

# Norwegian Defence Commission of 2021

Finalised and presented to the  
Norwegian Government in May 2023.

*English short version*

Audio Version



## Outline

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# 1. Introduction

**‘But now, as we face greater perils, are we as a people united and awake, ready to face any danger with our greatest abilities?’**

Fridtjof Nansen (1915),  
*Before its too late.*

The Norwegian Defence Commission has undertaken a comprehensive security and defence policy review of national security inflection points and priorities for the next 10-20 years. The Commission has been tasked to make timely recommendations to the Norwegian Government and stimulate public debate. The report was presented to the government in May 2023. This short version of the Defence Commission’s report summarises the Commission’s main findings and recommendations for an international audience.

**‘There is a dramatic mismatch between Norway’s defence capabilities and the security challenges it faces.’**

The report outlines how Norwegian defence capabilities are insufficient to handle current security challenges and even less suited to deal with the emerging security landscape. There is a dramatic mismatch between Norway’s defence capabilities and the security challenges

it faces. Norway is vulnerable, with serious shortfalls in its defence capabilities. The will and ability to defend Norway must be strengthened, and Norway is well positioned to do what is required.

The need for investment and improvement are extensive. Extraordinary measures are required. The Commission calls for a drastic, long-term and comprehensive prioritization of security, defence and national readiness. This should be guaranteed through a political settlement between the parties in Parliament. The settlement must include a binding agreement on a higher level of ambition for the defence of Norway combined with a specific economic plan.

Such a political settlement requires a united and comprehensive approach to the defence of Norway. Norway cannot defend itself without support from our Allies or solely by military means. Allies, international cooperation and collaboration between governmental agencies, businesses and the population within the framework of the Norwegian total defence concept is needed. The strengthening of the Norwegian Armed Forces must be conducted through comprehensive, predictable and long-term measures. Norwegian authorities must formulate national strategies, comprehensive policy and prioritize across and between sectors.

The most important recommendation from the Defence Commission is therefore; a comprehensive plan to improve security, defence and preparedness through a binding political settlement.



### A grave international security environment

Once again, war rages in Europe. Europe has not seen such a brutal and extensive war since the Second World War. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and extensive use of military force disrupts international security and stability. The scope and brutality of the war affects the entire international community.

The war in Ukraine has strengthened Western cohesion and NATO's collective defence. It has also demonstrated Europe's dependency on the US security guarantee that has resulted from the substantial reduction of Europe's defensive capability since the 1990s. At the same time, the United States has made clear in its national security and defence strategies that China is its pacing challenge, while Russia is a secondary priority. This requires that European states take greater responsibility for the defence and security of Europe.

Despite the serious deterioration of the security environment in recent years, Norwegian authorities have not yet fully acknowledged the need for stronger Armed Forces that are better adapted to current and future threats. It is too late to prepare for a potential crisis or a war when it is upon us. In the future, crises are likely to occur more frequently, affecting Norwegian security and society more deeply than before. This is the moment for resolute action to enhance Norway's ability to defend itself.

The task of the Norwegian Defence Commission has been to assess potential security and defence policy choices and priorities in a 10 to 20-year perspective. The commission has assessed whether Norway is prepared to face the challenges of the future. We have found that the Norwegian government stands at a significant

**'The Norwegian government stands at a significant inflection point. The decision on whether to prioritise security, defence, and readiness in the next 10 to 20 years must be made now.'**

inflection point. The decision on whether to prioritise security, defence, and readiness in the next 10 to 20 years must be made now. The Norwegian Defence Commission believes three insights should underpin Norway's future defence policy:

- First, the Norwegian government and people must realise the gravity of the current security situation, and how external developments could severely and negatively impact Norwegian security.
- Second, the Norwegian government must act. We need significant investments and efforts toward improving Norwegian security, defence, and national preparedness.
- Third, the Norwegian government must acknowledge that the challenges we face will require a greater degree of integration. Our defence and security policy must be based on enhanced international cooperation with our Allies, better national cooperation across sectors and domains and better internal cooperation and integration within the defence sector and the Armed Forces. This includes better cooperation between the public and the private sector, including with business and industry.

## 2. Key Parameters of Norway's Security and Defence



### Norwegian advantages and vulnerabilities

Norway has certain key advantages that should be maximized in order to secure its strategic interests. The same advantages can turn to vulnerabilities if not tended to.

- A geopolitical location that attracts interest and support
- A challenging and favourable geography
- Strong ties between government, society and people
- Economic leverage
- Vast natural resources
- A trusted ally and member of NATO
- A highly digitalised and technologically advanced society
- A highly skilled and adaptable population

### Norwegian strategic interests

Norway's security and defence policy has been characterised by a considerable degree of continuity since the Second World War. Its basic premises have enjoyed broad political and public support. At the same time, Norway has adapted to external threats, international events, allied considerations and domestic political developments. The organisation of the Armed Forces and their tasks have been adjusted, but often long after the need for change became clear. This illustrates that adaptation takes time, that change is challenging, and that it requires political courage, determination and long-term perspective.

The Defence Commission points out some enduring traits, interests and values relevant to national security. Norwegian security and defence policy should be based on authoritative and lasting strategic interests. These must form the basis for future national security priorities. The Commission has defined nine such strategic interests for Norway:

### Nine strategic interests for Norway:

- A free, independent and indivisible Norway
- A nation with freedom of action on security policy
- A strong democracy and respect for the rule of law
- A resilient and united population
- A safe and viable society built on mutual trust between people and government
- An economically independent nation with sustainable growth
- A functioning international system for cooperation and with respect for international law
- A country with an international outlook that can pursue its regional and global interests
- An allied nation with mutual security guarantees



### 3. The Future Security Environment and Key Challenges Ahead

#### National defence capability status

After the Cold War, a relatively peaceful period in this part of the world has contributed to a situation where Norway's defence capabilities no longer match the challenges it faces. Currently, the Norwegian Armed Forces have substantial deficiencies. Its capability is too weak; the defence sector is fragmented and the Norwegian Total Defence Concept has not been adapted to the current security environment. Norwegian authorities struggle to meet international expectations and commitments.

The current situation in the Norwegian Armed Forces is dire. Lagging investments and an inability to sustain continuous operations require urgent attention. It takes time to increase volume and improve quality. It has gradually become more difficult to recruit, train and retain qualified personnel. Investing in national security is an insurance premium. In an increasingly dangerous and unpredictable world, a rich and vulnerable country like Norway must increase its deposit.

There is an imbalance between the force structure

and available human and economic resources. In the future, the population will age, and the competition for skills and expertise will intensify. The Norwegian Armed Forces must recruit and retain the right personnel with the right skills. The Defence Commission believes that immediate measures must be taken to secure better recruitment and retention in the future, as a growing deficit of officers and specialists already poses a significant challenge. To mitigate these challenges, the entire organisation offering military education must be strengthened.

The commission recommends improving the personnel policy of the Armed Forces. This should include a review of existing incentives, family policy, the educational and recruitment system, to include the use of reservists. In the future, it will be necessary to better utilise the sum of available skills to our society in the best possible way: across the civil-military divide, across the public-private divide, and across national borders.

#### Great power competition and the global redistribution of power

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 marked the definitive end of the post-Cold War era. Russia attacked a neighbouring country for the third time in 14 years, after attacking Georgia in 2008 and annexing Crimea and destabilizing Eastern Ukraine in 2014. The international security situation is more unstable, dangerous and competitive than it has been for a long time. There is an on-going struggle for global influence between democratic countries, authoritarian countries, as well as disruptive non-state actors. Increased global tensions and uncertainty are likely to continue over the next two decades.

The competition between the United States and China will define international relations for years to come. This is true in terms of security, but also for

global economic and technological development. China increasingly challenges the US regionally and globally, and the US sees China as a "pacing threat". The US pivot to the Asia-Pacific is likely to continue in the years ahead. At the same time, Russia has repeatedly demonstrated that it is a sustained and serious threat to regional and global security and stability. The US will continue to counteract Russian attempts to undermine the existing international order, but US resources might suffer from overstretch if faced with parallel crises in Asia and Europe.

**'There is an on-going struggle for global influence between democratic countries, authoritarian countries, as well as disruptive non-state actors.'**

*Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping have met 40 times since 2013. China and Russia have an increasingly close strategic partnership in which their opposition to the West yields mutual benefits.*  
*Photo: Kremlin.ru*



Russia's invasion of Ukraine has consolidated NATO and strengthened cohesion and cooperation between Western and other democratic countries against revisionist actors. However, the war in Ukraine has also exposed shortfalls in defence capabilities and depleted stockpiles of arms and ammunition. Due to past budget cuts and underinvestment, European military capabilities do not match its security needs. Europe needs to take more responsibility for its own security. Norway and other European NATO-countries, must increase defence spending substantially in order to fulfil national needs and contribute to better burden sharing within NATO.

The EU will likely increase its role in security and defence in the future. NATO and the European Union play complementary and mutually reinforcing roles in supporting international peace and security. It is important to avoid duplication and ensure Norway's access and involvement in shaping European security and defence policy.

**'Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO is a historic development that fundamentally changes the geopolitical situation on the Scandinavian peninsula.'**

Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO is a historic development that fundamentally changes the geopolitical situation on the Scandinavian peninsula. The potential for increased cooperation and mutual security for all Nordic countries has increased, but Russia may also increase its military activity along a longer land border with NATO, as well as in the Arctic. The strategic importance of the region is likely to increase.

Russia and China both challenge the existing global order. Russia is a close, potentially direct and immediate threat, whereas China comprises a more distant, indirect, but systemic challenge. Terrorism and non-state actors will also continue to threaten Norwegian and global security the next 20 years.

### **National resilience and preparedness**

Complex threats will increasingly challenge Norwegian national security interests in decades to come. Both state and non-state actors can use various non-military measures to target political institutions, influence public opinion and undermine Norwegian security. Such measures include but are not limited to disruptive technologies, digital and cyber measures, disinformation and propaganda campaigns. Targets such as infrastructure, governmental and private institutions, and public opinion can be attacked with increasing speed, scale and intensity. The distinction between peace, crisis and conflict is increasingly blurred, and so is the distinction between military and civilian crisis-management. Digitalization has many upsides, but also creates vulnerabilities if proper security systems are not in place. Civil-military cooperation – including close coordination between different agencies, contingency planning, and a high level of trust between authorities and the general public – play a vital role in mitigating and managing hybrid threats.

### **Demographic trends**

Demographic trends have a vital impact on security, defence and preparedness. The population in many Western countries will age significantly over the next 20 years. That includes Norway. As a consequence,



*Energy is essential for security, growth and prosperity. After the Nord Stream explosions in the Baltic Sea in autumn 2022, several Allies offered military support to patrol areas around Norwegian petroleum platforms and installations. Photo: Norwegian Armed Forces*

there will be fewer people of working age per retiree. The relative decline in the active workforce will lead to increased competition for skill, talent and expertise across sectors. An increasing share of the Norwegian population will have immigrant background. This demographic will therefore become an increasingly important recruiting pool for the Armed Forces. In Norway, the population will increasingly be concentrated in urban areas in the southern part of the country. This will pose an additional recruitment challenge for the Armed Forces as many bases are located in less populated and more remote areas.

Russia and China will also experience ageing populations and falling fertility rates. Other regions, especially the Middle East and Africa, will experience rapid population growth. This might lead to the emergence of other stronger states, but could also result in regional instability, increase the risk of conflict and create new waves of migration.

### **Climate change**

Climate change and security will be increasingly interconnected in the decades ahead. Climate change is a threat multiplier, transcends borders and can contribute to societal destabilization, migration, exacerbate existing conflicts or lead to conflict in and of itself. Natural disasters like flooding and landslides will also affect military activity. Norway's Armed Forces must adapt to environmental changes as well as contribute to reduced emissions. A key factor for Norway is the effects of climate change in the Arctic region. Reduced ice-cover is likely to increase activity at sea, allow for exploitation of mineral and energy resources and increase the Arctic's strategic importance. Utilization of

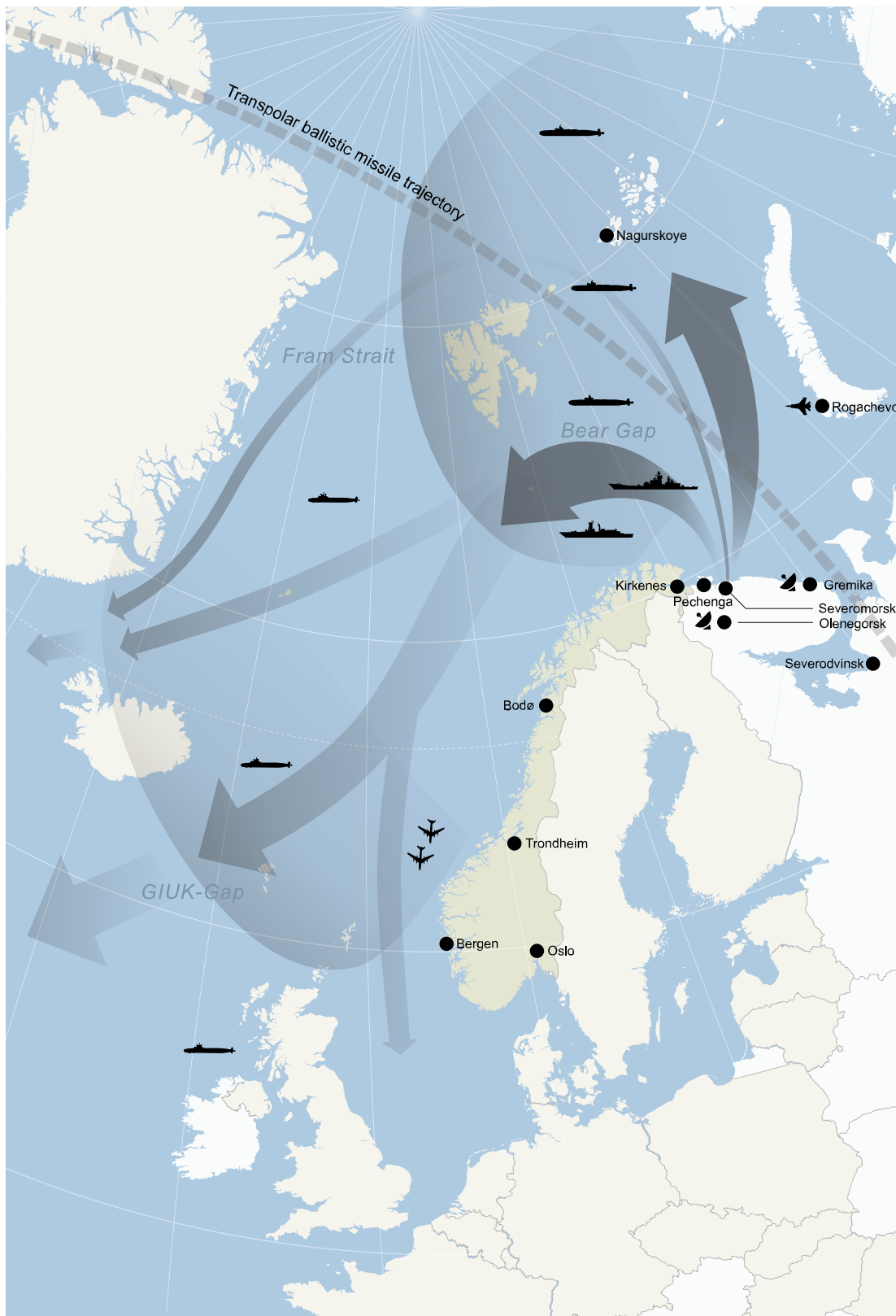
new technologies is important to mitigate the effects of climate change and reduce emissions, in particular the use of simulators, drones and sensors. The Norwegian Armed Forces are likely to face dilemmas between maintaining high operational capability and making the adjustments needed to meet climate goals. It should be recognized that if national security is threatened, operational ability will have to take priority.

### **Economics and resources**

Economic power often translates into military power. Economics and security policy are interlinked. The relative economic decline of the West and the rapid rise of China is the key factor that will shape global security in the coming decades. The positive economic effects of globalization and free trade are in regression, and the contours of a world divided into two separate economic, technological and cooperative spheres is becoming clearer. This will reduce Western countries' economic room for manoeuvre and put a strain on public spending.

### **'Energy security is once again becoming a key economic and security policy factor'**

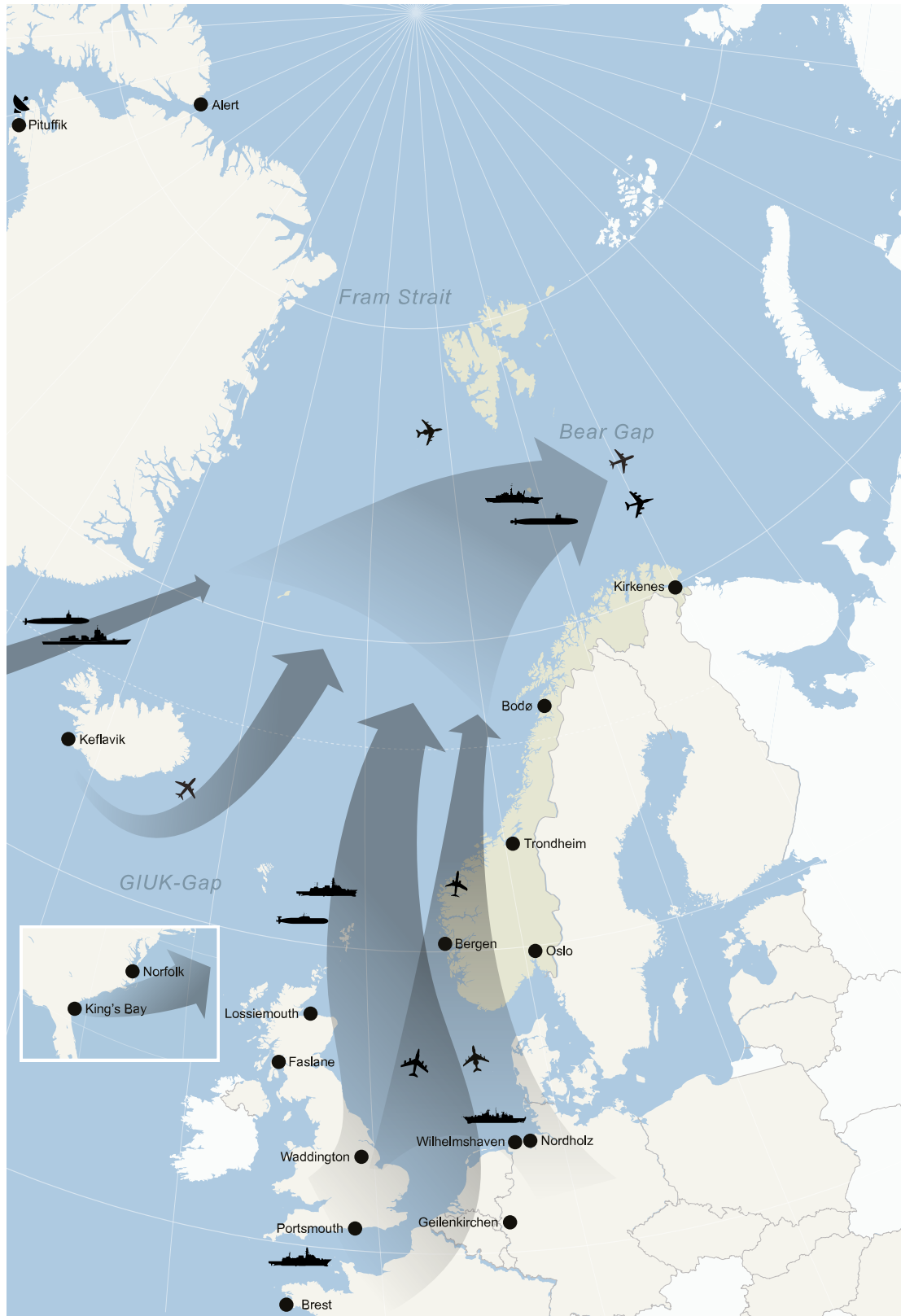
Energy security is once again becoming a key economic and security policy factor, as demonstrated by Russia cutting off its oil and gas supplies to Europe. Norway has vital national security interests in securing oil and gas infrastructure, and plays a key role in supplying energy to Europe. Unlike many Western countries, Norway has the resources to cope with a more demanding economic and security situation, but necessary decisions and investments will have to be made to realize this potential.



*Russian military activity and posture in the North Atlantic and the European High North. The Russian strategy for maritime control significantly overlaps with Norwegian territorial waters, economic zones, and other national and Allied areas of interest. The illustration above depicts typical and persistent maneuvers of Russian military forces in the Barents, Norwegian, and North Sea, and their further advancement into the Atlantic Ocean.*



## The Future Security Environment and Key Challenges Ahead



*Allied military operations aimed at countering Russian armed forces' posture. NATO Allies routinely conduct patrols in the North Atlantic and the High North to challenge Russian aspirations for military control in this region. The scope of these patrols extensively overlaps with Norwegian areas of interest.*

## Technology

Technological development will likely accelerate over the next 20 years and has the potential to fundamentally change societies. Artificial intelligence and other emerging and disruptive technologies hold revolutionary potential, possibilities and risks that are difficult to predict. Keeping pace with technological developments will be vital both for society and for the Armed Forces. Utilizing emerging and future technology to enhance and protect our national capabilities and value chains, while at the same time thwarting efforts to use them against Norway, will be critical.

Satellites are an increasingly important and accessible asset for intelligence, surveillance and weapons guidance. Developments in outer space will therefore become even more important in the years to come. Traditional military platforms will continue to be relevant, but the use of unmanned systems will increase significantly due to more advanced technology, reduced costs and increased battlefield efficiency. Greater availability and lower costs will lead to the proliferation of advanced military technology – including to non-state actors.

To cope with these technological developments, Norway needs to significantly improve strategic planning and foresight, development of national expertise and capabilities, and cooperation with NATO Allies. Substantial grants must be awarded to research and development of information and communications technology, unmanned platforms and AI.

## Military power

War and violence have returned and are increasingly utilised as political tools by state actors. The use of military force by authoritarian and totalitarian state actors to consolidate power, secure their own regimes and obtain access to resources is perceived as less risky and more effective than in the previous three decades. This trend is accelerated by the perceived relative decline in the power of western and democratic states. Norway and its Allies must adapt to this new security situation, but limited productive capacity and supplies means that

adaptation will take time. This makes Norway and other Allies vulnerable.

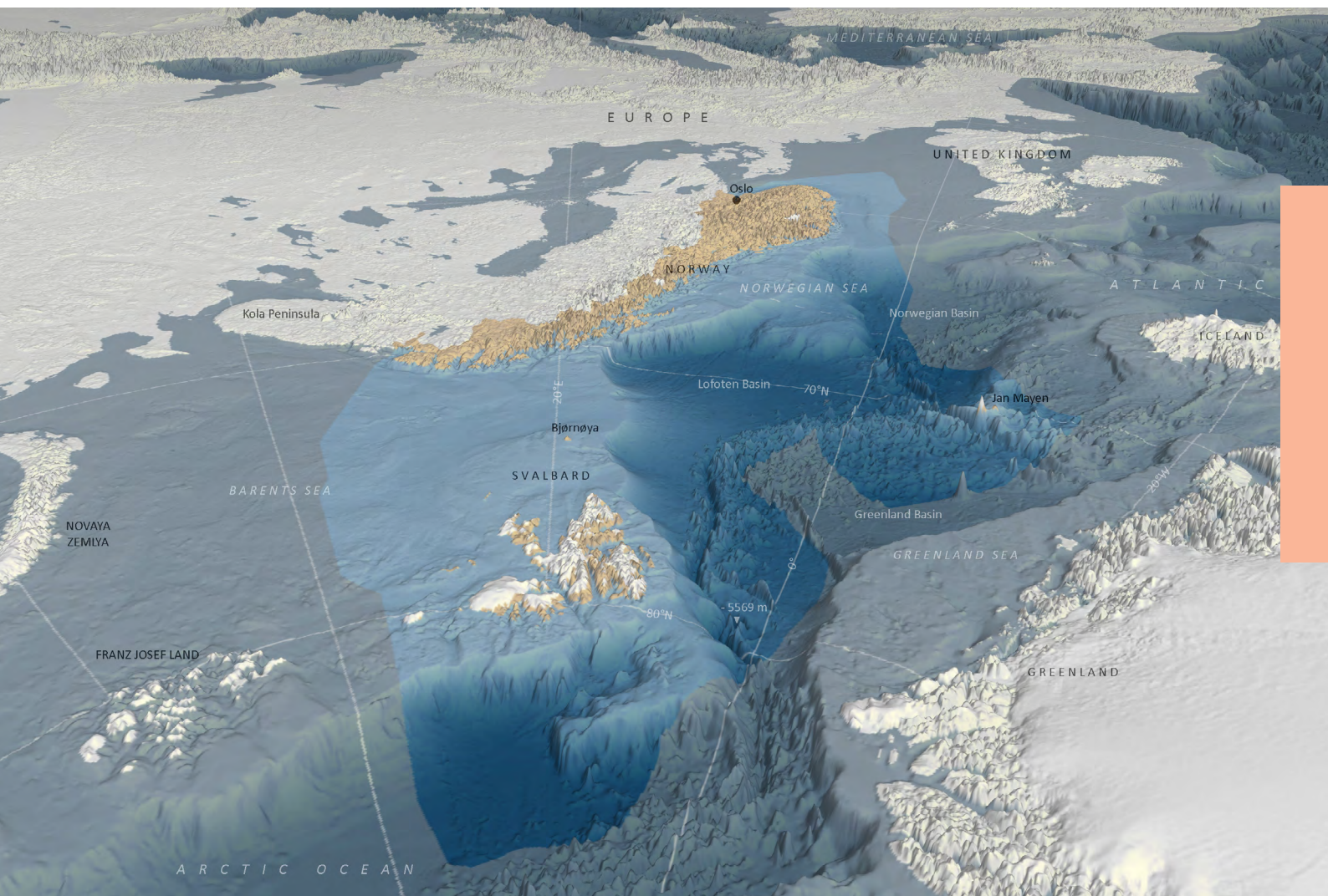
The role of nuclear weapons in international politics is likely to assume greater importance over the next 20 years. The erosion of arms control and disarmament regimes may lead to an increase in the number of nuclear weapons and nuclear-weapon states. The potential rise of China as a nuclear superpower, and the increased risk of nuclear proliferation to new countries in the next 10–20 years, makes the strategic nuclear balance more difficult to maintain. Changes in the nuclear balance in the Middle East and Europe could also lead to nuclear proliferation.

The ability to generate coordinated military effects across operational domains will improve with new technological developments. The West has so far had a superior ability in carrying out joint operations, but China and Russia are building military forces designed to offset this advantage. To remain capable of joint operations, continuous development is needed. Close integration of systems and procedures with Allies will continue to require a technological standard that makes joint operations possible.

Cyber attacks will become a more integrated part of joint operations as information superiority and control of civilian and military networks, becomes even more important in military conflicts. In the next 20 years, such attacks, often in combination with military operations, will become an effective tool for achieving intended effects while preventing adversaries from being able to utilise their armed forces effectively.

The war in Ukraine demonstrates the return of industrial warfare. Since the end of the Cold War, Western countries have moved away from mass production and towards smaller series of high-tech products. Limited Western ability to replace losses and consumption constitutes a serious weakness. Quantity remains a quality in and of itself.

**‘The military-strategic importance of the High North will persist and probably increase in years to come.’**



*Norwegian seas and coastline, including the ocean floor. Norway's geographical location significantly influences Norwegian security and freedom of action. This is primarily due to its proximity to the Kola Peninsula and the extensive coastlines bordering the Barents Sea and other areas used by Russia to project Sea and Air power towards the West.*

The military-strategic importance of the High North will persist and probably increase in years to come. The Kola Peninsula will be crucial for Russian access to the Atlantic Ocean – especially for the strategic and tactical submarines operating from their bases. The Russian desire for access to the Atlantic Ocean overlaps with NATO's need for sea control in Norwegian waters.

### **A maritime challenge for Norway**

Norway faces a maritime challenge over the next 10–20 years. Norway's strategic interests and Norwegian advantages and vulnerabilities in relation to internal and external challenges point to the maritime domain. Norway is a maritime nation and in a strategic sense

belongs to a maritime area of operations. A substantial share of Norwegian value creation and trade is based on unhindered access to Norwegian waters and sea lanes.

Norway's location affects Norwegian security. This is due to its proximity to the Kola Peninsula as well as a long coastline on the Barents Sea.

Several ongoing and projected strategic trends demonstrate the need for both strengthening the Norwegian Armed Forces in general and for a heightened emphasis on the maritime domain. Russia's Northern Fleet is likely to become more important, while the US pivots its maritime capabilities towards the Pacific and Southeast Asia. In this context, Norwegian maritime presence, intelligence and surveillance in areas close to Norway will become even more important.



The opening of sea lines of communication in the Arctic, as well as developments in outer space, will place additional demands on Norway's military presence in the High North. However, Norway's maritime capability has serious shortfalls. The time has come for a broad maritime commitment in the further strengthening of defence capabilities.

Much of Norwegian assets, interests and vulnerabilities are in the coastal zone and in the ocean. The Armed Forces should therefore be even more focused on increasing its capability for joint operations in the maritime and littoral. There is a need for maritime investments and efforts that include relevant capabilities from the entire Norwegian Armed Forces. This must be a joint operational investment and not a strengthening of the Royal Norwegian Navy alone. In order to succeed, the Norwegian Armed Forces must cooperate with other sectors, the industry and maritime businesses in particular.

The Norwegian Defence Commission recommends a maritime effort to enhance the ability to protect national interests in Norwegian waters and in the coastal zone. Norway has considerable maritime interests across vast ocean areas. A lot of the nation's resources and assets are located in the ocean or on the ocean floor, in the form of oil and gas, fisheries and shipping. Norway's offshore petroleum and power production has also become even more important for European energy security. It is now also an allied maritime interest.

The geopolitical and strategic importance of the Norwegian ocean territories will increase in the years to come. Sweden and Finland as NATO members will

strengthen the joint Nordic land and air power, but not naval power in areas close to Norway. Norway's role in securing free sea lanes and facilitating allied reinforcements will gain importance. This is happening while many of the Navy's vessels are getting old and will soon have to be replaced or upgraded.

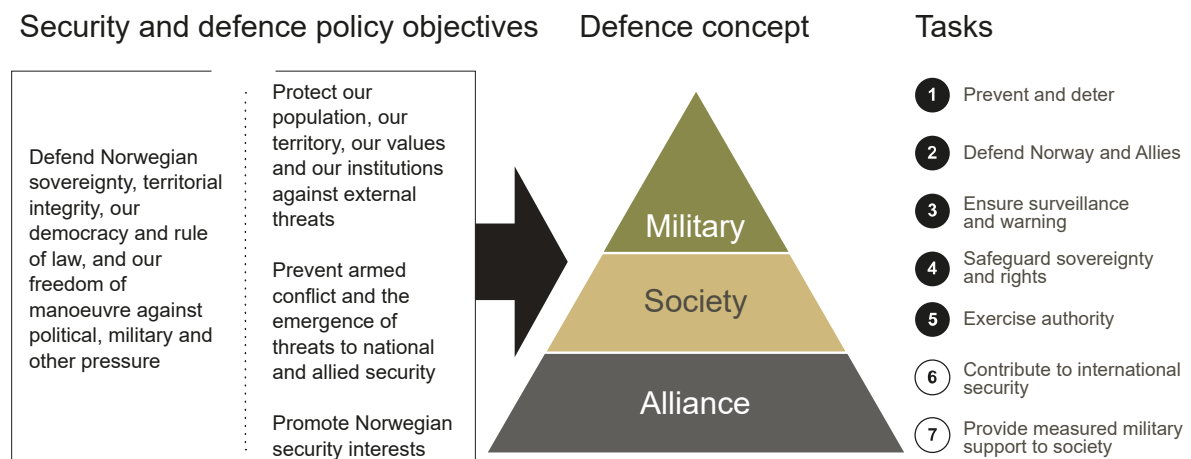
A strategic national maritime effort will require the Norwegian Armed Forces to strengthen its ability to plan and lead joint operations across different domains and with several Allies. The maritime domain is secured through naval power, but also through air power, where the new F-35 combat aircraft and P-8 surveillance aircraft are central. In coastal areas, the Norwegian Army, Home Guard and special forces play important roles. A substantial part of Norwegian intelligence assets are also maritime. Seamless integration with Allies must be emphasised, especially with forces that can assist rapidly.

In order to secure the Norwegian Armed Forces' ability to exercise naval power, the Defence Commission believes that the Norwegian government must decide promptly on a new naval surface structure. A new structure must be in place before the current structure expires around 2030 – in order to maintain operational capability. In addition to new frigates, the maritime effort should include more submarines, standardised multi-purpose vessels based on proven civilian designs, naval air defence and protection of allied reinforcement. The effort should also contribute to littoral capabilities, strengthened surveillance, search and rescue capabilities with long-range drones, naval helicopters and satellite capability as well as required logistic support.



## 4. Recommendations

### A new level of ambition



Norway is well positioned to adapt to the current and future security challenges. We live in a relatively peaceful part of the world and have a stable form of government. We have a solid and technology-driven economy with access to valuable natural resources. A highly educated population with a high level of trust in the authorities is a considerable advantage. We are part of NATO – a unique Euro-Atlantic security community. We cooperate closely with the EU and have binding agreements with several countries that promote security and stability. In recent years, the Norwegian government has strengthened the Norwegian Armed Forces. Governmental coordination to respond to complex threats has also improved.

In a situation where many of the security conditions are changing rapidly, a small state like Norway is nevertheless vulnerable. A broader and more complex set of challenges will put our ability to defend ourselves to the test. This will require a clearer description and

definition of Norway's strategic interests and of what the authorities should prioritise to protect these interests.

The Defence Commission recommends adjusted security and defence policy objectives, an updated Defence Concept and a more precise set of tasks for the Armed Forces that are aligned with these objectives.

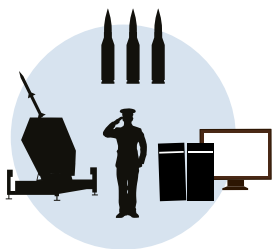
The Commission therefore proposes that the following ambition should guide the future development of the Armed Forces:

*The Norwegian Armed Forces should, in a 10-to-20-year timeframe, be able to set the conditions for Norway to take greater responsibility of the security in our region. The Armed Forces must strengthen its capabilities related to the risk and threat environment. The Armed Forces will be at the front of the defence of Norway and seek to maximize the effects of contributions from the rest of the society and from allied support.*

## A new plan for the defence of Norway

### The need for a political settlement on the future of the defence of Norway

The Defence Commission calls for a political settlement among the parties in Parliament to agree on an increased level of ambition and a financial plan to strengthen Norway's defence capabilities. The current trajectory is not sufficient to finance the current ambition for Norway's Armed Forces, nor will it suffice to meet the security situation Norway will face in the next 10–20 years. The Defence Commission therefore proposes a new level of ambition. It takes the form of three interconnected priorities that must start simultaneously to have the required effect.



#### Critical measures to strengthen the Armed Forces.

Immediate steps must be taken to make the Armed Forces more operational, robust and prepared for a higher level of activity over longer periods. Operational readiness and endurance must be raised significantly and vulnerabilities in digital security must be reduced. The level of preparedness, staffing in critical areas, and the necessary ammunition, spare parts and supplies must all be increased.



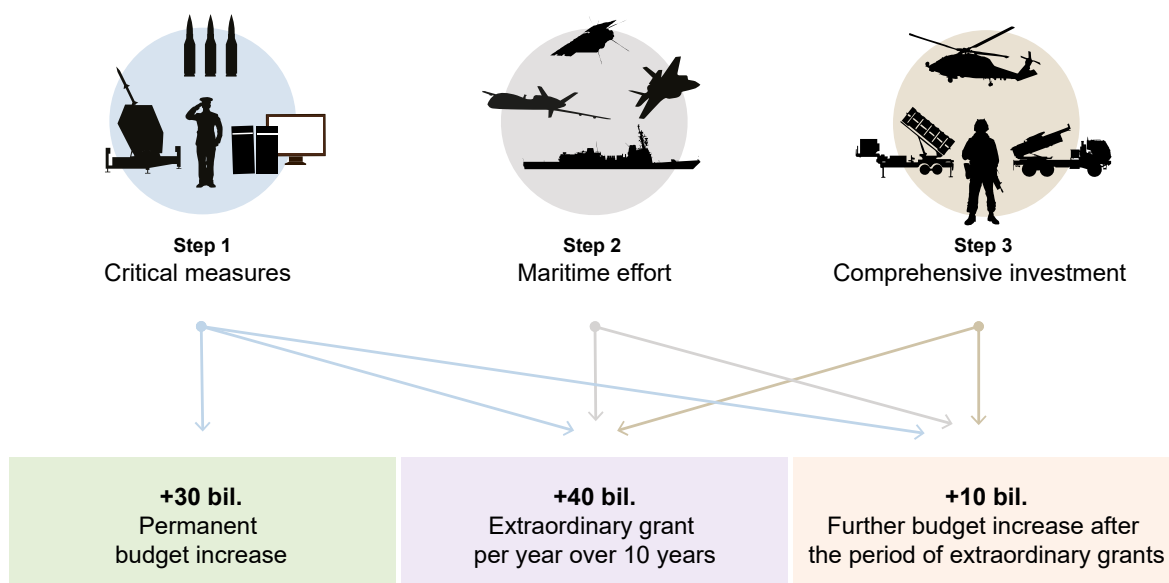
#### A national maritime effort to protect Norway's vast maritime interests in a more challenging security situation.

Norway's position as an energy supplier, successful allied reinforcement of the Nordic region, and the U.S. Navy's increasing focus on China, all necessitate much greater capacity for surveillance and maritime warfare. The Defence Commission believes that the Norwegian government must decide on a new naval surface structure. This new structure must be in place before the current structure expires around 2030, in order to maintain operational capability.



#### A comprehensive and long-term investment in security, defence and readiness.

This will provide the entirety of the Armed Forces with the depth, volume and resilience necessary in case of crisis and war, while also making the Armed Forces better able to meet the technological and geostrategic shift we are now seeing.



### The basis for strengthening the defence economy

The Defence Commission is of the opinion that Norway has the economic strength to make the investments in defence and preparedness that are necessary. The Norwegian economy is strong and Norway is one of few Western nations with the capacity to increase defence spending without having to take up large government loans. In addition, the increased prices of oil and gas following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 have benefited the Norwegian economy. A relatively small proportion of Norway's income from oil and gas will be enough to significantly strengthen our national defence capability for many years to come.

### A broad political settlement

In order to create the political foundations necessary to make an increased level of ambition possible, the Defence Commission proposes a broad political settlement. Such settlements form an important and valuable part of Norwegian political tradition. A long-term commitment to enhance Norwegian security and defence capabilities is also particularly well suited for such a settlement. The purpose of a political settlement on defence must be to strengthen defence capabilities quickly with a predictable level of investment over time. In order for the defence settlement to have the desired effect, new requirements must also be set for

governance, management and use of resources. In this way, the settlement can set the framework and direction for a strengthening of the Armed Forces, a strengthening of civil-military cooperation and total defence, and a strengthening of Norway's relations with Allies and international partners. Combined, this will increase Norway's defensive capability significantly.

The Defence Commission therefore recommends a political settlement between a broad coalition of parties in Parliament. It should include a financial plan for strengthening the defence budget in three simultaneous steps:

- First, the Commission suggests an immediate increase of the defence budget by approximately 30 billion Norwegian kroner to bolster personnel and fill stocks of arms, ammunition and spare parts.
- Second, the Commission proposes that 40 billion Norwegian kroner per year over a ten-year period should be set aside for extraordinary investments in security and defence capabilities.
- Finally, the Commission proposes a permanent increase in defence spending of approximately 10 billion kroner after the period of extraordinary investments has passed in order to adjust for increased operating expenses due to increased activity and a larger force structure.

## An Integrated Approach and the Need for a National Security Strategy



*Norway is dependent on the use of the nation's total resources to handle defence and preparedness challenges. The Armed Forces are dependent on support from the civilian sector and the civilian sector greatly benefits from support from the armed forces.*

*Photo: Norwegian Armed Forces*

The Norwegian government must acknowledge that the challenges it is facing will require a greater degree of integration across society and the Armed Forces. A better, shared and coordinated understanding across decision-making and executive bodies, in the defence sector and in the population at large, is a prerequisite for coherent and long-term approach to national security. This applies to planning and policy development, but also to how the Norwegian Armed Forces, other security agencies, businesses and social actors operate every day.

Norway cannot defend itself with just military measures at a time when threats are becoming more complex. Norway has many resources, but they need to be used in more and better ways. The Norwegian Defence Commission believes that national resilience against threats, risks and challenges must be strengthened. National security is being tested more frequently and the commission expects that continuous handling of different types of crises will become the new normal in the future.

The Norwegian total defence concept is unique and needs to be adjusted to a new reality. A whole-of-government approach is needed to enhance the resilience

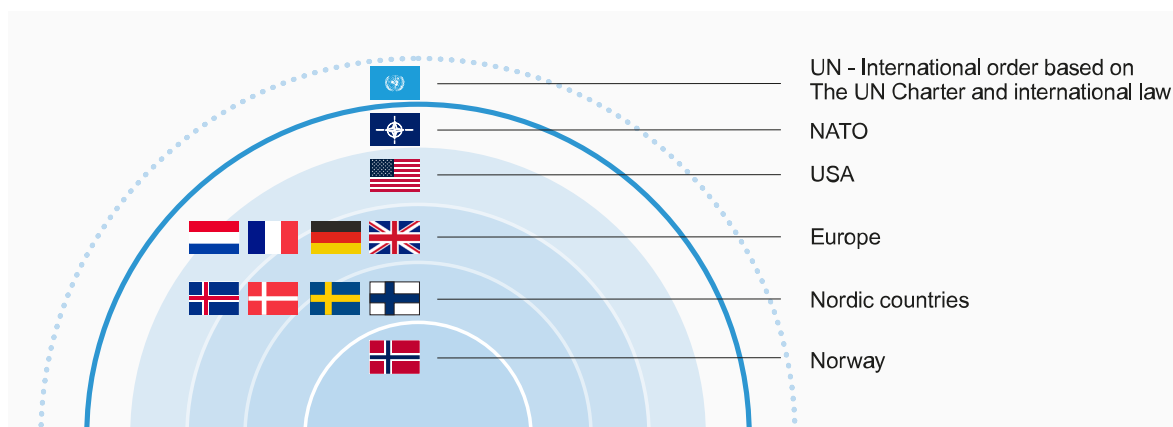
of society against military and non-military threats and challenges. More must be done to identify and mitigate strategic vulnerabilities and dependencies and to ensure continuity of government, the delivery of essential services to our population and civilian support to the Armed Forces. Norwegian authorities must ensure that national and NATO defence planning is synchronized, and that civilian and military authorities all act based on the same planning assumptions. The private sector's role and responsibility in the defence of Norway will become even more significant. The Norwegian Armed Forces should continue to develop its ability to support civil authorities in civil protection and emergency preparedness. In a 10-to-20-year perspective, Norwegian authorities must optimise how society utilizes the totality of our available resources and how we organise, manage and lead military and civilian readiness and preparedness efforts.

Norwegian security and defence is dependent on the trust of the people and their willingness to defend the homeland. Increased knowledge and stronger awareness in the population about the emerging security environment and necessary measures to strengthen security, defence and preparedness is critical. Norway's compulsory National Military Service continues and the reserve system serves as a 'glue' between the Armed Forces and the people. Greater efforts should be made to educate the public. Security, defence and preparedness should to be included in school curriculums. This will not only strengthen the Armed Forces, but other national readiness actors as well as the total defence concept.

The Norwegian Defence Commission believes that the government's ability to lead in times of crisis must be strengthened. The government should formulate a National Security Strategy and strengthen the coordinating role of the Prime Minister's office and its ability to shape policies that prioritise long-term national security. Improved management, coordination, and accountability within the defence sector is also needed. This will be crucial to the Norwegian Armed Forces' ability to implement a higher level of ambition and use increased budgets in a responsible manner.



## Strengthening International Cooperation and Euro-Atlantic Security



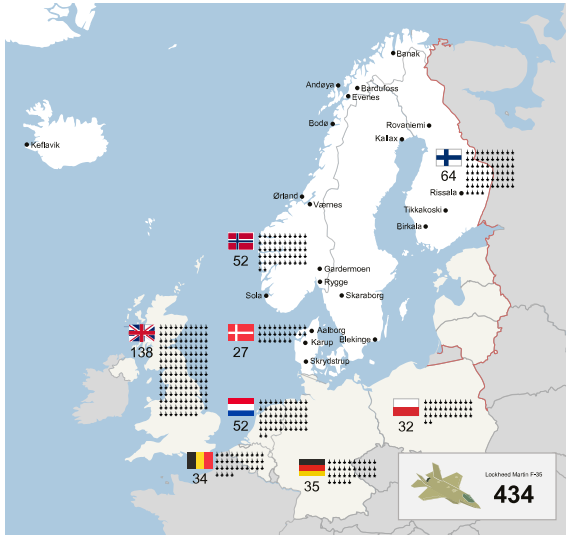
*A Norwegian hedging strategy can be seen as a series of mutually reinforcing concentric circles. The strategy is based on the UN Charter and respect for international law while NATO remains the cornerstone of Norwegian security. The critical importance of cooperation with the United States is maintained and developed, while European and Nordic defense collaboration is strengthened to complement and deepen collective defense cooperation.*

Norwegian security and defence is reliant upon the collective defence capabilities of NATO and key Allies. This has been of great service to Norwegian freedom and independence for over 70 years. There is no real alternative to bilateral cooperation with the United States and membership in NATO in safeguarding Norwegian security. At the same time, the commission believes that there is a need to supplement this with enhanced self-sufficiency and enhanced bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation.

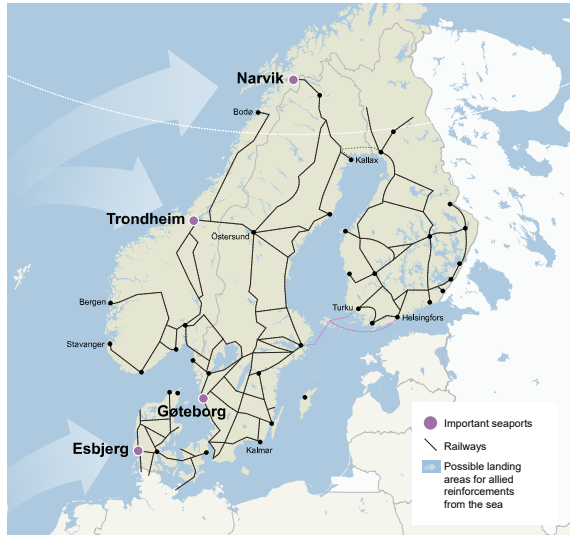
Some countries may now turn inwards or towards other challenges, such as China, or an unstable flank in southern Europe. Norwegian authorities must continue to ensure that Norway has several Allies and options. Norway should take responsibility for shaping its environment: in the development of NATO, in relations with Europe and in cooperation with close Nordic neighbours. Europe needs to do more to enhance European security, and Norway needs to do its share. This means that Norway must invest more in international agreements and operational cooperation in a 10-20-year perspective.

Norway should strengthen cooperation with its most important Allies. In this context, the relationship with the United States occupies a special position. Strategic and operational cooperation with the USA, bilaterally and within the framework of NATO, will continue to be decisive for the defence of Norway. Norway must remain a reliable NATO member and contribute to the continued success of the Alliance by contributing to collective defence, to the NATO command and force structure, as well as to implementing decisions on defence spending. The United States is and remains Norway's most important security guarantor.

Norwegian influence and freedom of action depends on the capacity to monitor and be present in national territorial waters and adjacent seas, but also on the ability to cooperate closely with the most important Allies. Norway should further strengthen defence and deterrence with Great Britain, Germany and other European Allies – particularly in the maritime domain. Such regional cooperation mutually reinforces cooperation within NATO and contributes to strengthening Europe's ability to safeguard its own security.



*Finnish and Swedish NATO membership enhances the framework for security and defense cooperation in Northern Europe. The represented nations will eventually maintain several hundred F-35 fifth-generation fighters. This allows for the development of dispersal strategies as well as increased opportunities for joint education, training, and maintenance.*



*The ability to receive and deploy allied reinforcements will be one of Norway's most significant contributions to Nordic and Northern European security. The map above depicts some of the major potential landing areas for allied reinforcements from the sea, as well as important seaports and railways in the Nordic countries.*

Norway must be a driving force in realising the potential that lies in Nordic defence cooperation as a result of Finland's accession to NATO. Hopefully Sweden will soon follow. Nordic and Euro-Atlantic security is about to enter a new dynamic in defence and security cooperation. Norway will have a key role in the allied reinforcement of the entire Nordic theatre. The potential for deep and binding collaboration with our Nordic neighbours has increased. Norway should take the initiative to develop measures for close integration of the Nordic armed forces. This should take place within the framework of NATO and the established Nordic defence cooperation, NORDEFCO. Arrangements should be made for joint defence planning and synchronization of NATO force goals. There are several opportunities to be explored in relation to joint operational coordination

**'Norway will have a key role in the allied reinforcement of the entire Nordic theatre. The potential for deep and binding collaboration with our Nordic neighbours has increased.'**

in the air, on land and in the cyber and space domain. There are potential economies of scale in education, maintenance of defence equipment and joint capability development, but political will, initiative and the ability to innovate will be necessary. The Defence Commission believes that a Nordic expert group should be tasked to consider how total defence and resilience can be enhanced across the Nordic region and what resources this will require.



**Front row (from left to right):** Synne Høyforsslett Bjørbæk, Sissel Haugdal Jore, Liv-Signe Navarsete, Kristin Ven Bruusgaard, Knut Storberget, Tone Elisatbeh Vangen, Ingvild Smines Tybring-Gjedde, Amy Brox Webber, Benedicte Røvik.  
**Back row (from left to right):** Audun Halvorsen, Egil André Aas, Espen Rasmussen, Christian Chramer, Rolf Tamnes, Fredrik Sejersted, Øystein Tunsjø.

## 5. The Norwegian Defence Commission

In response to significant changes, an increasingly troubling strategic environment, and instruction from the Norwegian Parliament in 2020, the Norwegian government established a Defence Commission in late 2021. It was tasked to consider what potential security and defence policy choices Norway could make in order to ensure Norwegian security and interests in a 10-20-year perspective. Norwegian Defence Commissions only occur with significant changes in the strategic environment. Prior to this commission, only three have been established since the Second World War – the latest delivering its recommendations at the end of the Cold War.

The Norwegian Defence Commission of 2021 observes a serious and challenging future for Norwegian security and defence policy in the next 10-20-years. Our ability to defend Norway and Norwegian interests could be seriously tested. The Commission proposes several concrete recommendations and measures to alleviate the situation, in both the short and long term. Norwegian

decision makers of today and tomorrow must prioritise the basic task of defending our country, our people, our values, and our interests.

The commission started working in January 2022. The final report was handed over to the Ministry of Defence on May 3rd, 2023. The mandate was extensive and a group of 17 members from political parties, academia, public and private sector, and the trade unions were given 15 months to produce a Norwegian Official Report (NOU) which will be subject to a public hearing. The findings in the report are based on a wide variety of sources, including interviews with a broad range of interlocutors in Norway and abroad, academic research and more than 100 written contributions. The Commission conducted 24 meetings, and visited Brussels, Berlin, London, Stockholm, Helsinki, Washington D.C. and Norfolk Virginia. The report will be a key input for the government's future work on security and defence policy.



**The report is available on  
the Norwegian Government's website  
[www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no)**

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