not to push China out, but to diversify and build deep relations with the EU and China (and others) simultaneously. The aim is to avoid a scramble for exclusive spheres of influence.

This demands that the EU's Global Gateway, climate policy, Africa policy etc. are all aligned and pursue a single strategic agenda. There is a security and defence dimension to this as well. China is increasing its global military presence, but for now does not engage in kinetic interventions – Russians, Americans, and Europeans do. It is a very sensitive instrument, of course, but military assistance, including legitimate combat operations, must be integrated in the EU's offer to relevant third countries.

Conclusion: Realpolitik
EU strategy is not served by high-flown rhetoric about human rights and democracy. The EU's interests oblige it to work with authoritarian states; the latter's domestic policies, however reprehensible, do not affect those interests; and the EU anyway has but little leverage to force a change in domestic policies. The EU must compartmentalise therefore: between domestic policies (which it can and must criticise when they violate human rights, but which sanctions will rarely change) and foreign policies (against which it must push back and/or retaliate when they threaten its interests).

Yes, that is Realpolitik: the EU would do well to adhere to it, if it wants the Zeitenwende, that other German word that everybody uses today, to turn to its advantage.

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Prospects for European energy security

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, energy security has risen to the top of the EU agenda. Since the 1990s, EU energy policy has been built on three pillars: a competitive Single European Market, environ-mental sustainability, and energy security. Security usually came last on the list. The EU has reversed this, with considerable effect. In the autumn of 2021 Russia's weaponizing gas trade caused shivers across European capitals. But one year later, even as the winter looms, Russia's gas weapon seems much weaker.

On 21 September, in her State of the European Union Speech, Ursula von der Leyen declared that the "current electricity market design [...] is not doing justice to consumers anymore." With a few sentences, the President of the European Commission effectively declared that three decades of energy liberalization had come to a halt. This model, which had been sustained by plentiful supplies of cheap Russian gas, was simply no longer viable.

Over the summer the French and German governments nationalized or bailed out energy companies and storage assets, politicians got directly involved in facilitating gas deals with Norway and Algeria, governments began to regulate prices, and they agreed new EU rules on storage and joint gas purchase. Are these temporary measures, or does this herald a shift toward a more state-driven model of EU energy policy?

Although energy is traded as a commodity, it is best understood as a strategic good: a public good with important national security implications. The Russo-Ukrainian gas crisis of January 2009 and the annexation of Crimea five years later drove this point home. The 2009 crisis prompted EU investment in interconnection and reverse-low pipelines. Poland and the Baltic states went further, investing in spare capacity to replace pipelines gas from Russia with LNG (liquefied natural gas, transported by ship) from international markets.

Yet the European Commission and most member states, particularly Germany, Italy and Austria, continued to treat gas primarily as an ordinary commodity (with one big externality: climate change). When Gazprom priced gas differently for more and less Russo-friendly EU states, the Commission used competition law to resolve this as a matter of a firm's abuse of its dominant position. This was done for good reasons. The central idea since the fall of the Berlin Wall was to tie Russia to the EU though trade and mutual dependence. And it was cheap.

Although the danger that oil and gas trade might be weaponized was well understood, both political and industry leaders considered this very unlikely. Until recently Russia supplied about a third of the gas used in Western Europe (the UK and the EU); some 155 billion cubic meters of a 450 bcm market. Fossil fuel export earnings supplied 40% the Russian state budget; about a third of this came from gas.

Whereas oil is a fungible commodity, traded on global markets and transported by ship, the 140 bcm that went to Europe via pipelines had nowhere else to go. China might be a big market for Russia in the future, but to get the infrastructure in place to hit even a third of the EU level, will take several years. And in any case that involves gas from Eastern Siberia, a long way from the geopolitically stranded assets in Western Siberia. Russia could simply not afford a gas war.

The problem was the whereas the EU was vulnerable in the short term, Russia was vulnerable in the medium to long term. Consequently, even after Russia's annexation of the Crimea in 2014, many EU states were reluctant to risk the economic, social and political costs that interrupted gas trade could involve. The fear of sky-high prices, inflation, and yellow-vest-type protests limited the scope for EU sanction.

This probably caused Vladimir Putting to believe that the EU would remain divided and incapable of action if Russia attacked Kyiv. Moscow was clearly surprised by EU leaders' willingness to bear the costs of a gas cut-off. When Chancellor Olaf Scholtz withdrew Germany's approval of the new Nord Stream 2 pipeline on 22 February 2022, Moscow had no response ready. With the stroke of a pen, the biggest importer of Russian gas showed that it was prepared to risk a gas supply crisis if that were what it took to stand up to Russian aggression.

Half a dozen sanction packages followed, as did haphazard Russian countermeasures designed to split EU states politically. Gas supply to "unfriendly" states were cut. EU states increased pipeline and LNG imports from other sources, improved LNG infrastructure, mandated storage, accelerated the development of renewable energy, and began to reduce energy consumption. Putin's closest ally in the EU, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, was totally isolated. Even the Russophile Italian populist and far right parties had to distance themselves from Putin to win elections.

This has had three important effects. The first was to render the EU more robust in the face of a total Russian gas cut off. By September 2022, Russian gas was down to 9 % of its market. The winter weather will be an important factor, but the EU can now cope without Russian gas.

Second, it weakened the Russian gas weapon. By late September 2022, Putin was under pressure to do something. If it turns out that Russia was behind the attacks on the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines on 26 September 2022, this signals a major change of strategy. Until recently, the strategy seemed to be to occupy or annex Ukrainian territory, threaten gas cut-offs to force EU governments to accept this, and reward them with cheap gas if they did so. This policy tool is now gone.

The third impact is even more important. The EU's initiatives signal a bigger shift in EU energy policy, toward more state-driven energy markets. The EU's era of low gas prices and minimal spare capacity is over: for the EU, security of s upply means more regulation of both infrastructure and trade.

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Ukraine – between buffer state and part of the Euro-Atlantic Community

For much of the period 1991 to 2014, Ukraine vacillated between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic community. President Leonid Kuchma (1994-2004) named his foreign policy a "multi-vector" approach. This wavering ended with the Russian annexation of Crimea in February 2014 and the war in Donbas soon after. Since then, dominating majorities in both the elite and the population have pushed for Euro-Atlantic integration. After the February 2022 Russian invasion of the country, both "multi-vector" and pro-Russian positions have become marginal. Popular support for membership in the European Union is at 80 %, and it is more than 75 % in all regions and age groups. Support for Nato membership is at 72 % and rising. There is also a majority in favor of this latter membership in all regions. Even in traditionally more Russia-leaning Eastern Ukraine 58 % now want to join Nato.

The scale and brutality of Russian warfare is the main reason for this state of affairs. However, there is more. A slow turn towards Europe and the West started long before Crimea. It began among the young. They understood that integration with Russia, or even a more neutral inbetween position, invariably would mean that a Russian politico-economic model would continue to dominate in Ukraine. Here, as in Russia, public corruption, injustice and inefficiency has reigned. The Ukrainians gradually came to the conclusion that the only way to battle these menaces was to join Western institutions. In that case, the Ukrainian elite might be forced to reform. Few expected the elite to reform its own initiative. In these matters, Russia and Putin had nothing to offer. The Euro-Atlantic community, despite its own numerous problems and weaknesses, did.

For Ukrainian Euro-Atlantic integration to happen, however, it is not enough that the Ukrainians themselves have made up their mind. Russia needs to let go, and the Euro-Atlantic community needs to admit.

Obviously, Russia is not ready to let go. That is what the current war is about. We can debate whether it was the failure of intelligence, the prospect of Ukrainian membership in Nato, or Putin's reading of history that best explain the attack, but the intense Russian desire to control Ukraine cannot be questioned.

Today, only a Ukrainian military victory or regime change in Moscow can make Russia let go of its southern neighbor. Important, such a regime change does not have to be democratic. Few think this would happen soon anyway. However, even a new autocrat would be in an entirely different position from Putin. He or she did not start the war. Only Putin made that decision. This provides an opportunity for ending a doomed war and blame it on the predecessor.

Neither Ukrainian victory nor Russian regime change would probably end the Russian desire to keep Ukraine back. However, since the Ukrainians now have made up their mind about where they belong, Russia is left with only military force as

the means to keep them back. Soon, even this tool may no longer work. The Russian military is bleeding out and getting weaker by the day in Donbas, Kherson and Kharkiv.

Will the Euro-Atlantic community admit Ukraine if Russia is forced to let go? In terms of identity, economics and policy, probably. On 23 June 2022 the European Council granted Ukraine status as a candidate for membership in the EU. Even Vladimir Putin had a few days earlier said he had nothing against Ukrainian EU membership. That statement rang hollow since he only a few months before had tried to take control over more or less the entire country by force. Still, such official Russian statements could make it even easier for the EU to admit Ukraine. A successful Ukrainian integration into the EU could in time help the Ukrainians achieve the domestic politico-economic model they crave. That will of course also presuppose that the Ukrainians are able to pull their act together. The need to get serious on fighting the corruption, lack of rule of law and inefficiencies that have plagued Ukrainian society since independence. However, even such a triumphant outcome would not satisfy the Ukrainian need for security.

Here, there seems to be only two options:
(1) Ukraine as a full member of Nato or (2) Ukraine as a neutral but heavily Nato-integrated bulwark against any future Russian aggression. Both the Ukrainian elite and society would strongly prefer the former, but Ukrainian President Zelenskiy has reluctantly indicated that his country also can live with a version of the latter. In either case, Euro-Atlantic politicians need to keep two things in mind. First, Ukraine is by now a country that has taken heavy losses in defense of more than its own independence. Given their contribution to resisting instability and authoritarianism from the east, they will be justified in demanding a stronger voice in Euro-Atlantic affairs than they had before the war. Second, unless there is a change of regime and thinking in Moscow, a seriously militarily weakened Russia will not necessarily be less of a security challenge. Humiliated, antagonistic and insecure countries make for unpredictable neighbors. A Ukrainian victory may be the first nail in the coffin for Russian authoritarianism and imperialism, but it could take a very long time to ram in the last one. The Euro-Atlantic community needs to think hard about how to handle Russia in the meantime.

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U.S. alliance conceptions after the Russian attack on Ukraine

The matter of U.S. commitment to NATO has been subject to much debate over the last few years. Former President Donald Trump infamously called NATO "obsolete", "much too costly for the U.S", and repeatedly conditioned U.S. security guarantees on defense spending (Benitez, 2019; Miller, 2021; Rapp-Hooper, 2020). Trump later said that NATO was "no longer obsolete" (Benitez, 2019), and did not withdraw from the alliance. In fact, U.S. defense spending increased under his presidency (Giles, 2020).[1]

Fast forward to today, President Joe Biden was elected with a mandate of "reaffirming" US alliances (Biden, 2021a; Blinken, 2021). While his largely unilateral withdrawal from Afghanistan left European allies concerned, Biden has made clear that he views American commitment to NATO as "ironclad" (Restuccia, 2022), a "sacred commitment" (Gangitano, 2022), and he has stated that "America's alliances are our greatest asset" (Biden, 2021b). In the face of Russian aggression towards Ukraine, he has continually promised that the U.S. will defend "every inch" of NATO territory (Biden, 2022).

This illustrates a puzzling ambiguity in American alliance policy between assurances of unwavering commitments and room for unilateral maneuver. However, after February 24th, some ambiguity has been replaced with an emerging consensus of NATO support. The change was not immediate: as recently as April, 63 Republican representatives voted against NATO (Blake, 2022). But as the conflict has progressed, consensus emerged, epitomized by the recent 95-1 Senate vote in favor of including Finland and Sweden in NATO. In this essay, I will delve into the arguments put forth in this hearing to illuminate what I term *conceptions of alliance* in current American foreign policy.

Conceptions of alliance

Most fundamentally, we can distinguish between one positive and one negative view of alliances (MacMillan, 2021). The positive view is that alliances deter aggression in peacetime and foster cooperation among states, which in itself promotes stability and peace. If deterrence fails, the alliance can increase the likelihood of victory by pooling the members' resources. The negative view is that alliances create rigid blocks of states vulnerable to entanglement into war.

In reality, however, alliance views are more complex. Alliances have the potential for good and bad. From American alliance history and International Relations theory, I have inferred four alliance conceptions: alliance as dangerous, useless, useful, and peaceful.

The argument that alliances might be *dangerous* often posits that America is overstretched (see for instance Gholz et al., 1997; Kupchan, 2020). A related argument is that alliances might entangle into war (Miller, 2021), an argument heard after the First World War, when the alliance system itself was often blamed for the war (MacMillan, 2021).

[1] Although the increase was not unprecedented, and in fact exaggerated by Trump himself (Giles, 2020; McCarthy, 2020).

The view of alliances as *useless* centers on arguments that alliances are conducive to freeriding and exploitation (Gholz et al., 1997; Mearsheimer & Walt, 2022). The freeriding concern is common in American foreign policy debate. The Trump examples are infamous, but President Obama also made it an issue, encouraging allies to increase their defense spending (Mccaskill, 2016), saying that "free riders aggravate me", and even warning that Great Britain could not claim a "special relationship" if it did not commit to the 2% target (Goldberg, 2016).

Obama, however invariably assured of unwavering U.S. commitment to NATO is (Obama, 2014; Pellerin, 2016). He adopted mainstream American foreign policy logic, where alliances are central to national security interests. In this view of alliances as *useful*, alliances are tools for pooling resources, exerting influence, and upholding the international order, and constitute "the cornerstone of America's global position" (Rapp-Hooper, 2020, p. 369).

The view of alliances as *peaceful* holds that alliances keep international order by deterring war in peacetime. Moreover, they foster cooperation, create bonds of trust, dampen security dilemmas, disclose a harmony of interests, and spread values such as democracy and human rights. Thus, they can contribute to peace.

Considering NATO expansion

In August, the Senate voted to approve NATO expansion to Sweden and Finland. During the hearing, most senators argued that NATO is central to America's national security interests; as long as alliance partners pay their fair share, NATO expansion is a good thing. Several senators highlighted the two states' geostrategic importance, and noted that both countries are militarily capable democracies. Republican Senator Tom Cotton reflected a conception of alliance both as useful and peaceful:

> If Finland and Sweden join NATO, the alliance will unquestionably be stronger, the risk of war—and of America being dragged into war—will decrease in Europe, and Vladimir Putin's unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine will backfire in another significant, lasting way (Cotton, 2022).

A conception of NATO as peaceful was also presented by Democratic Senator Bob Menendez. He underscored the role of values in the alliance's rationale, arguing that NATO is a "bulwark protecting peace and democracy (Menendez, 2022).

Republican Senator Rand Paul, however, expressed reservations to NATO expansion, asking: "Will Sweden's and Finland's ascension to NATO (...) cause more or less war?" (Paul, 2022). To him, the answer was not clear: NATO enlargement might not deter, but needlessly provoke, nuclear conflict. Paul's remarks reflected a conception of alliance as dangerous: offensive, provocative, and conducive to war.

Republican Senator Josh Hawley was the sole "no vote", arguing that the U.S. is overstretched, and must reverse this trend in order to face China. Before the U.S. could expand commitments, European allies should spend much more than 2 %. Combining arguments of alliance as useless with arguments of alliance as dangerous, he claimed NATO expansion would make America "less safe" (Hawley, 2022).

Concluding remarks

During the hearing, the four conceptions of alliance were all represented. However, the two negative conceptions were marginal. One Senator abstained;[2] one voted no; and reservations to NATO enlargement were largely criticized. Moreover, the House of Representatives held a symbolic hearing on the same question, this time ending in a 394 to 18 vote in favor of NATO expansion – quite the turnaround from April, when 63 Representatives voted against NATO itself.

This seems to suggest that there is an emerging NATO consensus in the American political landscape. The consensus corresponds with a conception of alliance as useful *and* peaceful: where alliances can be deterrents of war in peace and spread values like democracy and freedom.

[2] The three remaining Senators missed the vote, but stated publicly that they would have voted in favor of enlargement (Jankowicz, 2022).

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War in Ukraine and Arctic Security

Russia's war on Ukraine has implications for institutions and regimes within Arctic regional governance. Current events challenge the liberal notion that international regimes are somehow resilient to, or even untouched by, shifts in the balance of power. The war has actualized questions of state sovereignty and whether great powers can dictate the course of international affairs. At the same time, it has led to NATO expansion and the European Union (EU) acting resolute and unison in response to Russia with sanctions and in aiding Ukraine with weapons. Still, European states must also rethink how to deal with Russia in the Arctic.

What are the implications of Russia's war on Ukraine for institutions and regimes within Arctic governance and for Arctic security?
The dissolution of the Soviet Union gave rise to expectations of cooperation and peaceful development, which was made possible largely due to the inclusion of Russia in Circumpolar partnerships. In the post-Cold War era, the Arctic quite quickly transformed from a region of high military tension caught between two superpowers to one characterized by cooperation and stability. The Arctic regime complex established in the 1990s was intended to shield collaboration on specific and important issues in the Arctic during challenging periods in international affairs.

This was, at the time, largely successful. Because it has also been in Russia's interest to keep the Arctic "a zone of peace". Russia is dependent on resource development in the region, expertise, foreign investments, and access to markets. Through framing the Arctic as a "special zone", Russia has been able to maintain positive relations with Western states in the Arctic, despite tensions elsewhere.

However, parallel to this narrative of commitment to international cooperation, Russia has also maintained military bases, activities, and exercises in the Arctic. While the Soviet Union/Russia has always had a significant military presence in the Arctic, recent activities have still been reasons for concern in NATO. NATO has focused on winter exercises in Norway, which have increased in numbers and complexity. Other developments are the rotating presence of US marines in northern and central Norway, and the establishment of the Joint Force Command in 2019, which is tasked with keeping the sea lines of communication between America and Europe open.

This does not contribute to low tension. Yet, the Arctic has remained peaceful, which gave rise to the term "Arctic exceptionalism" to describe the successful efforts to maintain cooperation and stability in the region. The Arctic regime complex did prove to be resilient after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. The political discourse about the Arctic was largely centred around the continued peaceful management of shared interests in the region, and the relationship between Russia and the other Arctic states remained civil in all areas except for military relations.

Today, the situation is different. Western states have paused all cooperation with Russia through bodies for circumpolar cooperation, also the Arctic Council – where Russia holds the chairmanship. History has shown that institutions can shield practical cooperation on specific issues, but today we are witnessing the most severe blow to Arctic regional cooperation in decades. Russia's war on Ukraine – in contrast to the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the war in Georgia in 2008 – was a bigger shock than the Arctic regime complex could resist. Thus, regimes can withstand limited conflicts and an annexation, but not full-scale invasion and war on the European continent. It is unimaginable that foreign and security relations with Russia can return to "normal", if defined as the situation prior to 2014.

Norway has followed the EU on sanctions on Russia, with an exception in the port ban regards to fishing vessels, and fisheries cooperation between Norway and Russia has not been suspended. Fisheries, and Svalbard, are areas where Norway has no choice but to interact with Russia, at least on some level. Yet, the "culture of compromise" between Norway and Russia, as described by Geir Hønneland pertaining to fisheries in the Barents Sea, face an uncertain future.

Is it still possible to argue for "High North – Low Tension"?

This mantra has been key in Norway's foreign policy approach in the Arctic, and Norwegian security interests in the region have been structured along these lines since the Cold War. The preferred narrative of Norwegian politicians is one centred around the Arctic as a peaceful and stable region, and with a solid legal framework for international cooperation and governance. The status quo has served Norway well, but the international order – which Norway is heavily dependent on – is now in play.

How does this influence Norway's position and interests in the Arctic?

Russia's war on Ukraine has contributed to strengthening NATO and European and Nordic defence and security cooperation. Finnish and Swedish NATO membership allows for viewing Nordic defence in a larger context, and a united Nordic region in NATO can provide a stronger voice in the alliance. These are all positive aspects for Norway. Adding to this is how Denmark has abolished its 30-year-long security defence opt-out in the EU and is now part of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy.

While Russia's military presence in the Arctic previously has accentuated the asymmetric relationship between Russia and Norway, this has changed. Norway's Chief of Defence, Eirik Kristoffersen, confirmed earlier in August that Russia has few ground forces left on the Kola Peninsula, and that large forces have been relocated from both the borders of Finland and from Kola to Ukraine. This poses the question of whether Norway is safer in the north because of the war.

Russia's war on Ukraine has served a significant blow to Arctic cooperation and the Arctic regime complex. Yet, it has at the same time contributed to a stronger and more unified transatlantic partnership and European cooperation. Norway is however not a member of the EU and therefore risks being side-lined, should the EU take on a more active role in the Arctic as well as for European security in general.

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