

An analysis of alternative roles for the European Union's Nordic Battle Group

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the regional significance of the Nordic Battle Group (NBG), one of eighteen rapid response forces made operational by the European Union (EU) in 2004. The battle groups have never deployed, generating a scholarly consensus that since they have not played a concrete military role they are ambiguous or even useless enterprises. Situated within the sub-disciplines of European Politics and Nordic Studies and adopting a constructivist approach, this thesis analyses the different depictions of the NBG in foreign policy documents, speeches and reports of the EU and the NBG's individual participants to address the following question: if the NBG is not functioning militarily, then what significance does it possess? The thesis argues that it allows its participants to show allegiance to the rapid response element of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the Berlin Plus arrangements while also cultivating regional military cooperation between the Nordic and Baltic States. As a symbolic entity it also reflects changes in the spatial and ideational construction of Norden and the Nordic 'brand'. The thesis expands the scope of existing literature on the EU's battle groups and draws on the work of scholars such as Neumann, Wæver and Browning to contribute to a broader understanding of the complex role these military forces play in the regional context.

This thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. All sources of information used have been referenced accordingly throughout the thesis and in the Bibliography. Ethics Committee approval has been obtained (reference number: 5201400612).

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Abbreviations

NBG	Nordic Battle Group
EU	European Union
IR	International Relations
UN	United Nations
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
SIEPS	Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies
IISS	International Institute for Security Studies
EUISS	European Union Institute for Security Studies
SWP	Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik
EDA	European Defence Agency
NRF	NATO Response Force
PfP	Partnership for Peace
NORDEFCE	Nordic Defence Cooperation
NORDAC	Nordic Armaments Cooperation
NORDCAPS	Nordic Coordination Arrangement for Military Peace Support
NORDSUP	Nordic Supportive Defence Structures
NB6	Nordic-Baltic 6
NB8	Nordic-Baltic 8
CBSS	Council of the Baltic Sea States
ND	Northern Dimension
EUSBSR	European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

Introduction

The Nordic Battle Group (NBG) poses a semantic challenge for International Relations (IR) scholars. Although its title implies that it is an entity engaged in military activities involving countries located in the Nordic region, the NBG has not yet been involved in any military operations, and several of its participants are not Nordic in any conventionally understood way. This raises two immediate questions: why does the NBG exist and why does it bear the Nordic name? The group has not once been deployed in the ten years of its existence, leading to harsh scholarly critiques of its impracticality and costly waste of resources. The ensuing consensus is that the group serves no apparent purpose. This thesis takes a more critical approach by considering alternative roles for the inactive military force.

During the 1990s, the European Union (EU) began to consider developing its military capabilities in order to improve its credibility as a global actor. This manifested in measures that sought to develop the EU's rapid response capabilities in the early 2000's and culminated in the creation of the battle groups. The NBG is just one of the eighteen multinational battle groups that were established; highly mobile rapid reaction forces intended to be capable of deploying within a short period of time to crises anywhere in the world. Yet ten years after becoming fully operational and in spite of there being no shortage of crises, the battle groups have yet to be deployed. In 2014 alone the EU faced increasing instability on its borders and tension with Russia over the situation in Ukraine, in addition to religious conflicts and the threat of extremist groups in the Gaza Strip, Syria and Iraq. More than ever before, it is necessary for the EU to demonstrate that it is adequately equipped to deal with such security issues, and yet thus far it has elected not to utilise the battle groups to address the threats it faces.

The NBG is a prime example of the EU's reluctance to deploy its battle groups. In 2007, the United Nations (UN) requested assistance for its operations in Africa, an ideal opportunity for the EU to utilise a battle group for the first time. Despite this, the decision was made not to deploy the battle groups that were due to go on standby, which included the NBG. Battle group inaction, and the NBG's in particular, has been addressed by scholars, who have cited politics, logistics and financial costs as impediments to deployment.¹ Studies evaluating battle group

¹ Wade Jacoby and Christopher Jones, 'The EU Battlegroups in Sweden and the Czech Republic: What National Defense Reforms Tell Us about European Rapid Reaction Capabilities', *European Security*, 17:2-3 (2008), pp.315-338; Ludovica Marchi Balossi-Restelli, 'Fit for what? Towards explaining Battlegroup inaction', *European Security*, 20:2 (2011), pp.155-184; Richard Gowan, 'From Rapid Reaction to Delayed Inaction? Congo, the UN and the EU', *International Peacekeeping*, 18:5 (2011), pp.593-611; Antoine Rayroux, 'Beyond

practicality have concluded that they have not yet contributed to strengthening the EU's rapid response capabilities, and have easily dismissed them as a waste of financial and material resources. Politicians concur that the battle groups are 'not functional' and require verbal commitment to be translated into concrete action.²

This thesis does not dispute these conclusions, as it is apparent that the battle groups, and the NBG specifically, serve no practical purpose at the present time. Instead, the thesis addresses a key paradox unacknowledged in scholarly discussions of battle group failure: notwithstanding its inaction and related criticism, the NBG has expanded the number of its participants with every standby period. In 2008, the group comprised of Sweden, Finland, Norway and Estonia. During the NBG's second standby period in 2011, Ireland and Croatia joined the membership. The NBG is currently in preparations for its third standby period in the first half of 2015 and now consists of military and logistical personnel from seven countries: Sweden, Finland, Norway, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia and Lithuania.³ Moving beyond the common depiction in the literature as an EU military force that has failed to deploy, the thesis addresses the following question: why are more states becoming involved in an enterprise that serves no apparent purpose? Extant scholarship is a point of departure to investigate alternative functions for the battle groups and establish the significance of the NBG in the regional context.

The thesis is located within the broader discipline of IR with a specific concentration on the Nordic region and the EU. Thereby it contributes to the sub-disciplines of Nordic Studies and European Politics. The primary objective is to establish how military cooperation under the umbrella of the EU has affected relations between NBG participating countries and the ongoing construction and articulation of Norden, the region from which the battle group takes its name.

Actorness in EU Crisis Management: Internal Functions of External Peacekeeping', *Journal of European Integration*, 35:7 (2013), pp.731-748.

² Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *Minister Tuomioja's speech on EU Common Security and Defence Policy*, 2 June 2014 < <http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=298227> >, accessed 5 August 2014.

³ The individual contributions to the NBG are as follows: Sweden – 1600; Norway – 70; Finland – 68 and 4 helicopters; Latvia – 140; Estonia – 50; Lithuania – 50; Ireland – 175. Source: Försvarsmakten, *Nordic Battlegroup - NBG15* < <http://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/about/our-mission-in-sweden-and-abroad/international-activities-and-operations/nordic-battle-group/> >, accessed 11 August 2014; Regeringskansliet, *Den nordiska stridsgruppen* [The Nordic Battlegroup] < <http://www.ud.se/sb/d/9199/a/83223> >, accessed 2 May 2014; Internasjonalt Forum, *Norsk tropp i EUs Battlegroup* [Norwegian troops in EU's Battlegroup], 25 February 2014 < <http://www.internasjonaltforum.no/dok/artikkel894.asp> >, accessed 4 May 2014; Correspondence of Tuuli Harviainen, Public Information Officer, Army Command Finland, with the author, 29 April 2014; Correspondence of Iveta Līce, Senior Desk Officer, Media Relation Section, Latvian Military Public Affairs Department, with the author, 23 April 2014; Nordic Battlegroup Force Commander, *NBG Nordic Battlegroup, FCdr NBG 15, Master* < http://www.forsvarsmakten.se/Global/Myndighetswebbplatsen/ENG/NBG15%20-%20eng/14MAR_%20FCdr_MASTER-F.pdf >, accessed 5 August 2014.

The thesis is concerned with the function of identities, ideas and norms in the regional context and with the expression, representation and construction of regional identity to a greater extent than policymaking or the logistics of defence cooperation. As such it is influenced primarily by constructivist theory, the many strands of which are commonly differentiated from the rational-empirical approaches of neorealism and neoliberalism. Constructivists emphasise that material reality is given meaning at an ideational level; that it is socially constructed through language, ideas, norms and their interpretation by various actors. Subsequently, the identities and interests of states, regional organisations and other actors are fluid and contingent rather than fixed or static. Constructivist insights have been adopted by many scholars working in the sub-fields of European Politics and Nordic Studies as a result of the complexities associated with European integration, the existence of regional forums of political cooperation and the changes that occur to the geographical boundaries of the regions of Europe and Norden. Through a constructivist lens, the NBG is the product of changing regional identities and a dynamic representation of the ideas, security concerns and norms espoused by each of its participants and regional institutions. The thesis qualitatively analyses how the battle group is depicted in foreign policy documents, speeches, and governmental and institutional reports in order to contribute to knowledge of alternative political and ideational functions of the NBG.

Chapter 1 situates the thesis within two distinct though related fields of scholarship. The first is on the EU's battle groups in the context of EU security and defence policy, and the second is on the region of Norden, its global identity and 'brand'. Literature in the former is preoccupied with material analysis while the latter is influenced by constructivist approaches and focuses to a greater extent on identity and change. Chapter 2 contextualises the NBG within the development of the EU's European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), Nordic integration with the EU, and the strengthening of Nordic defence cooperation after the Cold War. It addresses the established purpose of the NBG as outlined in the EU's 2010 Headline Goal and the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) produced by the NBG's founding participants. Chapter 3 undertakes qualitative documentary analysis to compare the scholarly evaluations and official representations of the group with its representation in national foreign policy to illuminate the variety of roles the NBG plays for each of its individual participants. Several distinct representations of the NBG emerge from the primary source material, not all of which are consistent with how the NBG has been portrayed by the EU and by the battle group scholarship. Chapter 4 evaluates these representations in terms of their significance in understanding the NBG's significance. Acknowledging that there are different interpretations of the function of the NBG in the regional context, it argues that

the NBG plays several roles of a political and ideational nature. Firstly, the NBG is a means for its participants to symbolically show their support for rapid response under the CSDP and Berlin Plus arrangements. Secondly, it fosters both Nordic and Nordic-Baltic military cooperation. Thirdly, it is a manifestation of a repackaged Nordic ‘brand’; one that has been reconstructed since the Cold War and still possesses relevance today. Lastly, the NBG serves as an expression and symbolic representation of the region of Norden and its enlargement that is taking place at both the Nordic and EU level.

A discussion of the regional significance of the NBG is particularly relevant in the current European political climate. Debates regarding European military spending and resources have come to the fore as concern over Russia’s actions in Ukraine are increasing among senior North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and EU officials. With the NBG due to go on standby for the third time in January 2015, there will be further debate regarding its future and its usefulness. An understanding of the various roles that it is playing will contribute a new perspective to such discussions. This thesis will demonstrate that, despite its inaction, the NBG is not precluded from functioning on a political and ideational level. The NBG assists the foreign policy goals of its participants and facilitates regional cooperation in defence and security. It communicates Nordic regional identity and represents an expanding regional space consistent with constructivist notions of identities as changeable and transmissible. The research thereby contributes to an understanding of the diverse roles played by the EU’s battle groups.

1. Theoretical Context

This chapter addresses the contribution this thesis makes to scholarship on the EU's battle groups and on the construction of Nordic identity. These two fields are situated within the sub-disciplines of European Politics and Nordic Studies respectively. Spanning the last decade, the literature on the EU's battle groups is relatively small and consists of journal articles and think tank reports assessing the practical contribution the battle groups have made towards improving the EU's crisis management capabilities. The research presented here extends the scholarship on this theme by examining the perspectives expressed in national foreign policy in addition to EU foreign policy and by evaluating the significance of the NBG beyond its unfulfilled military role. The literature on Norden and the construction of Nordic identity is more extensive. It emerged in the early 1990s, influenced by constructivist work beginning from the 1980s. The thesis applies insights from this body of literature about the Nordic region and its brand to the NBG.

The EU's battle groups have received limited scholarly attention. A principal reason is that the battle groups have never deployed, and subsequently they have not been involved in many events that scholars can interpret and analyse. Most studies are focused on the success of the battle groups in fulfilling the tasks assigned to them by the EU. The first evaluation of the battle group concept by the Department of Strategic and Defence Studies in Helsinki in 2005 was an exception. This report analysed the political significance of the battle group for the EU's global ambitions and for the foreign policies of Sweden and Finland.⁴ From 2006 onwards, however, studies of the EU's battle groups were characterised by speculation regarding how the battle groups would strengthen the EU's military capabilities as per their intended purpose. The consensus that has emerged is that the battle groups have not contributed to the improvement of EU crisis management.

In 2006, for example, the Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies (SIEPS) concluded that due to the small size of the battle group forces, 'the EU Battlegroup Concept is too modest to be of much use beyond humanitarian assistance missions, military diplomacy assignments and symbolic national action.'⁵ It asserted that the battle groups were insufficient if the EU

⁴ Department of Strategic and Defence Studies, *EU Battlegroups: Theory and Development in the Light of Finnish-Swedish Co-operation*, Research Reports No. 30, Helsinki, 2005 < <http://www.pana.ie/download/eubattlegroups.pdf> >, accessed 18 May 2014, pp.1-93.

⁵ Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, *Armed and Ready? The EU Battlegroup Concept and the Nordic Battlegroup*, March 2006 < <http://www.sieps.se/sites/default/files/32-20062.pdf> >, accessed 16 October 2013, p.46.

wished to achieve its strategic goals.⁶ The same year the Swedish Defence Research Agency described the NBG as an example of ‘the rather complicated process of setting up a multinational unit’ and claimed that the differing security policies and deployment mechanisms of its member states were obstacles to practical action.⁷ These studies reveal that scepticism towards battle group capabilities existed from the outset and that practical considerations were the central preoccupations of these analyses.

In centring upon the military utility of the battle groups, such analyses do not recognise the possibility that political and ideational factors could facilitate and explain the existence of these groups. Neither do they ask critical questions. The European Union Institute for Security Studies’ 2007 report posited four questions: ‘What are the origins of the EU Battlegroups? What is the EU Battlegroup Concept? What are the main challenges and prospects facing the EU BGs? How are the EU BGs likely to evolve over the next few years?’⁸ These questions are the central preoccupations of the majority of studies produced on the EU’s battle groups. They are primarily focused on tracing the development of the EU battle group concept, explaining its function and purpose, outlining the challenges that it faces and asking questions of effectiveness and usefulness.

Within several years of the battle groups becoming operational, the focus on the practical success of the groups was maintained but analyses became noticeably harsher as it became clear that the forces were not being used for their intended military purpose. According to the EU’s 2010 Headline Goal, the battle groups were created to strengthen the EU’s ability to respond to UN requests for assistance in their operations.⁹ Yet when the UN requested EU assistance in Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2007, the EU decided not to use the battle groups that would be on standby, which included the NBG, but sent another force in their place.¹⁰ A highly critical report published by the UK-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) wrote: ‘among officials and officers a popular joke goes: ‘the safest place if you do not want to deploy is on the EU battlegroup roster.’’¹¹ The biggest shortcoming of the battle

⁶ Ibid., p.48.

⁷ Swedish Defence Research Agency, ‘EU-Battlegroups: Some New Capabilities, Actually’, *The Royal United Services Institute Journal*, 151:6 (2006), p.64.

⁸ European Union Institute for Security Studies, *Enter the EU Battlegroups*, February 2007 < <http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/cp097.pdf> >, accessed 18 May 2014, p.7.

⁹ European Union, *Headline Goal 2010*, 17 May 2004 < <http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/2010%20Headline%20Goal.pdf> >, accessed 1 February 2014, pp.1-8.

¹⁰ This force was the EUFOR Chad/CAR Mission.

¹¹ International Institute for Strategic Studies, ‘Europe’s rapid-response forces: Use them or lose them?’, *IISS Strategic Comments*, 15:7 (2009), no pagination.

groups, the think tank claimed, was ‘the failure to use them.’¹² IISS argued that the EU’s credibility as a global security actor and strengthening of its crisis management capacity had ‘not been borne out by reality’ and could not be achieved unless the capabilities of the battle groups were ‘demonstrated to be real.’¹³

The decision of the EU not to deploy its battle groups to Africa stimulated scholarly discussion regarding the reasons behind non-deployment and the implications of this for the future of the battle group concept.¹⁴ There were two primary explanations. According to Jacoby and Jones, Sweden was to blame for its refusal to deploy the NBG due to the enormous logistical and financial costs of deployment.¹⁵ In contrast, Gowan and Balossi-Restelli argued that it was Britain and Germany’s unwillingness to deploy to Africa that explained the decision.¹⁶ Such studies moved away from explanation of the battle groups’ failings towards understanding *why* the battle groups were not being utilised. Nevertheless, they still focused on the military role and utility of the groups.

Approaches adopted by more recent studies more closely reflect the aims of this thesis. In a 2011 report, German policy institute Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) concluded that despite their practical ineffectiveness, the battle groups were a political success for the EU because they were an indication that the Union had managed to create necessary units for rapid crisis response that it had not previously possessed.¹⁷ For SWP, the mere fact that the battle groups were operational was a political achievement. Rayroux’s examination of the militarily unsuccessful EU mission to Chad and the Central African Republic in 2008 (EUFOR Chad/CAR) also demonstrates the potential for a more critical approach to military units in his postulation that the operation performed several important functional and ideational purposes

¹² Ibid., no pagination.

¹³ Ibid., no pagination.

¹⁴ Debate over the reasons the NBG did not deploy in 2008 actually began several years earlier in the Swedish media. In 2008, Sveriges Radio program ‘Studio Ett’ conducted a discussion forum with several prominent Swedish officials and politicians about the reasons the battle group was not used. After its second standby period in 2011, Sveriges Radio channel P4 raised concerns about the future and credibility of the NBG. Sveriges Radio, *Nordic Battlegroup*, Studio Ett, 18 June 2008 < <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=1637&artikel=2140122> >, accessed 20 April 2014; Sveriges Radio, *Nordic Battlegroup läggs ner* [Nordic Battle Group shuts down], P4 Uppland, 30 June 2011 < <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=114&artikel=4580825> >, accessed 20 April 2014.

¹⁵ Jacoby and Jones, ‘The EU Battlegroups in Sweden and the Czech Republic’, p.328.

¹⁶ Gowan, ‘From Rapid Reaction to Delayed Inaction?’, pp.593-611; Balossi-Restelli, ‘Fit for what?’, pp.155-184.

¹⁷ Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, *EU Battlegroups: What Contribution to European Defence? Progress and Prospects of European Rapid Response Forces*, Berlin, 2011 < http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2011_RP08_mjr_mlg_ks.pdf >, accessed 1 February 2014, pp.1-36.

for the EU.¹⁸ Like SWP and Rayroux, this thesis focuses on the political and symbolic role of the battle groups. However, both of these studies retained an EU perspective, and the research presented here will extend the focus of analysis to an examination of national foreign policy perspectives and draw linkages with Nordic regional foreign policy and identity construction.

Although I adopt an alternative approach to studies of the EU's battle groups that examine their military function, I do not dispute their arguments or conclusions. The preoccupation with the usefulness and credibility of the battle groups is justified, as the obstacles to battle group action are certainly real. Battle group deployment requires unanimous consensus among all EU member states, all of whom possess their own agendas and interests, and between all participants of the multinational battle groups themselves, whose forces are under national control. Countries such as Ireland have decision-making mechanisms in place such as the Irish 'triple lock' that provide a practical and time-consuming impediment to NBG deployment.¹⁹ It is also estimated that the NBG costs around US\$300 million simply 'to train, assemble and [be] made deployable.'²⁰ The burden of such costs falls on the participating countries.²¹ Notwithstanding these issues, I move away from military failure and impracticality towards the role that the battle groups are playing in conveying normative commitment, enhancing regional military cooperation, projecting regional identity and symbolising changing regional spaces. This approach broadens discussions on the EU's battle groups to include an analysis of the broader significance of the NBG in the regional context.

This thesis also contributes to a body of scholarship that critically examines the region of Norden and its distinctive identity. It draws on Neumann's 'region-building approach' and on Browning and Wæver's interpretations of how Nordic identity has been constructed and challenged after the Cold War. Due to its focus on ideas, identities, change and complexity and Norden's ongoing adaptation and reformulation, constructivism has been the dominant approach adopted by Nordic Studies scholars. I will briefly summarise the key ideas of this school before situating this thesis within the existing scholarship on Norden.

¹⁸ Rayroux, 'Beyond Actorness in EU Crisis Management', p.744.

¹⁹ The Irish 'triple-lock' stipulates that for Irish troops to participate in overseas missions, three conditions must be met: the operation must be approved by the Dáil Éireann (House of Representatives), authorised by the Irish government and endorsed by the United Nations.

²⁰ Gerard O'Dwyer, 'Sweden Proposes Nordic Battalion Force Plan', *Defense News*, 25 July 2013 < <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130725/DEFREG01/307250013/Sweden-Proposes-Nordic-Battalion-Force-Plan> >, accessed 29 December 2013.

²¹ European Union Institute for Security Studies, *EU Battlegroups – ready to go?*, November 2013 < http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Brief_40_EU_Battlegroups.pdf >, accessed 29 July 2014, p.3.

Constructivism emerged in the 1980s, positioning itself as a social approach to international politics. In what became known as ‘the constructivist turn’ in IR theory, its popularity accelerated after the end of the Cold War as the states of the former Soviet Union attempted to redefine their identities in a new global context.²² In contrast to neorealism and neoliberalism, which are status quo theories attempting to manage the problems that an existing anarchical international system creates, constructivism considers the international system to be socially constructed and historically contingent. Constructivist scholars reject the positivism of dominant theoretical approaches and focus instead on the role of rules and norms in constructing the identities and interests of actors.

Onuf coined the term ‘constructivism’ in 1989 in his work *World of Our Making*, which challenged empiricist and realist assumptions with the view that human beings construct society.²³ Onuf and his contemporary Kratochwil focused on how rules and norms influenced the behaviour of political actors.²⁴ Kratochwil and Koslowski argued that ‘in all politics, domestic and international, actors reproduce or alter systems through their actions.’²⁵ They continued that ‘fundamental changes in international politics occur when beliefs and identities of domestic actors are altered thereby also altering the rules and norms that are constitutive of their political practices.’²⁶ Using the end of the Cold War as an indication that the orthodoxy of neorealism had been undermined, their subject of analysis was large. Yet their assertion that change occurs on an international scale as the result of changes at the domestic level is highly relevant to an analysis of the Nordic region.

Wendt attempted to reconcile social and positivist theory, for which he has been criticised and even perceived as not belonging to the constructivist school.²⁷ Nevertheless, his oft-quoted phrase that anarchy is ‘what states make of it’ has become something of a tenet of constructivism, encapsulating that anarchy is not a natural condition of the international system but a social construct that is affected by how states interpret their relationships with one

²² Jeffrey T. Checkel, ‘The constructivist turn in international relations theory’, *World Politics*, 50:2 (1998), pp.324-348.

²³ Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

²⁴ Ibid.; Friedrich Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms and Decisions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

²⁵ Rey Koslowski and Friedrich Kratochwil, ‘Understanding change in international politics: the Soviet empire’s demise and the international system’, *International Organisation*, 48:2 (1994), p.216.

²⁶ Ibid., p.216.

²⁷ Stefano Guzzini and Anna Leander, eds., *Constructivism and International Relations: Alexander Wendt and his critics* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006); Erik Ringmar, ‘Alexander Wendt: a social scientist struggling with history’ in Iver B. Neumann and Ole Wæver, eds., *The Future of International Relations: Masters in the Making* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 269-289.

another.²⁸ Wendt examined collective identity formation and how rhetoric contributes to its construction and adaptation, common themes in literature on the Nordic region.²⁹ Wendt argued that the interests and identities of states can be changed and redefined during the process of cooperating with other actors.³⁰ He posited that by engaging in ‘discursive practices’, it was possible for states to ‘learn’ to consider themselves as a collective ‘we’ bound by certain norms through cooperating with other states.³¹ Such processes are evident in the role played by the NBG in projecting a collective Nordic identity and space.

The perspectives of Wendt and other constructivists are significant for this thesis for their influence upon the work of scholars investigating Norden, which is more specific to the themes and ideas of the research. The currently defining characteristics of Norden have been constructed over time and have been challenged and remodelled in recent decades by actors both outside and within the region. ‘Norden’ in the Scandinavian tongues translates literally as ‘the North’ in the English language, and has been defined as a European ‘sub-region’ and ‘meso-level’ between the national and international.³² The geographical area that the region encompasses is not universally agreed. Many scholars posit that Norden comprises the five countries of Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland.³³ Some exclude Iceland and focus on the four larger countries.³⁴ Others present smaller combinations, such as the (more or less) linguistically intelligible trio of Sweden, Denmark and Norway, or the three EU member

²⁸ Alexander Wendt, ‘Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics’, *International Organization*, 46:2 (1992), pp.391-425.

²⁹ Alexander Wendt, ‘Collective Identity Formation and the International State’, *American Political Science Review*, 88:2 (1994), pp.384-396.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.384.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp.390-391.

³² Bjørn Møller, *European Security: The Roles of Regional Organisations* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2012); Norbert Götz, ‘Norden: Structures That Do Not Make a Region’, *European Review of History*, 10:2 (2003), pp.323-341.

³³ Thorsten B. Olesen, ‘Choosing or Refuting Europe? The Nordic Countries and European Integration, 1945-2000’, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 25:1-2 (2000), pp.147-168; Eric S. Einholm, ‘Just enough (“Lagom”) Europeanization: The Nordic States and Europe’, *Scandinavian Studies*, 74:3 (2002), pp.265-286; Christine Ingebritsen, ‘Norm Entrepreneurs: Scandinavia’s Role in World Politics’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 37:1 (2002), pp.11-23; Götz, ‘Norden’, pp.323-341; Mikko Lagerspetz, ‘How Many Nordic Countries? Possibilities and Limits of Geopolitical Identity Construction’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 38:1 (2003), pp.49-61; Robert D. DeLong, ‘Danish Military Involvement in the Invasion of Iraq in Light of the Scandinavian International Relations Model’, *Scandinavian Studies*, 81:3 (2009), pp.267-280.

³⁴ Ole Wæver, ‘Nordic nostalgia: Northern Europe after the Cold War’, *International Affairs*, 68:1 (1992), pp.77-102; Jan-Erik Lane, ‘Twilight of the Scandinavian Model’, *Political Studies*, 41:2 (1993), pp.315-324; Clive Archer, ‘Nordic Swans and Baltic Cygnets’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 34:1 (1999), pp.47-71; Pernille Rieker, ‘Europeanization of Nordic Security: The European Union and the Changing Security Identities of the Nordic States’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 39:4 (2004), pp.369-392; Annika Bergman, ‘Adjacent Internationalism: The Concept of Solidarity and Post-Cold War Nordic-Baltic Relations’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 41:1 (2006), pp.73-97; Peter Viggo Jakobsen, *Nordic Approaches to Peace Operations: A New Model in the Making* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006); Clive Archer, ed., *New Security Issues in Northern Europe: The Nordic and Baltic States and the ESDP* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Madeleine Hurd, ed., *Bordering the Baltic: Scandinavian Boundary-drawing Processes 1900-2000* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2010).

states of Sweden, Denmark and Finland.³⁵ The absence of a common conception of where the territorial boundaries of Norden lie indicates that the region is not a static spatial area as rationalist approaches would argue but can be defined in various ways. Constructivist perspectives that acknowledge processes of change and reinterpretation are therefore popular in Nordic Studies.

The region-building approach to Norden as articulated by Neumann is particularly influential on this thesis. Neumann posited that there was a prevailing dichotomy within the study of regions in IR, whereby ‘inside-out’ approaches that concentrated on factors such as climate, language and culture as the primary shapers of regions were positioned in opposition to ‘outside-in’ approaches that stressed systemic factors such as geography.³⁶ An ‘inside-out’ approach to Norden would argue that the region emerged out of internal factors common to the Nordic countries, such as cultural, linguistic, historical and political ties. An ‘outside-in’ approach would, on the contrary, stress the geographical location of the Nordic countries, with their close proximity north of the European continent. Neumann was critical of the fact that both these approaches treated regions as fixed and unchangeable over time.³⁷ He challenged these approaches by developing a critical approach that he termed the ‘region-building approach.’³⁸ This was influenced by Anderson’s ideas on the process of nation-building in its contention that like nation-states, regions are ‘imagined communities’ that are socially constructed and historically and culturally contingent.³⁹ ‘The existence of regions’, Neumann argued, ‘is preceded by the existence of region-builders, political actors who, as part of some political project, imagine a certain spatial and chronological identity for a region, and disseminate this imagined identity to others.’⁴⁰ This thesis adopts such a perspective to examine the NBG as the outcome and expression of processes of construction and reconstruction by competing region-builders representing the EU, nation-states and regional institutions.

³⁵ Hans Mouritzen, ‘The Two Musterknaben and the Naughty Boy: Sweden, Finland and Denmark in the Process of European Integration’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 28:4 (1993), pp.373-402; Peter Lawler, ‘Scandinavian Exceptionalism and the European Union’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 35:4 (1997), pp.565-594.

³⁶ Iver B. Neumann, ‘A region-building approach to Northern Europe’, *Review of International Studies*, 20:1 (1994), pp.53-74.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.57.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.53-74.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.58. Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* posited that nationality is a ‘cultural artefact’ that is historically contingent and constructed, not naturally pre-existing as rationalist approaches would argue. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Second Edition (London: Verso, 1991).

⁴⁰ Neumann, ‘A region-building approach to Northern Europe’, p.58.

Since Neumann's articulation, Nordic Studies scholars have continued to explore Norden as a social construct. These scholars have analysed how Norden has been portrayed as exceptional and unique throughout recent history. Olesen describes Norden as an 'idea' that was projected as an 'alternative, platform and supplement' to European and Atlantic cooperation during the period 1945-1988.⁴¹ Lagerspetz and Götz do not consider the political, historical and cultural connections between the Nordic countries as determinants of a pre-given, geographically bounded area but argue that certain connections have been emphasised over others and projected purposefully to create a socially constructed space associated with peacefulness and neutrality; a buffer between the two rival blocs of East and West.⁴² Götz echoes Neumann by asserting that 'region-building is, like nation-building, a project of elites in the struggle for resources, it is an enterprise driven forward by actors with collective material and immaterial interests, not something materialised by history.'⁴³

Drawing on terminology used in the fields of economics and marketing, Browning argued that during the Cold War the Nordic model became a 'brand' that marketed the Nordics in a particular way to the international community.⁴⁴ He claimed that a brand of exceptionalism in international affairs was strategically constructed by the Nordic countries and disseminated to create an impression of Norden as unique.⁴⁵ Peacefulness, internationalist solidarism and egalitarian social democracy were elements of this brand that were used to characterise Norden 'as the promise of a better, more advanced, more peaceful, less militarized future to that offered by the Cold War combatants.'⁴⁶ The notion of a Nordic brand has emerged in disciplines other than IR and has been openly acknowledged by Nordic institutions.⁴⁷ Ingebritsen, Kronsell, Björkdahl, Magnúsdóttir, Þorhallsson and Olsen have focused on how this brand was constructed through political rhetoric and adherence to particular norms. They have looked how the Nordic countries have promoted ideas about sustainable development, conflict resolution and technological innovation in order to influence the spread of these norms at the global level

⁴¹ Thorsten Borring Olesen, 'Den europæiske udfordring: EU, EØS og nordisk samarbejde – i historisk belysning' [The European challenge: EU, EEA and Nordic cooperation – in historical perspective], *Europautredningen*, May 2011 < <http://www.europautredningen.no/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Rap12-norden.pdf> >, accessed 16 March 2014, p.8

⁴² Lagerspetz, 'How Many Nordic Countries', p.50; Götz, 'Norden', p.324.

⁴³ Götz, 'Norden', pp.324-325.

⁴⁴ Christopher S. Browning, 'Branding Nordicity: Models, Identity and the Decline of Exceptionalism', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 42:1 (2007), pp.27-50.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.27-50.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.31-36.

⁴⁷ Anette Therkelsen and Malene Gram, 'Branding Europe – Between Nations, Regions and Continents', *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 10:2 (2010), pp.107-128; Nordic Council of Ministers, *Copyright Norden. The Nordic Model – Fact or Fiction?*, Copenhagen, 2008 < <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:700926/FULLTEXT01.pdf> >, accessed 3 October 2014, pp.1-71.

and contribute to a positive perception of themselves as a region collectively committed to solving global problems.⁴⁸ Ulriksen has analysed how the Nordic brand was constructed through foreign policy decisions. He argues that the involvement of the Nordics in peacekeeping operations and donation of aid to developing countries is a conscious foreign policy choice designed to project a benevolent image of themselves, gain international prestige and build a positive reputation.⁴⁹ The NBG can be viewed as another contribution to the construction of the Nordic brand, emphasising the Nordics' loyalty and commitment to rapid response norms under the CSDP.

Browning asserts, however, that the Nordic brand constructed during the Cold War has passed its sell-by date and is no longer marketable.⁵⁰ This builds on arguments made from the early 1990s that Norden was under threat in a changing world. With the collapse of the bipolar world order and its diametrically opposed political systems, Norden's Cold War identity as the 'middle way' between American capitalism and Soviet communism was no longer applicable.⁵¹ In 1992 Wæver declared that 'the concept of Norden is coming to appear increasingly irrelevant.'⁵² A leading figure of the Copenhagen School, Wæver has been influential within the field of Nordic Studies for his evaluation of the reconstruction of the Nordic model and Nordic region. He argued that the very norms underpinning the Nordic model—peacefulness, morality and progressivism—were being adopted by Europe, and that as a result, Norden faced the choice of isolation or incorporation into Europe.⁵³ Mouritzen also claimed that the Nordic

⁴⁸ Ingebritsen, 'Norm Entrepreneurs', pp.11-23; Annica Kronsell, 'Can Small States Influence EU Norms? Insights from Sweden's Participation in the Field of Environmental Politics', *Scandinavian Studies*, 74:3 (2002), pp.287-304; Christine Ingebritsen, 'The Scandinavian way and its legacy in Europe', *Scandinavian Studies*, 74:3 (2002), pp.255-264; Christine Ingebritsen, 'Learning from Lilliput: Small States and EU Expansion', *Scandinavian Studies*, 76:3 (2004), pp.369-384; Annika Björkdahl, 'Norm Advocacy: a small state strategy to influence the EU', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15:1 (2008), pp.135-154; Gunnhildur Lily Magnúsdóttir and Baldur Þorhallsson, 'The Nordic States and Agenda-Setting in the European Union: How do Small States Score?', *Icelandic Review of Politics and Administration*, 7:1 (2011), pp.203-224; Christine Ingebritsen, 'Ecological Institutionalism: Scandinavia and the Greening of Global Capitalism', *Scandinavian Studies*, 84:1 (2012), pp.87-97; Gorm Rye Olsen, 'The European Union's Africa Policy: The Result of Nordicization or Europeanization?', *Journal of European Integration*, 35:4 (2013), pp. 409-424.

⁴⁹ Ståle Ulriksen, 'Deployments for Development? Nordic Peacekeeping Efforts in Africa', *International Peacekeeping*, 14:4 (2007), pp.553-568.

⁵⁰ Browning, 'Branding Nordicity', pp.27-50.

⁵¹ The term 'middle way' was first used by American journalist Marquis William Childs. In *Sweden: the Middle Way*, first published in 1936, Childs argued that Sweden, and to a lesser extent Denmark and Norway, had successfully manoeuvred between two opposing political systems. This book impacted greatly upon the development of a global perception of Sweden and the Nordic countries as the ideal social and political model. Marquis William Childs, *Sweden: the Middle Way: The Story of a Constructive Compromise Between Socialism and Capitalism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1947).

⁵² Wæver, 'Nordic nostalgia', p.84.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp.77-102.

model was losing credibility, attributing this to Sweden's preference for a European over a Nordic identity from the early 1990s.⁵⁴

Claims that the defining characteristics of Norden were disappearing have continued to be asserted after the turn of the twenty-first century. DeLong concurred with Wæver and Mouritzen that Norden was diminishing but in contrast to Mouritzen's argument that that Sweden was the primary instigator of Norden's decline, DeLong argued that Denmark's decision to participate in the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 was the most significant factor.⁵⁵ Laatikainen asserted that the authority of the Nordic group within the UN was lessening as the EU became a more important actor.⁵⁶ She claimed that in the past, recourse to joint Nordic political statements at the UN level contributed towards 'the development of a distinctive Nordic profile within UN politics' based on 'a strong multilateralist ethic, a small state commitment to and appreciation for the concept of collective security and the externalization of the norms of Social Democratic governance.'⁵⁷ Yet now, as Götz concurs, the EU 'is politically much more relevant' than Norden, and the region has undergone 'a substantial split' as a result of the accession of Sweden and Finland to the EU.⁵⁸ Christensen, focusing on Nordic interaction with the ESDP, has questioned whether it is relevant or even possible to remain Nordic without first being European.⁵⁹ The paradox of Europe's adoption of Nordic norms and values is of course, as Browning acknowledged, that it indicates the 'staggering success' of the marketing of the Nordic brand, and yet at the same time threatens the brand's very existence.⁶⁰

At the same time that the Nordic region is undergoing changes to its global image, its territorial boundaries are also being rearticulated and reshaped. These geographical changes are acknowledged as stemming from the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989.⁶¹ A popular assumption in scholarly circles is that the Baltic region is emerging as a new frame of reference to challenge the pre-eminence of Norden. Since the Baltic States gained independence and integrated into the EU and NATO, the Nordic region began to be articulated as part of a larger

⁵⁴ Hans Mouritzen, 'The Nordic Model as a Foreign Policy Instrument: Its Rise and Fall', *Journal of Peace Research*, 32:1 (1995), pp.9-21.

⁵⁵ DeLong, 'Danish Military Involvement in the Invasion of Iraq', pp.267-280.

⁵⁶ Katie Verlin Laatikainen, 'Norden's Eclipse: The Impact of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy on the Nordic Group in the United Nations', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 38:4 (2003), pp.409-441.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.429.

⁵⁸ Götz, 'Norden', p.327.

⁵⁹ Jesper L. Christensen, 'Not only, but also Nordic': the European Security and Defence Policy and its implications for alternative frameworks of Nordic cooperation' in Alyson J.K. Bailes, Gunilla Herolf and Bengt Sundelius, eds., *The Nordic Countries and the European Security and Defence Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.150-166.

⁶⁰ Browning, 'Branding Nordicity', p.44.

⁶¹ Hurd, *Bordering the Baltic*, p.9.

region with Baltic characteristics. Theorising that the Nordic region was undergoing profound spatial change, Wæver was the pioneer of this new geographical space. He believed that Norden could be rearticulated as a Baltic project, proclaiming that it was more relevant to the changing context than the Nordic one.⁶²

Many concurred with Wæver's assessment. Jukarainen employed Neumann's region-building approach to argue that Norden, the dominant spatial representation of 'northernness', had been reconstructed into the 'new North', a complex geographical mixture of European, Russian and Baltic elements.⁶³ More recently, Musiał has argued that a discursive broadening of Northern Europe has taken place, whereby Norden is being reconstructed into a region possessing a Baltic component, which 'has been "talked" into being.'⁶⁴ Mouritzen comparatively believed that the Baltic project was a passing, fashionable phase likely to wane, as the Baltic States did not possess enough in common to allow for the projection and exportation of a common regional identity in the same way that the Nordics were able to do.⁶⁵ He has described Nordic-Baltic relations as an example of 'divisive geopolitics.'⁶⁶ Yet others such as Rüse and Jurkynas recognise that increasing regional cooperation at inter-regional and EU levels has institutionalised the Nordic-Baltic relationship and is contributing to connections between these regions.⁶⁷

This literature review has located my research within the battle group scholarship and identified the ways in which this thesis departs from the dominant approaches adopted by studies in this field. It has situated the thesis in the field of constructivist-influenced Nordic Studies scholarship that has examined changes to the identity and geography of the Nordic region since the end of the Cold War. A discussion of the NBG necessitates an understanding of the battle group concept and the purpose for which it was created by the EU. The next chapter provides a contextual overview of the EU's battle group concept and the NBG and their representation in EU policy, which will enable an understanding of why battle group scholars have been so

⁶² Wæver, 'Nordic nostalgia', p.96.

⁶³ Pirjo Jukarainen, 'Norden is Dead – Long Live the Eastwards Faced Euro-North', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 34:4 (1999), pp.355-382.

⁶⁴ Kazimierz Musiał, 'Reconstructing Nordic Significance in Europe on the threshold of the 21st century', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 34:3 (2009), pp.286-306; Kazimierz Musiał, 'Reconceptualising Nordic Identities after 1989' in Hurd, *Bordering the Baltic*, pp.105-126.

⁶⁵ Mouritzen, 'The Nordic Model as a Foreign Policy Instrument', p.18.

⁶⁶ Hans Mouritzen, 'The Nordic-Baltic Area: Divisive Geopolitics at Work', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 19:3 (2006), pp.495-511.

⁶⁷ Ilze Rüse, 'Nordic-Baltic Interaction in European Union Negotiations: Taking Advantage of Institutionalized Cooperation', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 45:2 (2014), pp.229-246; Mindaugas Jurkynas, 'Brotherhood reconsidered: region-building in the Baltics', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 35:1 (2004), pp.1-31.

critical towards them. This will provide a point of departure for analysing how the NBG has been discursively constructed in national foreign policy.

2. Origins and Development of the Battle Groups

This chapter provides some political and historical context surrounding the formation of the EU's battle groups and the NBG specifically. Firstly, it explains political and historical developments at the EU and Nordic level that contributed to the formation of the battle groups and the NBG; secondly, it outlines the role and significance that the EU envisaged for the NBG. The 2010 Headline Goal serves as the basis of the official EU perspective, which will be compared and contrasted with the perspectives that emerge from the construction of the NBG in national foreign policy in Chapter 3.

The EU's battle groups emerged from regional developments linked to the changing personality of the EU during the end of the twentieth century. For much of the Union's existence it could not be argued that it was a military actor. Its origins in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC) in the 1950s established it as an economic and trade actor, and today it remains the largest free trade area in the world. Depictions of the EU as a 'normative', 'ethical' or 'civilian' actor on the basis of its championing of liberal democratic principles, abolition of the death penalty and environmental agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol, have positioned it as a peaceful actor disinclined to use military force.⁶⁸ However, beginning in the late 1990s, the EU attempted to expand its role in global affairs by developing the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the ESDP, which the battle groups were to later, ostensibly, spearhead.

The strengthening of the EU's military capabilities under the ESDP manifested in actions that enhanced the EU's cooperation with NATO and also increased the Union's capacity for autonomous action. EU-NATO cooperation developed during the 1990s, with the formalisation of their strategic partnership occurring in 2002 with the EU-NATO Declaration on ESDP.⁶⁹ Following this, the Berlin Plus arrangements were adopted in 2003. They outlined the nature of EU-NATO crisis management cooperation under the ESDP, provided the EU with access to NATO's assets, and emphasised the need for the 'mutually reinforcing' development of the

⁶⁸ Ian Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40:2 (2002), pp.235-258; Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, 'Environmental Policy: The Union as global leader' in Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, eds., *The European Union as a Global Actor*, Second Edition (London: Routledge, 2006), pp.89-110; Bedrudin Brljavac and Maximilian Conrad, 'A Global Civilian Power? The Future Role of the European Union in International Politics', *Icelandic Review of Politics and Administration*, 7:1 (2011), pp.97-116.

⁶⁹ NATO, *EU-NATO Declaration on ESDP*, 16 December 2002 <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_19544.htm>, accessed 11 September 2014.

military capabilities of EU and NATO member states.⁷⁰ The first practical application of the Berlin Plus arrangements was in the first EU-led military mission, Operation Concordia, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2003, during which the EU utilised NATO resources.

The EU also wished to develop autonomous military capabilities and conduct military operations ‘without recourse to NATO assets’ and increase its ability to contribute to UN missions abroad.⁷¹ The conflicts in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s revealed the inability of the EU to resolve crises on its borders without NATO assistance and subsequently acted as a catalyst for the improvement of its foreign policy and particularly its military dimension. In response to the Balkan crisis, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and French President Jacques Chirac held a summit in Saint Malo in December 1998. Many pinpoint this event as the impetus to the strengthening of the EU’s military actorness, as the two leaders decided that ‘the Union must have a capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises.’⁷² Their efforts produced the Helsinki Headline Goal for 2003, which was the first concrete step towards developing the EU’s autonomous military capabilities under the ESDP. The Helsinki Headline Goal articulated the concept of ‘rapid response’ to be realised with a European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF) with the capacity to deploy 60,000 troops within 60 days for a period of up to one year.⁷³

Events in the early 2000’s contributed to further political developments. In 2003 the EU launched Operation Artemis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which was the EU’s first autonomous military mission.⁷⁴ In contrast to Concordia, Artemis was carried out without NATO’s assistance and was subsequently considered by defence analysts to be a successful enterprise; an indication that the EU was ‘capable of reacting rapidly and forcefully in international security affairs’ and proof that it could act as an independent actor in overseas

⁷⁰ European Council, *EU-NATO: The Framework for Permanent Relations and Berlin Plus*, 17 March 2003 < <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/03-11-11%20Berlin%20Plus%20press%20note%20BL.pdf> >, accessed 19 May 2014.

⁷¹ Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, *EU Battlegroups: What Contribution to European Defence?* < http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2011_RP08_mjr_mlg_ks.pdf >, p.7.

⁷² Council of the European Union, *Joint Declaration Issued at the Joint British-French Summit, Saint-Malo, France*, 3-4 December 1998 < <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/French-British%20Summit%20Declaration,%20Saint-Malo,%201998%20-%20EN.pdf> >, accessed 2 May 2014.

⁷³ Council of the European Union, *Helsinki Headline Goal*, December 1999 < <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/Helsinki%20Headline%20Goal.pdf> >, accessed 22 March 2014.

⁷⁴ Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, *Armed and Ready?* < <http://www.sieps.se/sites/default/files/32-20062.pdf> >, p.9.

crises.⁷⁵ Developments that occurred in 2003 and 2004 in the wake of Operation Artemis strongly suggest that it assisted the expansion of EU defence and security policy. The European Security Strategy (ESS) summarised the EU's strategic objectives, which included developing military capabilities and civilian resources to respond to security crises.⁷⁶ The European Defence Agency (EDA) was formed to improve European defence capabilities in support of the ESDP.⁷⁷ Most significantly, the timeline for the Helsinki Headline Goal was extended by the Headline Goal 2010, which was formulated in 2004.⁷⁸ The Headline Goal 2010 is the key document outlining the role and purpose of the EU battle groups from an EU perspective. It declared that the EU required more 'flexible, mobile and interoperable' forces in order to be able to respond 'with rapid and decisive action' to crises by 2010.⁷⁹ The battle groups – force packages with the ability to deploy 'at high readiness as a response to a crisis either as a stand-alone force or as part of a larger operation enabling follow-on phases' – were conceived of as the solution.⁸⁰

Each battle group was to consist of a minimum of 1500 troops, including a battalion-sized force and smaller combat support and logistics units.⁸¹ They were to operate on rotating standby periods of six months and possess the capability to perform a range of tasks, including humanitarian assistance, evacuation, conflict prevention, stabilisation and construction and separation of parties by force.⁸² These military actions are otherwise known as the Petersberg Tasks, which were first agreed upon in 1992 and incorporated into Article 17 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU).⁸³ They were then expanded on by the Lisbon Treaty of 2009, the same document that renamed the ESDP the CSDP.⁸⁴ The Headline Goal instructed that, following unanimous approval from all EU member states, the battle groups should be able to

⁷⁵ Swedish Defence Research Agency, 'EU-Battlegroups', p.63; Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, *Armed and Ready?* < <http://www.sieps.se/sites/default/files/32-20062.pdf> >, p.9.

⁷⁶ European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*, 12 December 2003 < <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf> >, accessed 2 March 2014, pp.1-14.

⁷⁷ European External Action Service, *About CSDP – European Defence Agency* < <http://eeas.europa.eu/csdp/about-csdp/eda/index.htm> >, accessed 2 March 2014.

⁷⁸ European Union, *Headline Goal 2010* < <http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/2010%20Headline%20Goal.pdf> >, pp.1-8.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.2.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.2.

⁸¹ Swedish Defence Research Agency, 'EU-Battlegroups', p.63.

⁸² Nordic Battlegroup Force Commander, *NBG Nordic Battlegroup, FCdr NBG 15, Master* < http://www.forsvarsmakten.se/Global/Myndighetswebbplatsen/ENG/NBG15%20-%20eng/14MAR_%20FCdr_MASTER-F.pdf >.

⁸³ European External Action Service, *About CSDP – The Petersberg Tasks* < http://eeas.europa.eu/csdp/about-csdp/petersberg/index_en.htm >, accessed 2 March 2014.

⁸⁴ European External Action Service, *About CSDP – The Treaty of Lisbon* < http://eeas.europa.eu/csdp/about-csdp/lisbon/index_en.htm >, accessed 2 March 2014.

deploy within five to ten days to anywhere in the world.⁸⁵ In line with the Berlin Plus arrangements, the document also stressed the need for interoperability with the UN and NATO.⁸⁶ The battle groups were depicted in the Headline Goal as effective military forces capable of fulfilling the Petersberg Tasks. The scholarly consensus that the battle groups are not performing their intended military function is based upon the failure of the groups to be utilised for the purposes outlined by the Headline Goal.

The NBG specifically was produced by the Military Capabilities Conference in Brussels in November 2004, at which Sweden, Finland and Norway declared their mutual intentions to establish a multinational battle group in support of the ESDP.⁸⁷ Sweden adopted the role of Framework Nation, meaning that it assumed responsibility for leadership of the battle group, including the coordination of planning, preparation and training.⁸⁸ An official MoU outlining a proposal for the development of the NBG was later signed between Sweden, Finland, Norway and Estonia on 23 May 2005.⁸⁹ According to Section 5 of this document, the NBG was ‘to contribute to the strengthening and further development of the European Security and Defence Policy’, and to be ‘a militarily effective, credible, rapidly deployable, and coherent force package capable of stand-alone operations, or for the initial phase of larger operations.’⁹⁰ This aim is consistent with the depiction of the battle group concept in the Headline Goal.

In addition to these documents that established the battle group concept and the NBG, the EU has issued official statements painting the NBG in a positive light. The EU Presidency declared in 2013 that ‘the Nordic Battlegroup, under the lead of Sweden, has become an important and regular contributor to the implementation of the Battlegroups concept under the EU Common Security and Defence Policy. This is strengthening the EU’s capabilities.’⁹¹ This depiction of

⁸⁵ European Union, *Headline Goal 2010* < <http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/2010%20Headline%20Goal.pdf> >, pp.4-5.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.5.

⁸⁷ Military Capability Commitment Conference, *Declaration on European Military Capabilities*, Brussels, 22 November 2004 < http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/documents_travail/2005/03/18defcapab/18defcap.pdf >, accessed 22 March 2014, pp.1-23.

⁸⁸ Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, *Armed and Ready?* < <http://www.sieps.se/sites/default/files/32-20062.pdf> >, p.37; Regeringskansliet, *Den nordiska stridsgruppen* < <http://www.ud.se/sb/d/9199/a/83223> >.

⁸⁹ *Memorandum of Understanding Between The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Estonia and The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Finland and the Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of Norway and The Government of the Kingdom of Sweden Concerning The Principles for the Establishment and Operation of a Multinational Battle Group to be Made Available to The European Union*, 23 May 2005 < <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/04/49/80/60960599.pdf> >, accessed 1 February 2014.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Statement by the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU in response to the presentation on the Nordic Battle Group and the EU Battle Group Concept by Brigadier General S. Andersson, Swedish Armed Forces*, 5 June 2013 < <http://www.osce.org/fsc/102516> >, accessed 2 March 2014.

the NBG as a competent military force that is actively serving its intended purpose may be the reason for the NBG's reputation for being one of the best EU battle groups and a model for the others to emulate.⁹²

The NBG was a product not only of EU policy developments but also of Swedish, Finnish and Norwegian foreign policy changes and the impact that this had on closer Nordic integration with the EU and the deepening of Nordic military cooperation. Denmark joined the EEC in 1973, but Sweden, Finland and Norway remained sceptical towards European integration throughout the Cold War. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the bipolar world order, these three countries reconsidered their relationship with the EU and attitudes towards Europe. Sweden and Finland joined the EU in 1995, while Norway integrated itself within the CFSP structure and maintained close relations with the Union. European security is now expressed as a fundamental foreign policy priority for all three countries and their decision to establish a multinational battle group under the umbrella of the EU's ESDP reflects this.⁹³

More specifically, the reformulation of neutrality in Swedish and Finnish foreign policy and the impact this had on their security policies provided a key impetus to the creation of the NBG. Whether this foreign policy shift was the result of external pressures, domestic socialisation processes or a combination of both has been debated by scholars.⁹⁴ Finnish neutrality had been

⁹² *The Economist*, 2008, cited in Per M. Norheim-Martinsen, *The European Union and Military Force: Governance and Strategy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.112; Edvardas Pocius, 'Sweden invited Lithuania to join the Nordic Battlegroup', *Lithuania Tribune*, 24 August 2012 < <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/15031/sweden-invited-lithuania-to-join-the-nordic-battlegroup-201215031/> >, accessed 18 May 2014; Jorge Benitez, 'Sweden invites Lithuania to join the EU's Nordic Battle Group', *NATO Source*, 29 August 2012 < <http://192.254.129.212/natosource/sweden-invites-lithuania-join-eus-nordic-Battle-Group> >, accessed 8 December 2013; Estonian Ministry of Defence, *Reinsalu: Participation in Nordic Battlegroup is priority for Estonia*, 11 September 2012 < <http://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/en/reinsalu-participation-in-nordic-battlegroup-is-priority-for-estonia> >, accessed 18 May 2014.

⁹³ Swedish Ministry of Defence, *Our Future Defence: The focus of Swedish defence policy 2005-2007: A Summary*, Stockholm, October 2004 < <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/03/21/19/224a4b3c.pdf> >, accessed 1 February 2014, pp.7-8; Kristin Krohn Devold, *EUs sikkerhets- og forsvarssamarbeid og Norge* [EU's security and defence cooperation and Norway], 26 August 2005 < http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumentarkiv/Regjeringen-Bondevik-II/fd/Taler-og-artikler-arkivert-individuelt/2005/eus_sikkerhets-og_forsvarssamarbeid.html?id=269433 >, accessed 4 April 2014; Forsvarsdepartementet, *Styrke og relevans* [Strength and relevance], 3 January 2005 < <http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/FD/Dokumenter/Styrke.pdf> >, accessed 18 May 2014, p.18; Prime Minister's Office Finland, *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2012: Government Report*, Helsinki, 2013 < http://vnk.fi/julkaisukansio/2012/j05-suomen-turvallisuus-j06-finlands-sakerhet/PDF/VNKJ0113_LR_En.pdf >, accessed 23 March 2014, p.12; Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *Minister Tuomioja's speech on EU Common Security and Defence Policy* < <http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=298227> >.

⁹⁴ Michael E. Smith, 'Conforming to Europe: the domestic impact of EU foreign policy co-operation', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 7:4 (2000), pp.613-631; Rieker, 'Europeanization of Nordic Security', pp.369-392; Fredrick Lee-Ohlsson, 'Sweden and Development of the European Security and Defence Policy: A Bi-Directional Process of Europeanization', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 44:2 (2009), pp.123-142; Douglas Brommesson, 'Normative Europeanization: The case of Swedish foreign policy reorientation', *Cooperation and*

forced upon it by the USSR after the Second World War in the form of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance. In contrast, Swedish neutrality was a conscious choice with a longer history, emerging after the Napoleonic Wars. During the 1990s, Sweden and Finland both shifted their policies of neutrality to 'military non-alignment' and pursued a more internationalist agenda.⁹⁵ In addition to their involvement in UN peacekeeping missions, the two Nordics also began to participate in NATO military operations through NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. Cooperation with NATO accelerated during 2014. Finnish Defence Minister Carl Haglund linked the situation in Ukraine to the emergence of debates about NATO membership in both Finland and Sweden.⁹⁶ Indeed, in the wake of Russia's incursion into Ukraine in March 2014, *The Wall Street Journal* instigated discussion regarding the potential accession to NATO of the only two Nordic countries outside the Organisation.⁹⁷ Recent moves to sign new agreements with NATO also indicate its blossoming relationship with the two former neutrals, a process which was undoubtedly lent further momentum with the election of pro-NATO Finnish Prime Minister Alexander Stubb in June 2014.⁹⁸ The governments of both countries intend to sign individual pacts with NATO that will further strengthen their cooperation.⁹⁹ Such developments are indicative of fundamental changes in

Conflict, 45:2 (2010), pp.224-244; Jessica L. Beyer and Stephanie C. Hofmann, 'Varieties of Neutrality: Norm revision and decline', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 46:3 (2011), pp.285-311.

⁹⁵ Ulrika Möller and Ulf Bjereld, 'From Nordic neutrals to post-neutral Europeans: Differences in Finnish and Swedish policy transformation', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 45:4 (2010), pp.363-386.

⁹⁶ Uutiset, 'Haglund: Sweden and Finland closer to NATO than ever', *Uutiset*, 17 May 2014 < http://yle.fi/uutiset/haglund_sweden_and_finland_closer_to_nato_than_ever/7247730 >, accessed 5 August 2014.

⁹⁷ Niclas Rolander, 'Sweden Mulls "Doctrine Shift" in Defense After Russian Incursion in Ukraine', *The Wall Street Journal*, 6 March 2014 < <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304554004579422572239271130> >, accessed 19 April 2014; Alistair Scrutton and Sakari Suoninen, 'As Russia growls, Swedes, Finns eye defence options, NATO', *Reuters*, 1 April 2014 < <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/01/us-ukraine-crisis-nordics-idUSBREA301AD20140401> >, accessed 19 April 2014; Annelie Gregor, 'Will Putin Push Sweden Toward NATO?', *Breaking Defense*, 2 April 2014 < <http://breakingdefense.com/2014/04/will-putin-push-sweden-toward-nato/> >, accessed 19 April 2014; Lithuania Tribune, 'Analysis: Finland and Sweden debate NATO membership', *Lithuania Tribune*, 17 April 2014 < <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/66954/analysis-finland-and-sweden-debate-nato-membership-201466954/> >, accessed 2 May 2014; Suvi Turtiainen, 'Despite Crimea, Finland and Sweden stay wary of NATO', *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 22 April 2014 < http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_despite_crimea_finland_and_sweden_stay_wary_of_nato250 >, accessed 2 May 2014; Jan Joel Andersson, 'Nordic NATO', *Council on Foreign Relations*, 30 April 2014 < http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/14377/jan-joel-andersson/nordic-nato?cid=soc-facebook-in-snapshots-nordic_nato-050114 >, accessed 2 May 2014; James Kirchnick, 'Putin's Nordic Shadow', *Foreign Policy*, 8 May 2014 < http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/05/08/putin_nordic_shadow_nato_finland_sweden >, accessed 18 May 2014.

⁹⁸ The Guardian, 'Finland and Sweden to strengthen ties with Nato', *The Guardian*, 27 August 2014 < <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/27/finland-sweden-strengthen-ties-nato> >, accessed 10 September 2014; Gerard O'Dwyer, 'Finland Appoints "NATO Hawk" as New PM', *Defense News*, 29 July 2014 < <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20140629/DEFREG01/306290017/Finland-Appoints-NATO-Hawk-New-PM> >, accessed 29 July 2014.

⁹⁹ Derek Scally, 'Finland and Sweden to bolster ties with Nato', *The Irish Times*, 5 September 2014 < <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/finland-and-sweden-to-bolster-ties-with-nato-1.1918366> >, accessed 10 September 2014.

Swedish and Finnish foreign policy that have caused them to become more closely integrated with the military structures of both the EU and NATO. The NBG forms a part of this larger transformation of Sweden and Finland's security policies that are becoming more aligned with the European and transatlantic institutions.

The reformulation of Swedish and Finnish foreign policy not only facilitated closer integration with the EU and NATO but also led to the strengthening of Nordic cooperation in security and defence which was another impetus to the establishment of the NBG. With two formerly neutral Nordic countries no longer opposed to military operations, the path for Nordic cooperative military structures was paved. Historically, the Nordic countries have cooperated at the political level through institutions such as the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers, and have participated together in international peacekeeping missions, but it was not until the end of the Cold War that Nordic cooperation in military activities intensified and became institutionalised. The NBG's formation took place in the very midst of the development of Nordic military frameworks. The Nordic Armaments Cooperation (NORDAC) was formed in 1994. This was followed by the Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support (NORDCAPS) in 1997 and later by the Nordic Supportive Defence Structures (NORDSUP) in 2008. In February 2009, Thorvald Stoltenberg, formerly both Norway's Defence Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister, published the Stoltenberg Report, which produced thirteen recommendations about how to further defence and security cooperation between the Nordic countries.¹⁰⁰ While many of Stoltenberg's recommendations have yet to be implemented, his Report reveals the importance placed by Norway on developing cooperative strategies for the Nordic countries in the area of defence and security and indicates that collaboration in the realm of defence and security policy had begun to be considered by high-ranking Nordic politicians as an area demanding attention. In December 2009, the three structures of NORDAC, NORDCAPS and NORDSUP were officially amalgamated into the single Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFECO). Encompassing Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, NORDEFECO serves as a comprehensive framework for all Nordic defence cooperation activities.¹⁰¹ The consolidation of the former Nordic military structures into one overarching

¹⁰⁰ Utenriksdepartementet, *Nordisk samarbeid om utenriks- og sikkerhetspolitikk: Forslag overlevert de nordiske utenriksministere på ekstraordinært nordisk utenriksministermøte* [Nordic cooperation on foreign and security policy: Proposals submitted to the Nordic Foreign Ministers to the extraordinary Nordic Foreign Ministers meeting], 9 February 2009 < http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/ud/dok/rapporter_planer/rapporter/2009/rapport_ths.html?id=545170 >, accessed 17 March 2014.

¹⁰¹ *Memorandum of Understanding Between The Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of Denmark and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Finland and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland and the Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of Norway and the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden on Nordic Defence*

body demonstrates attempts to create greater cohesion in military cooperation. Although the NBG does not incorporate all the Nordic countries, as a military force intended to perform a military function it could not have been created without closer Nordic cooperation in defence and security matters.

The foreign policies of the Nordic countries towards their Baltic neighbours also facilitated the NBG's development. Inclusion of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the NBG for 2015 is the result of close political relationships that were initiated during the 1990s in the wake of their independence from the Soviet Union. The Nordics assisted the Baltics in preparing for EU and NATO accession and have since established a multitude of regional institutional frameworks that incorporate the Baltics in addition to including them as partners within their own Nordic institutions.¹⁰² The NBG's expanding membership is one manifestation of the intensifying relations between the Nordic and Baltic countries. It poses interesting dilemmas for the construction of Nordic region, the significance of which is detailed in Chapter 4.

The NBG emerged out of EU political developments and Nordic foreign policy changes. It has been depicted by the EU as an effective rapid reaction force and one of the more successful battle groups. Yet to date the NBG and the other EU battle groups have not functioned in the capacity that the 2010 Headline Goal envisioned them to. NATO allies are concerned that the EU is not fulfilling the Berlin Plus arrangements, with officials expressing their opinion that the EU needs to increase its military spending.¹⁰³ Despite the EU declaring in December 2013 that defence mattered, European countries have been reluctant to increase their defence

Cooperation, 4 November 2009 < <http://www.nordefco.org/Files/nordefco-mou.pdf> >, accessed 29 December 2013.

¹⁰² European Union Institute for Security Studies, *The Baltics: from nation states to member states*, Occasional Paper No. 62, February 2006 < <http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/occ62.pdf> >, accessed 30 March 2014, pp.1-42; Archer, 'Nordic Swans and Baltic Cygnets', pp.47-71.

¹⁰³ Phil Stewart, 'Nato chief says Russia may not stop at Crimea, urges Europe to "step up"', *Reuters*, 19 March 2014 < <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/19/us-ukraine-crisis-nato-rasmussen-idUSBREA2I25D20140319> >, accessed 22 March 2014; Stephen Erlanger, 'Shrinking Europe Military Spending Stirs Concern', *The New York Times*, 22 April 2013 < <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/23/world/europe/europes-shrinking-military-spending-under-scrutiny.html?pagewanted=all&r=0> >, accessed 2 March 2014; Marcus Weisgerber, 'NATO to Urge Members to Boost Defence Spending', *Defence News*, 1 May 2014 < http://www.defensenews.com/article/20140501/DEFREG01/305010019/NATO-Urge-Members-Boost-Defense-Spending?odysey=mod_sectionstories >, accessed 2 May 2014; Anders Fogh Rasmussen, 'Each NATO Ally has to Pull its Weight After Russia's Threats', *Financial Times*, 6 August 2014 < <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/each-nato-ally-has-to-pull-its-weight-after-russia-s-threats> >, accessed 18 August 2014; Ben Farmer and Peter Foster, 'Obama and Cameron to tell Nato allies to increase defence spending', *The Telegraph*, 31 August 2014 < <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/11066785/Obama-and-Cameron-to-tell-Nato-allies-to-increase-defence-spending.html> >, accessed 10 September 2014.

expenditure.¹⁰⁴ Pressure in light of the current situation in Ukraine is pushing the EU to play a greater role in military affairs in order to fulfil the Berlin Plus arrangements, maintain the Euro-Atlantic relationship and show strength in the face of perceived Russian aggression.¹⁰⁵ Yet it appears that the EU is still unwilling to utilise its battle groups. If the NBG has failed to act in the capacity it was designed to over the past decade, then why does it, along with the other EU battle groups, continue to exist? Clearly the answer is not due to its military successes. The NBG serves several important functions and in order to analyse these, it is necessary to look beyond evaluations of its (non) military contribution. Moving away from the NBG as it was conceived of in the EU's Headline Goal, I will now examine how it has been depicted by the foreign policies of its participants. This will enable a consideration of some alternative explanations for the NBG's existence and enlargement.

¹⁰⁴ Nick Witney, 'Hard truths about Europe's soft power', *EurActiv*, 18 July 2014 < <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/global-europe/hard-truths-about-europes-soft-power-303581> >, accessed 29 July 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Adrian Croft, 'Ukraine crisis forces European defence spending rethink', *Reuters*, 27 August 2014 < <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/08/27/uk-nato-summit-spending-idUKKBN0GR1E720140827> >, accessed 10 September 2014.

3. The Nordic Battle Group in National Foreign Policy

Existing analyses of the EU's battle groups consider them instruments solely of the EU, and indeed they are EU entities. Nevertheless, the multinational forces serve the foreign policy objectives of their individual participants in addition to the goals of EU foreign policy. Consistent with a constructivist understanding of identity as complex and multi-faceted, it is important that the NBG is viewed not as an entity with a single function that is dictated only by the EU. The NBG is a collective group of nation-states with their own foreign policy priorities and perceptions of the role and importance of the group in the regional context. This chapter adopts a comparative approach by examining discursive representations of the NBG in foreign policy documents, reports and speeches produced by the political elite of each of the NBG's 2015 participants.¹⁰⁶ Four interpretations of the group's purpose are discernable, undermining the notion that the NBG serves a single, military purpose.

Sweden

In terms of both material and rhetorical commitment, Sweden has been the most supportive participant of the NBG. Sweden will bear the greatest responsibility of all the contributing countries in 2015 by providing over 70% of the total battle group contingent and assuming the role of Framework Nation for the third time.¹⁰⁷ Swedish governments have been overwhelmingly supportive of the NBG and the EU battle group concept, as reflected in foreign policy documents and political speeches. These primary sources convey the idea that the NBG contributes to the improvement of the EU's military capabilities under the CSDP, strengthens Nordic cooperation and develops Sweden's national armed forces.

Swedish foreign policy most commonly refers to the NBG in the context of its contribution to EU crisis management capabilities as part of the ESDP/CSDP framework. A 2004 government bill stressed that it was in the interest of Sweden to make 'a tangible contribution to the EU's capability and [make] rapid reaction resources available for international crisis management operations.'¹⁰⁸ The intention to use the NBG to strengthen the EU's rapid response capabilities was also expressed in the 2008 *National Strategy*, which stated:

¹⁰⁶ Croatia also participated in the NBG in 2011. I have chosen not to address its contribution in this thesis as its contribution of 2 helicopters and 20 soldiers was minimal and it is not participating during the 2015 standby period. Source: Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia, *MOD State Secretary Simunovic met Nordic Battle Group Commander*, 13 June 2011 < <http://www.morh.hr/en/news/press-releases/6836-mod-state-secretary-simunovic-met-nordic-battle-group-commander.html> >, accessed 21 April 2014.

¹⁰⁷ Regeringskansliet, *Den nordiska stridsgruppen* < <http://www.ud.se/sb/d/9199/a/83223> >.

¹⁰⁸ Swedish Ministry of Defence, *Our Future Defence* < <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/03/21/19/224a4b3c.pdf> >, p.8.

It is the Government's aspiration that Sweden should be at the core of European cooperation. Sweden's objective is to contribute actively to developing the EU's capability to conduct operations in support of international peace and security under ESDP. This is manifested in Sweden's leading role in the Nordic battle group in the spring of 2008 and in Sweden having also given notice of its willingness to fulfil a leading role in 2011.¹⁰⁹

Here a clear link is made between the Swedish government's intentions to actively contribute towards the development of the EU's security and defence policy and Sweden's role as Framework Nation for the NBG in both 2008 and 2011. The sentiments expressed in these strategic documents have been reinforced in speeches made by Swedish politicians, in particular former Defence Minister Sten Tolgfors and Foreign Affairs Minister Carl Bildt. Addressing the Swedish Atlantic Council Conference in 2007, Tolgfors declared that:

The Nordic Battle Group is one of Sweden's main undertakings. Its establishment adds credibility to the political actions of the EU. The European Union is the leading soft power in the world but it has lacked military capabilities to back up its foreign policy. The Battle Group concept will help us to ameliorate this imbalance of capabilities.¹¹⁰

Tolgfors linked the NBG's contribution to the development of the EU's military capabilities directly to the EU's credibility as a global actor. Bildt expressed rhetorical support for the battle group concept and called for improvements to be made and the issue of inaction to be addressed during the Swedish EU Presidency in 2009.¹¹¹ Bildt's opinions built on those expressed in a report produced by Swedish representatives that strongly encouraged the use of the EU's battle groups to develop the EU's crisis management capabilities.¹¹² Efforts during Sweden's EU Presidency to improve the battle group concept demonstrate the commitment that Sweden has displayed to the NBG and the battle group concept as part of the ESDP/CSDP.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Government Offices of Sweden, *National strategy for Swedish participation in international peace-support and security-building operations*, 13 March 2008 < <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/10/80/95/73e64223.pdf> >, accessed 2 May 2014, p.10.

¹¹⁰ Sten Tolgfors, *Speech by Sten Tolgfors, Swedish Minister for Defence, at the Swedish Atlantic Council conference*, 9 November 2007 < <http://www.government.se/sb/d/8738/a/92078> >, accessed 4 April 2014.

¹¹¹ Carl Bildt, *Speech by Mr Carl Bildt, Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the conference "ESDP@10 - What lessons for the future"*, Brussels, 28 July 2009 < <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/7417/a/131181> >, accessed 2 May 2014.

¹¹² Prime Minister's Office Sweden, *Report on the Swedish Presidency to the European Union, 1 July – 31 December 2009*, 7 May 2010 < <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/14/54/51/e328c5fe.pdf> >, accessed 4 May 2014, pp.1-54.

¹¹³ Valentina Pop, 'Sweden seeks scrutiny of EU battle groups', *EU Observer*, 9 September 2009 < <http://euobserver.com/defence/28627> >, accessed 3 May 2014; Paul Ames, 'Seeking greater flexibility on use of EU battlegroups', *Europolitics*, 2 July 2009 < <http://europolitics.eis-vt-prod-web01.cyberadm.net/dossiers/swedish-pr-sidency/seeking-greater-flexibility-on-use-of-eu-battlegroups-art242339-132.html> >, accessed 3 May 2014.

By positioning the NBG as directly serving the goals of the EU's ESDP/CSDP, Sweden is also disassociating the group from its Swedish leadership in light of its failure to deploy. When the NBG was subjected to criticism in the aftermath of its standby periods in 2008 and 2011, Tolgfors and Karl Engelbrektsson, the Chief of the NBG in 2008, argued that EU politics prevented deployment.¹¹⁴ Tolgfors semantically disassociated Sweden from accountability by emphasising that the NBG was a *EU* battle group rather than a *Swedish* battle group.¹¹⁵ Constructing the NBG as a EU military force serving the goals of EU foreign policy is a convenient way of protecting Sweden's reputation.

Swedish foreign policy documents and political statements describe the NBG not only as a contribution to the ESDP/CSDP but also as a means of furthering Nordic defence and security cooperation. The 2008 *National Strategy* declared that the NBG was an example of 'great opportunities in the framework of Nordic defence-related cooperation for exchange of experience, coordination and joint contributions to international operations, on both a bilateral and a multilateral basis.'¹¹⁶ Bildt referred to the NBG as an example of meaningful cooperation between Sweden, Norway and Finland.¹¹⁷ Tolgfors concurred with this assessment but described the NBG as 'the ultimate example of enhanced Nordic cooperation in a Euro-Atlantic context,' thus locating cooperation through the NBG within the larger transatlantic context and positioning the NBG as a bridge builder between the EU and NATO.¹¹⁸ This is important to Sweden, as although it is not a full member of NATO, it is growing closer to the Organisation through its participation in NATO operations since the 1990s. Politicians now assert that Sweden is an 'active partner' of NATO.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Sveriges Radio, *Nordic Battlegroup* < <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=1637&artikel=2140122> >; Sveriges Radio, *Ahlin(S)vill skrota NBG* [Ahlin wants to scrap NBG], P4 Skaraborg, 21 June 2011 < <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=97&artikel=4566641> >, accessed 3 May 2014; Gunnar Jonsson, 'Nordic Battle Group: Ensidig reträtt är ingen försvarspolitik' [Nordic Battle Group: Unilateral retreat is no defence policy], *Dagens Nyheter*, 11 November 2011 < <http://www.dn.se/ledare/signerat/nordic-battle-group-ensidig-retratt-ar-ingen-forsvarspolitik> >, accessed 9 September 2014.

¹¹⁵ Sveriges Radio, *Nordic Battlegroup* < <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=1637&artikel=2140122> >.

¹¹⁶ Government Offices of Sweden, *National strategy* < <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/10/80/95/73e64223.pdf> >, p.15.

¹¹⁷ Carl Bildt, *Nordiskt samarbete i en ny tid, Seminar Series 'Skandinaviske veivalg'* [Nordic cooperation in a new time, Seminar Series 'Scandinavian crossroads'], Norwegian Embassy in Stockholm, 13 March 2007 < <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/7417/a/79754> >, accessed 18 March 2014.

¹¹⁸ Sten Tolgfors, *Speech by Sten Tolgfors* < <http://www.government.se/sb/d/8738/a/92078> >.

¹¹⁹ Karin Enström, quoted in: Scally, 'Finland and Sweden to bolster ties with Nato' < <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/finland-and-sweden-to-bolster-ties-with-nato-1.1918366> >.

The NBG serves the additional purpose of developing Sweden's military capabilities. Since its inception, the NBG was designed to 'strengthen Sweden's international capability' and enhance the 'long-term development and operative capability' of its national armed forces.¹²⁰ The development of rapid reaction forces was articulated as contributing to 'improved prospects of exerting influence', which in turn would facilitate 'the goal of Sweden being able to be an active international player.'¹²¹ The incredible transformation of Sweden's national armed forces that has taken place through its role as Framework Nation of the NBG and the benefits of this for Swedish prestige have been acknowledged by think tanks and scholars.¹²² Examination of Swedish foreign policy positions the NBG as playing three roles for its Framework Nation: it aligns with the purpose outlined in the EU's Headline Goal in strengthening the CSDP and rapid response capabilities and is also intended to assist Nordic defence cooperation and develop Sweden's armed forces. Underlying these ostensive functions is a palpable use of the NBG to maintain Sweden's reputation and credibility.

Finland

Finland will contribute 68 soldiers and 4 helicopters to the NBG in 2015.¹²³ The numerical difference between Sweden and Finland's material contributions implies that Finland is less committed to the battle group. The minimal importance placed on the NBG in Finnish foreign policy documents and statements supports this contention. Since the introduction of the battle group concept in 2004, Finnish foreign policy references to the battle groups have retained a focus on the Berlin Plus arrangements, with the NBG situated firmly within the Euro-Atlantic context. Strategic documents acknowledge the battle groups and the need for crisis management capabilities but rarely refer specifically to the NBG, preferring to emphasise the development of EU crisis management capabilities in cohesion with NATO's. The NBG serves a secondary purpose of developing cooperation between the Nordic countries.

Finland's commitment to the NBG forms part of its commitment to international crisis management more generally, in line with the Berlin Plus Arrangements that stress the

¹²⁰ Swedish Ministry of Defence, *Our Future Defence* < <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/03/21/19/224a4b3c.pdf> >, p.14.

¹²¹ Government Offices of Sweden, *National strategy* < <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/10/80/95/73e64223.pdf> >, p.18.

¹²² European Union Institute for Security Studies, *Enter the EU Battlegroups* < <http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/cp097.pdf> >, p.63; International Institute for Strategic Studies, 'Europe's rapid-response forces', no pagination; Jacoby and Jones, 'The EU Battlegroups in Sweden and the Czech Republic', pp.324-327; Lee-Ohlsson, 'Sweden and Development of the European Security and Defence Policy', p.134.

¹²³ Correspondence of Tuuli Harviainen with the author, 29 April 2014.

importance of mutual reinforcement of the crisis management forces of NATO and the EU.¹²⁴ Finland is not a full member of NATO but, like Sweden, has actively participated in NATO missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan through the PfP program, contributes troops to NATO's multinational crisis management force, the NATO Response Force (NRF) and continues to integrate itself more closely with the Organisation.¹²⁵ Successive Finnish Security and Defence Policies have emphasised cohesion between European and transatlantic institutions. For example, Finland's 2004 *Security and Defence Policy* stated: 'Finland supports an independent crisis management capability for the European Union and is in favour of strengthening that capability. Closer cooperation between the EU and NATO will serve as an important basis for the build-up and use of this capability.'¹²⁶ The 2009 *Security and Defence Policy* declared that 'the strengthening of the ESDP only accentuates the importance of cooperation with NATO.'¹²⁷ The 2012 Policy directly referenced the Berlin Plus Arrangements and the need for mutual reinforcement between the activities of the EU battle groups and the NRF.¹²⁸

Cohesion between EU and NATO rapid response forces is a logistical and practical priority. Finland uses the same troops for the rapid response elements of both the EU battle groups and the NRF, making communication and cooperation between the two institutions necessary. As former Defence Minister Jyri Häkämies recognised: 'because we can afford to have only one set of forces used for both purposes, it is vital for us that the EU and NATO will be able to work together.'¹²⁹ The need for coordination of EU and NATO rapid response forces is a noticeably consistent theme throughout Finnish foreign policy, in contrast to Swedish foreign policy which places greater emphasis upon developing the NBG primarily as part of the ESDP/CSDP framework. Finnish foreign policy is more focused in ensuring that the EU battle groups are not prioritised to the detriment of NATO's crisis management force.

¹²⁴ European Council, *EU-NATO: The Framework for Permanent Relations and Berlin Plus* < <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/03-11-11%20Berlin%20Plus%20press%20note%20BL.pdf> >.

¹²⁵ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *Finland's participation in NATO-led crisis management operations* < <http://www.um.fi/public/default.aspx?nodeid=32299&contentlan=2&culture=en-US> >, accessed 27 April 2014.

¹²⁶ Prime Minister's Office Finland, *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2004: Government Report*, Helsinki, 2004 < http://www.defmin.fi/files/311/2574_2160_English_White_paper_2004_1_.pdf >, accessed 4 April 2014, p.80.

¹²⁷ Prime Minister's Office Finland, *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2009: Government Report*, Helsinki, 2009 < <http://vnk.fi/julkaisukansio/2009/j11-turvallisuus-j12-sakerhets-j13-finnish/pdf/en.pdf> >, accessed 4 April 2014, p.65.

¹²⁸ Prime Minister's Office Finland, *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2012* < http://vnk.fi/julkaisukansio/2012/j05-suomen-turvallisuus-j06-finlands-sakerhet/PDF/VNKJ0113_LR_En.pdf >, p.45.

¹²⁹ Valtioneuvosto, *Minister of Defence Jyri Häkämies at CSIS in Washington*, 6 September 2007 < <http://valtioneuvosto.fi/ajankohtaista/puheet/puhe/en.jsp.print?oid=204460> >, accessed 4 April 2014.

Active participation in NATO and EU-led international crisis management operations has also been linked directly to Finland's territorial defence. Häkämies situated Finnish involvement in these enterprises in the context of defending the stability of the European continent and 'the country, should our territorial integrity or the nation's very existence become under threat,' linking the need for NATO and EU crisis management capabilities directly to Finland's national security.¹³⁰ Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs also states that participation in international military operations supports 'the reform and strengthening of Finland's national defence capability.'¹³¹ This preoccupation with national security may be the result of Finland's history with its neighbour Russia, which imposed neutrality upon Finland and which is still recognised quite openly as a security threat. In 2007 Häkämies declared that 'Russia, Russia and Russia' were the three main security challenges for Finland.¹³² References to Russia's increase in defence spending, extensive energy resources, nuclear arsenal and political partnerships pervade Finland's 2012 *Security and Defence Policy*, while Russian intrusions into Finnish airspace in August 2014 provoked concern and resulted in Finland cultivating a closer relationship with NATO.¹³³ These events and references to the significance of crisis management capabilities for national security indicate that for Finland, participation in multinational military forces such as the NBG is directly related to its own desire for security in specific relation to its fear of what Browning terms 'revanchist Russian ambitions.'¹³⁴

The NBG has also been referred to as a contribution to the strengthening of Nordic cooperation in defence and security. In 2012, Foreign Affairs Minister Tuomioja described Nordic cooperation as 'a fundamental part of [Finland's] foreign policy', second in importance to cooperation with the EU, UN and NATO.¹³⁵ He referred to the NBG as a specific example of Nordic military cooperation.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *Finland's foreign and security policy* < http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?nodeid=32280&contentlan=2&culture=en-US#crisis_management >, accessed 25 September 2014.

¹³² Valtioneuvosto, *Minister of Defence Jyri Häkämies at CSIS in Washington* < <http://valtioneuvosto.fi/ajankohtaista/puheet/puhe/en.jsp.print?oid=204460> >.

¹³³ Prime Minister's Office Finland, *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2012* < http://vnk.fi/julkaisukansio/2012/j05-suomen-turvallisuus-j06-finlands-sakerhet/PDF/VNKJ0113_LR_En.pdf >, p.11, 24, 32-35, 37, 40-42, 50, 56-57, 62-66, 74-75, 81; Scally, 'Finland and Sweden to bolster ties with Nato' < <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/finland-and-sweden-to-bolster-ties-with-nato-1.1918366> >.

¹³⁴ Christopher S. Browning, 'Inventing New Traditions: The Western Europeanisation of Finland' in *Constructivism, narrative and foreign policy analysis: a case study of Finland* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), p.269.

¹³⁵ Erkki Tuomioja, *Speech at the seminar "Nordic Security Cooperation = Smart Defence?"*, 23 November 2012 < <http://www.tuomioja.org/index.php?mainAction=showPage&id=1855&category=4> >, accessed 5 August 2014.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

The view of the NBG that emerges from an analysis of Finnish foreign policy align less with the EU's Headline Goal than in Swedish foreign policy. Finnish commitment to the CSDP has certainly been expressed, however more emphasis is placed on Finland's foreign policy goals of national defence in the context of the broader strategic partnership between the EU and NATO.

Norway

Norway provides an interesting case study, as it is not a member of the EU. Yet its integration with the CFSP enables it to participate in EU military operations, and together with Sweden and Finland it was a founding member of the NBG. Norway provided a substantial contribution of 150 troops in 2008 but will provide a significantly smaller contribution of 70 personnel for the 2015 standby period.¹³⁷ According to Norway's former Defence Minister Kristin Krohn Devold, Norway's participation in the NBG was intended to strengthen military cooperation with its European and Nordic partners.¹³⁸ Depictions of the NBG in Norwegian foreign policy confirm these intentions, prioritising EU frameworks over Nordic cooperative structures. Norwegian participation in the NBG must also be considered within the context of the country's membership of NATO.

Participation in the NBG forms a part of Norway's broader foreign policy aim to integrate the country as closely as possible with the EU's defence and security structures, considering that 'Norway has, within the constraints of non-membership, an interest in positioning itself close to the EU in the area of foreign and security policy.'¹³⁹ During the Cold War, Norway forged a close alliance with the US and NATO and subsequently developed 'a strong Atlantic security identity.'¹⁴⁰ With the end of the Cold War, Norway was concerned that it would no longer be considered a key security actor in Europe. When its neighbours Sweden and Finland joined Denmark in the EU in 1995, the Norwegian public rejected EU membership for a second time in a referendum, leaving the country outside the Union. Former Defence Minister Jørgen

¹³⁷ Utenriksdepartementet, *Utenfor og innenfor* [Outside and inside], 23 April 2005 < <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/ud/dok/nou-er/2012/nou-2012-2/24/4/5.html?id=669789> >, accessed 4 May 2014; Internasjonalt Forum, *Norsk tropp i EU's Battlegroup* < <http://www.internasjonaltforum.no/dok/artikkel894.asp> >.

¹³⁸ Kristin Krohn Devold, *Norwegian participation in the EU's rapid reaction forces*, Defence Minister's statement to the Storting, 30 November 2004 < http://www.regjeringen.no/en/archive/Bondeviks-2nd-Government/ministry-of-defence/Taler-og-artikler-arkivert-individuelt/2004/norwegian_participation_in_the.html?regj_oss=1&id=268028 >, accessed 4 April 2014.

¹³⁹ Norwegian Ministry of Defence, *Norwegian Defence 2013* < <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=167437> >, accessed 27 April 2014, p.9.

¹⁴⁰ Pernille Rieker, 'Norway and the ESDP: Explaining Norwegian Participation in the EU's Security Policy', *European Security*, 15:3 (2006), p.286.

Kosmo proposed in 1996 that instead of using the outcome of the 1994 referendum to become an ‘outside player’ in Europe, Norway should instead seek to influence European defence and security policy, as ‘anything short of participation would isolate [Norway].’¹⁴¹ Therefore, once the EU began to develop a security identity and a military dimension in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Norway actively sought integration with the EU’s CFSP structure and has since contributed to several EU-led operations abroad.¹⁴² Recognising that it cannot contribute to the political decision-making process as a non-EU member, Norway views practical participation in EU-led military operations as politically important, and this was identified by its Department of Defence as a key reason for its participation in the NBG.¹⁴³

References in Norwegian foreign policy documents and political statements attest to the primary function of the NBG being to strengthen Norway’s integration with the CSDP. In 2005 Devold declared that the creation of rapid reaction forces was one of the most important elements of the EU’s security and defence structures and that Norway’s decision to participate in the NBG represented ‘a continuation of our support for the common European security and defence policy.’¹⁴⁴ Norway’s current Defence Minister Ine Eriksen Søreide has indicated that almost a decade later this view remains unchanged: ‘Norwegian participation [in the NBG for 2015] will be an important contribution to safeguard and strengthen cooperation with the EU within the defence and security policy.’¹⁴⁵ Her reference to Norway’s ‘important contribution’ is not entirely convincing considering that Norway has more than halved its NBG contribution since 2008. Regardless of the embellishments of the political rhetoric, what concerns this analysis is how the NBG has been represented by Norwegian foreign policy. Participation in

¹⁴¹ Jørgen Kosmo, *Long-term challenges for Norwegian defence*, Oslo Militære Samfund, 8 January 1996 < http://www.regjeringen.no/en/archive/Brundtlands-3rd-Government/fd/Taler-og-artikler-arkivert-individuelt/1996/long-term_challenges_for_norwegian.html?regj_oss=1&id=261593 >, accessed 27 April 2014.

¹⁴² Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The EEA Agreement and Norway’s other agreements with the EU: Report to the Storting*, 12 October 2012 < http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/38391588/PDFS/STM201220130005000EN_PDFS.pdf >, accessed 27 April 2014, p.33; Europaportalen, *Sikkerhet og forsvar* [Security and defence] < <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/sub/europaportalen/tema/sikkerhet-og-forsvar/sikkerhet-og-forsvar.html?id=686148> >, accessed 22 August 2014.

¹⁴³ Forsvarsdepartementet, *Styrke og relevans* < <http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/FD/Dokumenter/Styrke.pdf> >, p.37.

¹⁴⁴ Devold, *EUs sikkerhets- og forsvarssamarbeid og Norge* < http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumentarkiv/Regjeringen-Bondevik-II/fd/Taler-og-artikler-arkivert-individuelt/2005/eus_sikkerhets-og_forsvarssamarbeid.html?id=269433 >; Devold, quoted in: Regjeringen, *Agreement on EU battle group signed in Brussels*, 23 May 2005 < http://www.regjeringen.no/en/archive/Bondeviks-2nd-Government/ministry-of-defence/Nyheter-og-pressemedlinger/2005/agreement_on_eu_battle_group_signed.html?regj_oss=1&id=255832 >, accessed 4 April 2014.

¹⁴⁵ Original text in Norwegian: ‘Norsk deltakelse vil være et viktig bidrag for å ivareta og styrke samarbeidet med EU innenfor det forsvars- og sikkerhetspolitiske området.’ Ine Eriksen Søreide, quoted in: Internasjonalt Forum, *Norsk tropp i EUs Battlegroup* < <http://www.internasjonaltforum.no/dok/artikkel894.asp> >.

the NBG has consistently been presented as a contribution to the development of the EU's CSDP, just as the NBG was represented in the EU's Headline Goal.

Like its fellow Nordics Sweden and Finland, Norway also depicts the NBG as a contribution to Nordic defence cooperation in its foreign policy, something that is emphasised as an intrinsic part of Norwegian cooperation with the EU. The 2005 document *Styrke og relevans*, which outlined Norway's security priorities, noted that cooperation with other Nordic countries was important as they shared common security interests.¹⁴⁶ Stoltenberg's eponymous report in 2009 called for closer Nordic defence and security cooperation and referred to the NBG as one example of a joint Nordic military contribution to the EU.¹⁴⁷ Former Defence Minister Grete Faremo declared in 2011 that 'the Nordic battlegroup is an important step in the process of further developing Nordic defence cooperation within a wider European framework', recognising the importance of the NBG for Nordic collaboration in the military area within the broader European regional context.¹⁴⁸ The NBG has been framed as an achievement in Nordic cooperation and as a practical manifestation of the common security interests of Nordic countries.¹⁴⁹ Defence Minister Søreide has stated that Norwegian involvement in the NBG for 2015 will strengthen Nordic cooperation in addition to contributing to the EU's security and defence policy.¹⁵⁰ All of these references indicate that Nordic military cooperation is considered an important priority and a reason for Norway's participation in the battle group. However, that most place Nordic cooperation within a broader EU framework indicates that in security matters the EU is considered more relevant than Norden.

Norway's membership of NATO should not be disregarded when discussing its participation in the NBG. Just like Finland, cohesion between NATO and EU crisis management forces is a strong priority for Norway.¹⁵¹ Former State Secretary Roger Ingebrigtsen stated that 'defence

¹⁴⁶ Forsvarsdepartementet, *Styrke og relevans* < <http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/FD/Dokumenter/Styrke.pdf> >, p.39.

¹⁴⁷ Utenriksdepartementet, *Nordisk samarbeid om utenriks- og sikkerhetspolitikk* < http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/ud/dok/rapporter_planer/rapporter/2009/rapport_ths.html?id=545170 >.

¹⁴⁸ Norwegian Ministry of Defence, *Norwegian Forces on Standby* < <http://www.eu-norway.org/news1/Norwegian-forces-on-standby#.Ur-I09IW3To> >, accessed 29 December 2013.

¹⁴⁹ Roger Ingebrigtsen, *Smart Defence – The Norwegian Perspective*, Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies Seminar, Oslo, 24 April 2012 < <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/archive/Stoltenbergs-2nd-Government/Ministry-of-Defence/taler-og-artikler/2012/smart-defence--the-norwegian-perspective.html?id=679432> >, accessed 29 December 2013; Norwegian Ministry of Defence, *Norwegian Defence 2013* < <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=167437> >, p.10.

¹⁵⁰ Original text in Norwegian: 'vil støtte opp under det nordiske samarbeidet.' Søreide, quoted in: Internasjonalt Forum, *Norsk tropp i EUs Battlegroup* < <http://www.internasjonaltforum.no/dok/artikkel894.asp> >.

¹⁵¹ Devold, *Norwegian participation in the EU's rapid reaction forces* < http://www.regjeringen.no/en/archive/Bondeviks-2nd-Government/ministry-of-defence/Taler-og-artikler-arkivert-individuelt/2004/norwegian_participation_in_the.html?regj_oss=1&id=268028 >.

cooperation within the Nordic context must be seen as an important and welcome supplement, but no alternative, to Norway's membership in NATO', once more supplanting Norden with a larger institution.¹⁵² Former Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg is the new Chief of NATO, and supports increased European defence spending.¹⁵³ Current Defence Minister Søreide has also emphasised the importance of NATO for European security in the present regional political climate.¹⁵⁴ Norwegian foreign policy constructs the NBG as a contribution to EU crisis management under the CSDP. The role of the NBG in enhancing Nordic defence cooperation is considered as a supplement and supportive element of both EU and NATO frameworks.

The 'Baltic States'

The NBG retains the word 'Nordic' in its title despite the fact that not all of its participants are, in any traditional sense, Nordic. The three countries collectively referred to as the 'Baltic States'—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—achieved their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Their accession to both the EU and NATO in 2004 formalised a pervasive shift in alignments that took place after the collapse of the Soviet Union and led to the transition of these newly independent states into European and transatlantic security structures. Since they do not consider the EU to be a 'full-fledged military actor', all three of these states prioritise their membership of NATO over the EU in security affairs.¹⁵⁵ The Baltics' participation in the NBG is therefore more significant as a form of Nordic-Baltic cooperation and adherence to the Berlin Plus arrangements than as a contribution to the CSDP, and their support for the battle group concept is at best 'lukewarm', as Tromer has argued.¹⁵⁶ The term 'Baltic States' is a discursive construction that is 'a modern political invention of the twentieth century' and the three countries are not considered here to share identical foreign policies.¹⁵⁷ Analysis of governmental documents and political statements reveals the differing levels of importance they place upon the NBG and the various roles they construct for it in the regional context.

¹⁵² Roger Ingebrigtsen, *Nordic Defence Cooperation – A mini-NATO to the North?*, Tromsø, 24 June 2011 < <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/archive/Stoltenbergs-2nd-Government/Ministry-of-Defence/taler-og-artikler/2011/nordic-defence-cooperation--a-mini-nato-.html?id=648561> >, accessed 2 May 2014.

¹⁵³ James Kaner, 'Norwegian to Lead NATO as It Is Poised for Bigger Role', *The New York Times*, 28 March 2014 < <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/29/world/europe/nato-picks-former-norwegian-premier-as-its-next-leader.html> >, accessed 30 March 2014.

¹⁵⁴ Ine Eriksen Søreide, *The security situation in Europe and the future of NATO – a Norwegian perspective*, YATA-NORSEC conference, 25 April 2014 < http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/fd/aktuelt/taler_artikler/ministeren/taler-og-artikler-av-forsvarsminister-in/2014/The-security-situation-in-Europe-and-the-future-of-NATO--a-Norwegian-perspective.html?id=757912 >, accessed 27 April 2014.

¹⁵⁵ European Union Institute for Security Studies, *The Baltics: from nation states to member states* < <http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/occ62.pdf> >, p.35.

¹⁵⁶ Elzbieta Tromer, 'Baltic perspectives on the European Security and Defence Policy' in Bailes, Herolf and Sundelius, *The Nordic Countries and the European Security and Defence Policy*, p.364.

¹⁵⁷ European Union Institute for Security Studies, *The Baltics: from nation states to member states* < <http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/occ62.pdf> >, p.21.

Estonia

Of the three Baltic States, Estonia is the most supportive of the NBG. The country was a signatory on the MoU that established the NBG in 2004 and joined Sweden, Finland and Norway for the first standby period in 2008 well before Latvia or Lithuania signed on to the enterprise. In addition, Estonia has limited its participation exclusively to the NBG. While Latvia and Lithuania have both supplied troops to the Polish-led battle group previously, Estonian troops have not participated in any other EU battle groups. Interestingly, references to the NBG in Estonian foreign policy documents and official statements are no more frequent than in Latvian and Lithuanian sources. This is because Estonia's exclusive participation in the NBG from the outset does not indicate a stronger commitment to the battle group concept than its Baltic neighbours, but is an indication of the unique importance that the country places on its relationship with Norden. Estonia's contribution to the NBG must be examined as part of its broader foreign policy goal to integrate itself more closely with this region.

Estonia considers NATO to be its primary security provider. Its 2010 *National Security Concept* places considerable importance on the development of EU security and defence policy and on strengthening the EU's ability to respond to international crises.¹⁵⁸ Contributing to the EU's battle groups is also expressed as a priority.¹⁵⁹ However, by declaring that 'NATO, with its transatlantic nature and the principle of collective defence serves as the cornerstone of European security and defence,' the document affirms that Estonia views European security within the larger transatlantic relationship.¹⁶⁰ No specific references are made to the NBG in this document, nor in Estonia's 2011 *National Defence Strategy*.¹⁶¹ As no importance is allocated to the NBG in such key strategic documents, it is necessary to examine Estonia's foreign policy more broadly in order to understand why this country began contributing to the NBG before its Baltic neighbours, and why it has restricted its contribution solely to the NBG.

Estonia's wish to be part of Norden has driven its foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. Estonian writers and political elite have attempted to illuminate what they call the 'good old Swedish times' during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, while scholars have examined the

¹⁵⁸ Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *National Security Concept of Estonia*, 12 May 2010 < http://www.vm.ee/sites/default/files/National_Security_Concept_of_Estonia_2010.pdf >, accessed 30 March 2014, p.10.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p.12.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p.4.

¹⁶¹ Estonian Ministry of Defence, *National Defence Strategy*, February 2011 < [http://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/files/kmin/img/files/KM_riigikaitse_strateegia_eng\(2\).pdf](http://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/files/kmin/img/files/KM_riigikaitse_strateegia_eng(2).pdf) >, accessed 15 September 2014, pp.1-26.

way in which some Estonian nationalists have attempted to disassociate the country from its Soviet and Baltic past and associate itself with the Nordic region instead.¹⁶² Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves addressed the Swedish Institute for International Affairs in 1999 during his former position as Foreign Affairs Minister and famously attempted to create a geographical space he termed ‘Yuleland.’¹⁶³ This region was based upon a linguistic similarity in the word for ‘Christmas’ in the languages of the five Nordic countries, Great Britain and Estonia. Ilves assumed the role of region-builder as articulated by Neumann; a member of the political elite attempting to speak into existence a collective region to which Estonia ostensibly belonged. His efforts epitomise the use of discursive practices to connect Estonia with other countries and to create a new focus for collective action.¹⁶⁴

Attempts to talk the region of Yuleland into existence have not yet come to fruition, but the decision to participate in the NBG was a way for Estonia to establish a closer connection to the Nordic countries. It forms a part of Estonian defence policy that aims to integrate with Nordic cooperation frameworks. Estonia’s 2011 *National Defence Strategy* stated that ‘defence co-operation between the Nordic and Baltic countries is the most important of various forms of regional cooperation. Estonia’s goal is to integrate Baltic defence co-operation with Nordic countries’ cooperation as closely as possible.’¹⁶⁵

Through its membership of the NBG, Estonia is one step closer to realising a dream to become a Nordic country. Estonia is contributing to the EU’s security and defence policy, but desires to forge a stronger connection with Norden based on what is perceived to be a shared history and culture.¹⁶⁶ For Estonia, the NBG serves an ideational and symbolic purpose by including the country within the regional space that it wishes to be a part of.

¹⁶² Lars Vikström, *Provinsen bortom havet. Estlands svenska historia 1561-1710* by Kari Tarkiainen and Ülle Tarkiainen, reviewed in *NyTid*, 9 December 2013 < <http://www.nytid.fi/2013/12/den-gamla-goda-svensktiden-om-estlands-svenska-historia/> >, accessed 4 January 2014; Mart Kuldkepp, ‘The Scandinavian Connection in Early Estonian Nationalism’, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 44:1 (2013), pp.313-338; Stuart Burch and David J. Smith, ‘Empty Spaces and the Value of Symbols: Estonia’s ‘War of Monuments’ from Another Angle’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 59:6 (2007), p.920; Karl Erik Rosengren, Marju Lauristin and Peeter Vilhalemm, eds., *Return to the Western World: Cultural and Political Perspectives on the Estonian Post-Communist Transition* (Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2007); Gregory Feldman, ‘Shifting the perspective on identity discourse in Estonia’, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 31:4 (2000), pp.406-428.

¹⁶³ Toomas Hendrik Ilves, *Estonia as a Nordic Country*, Speech to the Swedish Institute for International Affairs, 14 December 1999 < <http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/3489> >, accessed 27 April 2014.

¹⁶⁴ Neumann, ‘A region-building approach to Northern Europe’, p.58.

¹⁶⁵ Estonian Ministry of Defence, *National Defence Strategy* < [http://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/files/kmin/img/files/KM_riigikaitse_strateegia_eng\(2\).pdf](http://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/files/kmin/img/files/KM_riigikaitse_strateegia_eng(2).pdf) >, p.10.

¹⁶⁶ Estonian Chief of Staff stated that: ‘We are linked to the Nordic states through culture and history, we understand each other well and share the same values’. Source: The Baltic Times, ‘Baltics invited to join NORDEFCO’, *The Baltic Times*, 24 January 2011 < <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/27822/#.VDHRImeSxOk> >, accessed 6 October 2014.

Latvia

The possibility of Latvian participation in the NBG was raised at a meeting between the former Latvian Foreign Minister Girts Valdis Kristovskis and Swedish Foreign Affairs Minister Carl Bildt in February 2011.¹⁶⁷ Latvia will contribute to the NBG for the first time in 2015 with over 140 personnel.¹⁶⁸ The few references to the NBG made in Latvian foreign policy documents and by Latvian politicians convey the NBG as a contribution to the EU's CSDP, a structure that Latvia subordinates to NATO. The NBG is portrayed as furthering Nordic-Baltic cooperation within a broader European and international context.

As in Estonian foreign policy documents, NATO takes clear precedence over the EU in security matters. While Latvia's 2012 *State Defence Concept* remarks that both NATO and the EU 'have a central role in ensuring security, stability and cooperation in the Euro-Atlantic area', the responsibility for the strengthening of collective defence is attributed almost solely to NATO.¹⁶⁹ The strengthening of the EU's military capabilities is described as necessary for NATO's military capacity, which suggests that Latvia's contribution to the EU's battle groups forms part of a more important need to develop NATO's crisis management capabilities.¹⁷⁰ This treatment of the EU battle group concept is consistent with Latvia's 2002 *National Security Concept* which emphasised the transatlantic relationship over the European.¹⁷¹ The *State Defence Concept* states that Latvia 'must pay particular attention' to its contribution to the NRF, which is described as 'an essential instrument for collective defence,' and to which it will contribute 'no less than 390 soldiers.'¹⁷² When we consider that Latvia will comparatively contribute 140 personnel to the NBG for 2015 it becomes clear where Latvia's collective security priorities lie. Indeed, the only mention of the NBG in Latvia's key foreign policy documents is that 'Latvia plans regular participation in EU Battlegroups, taking into account the involvement in other

¹⁶⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, *Foreign Minister Kristovskis meets Swedish Foreign Minister in Stockholm*, 9 February 2011 < <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/press-releases/2011/february/09-2/> >, accessed 4 April 2014.

¹⁶⁸ Correspondence of Iveta Līce with the author, 23 April 2014.

¹⁶⁹ Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, *The State Defence Concept 2012*, 10 May 2012 < <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=167323> >, accessed 3 May 2014, p.4, 10.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.12.

¹⁷¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, *The National Security Concept*, 24 January 2002 < <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/security/basic/4534/> >, accessed 30 March 2014.

¹⁷² Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, *The State Defence Concept 2012* < <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=167323> >, p.13.

international operations.¹⁷³ The battle group concept is evidently considered within the broader context of international crisis management and of lesser importance than the NRF.

The relative absence of the NBG from Latvian foreign policy indicates that it does not hold much importance for this Baltic country. The only other instance of rhetorical support for the EU's battle groups was when Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs called for greater attention to be paid to developing the effectiveness of the battle group concept during a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels in May 2013.¹⁷⁴ This is inconsistent with the neglect of the battle groups in both the *State Defence Concept* and the *National Security Concept* and it is clear that despite Rinkēvičs' remarks, Latvia prioritises NATO's crisis management forces over the EU's. The NBG is not linked to Nordic-Baltic cooperation in Latvian foreign policy and no direct link is made between Latvian participation in the NBG and Nordic-Baltic regional cooperation. Yet the Nordic countries are viewed as models to emulate and cooperation with them is considered to be a 'supplementary element of global and European security processes' contributing to regional stability and a means of furthering Latvia's integration with the EU and NATO.¹⁷⁵ From a Latvian foreign policy perspective the NBG can be considered another form of Nordic-Baltic cooperation within larger EU and international projects.

Lithuania

Lithuania announced its intentions to join the NBG in November 2010.¹⁷⁶ Two years later it was invited by Sweden to join the NBG and will participate in the group for the first time during the 2015 standby period.¹⁷⁷ For Lithuania, the depiction of the NBG as a contribution to the CSDP is subordinate to the broader foreign policy aim of closer Nordic-Baltic cooperation within the broader context of Lithuania's membership of NATO.

The role of the NBG has been described by Lithuanian politicians as a valuable contribution to EU security and defence. In 2012, former Defence Minister Rasa Juknevičiene stated that Lithuania's participation in the NBG would contribute to the rapid response capabilities of the

¹⁷³ Ibid., p.13.

¹⁷⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, *Foreign Minister Rinkvis draws attention to enhancement of civilian capabilities when planning Common Security and Defence Policy missions*, 28 May 2013 < <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/press-releases/2013/may/28-2/?print=on> >, accessed 4 April 2014.

¹⁷⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, *The National Security Concept* < <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/security/basic/4534/> >.

¹⁷⁶ Lithuania Tribune, 'Baltic States keen on stronger security coop with Nordic nations', *Lithuania Tribune*, 11 November 2010 < <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/4359/baltic-states-keen-on-stronger-security-coop-with-nordic-nations-20104359/> >, accessed 3 May 2014.

¹⁷⁷ Benitez, 'Sweden invites Lithuania to join the EU's Nordic Battle Group' < <http://192.254.129.212/natosource/sweden-invites-lithuania-join-eus-nordic-Battle-Group> >.

EU.¹⁷⁸ During the Lithuanian EU Council Presidency in 2013, Defence Minister Juozas Olekas expressed a strong commitment to the CSDP and developing the EU's battle group concept by addressing the need for battle group improvement and reform.¹⁷⁹ By making such statements, Lithuanian politicians supported the battle groups as a means of improving the EU's crisis management capabilities.

This is not supported by Lithuanian foreign policy documents. Prior to Lithuania's accession to the EU and NATO in 2004, its foreign policy gave equal consideration to both institutions. Lithuania's 2002 *National Security Strategy* envisaged Lithuanian security to be 'part of a common European security and transatlantic defence system.'¹⁸⁰ Integration into the two institutions were 'two equally important priorities' for the government, as their structures strengthened and complemented each other.¹⁸¹ However, examination of Lithuania's 2011 *Defence Policy* and its 2012 *National Security Strategy* reveals that in recent years, the complementarity of the EU and NATO has been replaced by a more weighted emphasis on Lithuania's membership of NATO. NATO membership is the dominant theme in both these documents, which list 'active and responsible membership' of the Organisation as Lithuania's first priority of defence and security policy.¹⁸² Although mention is also made of Lithuania becoming an active and responsible member of the EU, this is a secondary concern and the documents do not elaborate on how Lithuania will specifically contribute towards developing the CSDP, let alone participate in the battle groups.¹⁸³ The lack of references to the NBG in Lithuanian foreign policy documents reflects that, in spite of the rhetorical declarations of support from its Defence Ministers, Lithuania prioritises NATO's collective defence system over the EU's CSDP.

Lithuania instead views the NBG in the context of Nordic-Baltic military cooperation. Lithuania's support of closer Baltic cooperation with the Nordic countries became apparent over a decade ago, when its 2002 *National Security Strategy* emphasised 'close multilateral and

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Lithuania Tribune, 'The future of EU Battlegroups addressed in London', *Lithuania Tribune*, 16 October 2013 < <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/53780/the-future-of-eu-Battle-Groups-addressed-in-london-201353780/> >, accessed 1 February 2014.

¹⁸⁰ Baltic Defence Review, 'National Security Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania', *Baltic Defence Review*, 7:1 (2002), p.23.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p.23.

¹⁸² Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania, *Defence Policy*, 2011 < http://www.kam.lt/en/defence_policy_1053/defence_policy_of_lithuania.html >, accessed 2 May 2014; Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, *National Security Strategy*, 26 June 2012 < <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=156893> >, accessed 3 May 2014.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

bilateral cooperation with Northern Europe states: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.’¹⁸⁴ This document was released well before Lithuania had acceded to the EU and before the battle group concept had been developed. It reveals that Lithuania has placed importance on its relationship with the Nordic countries from an early stage, and this is something that has likely influenced its decision to participate in the NBG. Indeed, when Juknevičiene announced Lithuania’s intentions to join the NBG, he linked the battle group directly to the need for closer Nordic-Baltic cooperation and depicted the NBG as a means of developing such cooperation at the military level.¹⁸⁵ He stated: ‘we are considering an opportunity for the Baltic states to join the Nordic Battle Group to make an important contribution to regional cooperation.’¹⁸⁶ Lithuanian foreign policy therefore presents the NBG as a contribution to Nordic-Baltic military cooperative endeavours and to EU crisis management within what it perceives as the more important transatlantic context.

Ireland

Ireland’s contribution to the NBG in 2008 was 85 personnel, which increased to 160 for the 2011 standby period and will increase again to 175 for the 2015 standby period, a number second only to Sweden’s.¹⁸⁷ Ireland’s participation to the NBG and the numerical increase in its contribution appears peculiar at first glance. It is not traditionally considered a Nordic country, nor does it participate in any Nordic or Nordic-Baltic institutional structures or enterprises aside from the NBG, making it an anomaly. Irish foreign policy presents the NBG as a way of associating Ireland with the Nordic countries, which are considered to possess similar norms and values, and as a contribution to international and EU crisis management capabilities.

Ideologically, Ireland shares commonalities with the Nordic countries. Like Sweden and Finland, Ireland is one of ‘Europe’s former neutral states’ with a long history of foreign policy neutrality that it has reformulated in recent years to become more accepting of the use of

¹⁸⁴ Baltic Defence Review, ‘National Security Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania’, p.26.

¹⁸⁵ Juknevičiene, quoted in: Lithuania Tribune, ‘Baltic States keen on stronger security coop with Nordic nations’, < <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/4359/baltic-states-keen-on-stronger-security-coop-with-nordic-nations-20104359/> >.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Karl Engelbrektsson, quoted in: Sveriges Radio, *Nordic Battlegroup* < <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=1637&artikel=2140122> >; Internasjonalt Forum, *Norsk tropp i EUs Battlegroup* < <http://www.internasjonaltforum.no/dok/artikkel894.asp> >; Nordic Battlegroup Force Commander, *NBG Nordic Battlegroup, FCdr NBG 15, Master* < http://www.forsvarsmakten.se/Global/Myndighetswebbplatsen/ENG/NBG15%20-%20eng/14MAR_%20FCdr_MASTER-F.pdf >.

military force.¹⁸⁸ Irish troops have also participated in peacekeeping missions with the Nordic countries, having cooperated both with Finland in Kosovo and Sweden in Liberia. Jan Stefan Andersson, the commander of the NBG in 2011, noted that one advantage of the Irish contribution was Ireland's long tradition of peacekeeping that it shared with Sweden.¹⁸⁹ This is a link that the Irish government has proudly acknowledged in official documents.¹⁹⁰ The Swedish Defence Research Agency suggested that 'the NBG, with two former 'neutrals' with a good reputation in Ireland and with recent experience of co-operation in UN Peace Support Operations, is an attractive partner for Ireland,' linking Irish participation in the NBG to the norms it is thought to share with the other NBG participants.¹⁹¹ The notion that common experiences and foreign policy developments in Ireland and the Nordic countries could impact upon Ireland's decision to participate in the NBG was affirmed by former Irish Defence Minister Willie O'Dea, who described Ireland and the Nordic countries as 'like-minded nations' in a speech about the NBG in 2007.¹⁹² The potential for Northern Ireland to 'go Nordic' is something that has also been discussed by economists, who have expressed a desire to shape Ireland's economy into one resembling the Nordic model.¹⁹³ Irish cooperation with the Nordics may be a form of brand association that allows the country to associate itself with values and ideas it perhaps considers important for its own nation-branding efforts.

Irish foreign policy emphasises that the NBG is primarily a contribution to the development of the CSDP and a means of strengthening international crisis management capabilities. Irish politicians and foreign policy documents express a strong commitment to the CSDP and the need to advance a common European interest within an international context. The 2007 White Paper on Defence described the NBG as demonstrating 'the capacity and interoperability [of

¹⁸⁸ Stanley R. Sloan, 'NATO Enlargement and the Former European Neutrals', *CRS Report for Congress*, 1997 < <http://www.fas.org/man/crs2.htm> >, accessed 22 December 2013.

¹⁸⁹ Jan Stefan Andersson, quoted in: Irish Digest, 'Irish troops to join EU battle group in Sweden', *Irish Digest*, 8 October 2010 < <http://www.irishdigest.com/irish-troops-to-join-eu-battle-group-in-sweden/> >, accessed 8 December 2013.

¹⁹⁰ Department of the Taoiseach, *Ireland and the European Union: Identifying Priorities and Pursuing Goals*, Fourth Edition, 2006 < http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Publications/Publications_Archive/Publications_2006/Ireland_and_the_European_Union_4th_Edition.pdf >, accessed 28 April 2014, pp.1-69; Department of Defence and Defence Forces, *Strategy Statement 2011-2014*, 2012 < <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=157106> >, accessed 3 May 2014, pp.1-34.

¹⁹¹ Swedish Defence Research Agency, 'EU-Battlegroups', p.63.

¹⁹² Department of Defence, *Approval of Memoranda of Understanding regarding Ireland's Participation in the Nordic Battlegroup: Minister O'Dea's Speech to Dáil Éireann*, 5 April 2007 < <http://www.defence.ie/WebSite.nsf/Speech+ID/0CA2EF188F98ECC280572C100422BB4?OpenDocument> >, accessed 21 December 2013.

¹⁹³ Esmond Birnie, 'Is Northern Ireland ready to embrace the Nordics?', *agendaNI*, 4 April 2014 < <http://www.agendani.com/is-northern-ireland-ready-to-embrace-the-nordics/> >, accessed 10 September 2014.

Ireland] to participate to good effect in more complex and robust UN peace support operations including those led by regional military frameworks.’¹⁹⁴ This was linked to Ireland’s effective and proactive engagement with the EU and the ESDP, which have been expressed elsewhere as being of foremost importance to Irish foreign policy.¹⁹⁵ Ireland’s *Security Strategy 2011-2014* is more specific in its references to Irish participation in the NBG, presenting it as an example of Irish support of international peacekeeping operations, international peace and security, and as a means of contributing to the EU’s Headline Goal and CSDP framework.¹⁹⁶ Former Defence Minister Alan Shatter stressed the importance of European defence in the keynote speech to an EDA conference in 2013, and while not directly referencing the NBG, he referred to Ireland’s ongoing support for crisis management and international Peace Support Operations within the European context.¹⁹⁷ The 2013 Irish EU Presidency made an official statement on the valuable contribution that the NBG specifically was making to the EU’s CSDP.¹⁹⁸

From these documents and statements we can deduce that the NBG serves two purposes from an Irish foreign policy perspective. Firstly, it is considered a means of positioning Ireland closer to ‘like-minded countries’ that share its foreign policy priorities and normative outlook. Secondly, the NBG allows Ireland to continue to demonstrate its commitment to European and international crisis management operations.

Conclusions

What does a comparison of the NBG’s representation in the foreign policies of its 2015 participants reveal about the significance of the group in the regional context? First, differences in the level of importance attributed to the NBG can be discerned. Sweden’s practical contribution to the NBG, the support of Swedish politicians for the battle group concept, and the many references to the battle groups in Swedish foreign policy documents indicates that the

¹⁹⁴ Department of Defence, *The White Paper on Defence: Review of Implementation*, February 2007 < <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=172865> >, accessed 3 May 2014, p.36.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p.11; Department of the Taoiseach, *Ireland and the European Union* < http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Publications/Publications_Archive/Publications_2006/Ireland_and_the_European_Union_4th_Edition.pdf >, p.66.

¹⁹⁶ Department of Defence and Defence Forces, *Strategy Statement 2011-2014* < <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=157106> >, p.14, 21, Appendix 2.

¹⁹⁷ Alan Shatter, *European Defence Matters*, Annual Conference by the European Defence Agency, Brussels, 21 March 2013 < <https://www.eda.europa.eu/info-hub/news/2013/03/22/european-defence-matters-speech-by-minister-shatter> >, accessed 28 April 2014.

¹⁹⁸ Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Statement by the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU* < <http://www.osce.org/fsc/102516> >.

NBG holds greater importance for Sweden than for its other participants. Latvia is the least enthusiastic participant, judging by the absence of references to the entity in its foreign policy, although interestingly its contribution is considerably larger than that of many other participants who express a higher level of rhetorical support for the NBG.

There are other variations in the roles that its participants attribute to the NBG. In particular, four distinct purposes for the NBG are articulated. Swedish, Norwegian and Irish foreign policy represent the NBG as a means of strengthening the EU's CSDP, or at least to a greater extent than the NBG's other participants. This is consistent with how the battle groups were conceived in the Headline Goal. Finland, Norway and the Baltic States portray the NBG as a valuable contribution to the mutually reinforcing crisis management capabilities of the EU and NATO, as expounded by the Berlin Plus arrangements. The NBG is constructed by its Nordic and Baltic participants as a fosterer of Nordic and Nordic-Baltic cooperation respectively. Obviously these are discursive constructions designed with an audience and political purpose in mind. Just as the EU's Headline Goal does not provide a complete or accurate picture of what the NBG's function is, neither should the representations of the NBG in national foreign policy be taken as comprehensive and conclusive. Yet they are useful in providing a starting point for discerning the significance of the NBG in the regional context, which the thesis will now address.

4. Regional Significance of the Nordic Battle Group

Taking into consideration its representation in EU and national foreign policy, this chapter proposes four roles for the NBG in the regional context. First, it enables its participants to convey commitment on a symbolic level to rapid response and crisis management norms and loyalty to the CSDP and Berlin Plus. Second, the NBG strengthens Nordic and Nordic-Baltic military cooperation within the European context. Third, the group represents a repackaged Nordic brand. Lastly, it reflects the spatial reconceptualisation of Norden. These roles construct the NBG as a passive, non-military entity imbued with political and ideational significance.

Conveys symbolic commitment to norms and institutional frameworks

The established consensus is that the NBG plays no active military role but remains an underutilised entity in preparation for deployment that never eventuates. This is not something acknowledged in either EU or national foreign policy, as this would involve admitting that the NBG was a complete failure. Why do the EU and the political elite of the NBG's participants position the NBG as a valuable contribution to the development of EU and international rapid response capabilities when this is plainly not the case? A feasible explanation is that the NBG, unlike UN peacekeeping operations, is a more specific show of support for the CSDP and Berlin Plus and the norm of rapid response these frameworks espouse rather than to international crisis management more broadly. Financial considerations also come into play.

Depiction of the NBG in national foreign policy has opened a new arena of semantic manoeuvre. Finland and Norway have viewed their involvement in the NBG as an emblematic gesture from the outset, with expressions of support for the Headline Goal and Berlin Plus in Finnish and Norwegian foreign policy incompatible with the numbers they are supplying (their combined contributions to the NBG for the 2015 standby period equal the personnel supplied by Latvia, a country that barely refers to the NBG in its foreign policy).¹⁹⁹ The contributions of Ireland and the Baltics to the NBG are no more concrete – the NBG has yet to deploy, regardless of the extent of verbal support it receives. Framework Nation Sweden should be the most materially committed to the battle group concept but, to the present, its' involvement has also been mainly symbolic. Expressions of the NBG making a 'tangible' commitment and 'actively' contributing towards EU and international crisis management in Swedish foreign policy documents are undermined by the failure of Sweden

¹⁹⁹ See footnote 3 for the numerical contributions of the NBG's 2015 participants.

as Framework Nation to mobilise the battle group in response to international crises.²⁰⁰ Emphasis by Swedish politicians on improving battle group capabilities also appears incongruous when all EU Battle Groups remain inoperative. If the NBG was experiencing any material success then it would surely be unnecessary to continue underscoring the importance of developing material capabilities that should already exist. By supporting battle group reform, Swedish politicians and diplomats draw attention to the NBG as a white elephant that of only symbolic relevance.²⁰¹

Arguably, the Nordics and Ireland do not need the NBG to convey symbolic support for international crisis management when they have elsewhere demonstrated commitment in a physical sense. Sweden's involvement in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations have already cemented it as a key player in crisis management. Sweden's Ministry of Defence estimates that Sweden alone has participated in 120 international operations in 60 countries since 1956.²⁰² Along with its fellow Nordics, Sweden has played an intrinsic role in the adoption and institutionalisation of conflict prevention as an international norm.²⁰³ Finland and Norway have also established themselves as proactive participants in international crisis management, heavily involved in operations under the auspices of the UN, NATO and the EU.²⁰⁴ Ireland is an acknowledged global leader in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.²⁰⁵ Why do these countries continue to be involved in a symbolic enterprise when they have shown their support in more concrete ways? They are using the NBG to show specific support for the EU and CSDP and in particular their support for the military dimension of EU crisis management. The Nordics and Ireland were, until relatively recently, associated with neutrality and military non-

²⁰⁰ Swedish Ministry of Defence, *Our Future Defence* < <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/03/21/19/224a4b3c.pdf> >, p.8; Government Offices of Sweden, *National strategy* < <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/10/80/95/73e64223.pdf> >, p.10.

²⁰¹ Tolgfors, *Speech by Sten Tolgfors* < <http://www.government.se/sb/d/8738/a/92078> >; Bildt, *Speech by Mr Carl Bildt* < <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/7417/a/131181> >; Prime Minister's Office Sweden, *Report on the Swedish Presidency to the European Union* < <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/14/54/51/e328c5fe.pdf> >, pp.1-54.

²⁰² Försvarmakten, *Completed Missions* < <http://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/about/our-mission-in-sweden-and-abroad/completed-operations/> >.

²⁰³ Björkdahl, 'Norm Advocacy', pp.135-154.

²⁰⁴ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *Civilian Crisis Management* < <http://forin.finland.fi/Public/default.aspx?nodeid=34632&contentlan=2&culture=en-US> >, accessed 10 September 2014; Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *Finland's participation in NATO-led crisis management operations* < <http://www.um.fi/public/default.aspx?nodeid=32299&contentlan=2&culture=en-US> >; Regjeringen, *International Operations* < <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/fd/Selected-topics/international-operations.html?id=1108> >, accessed 5 September 2014.

²⁰⁵ United Nations, *Secretary-General's address to the National Forum on Europe*, Dublin, 14 October 2004 < <http://www.un.org/sg/statements/?nid=1131> >, accessed 10 September 2014.

involvement.²⁰⁶ The NBG is a way of showing that they support the development of the EU as a global military actor in addition to its civilian dimension.

Yet the EU possesses other military crisis management forces that would allow these states to make a more tangible contribution to the CSDP and Berlin Plus, for example the EUFOR Althea operation in Bosnia and Hercegovina.²⁰⁷ It is therefore possible that financial considerations also play a role in explaining involvement in the NBG and its role as a symbolic transmitter of commitment, as Jacoby and Jones have suggested.²⁰⁸ Many members of the NBG have been made redundant due to the unanticipated high cost of the enterprise.²⁰⁹ If the cost of training the NBG is too expensive to maintain then this speaks volumes about the ability of its participants, particularly Sweden as Framework Nation, to fund overseas deployment. Sweden's overall budget allocation for the training and standby of its defence forces is far greater than its budget allocation for international operations.²¹⁰ In addition, Ireland's defence budget for 2014 is 24% less than the allocation for 2008.²¹¹ Norway's defence budget for 2014 may constitute the largest per capita defence budget of all European NATO allies but this is not being used to support the NBG.²¹² Judging by these statistics, it seems unlikely that the battle group will be capable of performing a military role unless its participants, and Sweden especially, increase their defence expenditure and allocation towards international operations. By virtue of its inaction, the NBG provides its participants with the opportunity to make a contribution to institutional frameworks without sending their troops overseas; something of a cheaper and more convenient alternative to their involvement in other EU military crisis management operations. The NBG will remain merely a symbolic enterprise until the financial possibility of deployment exists.

²⁰⁶ Beyer and Hofmann, 'Varieties of Neutrality', pp.285-311.

²⁰⁷ European Union External Action, *EU Military Operation in Bosnia and Hercegovina Operation EUFOR ALTHEA*, April 2014 < http://www.eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/althea-bih/pdf/factsheet_eufor_althea_en.pdf >, accessed 1 August 2014.

²⁰⁸ Jacoby and Jones, 'The EU Battlegroups in Sweden and the Czech Republic', pp.315-338.

²⁰⁹ Pär Düsing, 'Stridsgruppen blev för dyr' [The battlegroup became too expensive], *Göteborgs-Posten*, 30 October 2010 < <http://www.gp.se/ekonomi/1.480617-stridsgruppen-blev-for-dyr> >, accessed 27 September 2014.

²¹⁰ The planned budget allocation for training and standby of Swedish defence forces for 2014 is SEK 23.1 billion, while the budget allocation for international missions is a comparatively meagre SEK 1.8 billion. Source: Försvarsmakten, *Budget Allocation* < <http://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/about/finances/budget-allocation/> >, accessed 6 September 2014.

²¹¹ Merrion Street, *Statement by the Minister for Defence, Mr. Alan Shatter, T.D., on Defence Budget 2014*, 15 October 2013 < <http://www.merrionstreet.ie/index.php/2013/10/statement-by-the-minister-for-defence-mr-alan-shatter-t-d-on-defence-budget-2014/?cat=12> >, accessed 6 September 2014.

²¹² *The Norwegian Defence Budget for 2014. Report no.1 from The Stoltenberg II Government: National Budget 2014*, 14 October 2014 < <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/archive/Stoltenbergs-2nd-Government/Ministry-of-Defence/Nyheter-og-pressemeldinger/Nyheter/2013/the-norwegian-defence-budget-for-2014.html?id=742373> >, accessed 6 October 2014.

All three Baltic States see more usefulness in NATO's crisis management capabilities than in the EU's and therefore their participation in the NBG is just as much a discursive gesture of support as it is for the Nordics and Ireland. But it is a necessary gesture, with the NBG enabling the Baltics to connect themselves more closely with the EU. As relatively new EU members when the battle group concept came about, the need to express support for the norms espoused by the ESDP framework was necessary to demonstrate their commitment to EU structures and enhance their credibility as member states within the institution.²¹³ Jakniunaite has argued that the Baltics are not yet fully 'European' and the foreign policies of Latvia and Lithuania in particular are intended to bring them closer to Europe.²¹⁴ Their involvement in the NBG for 2015 symbolises this foreign policy goal by showing Baltic support for the CSDP and Berlin Plus that they perceive as necessary for closer integration with the EU.

In serving a symbolic purpose for its participants, the NBG undoubtedly remains a white elephant. Yet the role of the NBG in transmitting the view that its participants are loyal contributors to institutional frameworks and espousers of norms that are valued by the European and international community should not be ignored. Importantly, the NBG is an economical and convenient means of support, as its participants can convey their commitment to rapid response and loyalty to the CSDP and Berlin Plus without the costs of sending their troops overseas. Notwithstanding this, the role that the NBG plays in conveying commitment to norms and to institutional frameworks cannot solely explain the continued existence and enlargement of the NBG. The NBG's role in fostering regional cooperation in the areas of defence and security sheds more light on the reasons for Nordic and Baltic participation in the enterprise.

Cultivates regional military cooperation

Regardless of whether or not the NBG deploys, the pooling of resources and joint training exercises involved in preparation for each standby period help to facilitate regional cooperation in military activities as part of the CSDP. Deeper analysis of the foreign policies of the Nordic countries reveals that they do not consider the NBG a primary forum for Nordic military activities. Nevertheless, the NBG still cultivates cooperation among the Nordics who contribute to the CSDP. The battle group is more valuable for its role in strengthening military cooperation between the Nordic and Baltic countries.

²¹³ European Union Institute for Security Studies, *The Baltics: from nation states to member states* < <http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/occ62.pdf> >.

²¹⁴ Dovilė Jakniunaite, 'Neighbourhood Politics of Baltic States: Between the EU and Russia', in Eiki Berg and Piret Ehin, eds., *Identity and Foreign Policy: Baltic-Russian Relations and European Integration* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 117–131.

Chapter 2 established that the NBG was the product of a variety of political developments, one of which was the increasing cooperation among the Nordic countries in military activities from the 1990s. What is interesting about the NBG is that only three of the conventionally defined Nordic countries participate. The self-exclusion of both Iceland and Denmark impacts upon the extent to which the NBG can serve as a fosterer of Nordic military cooperation. The NBG may be Nordic by name but it nevertheless serves the security objectives of the EU and therefore its role in sustaining Nordic military cooperation is limited to those countries that are integrated with the CSDP. Thus the group is a subsidiary means of developing Nordic defence and security coordination under the EU's direction.

Denmark and Iceland are not averse to participating in international crisis management operations. Iceland has contributed with other Nordic countries towards peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan and has developed its own Icelandic Crisis Response Unit, which has acted in close cooperation with NATO.²¹⁵ Its non-EU member status does not enable Iceland to participate in the CSDP, although this has evidently not been an obstacle for its fellow Nordic non-EU member state Norway. Denmark is openly supportive of military operations, actively participating in UN and NATO operations and supporting the US in its 2003 invasion of Iraq. Prior to the battle groups becoming operational, Anders Fogh Rasmussen publicly expressed his desire to enable Danish participation in EU military operations during his position as Prime Minister of Denmark.²¹⁶ Yet Denmark's 'no' vote at the Maastricht referendum in June 1992 and the opt-out clause this produced remains in place, with the consequence that Denmark cannot participate in the 'elaboration and the implementation of decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications.'²¹⁷ Perhaps the Baltics, as the 'new Nordics' are replacing Denmark and Ireland in the NBG.

These Nordics may not be willing to develop Nordic military cooperation under an EU umbrella but are more agreeable to developing such cooperation outside EU frameworks. The foreign policies of Iceland and Denmark may exclude them from participating in the NBG but both are

²¹⁵ Alyson J.K. Bailes and Baldur Thorhallsson, 'Iceland and the European Defence and Security Policy' in Bailes, Herolf and Sundelius, eds., *The Nordic Countries and the European Security and Defence Policy*, p.335, 337.

²¹⁶ Statsministeriet, *Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen's speech on the presentation of the "European of the Year" award from The Danish European Movement*, 3 May 2003 < http://www.stm.dk/p_11263.html >, accessed 1 April 2014.

²¹⁷ Danish Ministry of Defence, *EU – The Danish Defence Opt-Out* < <http://www.fmn.dk/eng/allabout/Pages/TheDanishDefenceOpt-Out.aspx> >, accessed 29 December 2013.

members of NORDEFECO, the Nordic-specific cooperative framework for defence. The NBG's Nordic participants also prioritise NORDEFECO over the NBG. Finnish Foreign Affairs Minister has criticised the battle group concept and suggested that NORDEFECO epitomises Nordic regional cooperation.²¹⁸ Norway's former Defence Minister stressed the pre-eminence of NORDEFECO as the foremost means of Nordic military cooperation without mentioning the NBG at all.²¹⁹ There has also been talk of Sweden proposing the establishment of a Nordic Battalion Force (NBF) to operate separately to the NBG; a force that, unlike the NBG, would be 'Nordic-specific.'²²⁰ In addition to the non-participation of Denmark and Iceland from the NBG, the prioritising of NORDEFECO undermines the representation of the NBG as a fosterer of Nordic military cooperation in the foreign policies of Sweden, Finland and Norway. This does not mean that the NBG does not play such a role. Rather, it indicates that it does so under the umbrella of the EU and the CSDP and therefore is developing interactions among the three Nordic countries who are able to actively participate in EU military operations. Nordic military cooperation is evidently taking place both within and outside the CSDP, with the NBG an example and manifestation of the latter.

The NBG is also the closest to a macro-regional framework for Nordic-Baltic military cooperation within the EU context at the present. Its role in developing regional military cooperation between the Nordic and Baltic countries again reveals that such cooperation takes place both within and outside EU frameworks. The emergence of Nordic-Baltic military cooperative frameworks was the result of the institutionalisation of political cooperation. This includes the Nordic-Baltic 6 (NB6), an informal political structure consisting of the EU member states of Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, along with the Nordic-Baltic 8 (NB8) that also incorporates non-EU member states Iceland and Norway and has initiated cooperation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in several important areas.²²¹

²¹⁸ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *Minister Tuomioja's speech on EU Common Security and Defence Policy* < <http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=298227> >.

²¹⁹ Ingebrigtsen, *Nordic Defence Cooperation – A mini-NATO to the North?* < <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/archive/Stoltenbergs-2nd-Government/Ministry-of-Defence/taler-og-artikler/2011/nordic-defence-cooperation--a-mini-nato-.html?id=648561> >.

²²⁰ O'Dwyer, 'Sweden Proposes Nordic Battalion Force Plan' < <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130725/DEFREG01/307250013/Sweden-Proposes-Nordic-Battalion-Force-Plan> >.

²²¹ Rüse, 'Nordic-Baltic Interaction in European Union Negotiations', p.236; Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Nordic-Baltic Co-operation* < <http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/4097> >, accessed 4 January 2014; Nordiska ministerrådet, *Riktlinjer för Nordiska ministerrådets samarbete med Estland, Lettland och Litauen 2009-2013* [Guidelines for the Nordic Council of Ministers' cooperation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania 2009-2013] < <http://www.norden.org/nordiska-ministerradet/samarbetsministrarna-mr-sam/estland-lettland-och-litauen/riktlinjer-foer-nordiska-ministerradets-samarbete-med-estland-lettland-och-litauen-2009-2013> >, accessed 1 January 2014.

NORDEFECO-Baltic meetings at Military Coordination Committee (MCC) level initiated defence cooperation between NORDEFECO and the Baltics.²²² The key NB8 document, the 2010 *Wise Men Report*, set out thirty-eight recommendations for deepening cooperation between the Nordic and Baltic countries in a number of key issue areas.²²³ As part of its recommendations for the development of Nordic-Baltic defence cooperation, the Report encouraged all NB8 countries to contribute to the NBG.²²⁴ From a regional institutional perspective then, the NBG is recognised as being valuable to the improvement of Nordic-Baltic cooperation. As the NBG is a EU project, this is evidently taking place within the larger EU context. Nevertheless, the pooling of resources and joint training exercises will undoubtedly foster further developments and present opportunities for the strengthening of Nordic-Baltic military cooperation in the future, and allow for integration of defence and security structures. The NBG provides the former Soviet states with the opportunity to participate in training exercises with highly experienced armed forces from the Nordic countries and Ireland, which have extensive experience in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. This continues their tradition of learning from and being supported by the Nordics during the 1990s, something that ‘allowed the[ir] major foreign and security policy goals to be achieved.’²²⁵

The NBG is therefore playing a role in cultivating Nordic and Nordic-Baltic cooperation within EU frameworks. This does not explain the participation of Ireland, a country that identifies neither as Nordic nor Baltic, nor does it fully encapsulate the reasons for Estonia’s involvement, which are linked strongly to its identification with Norden. I will now examine two manifestations of the ideational role of the NBG in the regional context that can add to an understanding of its overall significance.

Represents a repackaged Nordic brand

Analysis of Irish and Estonian foreign policy has revealed that Ireland’s participation in the NBG is closely linked to Ireland’s wish to directly associate itself with countries it views as espousing similar norms and values and to Estonia’s desire to position itself more closely to Norden. While there are distinct differences in the representations of the NBG by each participant, all participants have expressed linkages to the Nordic countries in their foreign

²²² Nordic Defence Cooperation, *Military Coordination Committee Annual Report 2012*, Danish Chairmanship of the Nordic Military Coordination Committee, 2013 < http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/FD/Temadokumenter/NORDEFECO_Military-coordination-committee-annual-report-2012.pdf >, accessed 29 December 2013, p.2, 4.

²²³ Valdis Birkavs and Søren Gade, *NB8 Wise Men Report*, August 2010 < <http://www.vme.ee/sites/default/files/NB8WiseMenReport.pdf> >, accessed 4 January 2014, pp.1-22.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.11.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1.

policies. The Nordics mentioned the NBG in the context of cooperation with one another and the Baltics and Ireland referenced it in the context of their relationship with the Nordics. From this it can be inferred that the NBG connects both Nordic and non-Nordic countries to Norden. This attempt at brand association, particularly in the case of Ireland and Estonia, is due to the enduring appeal of the Nordic brand. Scholarly consensus is that the Nordic brand is no longer marketable but the present membership of the NBG suggests that the Nordic brand may still be relevant.

There is still a clear interest among the Nordics in marketing their brand to the international community. Finnish Foreign Affairs Minister Tuomioja linked Nordic cooperation to the prestige and reputation of the Nordic brand on an international scale. He stated that ‘the Nordic model is an attractive benchmark and brand also globally. There is interest abroad towards our pragmatic and results-oriented cooperation.’²²⁶ Tuomioja’s statement indicates a preoccupation among the Nordic countries with the marketing of their global image and the role played by regional cooperation in projecting that image to the rest of the world. With their increasing involvement in military enterprises, including the NBG, the Nordics have adapted their brand so that they are able to simultaneously project themselves as responsible global citizens and military actors. Ulriksen has argued that despite donating large amounts of aid to Africa, the Nordic countries actually have no geopolitical interest in the African continent but simply wish to gain influence in international institutions through a process of ‘image building.’²²⁷ The NBG can be interpreted as another example of Nordic image building through association. The NBG’s participants clearly do not possess the interest or financial capacity to deploy the battle group and so their participation may be intended for image building and national brand marketing purposes rather than any ostensive desire to act.

Browning acknowledges that the success of a regional brand depends not only on transmission but on confirmation from the international community.²²⁸ As scholarly consensus is that the Nordic model is now more or less synonymous with a European one, it could be argued that the Nordic brand has disappeared entirely. Indeed, as discussed in the literature review, scholars have argued that the Nordic brand or model as it was conceived during the Cold War is no

²²⁶ Tuomioja, *Speech at the seminar “Nordic Security Cooperation = Smart Defence?”* <<http://www.tuomioja.org/index.php?mainAction=showPage&id=1855&category=4>>.

²²⁷ Ulriksen, ‘Deployments for Development?’, pp.553-568.

²²⁸ Browning, ‘Branding Nordicity’, p.31.

longer marketable or relevant in the current regional or global context.²²⁹ Yet Musiał has recognised that at least several important elements of the brand persist:

...symbols and metaphors that are used to construct identities take time to mature and become operational. It is, therefore, quite natural that many of the more traditional concepts of what are typical Scandinavian or Nordic values have survived. The Nordic brand continues to include labels such as Northern Europe's peace-makers and peace-lovers, norm entrepreneurs, socially progressive peoples and cultural leaders.²³⁰

The participation of the Baltics and Ireland in the NBG points to the continued applicability and currency of the Nordic brand. Their involvement is a means of associating themselves with Norden and reaping the benefits of such connections. Even if the Nordic brand is fading, the Nordic countries are still considered by other NBG participants to possess norms and ideals that are to be commended and emulated by other nations and the international community. EUISS acknowledged that after achieving their independence, association with the Nordic countries was a goal of the Baltics' foreign policies: 'for Baltic elites, association with wealthy and peaceful Northern Europe had clear merits.'²³¹ This goal persists in the model that the Nordics are perceived to provide for the Baltics to emulate.²³² Irish politicians have drawn positive comparisons with elements of the Nordic brand that involve peacekeeping and neutrality, as well as expressed a desire to emulate the Nordics in the economic and public sector.²³³ The NBG is therefore a means for these countries to associate themselves with the Nordic brand and perhaps even to co-opt elements of it for themselves.

The Nordics are clearly interested in ensuring that the Nordic brand has not yet run its course, with the Nordic Council of Ministers sponsoring a conference run by the Baltic Development Forum in September 2014 that focused on the cultural components of the Nordic brand as well

²²⁹ Ibid., pp.27-50; DeLong, 'Danish Military Involvement in the Invasion of Iraq', pp.267-280; Jukarainen, 'Norden is Dead', pp.355-382; Mouritzen, 'The Nordic Model as a Foreign Policy Instrument', pp.9-21; Laatikainen, 'Norden's Eclipse', pp.409-441; Götz, 'Norden', pp.323-341; Christensen, 'Not only, but also Nordic' in Bailes, Herolf and Sundelius, *The Nordic Countries and the European Security and Defence Policy*, pp.150-166.

²³⁰ Musiał, 'Reconceptualising Nordic Identities after 1989' in Hurd, *Bordering the Baltic*, p.118.

²³¹ European Union Institute for Security Studies, *The Baltics: from nation states to member states* < <http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/occ62.pdf> >, p.25.

²³² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, *The National Security Concept* < <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/security/basic/4534/> >.

²³³ Department of Defence, *Approval of Memoranda of Understanding regarding Ireland's Participation in the Nordic Battlegroup* < <http://www.defence.ie/WebSite.nsf/Speech+ID/0CA2EF188F98ECC280572C100422BB4?OpenDocument> >; Margaret Canning, 'Reform of the public sector tops agenda for Simon Hamilton', *Belfast Telegraph*, 2 August 2013 < <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/news/reform-of-the-public-sector-tops-agenda-for-simon-hamilton-29466464.html> >, accessed 6 September 2014.

as on the ‘branding of the Baltic Sea region.’²³⁴ Such events highlight renewed interest in both the Nordic brand’s traditional components along with its more recent acquisitions and points to another role for the NBG in the regional context.

Reflects Norden’s spatial reconceptualisation

Cooperation as part of the NBG is symptomatic of changes to the geographical conceptualisation of Norden, representing both the incorporation of Norden within the larger European space as well as the expansion of the Nordic regional project to include the Baltics. The NBG manifests the region-building efforts of the EU to incorporate the Baltic States into a regional project in Northern Europe. It also reflects the Nordics’ desire to expand their regional project while maintaining the Nordic focus. This chapter argues that this does not signify the disappearance or irrelevance of Norden but rather a reimagination of its boundaries and the countries the region includes and excludes. The NBG is not a region-building project in itself but it exemplifies the changes and processes of spatial construction that are being championed both by the EU and the Nordics, signifying two competing region-building projects.

The articulation of a new regional space in Northern Europe was initiated by the EU after the accession of the Baltics in 2004. Since then, the EU has become more engaged in Northern Europe as a region, viewing it as ‘an experimental space for regional security governance.’²³⁵ Rather than viewing the regionalisation of Northern Europe as a threat as it did in the past, the EU now recognises the opportunities presented by the existence of macro-regions and supporting macro-regional strategies such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), which now form a part of the goals of EU security policy.²³⁶ By defining this region, the EU is adopting the role of region-builder and encouraging a process whereby other actors also recognise it as a distinctive geographical space. The EUSBSR is more encompassing than the Nordic project, including Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania,

²³⁴ Baltic Development Forum, *Programme and Registration: Cool North – Cultural Diplomacy in the Nordics*, Copenhagen, 8-9 September 2014 < <http://www.bdforum.org/cool-north-cultural-diplomacy-nordics/> >, accessed 6 October 2014.

²³⁵ Christopher S. Browning, ‘Experimenting in the northern laboratory: the emergence of an EU approach to security governance in the north and its broader significance’, *European Security*, 19:3 (2010), pp.395-411.

²³⁶ EUSBSR, *What is the EUSBSR* < <http://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/about> >, accessed 18 September 2014; European Commission, *Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)*, Brussels, 22 June 2011 < http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperate/baltic/pdf/13092011_sec1071_2011.doc >, accessed 2 January 2014, pp.1-322; European Commission, *Report from the European Commission: the Implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region*, Brussels, 2010 < http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperate/baltic/pdf/events/tallinn/annual_report_041010.doc >, accessed 2 January 2014, pp.1-6.

Poland and Germany. The European Commission's participation in the Council for Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the EU's Northern Dimension (ND) further demonstrate the EU's commitment to developing macro-regional institutions and identity. The NBG, as an EU military project now involving the Baltics and three Nordic countries, is contributing to the EU's construction of a macro-region north of Europe.

However the NBG is also representative of a competing regional strategy that is being championed by the Nordics. Various Nordic-Baltic institutions exist outside of an EU framework with the intention to develop regional cooperation between the Nordic and Baltic countries, without other larger states and without the 'Baltic Sea' label. The NBG is a success for this region-building enterprise due to the fact that it continues to bear the Nordic name. The very fact that the NBG was not named 'The Baltic Sea Battle Group' in spite of its inclusion of Estonia from the beginning and the inclusion of all three Baltic States for 2015 undermines the EU's macro-regional strategy and instead supports Nordic region-building efforts. The reason for the Nordic label can perhaps be explained by examining a report released by the Swedish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2013. It dealt with the idea of the Nordic model and its continuing relevance in the present context, the challenges it faced and recommendations to enhance and develop Norden's presence in the world.²³⁷ It particularly emphasised that 'the Nordic name is an asset which we will continue to protect and develop.'²³⁸ This points to the notion that while the Nordics are growing more accustomed to expanding the territorial expanse of their region, they wish it to retain its Nordic characteristics. The foreign policy statements and documents of Nordic institutions certainly retain a strong rhetorical emphasis on Norden over a 'Baltic Sea Region.'²³⁹ The NBG could thus be interpreted as a conscious choice on the part of its Nordic participants to ensure that Norden is not subsumed beneath a larger macro-region driven by the EU; a means of circumventing the EU's macro-region building strategies and prioritising their own. This tension points to the relationship

²³⁷ Nordiska ministerrådet, *Den nordiska modellen i en ny tid: Program för Sveriges ordförandeskap i Nordiska ministerrådet 2013* [The Nordic model in a new time: Program for Sweden's Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers 2013], Copenhagen, 2012 < <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/20/26/74/fb30a283.pdf> >, pp.1-43.

²³⁸ Original text in Swedish: 'Det nordiska namnet är en tillgång som vi fortsatt ska värna om och utveckla.' Ibid., p.15.

²³⁹ Nordic Defence Cooperation, *Military Coordination Committee Annual Report 2012* < http://www.regeringen.no/upload/FD/Temadokumenter/NORDEFECO_Military-coordination-committee-annual-report-2012.pdf >, p.2; Nordiska ministerrådet, *Riktlinjer för Nordiska ministerrådets samarbete med Estland, Lettland och Litauen 2009-2013* < <http://www.norden.org/nordiska-ministerraadet/samarbetsministrarna-mr-sam/estland-lettland-och-litauen/riktlinjer-foer-nordiska-ministerraadets-samarbete-med-estland-lettland-och-litauen-2009-2013> >; Nordiska ministerrådet, *Den nordiska modellen i en ny tid* < <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/20/26/74/fb30a283.pdf> >, p.41; Regeringskansliet, *Svenskt samordningsansvar för nordiskt-baltiskt samarbete 2013* [Swedish coordination responsibility for Nordic-Baltic cooperation 2013] < <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/2712/a/160184> >, accessed 1 January 2014.

between Norden and Europe that has been the subject of scholarly analysis, much of which has asserted that Europe is now more politically relevant than Norden.²⁴⁰ But the NBG is simultaneously a European and a Nordic project, with the two competing with one another rather than Norden being subsumed beneath European region-building processes.

The integration of the Baltics within Norden is a genuine prospect. The possibility of incorporating the Baltics within a Nordic political union and of altering the boundaries delineating Norden and Eastern Europe has been raised in Swedish media.²⁴¹ The Foreign Ministry of Finland has acknowledged that the possibility for an amalgamation of the two regions in the future may be on the cards.²⁴² The invitation extended to the Defence Forces of the Baltic States to join NORDEFCO was also a significant step in the integration of the two regions.²⁴³ The participation of all three Baltic States in the NBG does not appear so extraordinary when it is contextualised within such a context. It appears to be a logical progression that reflects Baltic participation in a number of other regional structures and in particular the beginning of their inclusion within Nordic military frameworks, ultimately representing the reconstruction of the Nordic region into one possessing Baltic characteristics.

The NBG is a spatial representation of an expanding and changing Nordic region that is caught between competing region-building strategies. The EU is attempting to discursively create a new macro-region based around the Baltic Sea while the Nordics are also expanding their regional project to incorporate their Baltic neighbours. Yet the replacement of Norden by a more politically relevant Baltic region that Wæver famously articulated in the early 1990s has not yet fully occurred, as the NBG supports the idea that Norden and the Nordic name have not completely disappeared.

²⁴⁰ Wæver, 'Nordic Nostalgia', pp.77-102; Mouritzen, 'The Nordic Model as a Foreign Policy Instrument', pp.9-21; Götz, 'Norden', pp.323-341; Christensen, 'Not only, but also Nordic' in Bailes, Herolf and Sundelius, *The Nordic Countries and the European Security and Defence Policy*, pp.150-166.

²⁴¹ Per Högselius, 'Estland längtar så in i Norden' [Estonia yearns to be in Norden], *SvD Kultur*, 20 November 2003 < http://www.svd.se/kultur/understreckt/estland-langtar-sa-in-i-norden_121038.svd >, accessed 4 November 2013; Björn Fjaestad, 'Starkt stöd för enat Norden' [Strong support for unified Norden], *Uppsala Nya Tidning*, 25 July 2011 < <http://www.unt.se/inc/print/starkt-stod-for-enat-norden-1407030-default.aspx> >, accessed 4 November 2013; Pål Ruin, 'Estland kan bli vår nya nordiska granne' [Estonia can become our newest Nordic neighbour], *Metro*, 4 September 2012 < <http://www.metro.se/nyheter/estland-kan-bli-var-nya-nordiska-granne/EVHlid%215qALPj5AcrA6/> >, accessed 4 November 2013.

²⁴² Foreign Ministry of Finland, *Nordiskt-baltiskt samarbete* [Nordic-Baltic cooperation] < <http://forin.finland.fi/Public/default.aspx?nodeid=43357&contentlan=3&culture=sv-FI> >, accessed 1 January 2014.

²⁴³ Estonian Defence Forces, *General Göransson: Nordic Battle Group to incorporate all Nordic and Baltic countries for the first time*, 27 January 2014 < <http://www.mil.ee/en/news/8039/general-g%C3%B6ranson:-nordic-battle-group-to-incorporate-all-nordic-and-the-baltic-countries-for-the-first-time> >, accessed 5 August 2014.

Examining the roles that the NBG plays in the regional context has revealed that its significance is ultimately political and ideational rather than material. Its failure to deploy renders it incapable of performing a satisfactory function as a rapid reaction force that strengthens EU and transatlantic crisis management capabilities, negating the possibility that it can play a military role. Politically, however, it serves as a symbolic show of loyalty and support for institutional frameworks and the norms they espouse. The NBG also enhances regional military cooperation among the Nordics and between the Nordic and Baltic countries. Looking beyond official and governmental depictions, it has also been determined that the NBG operates on an ideational level in the regional context. Its expanding membership points to the continued relevance of the Nordic brand. The NBG also reveals that the Nordic region is changing, expanding and being challenged but that Norden remains as a space of reference.

Conclusion

The NBG is a multinational group ostensibly created to perform a military function that it is yet to realise. Its inaction, and that of the EU's other battle groups, has dominated scholarly discussions of the concept. The literature focuses on the military role outlined in the EU's 2010 Headline Goal, overlooking the continued existence and membership increase of the NBG in spite of its inaction. It also fails to recognise differences in national foreign policy, instead prioritising the EU perspective. The NBG's ideational significance in the regional context has eluded intensive analysis, which this thesis has sought to rectify through its examination of national foreign policies and consideration of alternative meaning and functions for the battle group.

Although the NBG makes no concrete contribution to the development of crisis management through the CSDP or Berlin Plus arrangements, it enables its participants to portray themselves as supportive of these institutional frameworks and the norms that they espouse. It also fosters regional military cooperation among and between the Nordic and Baltic countries, assisting more general socialisation processes. In addition, the NBG manifests a changing regional identity and a repackaged Nordic brand. It can be argued that the NBG is a marketing tool for the Nordics that they can use to project themselves to the international community as committed to rapid military response, the CSDP and Berlin Plus. The NBG also has a region-building role. The EU and the NBG states are region-builders in the sense that Neumann has defined them – political actors who imagine a particular regional space and disseminate the identity of this space to others. The inclusion of countries from outside the traditional geography of Norden recasts its territorial boundaries and reconceptualises the identity contained within. This is occurring at the behest of both the EU and the Nordic countries, adding to Europe's multilayered region-building projects.

The NBG's role in fostering regional military cooperation is a practical one, yet this thesis also addresses others that are political and ideational. This suggests that it may not be the NBG itself that is most significant but rather what it represents for regional identity construction. The NBG is a passive non-military actor; a promoter of regional cooperation and representation of a dynamic regional space. By illuminating these ideational qualities, this thesis has expanded the scope of the battle group literature. Its constructivist approach contributes to deepening understanding of the multiple and varied roles that the EU's battle groups can have.

The NBG, and the EU's other battle groups, could also potentially function on other levels and in different capacities, especially if more states bandwagon on the enterprise and bring their own foreign policy priorities to the group. This thesis can thus serve as a starting point for further research into the EU's battle groups, all of which are under-utilised. For example, the approach taken here could be used to examine the more recently created Visegrad Battle Group, which also has a regional focus.

This thesis also touched on broader discussions surrounding the idea and identity of Norden and the Baltic Sea Region. While the research in this thesis focused on the relevance of these discussions to the NBG as a specific case study, there is room for more analysis of the Nordic region and its identity. In particular, there are differing positions on whether or not the Nordic brand is still relevant or how it may have changed. Similarly, Wæver's ideas about the reconstruction of Norden as a regional space could be reinterpreted in light of recent institutional developments. Changes in the regional space known as Norden share a symbiotic relationship with the dense institutionalisation that has occurred and is occurring across Europe. The NBG is just one entity that is illuminating these processes.

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