



# Military Cooperation Around Framework Nations

A European Solution to the Problem of Limited Defence Capabilities

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Cover: Alexander Gustavsson/Försvarsmakten. Visby class corvettes HMS Nyköping and HMS Karlstad during Trident Juncture 2018. The two corvettes are assigned to the JEF force pool and will be held at high readiness from 2019 as part of the NRF.

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## Summary

This study examines two European defence collaborations that involve the pooling of military capabilities around a framework nation: the Framework Nations Concept (FNC) led by Germany and the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) led by the United Kingdom. The study assesses the significance of this collaborative format for security and defence in Europe, with a particular focus on Sweden and the Baltic Sea region.

The potential benefits of these collaborations are manifold. They may promote quicker decision making while contributing to fairer burden sharing within NATO. Additionally, they may strengthen regional security ties and improve interoperability between national armed forces. However, the FNC and the JEF also risk contributing to a fragmentation of defence efforts in Europe and wasting scarce resources allocated to national defence. This could ultimately undermine the cohesion of multilateral institutions in Europe.

Given the limited defence capabilities of many European states, including Sweden, the study recommends an overall coordination of collaborations such as the FNC and the JEF in order to avoid fragmentation and a duplication of efforts. Moreover, Sweden needs to prioritise those collaborative formats which are determined to have the greatest outputs and which benefit the national military capability.

Keywords: defence cooperation, framework nation, capability development, Europe, EU, Framework Nations Concept, FNC, Germany, Joint Expeditionary Force, JEF, military capability, NATO, operations, Sweden, United Kingdom, UK.

## Sammanfattning

I denna studie analyseras två europeiska försvarssamarbeten som innebär att länder knyter militära förmågor närmare en ramnation: Framework Nations Concept (FNC) som leds av Tyskland och Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) som leds av Storbritannien. Syftet med studien är att undersöka vilken betydelse dessa samarbetsformat har för säkerhet och försvar i Europa, med ett särskilt fokus på Sverige och Östersjöregionen.

De potentiella vinsterna med dessa samarbeten är flera. De kan möjliggöra snabbare beslutsfattande, samtidigt som de bidrar till en jämnare bördefördelning inom Nato. Därtill kan de stärka de säkerhetspolitiska relationerna i regionen och utveckla samverkansförmågan mellan ländernas försvarsmakter. FNC och JEF kan dock samtidigt leda till en fragmentering av försvarssamarbetet i Europa och till ett slöseri av knappa resurser som behövs för nationellt försvar. Detta skulle i slutändan kunna minska sammanhållningen inom de multilaterala institutionerna i Europa.

Eftersom många europeiska stater, Sverige inkluderat, har begränsade militära förmågor rekommenderas i studien en övergripande samordning av olika försvarssamarbeten i Europa för att undvika fragmentering och duplicering av försvarssatsningar. Därtill behöver Sverige prioritera de försvarssamarbeten som anses leda till störst resultat och som stärker den nationella militära förmågan.

Nyckelord: Europa, EU, Framework Nations Concept, FNC, förmågeutveckling, försvarssamarbete, insatser, Joint Expeditionary Force, JEF, militär förmåga, Nato, operationer, ramnation, Storbritannien, Sverige, Tyskland.

## Preface

FOI's project on Northern European and Transatlantic Security (NOTS) continuously tracks security and defence policy developments in Sweden's neighbourhood, the rest of Europe and the United States for the Swedish Ministry of Defence.

Enhanced defence cooperation between European states and within multilateral organisations, such as the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, constitutes an important area of research for the NOTS project. This study examines two multinational cooperation initiatives launched by two of Europe's major military powers – Germany and the United Kingdom. Recent and related studies have focused on Nordic defence cooperation, the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation, as well as French security policy and military capabilities, including French initiatives on defence cooperation.

The authors would like to extend their gratitude to all the officials and experts who have shared their knowledge and contributed to the study. Special thanks are due to the Swedish military attachés in Berlin and London who provided valuable assistance. The authors would also like to thank Håkon Lunde Saxi, who reviewed the study, for constructive comments and interesting discussions.

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## Acronyms

ACT	Allied Command Transformation (NATO)
BMCC	Baltic Maritime Component Command
C2	Command and Control
CBRN	Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear
CIMIC	Civil-Military Coordination
CJEF	Combined Joint Expeditionary Force
EDA	European Defence Agency
EI2	European Intervention Initiative
FE	Force Elements
FNC	Framework Nations Concept
FOC	Full operational capability
HQ	Headquarters
JEF	Joint Expeditionary Force
HNS	Host Nation Support
MAG	Multinational Air Group
NDPP	NATO Defence Planning Process
NRF	NATO Response Force
ORBAT	Order of Battle
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation (EU)
SDSR	Strategic Defence and Security Review (UK)
VJTF	Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (NATO)

# 1 Introduction

The past decade has seen a rapid increase in bilateral and regional military cooperation between European countries. New structures are being developed in order to address the challenges posed by limited European defence capabilities after a sustained period of declining defence expenditure. At the same time, Europe is facing a number of pressing security challenges and needs to assume greater responsibility for its own security.<sup>1</sup>

One form of cooperation features the setting up of multinational formations under the leadership of a framework nation. This involves a major military power providing the military backbone for a group of smaller participating countries. The inspiration comes from the stabilisation operations conducted in recent years, for example in Afghanistan, as well as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, where the concept has been adopted as a way to meet NATO capability and force requirements.<sup>2</sup>

This study examines two key European military collaborations: the Framework Nations Concept (FNC) led by Germany and the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) led by the United Kingdom. While they differ significantly in terms of purpose and structure, both initiatives involve the pooling of military capabilities around framework nations. Moreover, the Swedish Government has decided to participate in both of these cooperation formats.

There are further examples of similar collaborations in Europe. As part of the same NATO decision to establish the FNC and the JEF, Italy assumed leadership of a group of countries cooperating on stabilisation operations and capacity building in third countries.<sup>3</sup> In 2017, the French President, Emmanuel Macron, proposed the European Intervention Initiative (EI2), which was interpreted as a French reply to the German and British initiatives and to the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) launched by the European Union. In June 2018, nine European states signed a Letter of Intent establishing the EI2.<sup>4</sup> The Italian and French groupings

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of defence cooperation formats see Sundberg, Anna and Åhman, Teresa, *På tu man hand: En studie om bilaterala och regionala försvarssamarbeten i Europa med fokus på det fransk-brittiska samarbetet* [The two of us: Regional and bilateral cooperation in Europe], Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Saxi, Håkon Lunde, British and German initiatives for defense cooperation: the Joint Expeditionary Force and the Framework Nations Concept, *Defense Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2 (2017), pp. 176–181; and Ruiz Palmer, Diego A., The Framework Nations' Concept and NATO: Game-Changer for a New Strategic Era or Missed Opportunity?, *NATO Research Paper*, no. 132 (2016), pp. 15–16.

<sup>3</sup> This group consists of Italy, Albania, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia and Austria. Glatz, Rainer L. and Zapfe, Martin, NATO's Framework Nations Concept, *CSS Analyses in Security Policy*, no. 218 (2017), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> The signatory states are Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Portugal and the UK. Finland joined in November 2018. Letter of intent concerning the

are not included in this study as they have less relevance for the defence of Northern Europe. Furthermore, Sweden is not currently intending to participate in these collaborations.

## 1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to analyse the significance of the German-led FNC and the UK-led JEF for security and defence in Europe. The study examines the potential for these collaborative formats to contribute to military capability, as well as the possible challenges that they may pose at the European and national levels. A special focus of the report is the Swedish perspective: what are the implications for Sweden of participating in these collaborative formats?

The following research questions guided the study:

- How do the FNC and the JEF relate to existing multilateral cooperation in defence, for example within NATO and the EU?
- How is cooperation structured in the FNC and the JEF, and what are the potential benefits and limitations for participating states?
- What are the implications of participation in the FNC and the JEF for Swedish and Baltic Sea security?

## 1.2 European context and concepts

Since the end of the Cold War, Europe has seen a rapid reduction in its large and heavy forces in favour of small, rapidly deployable and lightly armed infantry-based forces. These reductions have created a situation in which European countries do not have sufficient capabilities to match a well-armed peer competitor at the higher end of the scale. However, a deteriorating security situation, linked to Russia's military build-up and increasingly assertive actions in the region, calls for full spectrum capabilities.<sup>5</sup>

Germany and the UK have been no exceptions to this trend. Since 1990, there has been a steady decline in both countries in the resources dedicated to defence. In conjunction with the increasing cost of equipment, this has resulted in smaller

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development of the European Intervention Initiative (EI2), 25 June 2018; Clément, Nicolas, Finland becomes tenth participant country in European Intervention Initiative, *Euractive*, 9 November 2018. For more information on French intentions behind EI2 see Sundberg, Anna, *Frankrikes säkerhetspolitik och militära förmåga: Vad blir kvar till länder i norr?* [French security policy and military capability: What is left to countries in the North?], Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency, forthcoming.

<sup>5</sup> Zandee, Dick, Core Groups: The Way to Real European Defence, *Egmont Security Policy Brief*, no.6 (2017), p. 2; and Anthony, Ian and Weintraub, Carrie, Closing Sweden's Military Security Deficit: the National Debate on NATO Membership, *NATO Research Paper*, no. 144 (2018), p. 1.

forces, but also a relative decline in the quality of their combat units. Both the German and the British Armed Forces have therefore experienced a thinning of parts of their organisation and the creation of hollow structures.<sup>6</sup>

The fact that no European country has the required military capabilities to handle all scenarios on its own has resulted in a wave of new defence collaborations. Another driving force has been an acknowledgement that European countries have different threat perceptions and differing levels of urgency in meeting new security threats.

New defence collaborations have involved a varying number of states (bilateral, trilateral or multilateral) and have had differing objectives, from the procurement and maintenance of equipment, to the development of capabilities and the operational use of forces. While these collaborations have often consisted of small groups of countries that are geographically close with a shared history and culture, successful cooperation has also been established between larger and more diverse groupings based on shared interests. The development of these types of groupings has been interpreted as a trend towards “minilateralism”, “clusters”, “core groups” and “coalitions of the willing” in European defence.<sup>7</sup>

Within NATO, this trend is reflected in the promotion of cooperation in smaller groupings under the leadership of a framework nation. NATO officially adopted the framework nations concept in 2014. Three groupings were launched under the leadership of Germany, the UK and Italy at NATO’s Wales Summit in September that year. The summit declaration defines the new collaborative format in the following way:

It focuses on groups of Allies coming together to work multinationally for the joint development of forces and capabilities required by the Alliance, facilitated by a framework nation. Its implementation will contribute to providing the Alliance with coherent sets of forces and capabilities, particularly in Europe. It will help demonstrate European Allies’ willingness to do more for our common security and also improve the balance of the provision of capabilities between the United States and European Allies as well as among European Allies themselves.<sup>8</sup>

There is, however, some degree of confusion about the terminology regarding both the FNC and the JEF. At times, the term FNC is used as a “catch all” concept to cover all three groupings, while in other instances it is used only to refer to the German-led format. Adding to the confusion, the notion of a “framework nation”

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<sup>6</sup> Saxi, British and German initiatives for defense cooperation: the Joint Expeditionary Force and the Framework Nations Concept, pp. 176–177; and Taylor, Paul, *Jumping over its Shadow: Germany and the Future of European Defence*, Friends of Europe, 2017, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, *International Defence Cooperation: Efficiency, Solidarity, Sovereignty*, Report from the Inquiry on Sweden’s International Defence Cooperation, Fö 2013:B, Stockholm, 2014, p. 47, Drent, Margriet, Zandee, Dick and Casteleijn, Lo, *Defence Cooperation in Clusters: Identifying the Next Steps*, The Hague: Clingendael, 2014, Zandee, Core Groups: The Way to Real European Defence; and Glatz and Zapfe, NATO’s Framework Nations Concept, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> NATO, Wales Summit Declaration, NATO Press Release, 5 September 2014, para. 67.

has previously been employed in various capability development initiatives as well as in crisis management operations. It has a long history in NATO's force structure and is currently used in NATO's enhanced Forward Presence and the enhanced NATO Response Force (including the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, VJTF). For clarity, this study only uses the term FNC, or German-led FNC, to refer to the collaboration format led by Germany.

A similar complication applies to the JEF. Within the UK, the Joint Expeditionary Force (Maritime) refers to the Royal Navy's expeditionary task force. The UK also has a defence partnership with France known as the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF). In this study, the term JEF is only used to refer to the multinational partnership covering nine European states led by the UK.

### 1.3 Swedish security policy context

Sweden's security and defence policy has transformed since the end of the Cold War. Having previously pursued a policy of military non-alignment aiming at neutrality in war, coupled with a strong and autonomous defence capability, Sweden cashed in on the peace dividend and significantly reduced its capability for territorial defence. While Sweden remains militarily non-aligned in the sense that it does not accept any mutual defence obligations with another party, the current security policy focuses on cooperation and solidarity. In 2009, the Swedish Parliament unanimously adopted the national declaration of solidarity, stating that:

Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to take similar action if Sweden is affected. Sweden should therefore be in a position to both give and receive military support.<sup>9</sup>

Today, Sweden is primarily occupied with the deteriorating security situation in the Baltic Sea region. Russia's military modernisation and rearmament, combined with its lowered threshold for the use of military force, are considered fundamental challenges to the European security order. A recent Swedish public investigation concluded that while direct aggression against Sweden is deemed unlikely, Sweden would nonetheless be drawn into any major conflict in the Baltic Sea region at an early stage.<sup>10</sup>

To address this situation, the Swedish red green coalition Government has pursued a two-tiered policy aimed at strengthening the Swedish national defence capability while deepening international defence cooperation. Steps have been taken to increase the operational capability of the armed forces in order to strengthen their ability to resist an attack. International cooperation has focused on the Nordic countries, particularly Finland, as well as the Baltic States, Poland, Germany, the

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<sup>9</sup> Regeringens proposition 2008/09:140, *Ett användbart försvar*, 2009, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Statens offentliga utredningar, *Säkerhet i ny tid - Betänkande av Utredningen om Sveriges försvars- och säkerhetspolitiska samarbeten*, SOU 2016:57, Stockholm, 2016, p. 42.

UK and the USA. Sweden also takes part in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy.<sup>11</sup>

The enhanced international cooperation promoted by the Swedish Government, however, does not extend to NATO membership.<sup>12</sup> The Government has stressed that becoming a NATO member would create additional tensions in Sweden's neighbourhood, put pressure on Finland and risk causing divisions among the Swedish public. However, a number of opposition parties are now in favour of joining NATO, signalling the potential for a future debate on NATO membership. Support for NATO among the Swedish public has fluctuated, and there is no stable majority in favour of seeking membership.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, Sweden's relationship with NATO has deepened since 2016. Sweden is described as having a "privileged" relationship with NATO due to Sweden's participation in every NATO mission with a UN mandate, including in Afghanistan. A Host Nation Support Agreement was signed in May 2016 and Sweden's role as an Enhanced Opportunity Partner was renewed in 2018.<sup>14</sup> Although Swedish involvement in collective defence efforts under Article 5 has so far been politically unacceptable, Sweden participated in the NATO exercise Trident Juncture in November 2018 which employed an Article 5 scenario. Sweden's participation was based on the national declaration of solidarity.<sup>15</sup>

## 1.4 Approach and structure of the report

This study is based on published sources and semi-structured interviews.<sup>16</sup> The literature includes primary material such as agreements and various government publications related to the FNC and the JEF. In addition, a wealth of secondary literature on security developments in Europe and the evolving nature of European defence cooperation provides a valuable context for the study.

Given their relative infancy, the material specifically related to the FNC and the JEF is currently sparse. The study has approached this literature gap by interviewing experts and officials knowledgeable about the collaborations. This was particularly important for examining their potential consequences in terms of military capability. Interviews were held with officials and experts in Stockholm,

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<sup>11</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, Speech by Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist at Berlin Security Conference 2017, Berlin, 28 November 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Government of Sweden, Statement of Government Policy, 21 January 2019, p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> Anthony and Weintraub, Closing Sweden's Military Security Deficit: the National Debate on NATO Membership, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>15</sup> Swedish Armed Forces, Trident Juncture 18.

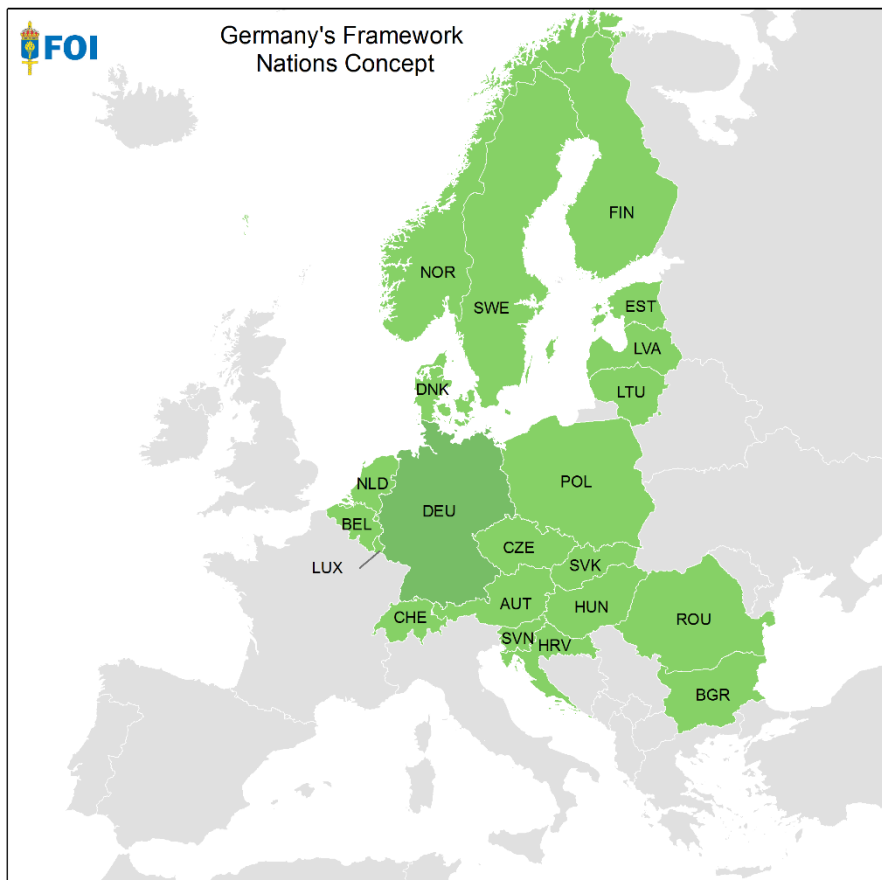
<sup>16</sup> Semi-structured interviews allow for questions and discussions to take place outside of the original list of questions.

London and Berlin. A list of the organisations and entities interviewed is provided after the bibliography.

The report is structured in three parts. Chapters 2 and 3 are dedicated to the German-led FNC and the UK-led JEF, respectively. They outline the purpose and structure as well as the participants in the two different collaboration formats, including a brief review of their potential and limitations. Chapter 4 situates the FNC and the JEF in the wider context of European defence cooperation and analyses their significance for participating states, including Sweden, and for Swedish and Baltic Sea security. Finally, Chapter 5 summarises the conclusions drawn and makes a set of recommendations on how to effectively take advantage of the opportunities on offer in these collaborative formats, as well as how to mitigate a number of related risks.

## 2 Germany's Framework Nations Concept

Germany proposed the FNC format in 2013 as a means of addressing NATO capability gaps and attaining a higher level of burden sharing between the European NATO member states and the USA. The original idea behind the initiative was that smaller states should group themselves around larger framework nations, in the process “plugging in” their capabilities to those of larger states that possess a broader set of military capabilities. The larger state would provide the military backbone of the cooperation and benefit through the increased depth and sustainability of its forces.<sup>17</sup>



<sup>17</sup> Major, Claudia and Mölling, Christian, The Framework Nations Concept, *SWP Comments*, no. 52 (2014).



Today, the German ambition for the FNC is to provide a structured framework for joint capability development among European states. While the initial focus was to cooperate around different capability clusters, the FNC has since evolved into the setting up of larger formations of forces. Contributing NATO members, for example, have started to link forces up to brigade level to the German land force structure. The FNC encompasses more than 20 such members and partners. Sweden joined the initiative in June 2018.

## 2.1 A model for structured capability development

The German-led FNC was launched together with the two other groupings at the Wales NATO Summit in September 2014. It initially consisted of ten NATO member states committed to “working systematically together, deepening and intensifying their cooperation in the long term”.<sup>18</sup> At the summit, the partner nations agreed to cooperate on capability projects in areas such as logistics support, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) protection, delivering firepower, and deployable headquarters.<sup>19</sup>

Germany’s goal was to provide a structured and more binding character to European capability development.<sup>20</sup> The structured approach of the FNC and the link to NATO defence planning were seen as a way to overcome the flaws in earlier capability development initiatives such as NATO’s Smart Defence or the EU’s Pooling and Sharing. These were judged to be too loosely structured and unable to provide for coordinated capability development.<sup>21</sup> The FNC would provide a more top-down approach, taking its departure from NATO’s Defence Planning Process (NDPP). NATO members and partners would come together and cooperate multinationally to meet the national capability targets set in the NDPP in the short and medium term, by 2023 and 2032 respectively.<sup>22</sup>

The FNC has also been portrayed as a way for Germany to assume leadership within NATO and to overcome its reputation as a reluctant partner (demonstrated, for instance, in the Libya crisis) that places too many caveats on its participation

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<sup>18</sup> NATO, Wales Summit Declaration, para. 67.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> German Federal Government, *White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr*, 2016, pp. 67–68.

<sup>21</sup> Ruiz Palmer, The Framework Nations’ Concept and NATO: Game-Changer for a New Strategic Era or Missed Opportunity?, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Allers, Robin, The Framework nation: can Germany lead on security? *International Affairs*, vol. 92, no. 5 (2016), p. 1175; and Glatz, Rainer L. and Zapfe, Martin, Ambitious Framework Nation: Germany in NATO, *SWP Comments*, no. 35 (2017), p. 5.

in international operations.<sup>23</sup> This is in line with the German ambition to take increasing responsibility for international security, as outlined at the Munich Security Conference in 2014 and confirmed in the 2016 *White Paper on Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr*.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, German security and defence policy remains firmly rooted in a multinational context. While it rests primarily on the fundamental pillars of NATO and the EU, Germany has in recent years also deepened its bilateral defence cooperation with a number of countries, such as France, the Netherlands, Poland and Norway.<sup>25</sup>

The original idea behind the FNC was to cooperate around capability shortfalls identified in the NDPP. The FNC is therefore closely linked to capability planning and development within NATO. Over time, however, the concept has adapted to a changing regional security environment. Following Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Germany tied it more closely to collective defence and the generation of follow-on forces for NATO's Eastern flank. According to the 2018 capstone planning document for the German Armed Forces, the *Konzeption der Bundeswehr*, the FNC aims to develop the participating states' capabilities in order to increase the credibility of NATO's deterrence and defence. The work carried out within the FNC will ultimately also contribute to achieving the EU's level of ambition and thereby constitutes, according to Germany, a link between NATO and the EU.<sup>26</sup>

Germany provides the overall leadership of the FNC and sees itself as a facilitator of cooperation.<sup>27</sup> The FNC is formally governed by the participating states' ministers of defence and a high-level group consisting of ministry of defence capability directors. The defence ministers normally meet once per year in conjunction with the meeting of NATO defence ministers in June, where a yearly progress report is adopted. The progress of the FNC is regularly monitored by a steering group at the military level. In addition, the German Ministry of Defence and the German Armed Forces chair regular working-level meetings on different areas of cooperation.<sup>28</sup>

However, the FNC does not mean the creation of a new layer between NATO and its members. Both the NDPP and NATO force generation will continue to deal

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<sup>23</sup> Saxi, British and German initiatives for defense cooperation: the Joint Expeditionary Force and the Framework Nations Concept, pp. 180–181; and Allers, Robin, The Framework nation: can Germany lead on security? p. 1170.

<sup>24</sup> German Federal Government, *White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr*, 2016, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64–77 and 80.

<sup>26</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, *Konzeption der Bundeswehr*, 2018, p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Interview, Berlin, October 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Ruiz Palmer, The Framework Nations' Concept and NATO: Game-Changer for a New Strategic Era or Missed Opportunity? pp. 13–14.

with NATO members and partners equally and individually.<sup>29</sup> All participating states retain the right to decide on the development and deployment of their armed forces. Just as they can choose to “plug in” capabilities and forces, participating states are able to “plug out” at any point in time. They can also change their status from participant to observer in individual capability development projects.<sup>30</sup>

## 2.2 Structure and participants

The FNC consists of a range of collaborative activities aimed at capability and force development in the short and medium term.

### Capability clusters

The cooperation started with the establishment of capability clusters, seeking to address the identified shortfalls in the NDPP. However, acknowledging that each European state only has one single set of forces, the clusters can also address capability needs identified in the EU Capability Development Mechanism or the EU’s Coordinated Annual Review on Defence. The activities in individual capability clusters range from developing doctrines, to planning and conducting training and exercises or the generation of force components for the NATO Response Force (NRF).<sup>31</sup> The participating states currently cooperate in 24 capability clusters, divided into four headings (see table 1).

Table 1 FNC Capability Clusters<sup>32</sup>

Cluster group	Capability Clusters
<b>Command and Control/ Support</b>	Logistics, Enhanced HNS, CIMIC, Mission Networks, Medical support, CBRN protection, Military Police Multinational Air Transport Unit, Multinational Helicopter Unit, Basic Helicopter Training
<b>Effects</b>	Air C2, Anit Submarine Warfare, Deployable Airbase Activation Modules, Military Engineering, Joint Fire Support, Naval Mine Warfare, Air Manoeuvre Training
<b>Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (J-ISR)</b>	Maritime Patrol Aircraft, Coalition Shared Data, Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft System, Geographical/meteorological/oceanographic support
<b>Protection</b>	Ballistic Missile Defence (Upper Layer), Theatre BMD (Lower Layer), Counter Rocket Artillery and Mortar

<sup>29</sup> Saxi, British and German initiatives for defense cooperation: the Joint Expeditionary Force and the Framework Nations Concept, p. 187.

<sup>30</sup> Interview, Berlin, October 2018; and Glatz and Zapfe, NATO’s Framework Nations Concept, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> The cooperation on CBRN protection is one of the most developed clusters, which has led to the contribution of multinational force components to the NRF. Interview, Berlin, October 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Interview, Berlin, October 2018.

## Larger formations

Cooperation related to larger formations was added in 2016 and aims to reinforce NATO's force pool of follow-on forces. It encompasses all the services of the German Armed Forces and aims to set up multinational structures by 2032 (see table 2). However, the level of ambition varies between the services. Cooperation in the land and air domain aims to set up multinational structures consisting of forces from the participating states. In the other domains, the intention is to improve the command of multinational forces or increase their availability.<sup>33</sup>

Table 2 FNC Larger Formations<sup>34</sup>

Larger formations
2–3 Multinational Army Divisions
1 Multinational Air Group
1 Baltic Maritime Component Command
1 Multinational Joint Logistic Support Group Headquarters
1 Multinational Medical Coordination Centre

Cooperation in the land domain is centred around the three German divisions: the rapid reaction division and the two armoured divisions. In addition, Poland has offered a multinational division Headquarters (HQ). The aim is to improve interoperability between the participating states' forces and ultimately lay the groundwork for three multinational armoured divisions, each consisting of three mechanised brigades.<sup>35</sup> The Netherlands, Romania and the Czech Republic have linked brigades to the German Army divisions and in October 2018 Lithuania affiliated its mechanised Iron Wolf brigade with one of the German armoured divisions. Other NATO member states have joined with smaller-sized units.<sup>36</sup>

In the air domain, Germany has offered to set up a Multinational Air Group (MAG). A MAG should be capable of conducting up to 350 air sorties per day. Germany will link its four tactical air wings to the MAG and provide 75 per cent of its forces. Members and partners can participate in certain functions and take

<sup>33</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, Fragen und Antworten zum Rahmennationenkonzept der NATO, 6 September 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Interview, Berlin, October 2018.

<sup>35</sup> Glatz and Zapfe, NATO's Framework Nations Concept, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Hagström Frisell, Eva, Tyskland [Germany], in Pallin, Krister (ed.), *Västlig militär förmåga: En analys av Nordeuropa 2017* [Western Military Capability: An Analysis of Northern Europe 2017], Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency, 2018, pp. 125–7, Fiorenza, Nicholas, Lithuanian Iron Wolf Brigade affiliated with German panzer division, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 31 October 2018; and interview, Berlin, October 2018.

part in training and exercises.<sup>37</sup> The ambition is to conduct a live exercise of the MAG in 2023.<sup>38</sup>

In the maritime domain, the Baltic Maritime Component Command (BMCC) is a proposed multinational HQ to be co-located with the German national maritime HQ in Rostock. The plan is for the BMCC to be part of the NATO force structure and be able to lead maritime operations, for example, in the Baltic Sea region. Germany's ambition is that the BMCC should have several international liaison officers and be functional by 2019.<sup>39</sup> So far, however, it is unclear which countries will join the BMCC and what maritime forces the BMCC will lead.

The Joint Logistic Support Group HQ will provide the logistic support for the other larger formations. It involves the establishment of a coordination and training centre in Garlstedt, Germany, and the set-up of a reception, staging and onward movement battalion. It is also linked to work ongoing in the FNC capability clusters on logistics and enhanced Host Nation Support.<sup>40</sup>

The Multinational Medical Coordination Centre will be set up at the German medical services HQ in Koblenz and include liaison officers from participating NATO member states and partners. The aim is to ensure medical support for the other larger formations. The work is linked to the FNC capability cluster focused on the set-up of a multinational field hospital.<sup>41</sup>

## **Participating NATO member states and partners**

Participation in these collaborative activities is flexible and voluntary. Countries can take part in the areas that they choose. Currently, 20 NATO member states and partners have joined the FNC. In addition, other NATO member states participate in individual capability clusters as observers. The participants are mainly Northern, Central and Eastern European countries, and they constitute almost two-thirds of NATO's European members.<sup>42</sup> Currently, ten NATO member states are contributing force packages or single components to the larger formations. The

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<sup>37</sup> Glatz and Zapfe, NATO's Framework Nations Concept, p. 2; and interview, Berlin, October 2018.

<sup>38</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, Framework Nations Concept, 2nd Progress Report, 7 June 2018, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> Interview, Berlin, October 2018.

<sup>40</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, Framework Nations Concept, 2nd Progress Report, p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> Interview, Berlin, October 2018.

<sup>42</sup> The current participants are: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Austria, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland. Interview, Berlin, October 2018.

deepest cooperation has been established with Germany's closest bilateral partners, such as the Netherlands, Poland and Norway.<sup>43</sup>

In June 2016, participation in the FNC was extended to partners and multinational organisations outside of NATO. In 2017, Austria, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland were invited to join. In addition, the European Defence Agency (EDA) was invited to support the FNC.<sup>44</sup> Until now, NATO partners have only joined individual capability clusters, but there are no formal obstacles to them taking part in activities related to the larger formations part of the concept.<sup>45</sup>

## 2.3 Swedish participation

The Swedish and German Armed Forces have a limited but well-established cooperation covering all three services. The cooperation consists of regular staff talks, as well as training and exercises. In the past, they have also cooperated closely in several international missions.<sup>46</sup>

Sweden has actively sought to deepen the bilateral defence relations with Germany as part of the Government's strategy to create a web of security partnerships to improve national security. Sweden views Germany as an important actor in the Baltic Sea region, and one that shares similar values and interests. In June 2017, the Swedish and German defence ministers signed a Letter of Intent on enhanced defence cooperation covering exercises, armaments and multinational operations.<sup>47</sup> Since that date, however, concrete steps to implement this cooperation have been lacking.<sup>48</sup>

In June 2018, the Swedish Government decided to join the FNC.<sup>49</sup> From a Swedish perspective, participation in the FNC is viewed as an important way to enhance bilateral defence relations and is expected to provide new opportunities for cooperation with Germany.<sup>50</sup> The Swedish decision to join the FNC should primarily be interpreted as a means of strengthening security policy relations between the two countries. There are few expectations that the FNC will strengthen

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<sup>43</sup> Saxi, British and German initiatives for defense cooperation: the Joint Expeditionary Force and the Framework Nations Concept, p. 184.

<sup>44</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, Framework Nations Concept: Zusammenarbeit intensiviert, 29 June 2017.

<sup>45</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, Framework Nations Concept, 2nd Progress Report, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> Interview, Stockholm, September 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, Sweden and Germany sign Letter of Intent in area of defence, 29 June 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Schmidt-Felzmann, Anke and Barzanje, Costan, Swedish Perceptions of Germany's role in Baltic Sea Region Security, in Spruds, Andris and Vizgunova, Elizabete (eds), *Perceptions of Germany in the Security of the Baltic Sea Region*, Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2018, p. 197.

<sup>49</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, Sweden joins the German-led Framework Nations Concept (FNC), 28 June 2018.

<sup>50</sup> Interview, Stockholm, September 2018.

Sweden's operational capability in the short term. The Swedish Government has, for example, still to decide which parts of the FNC to join. It has asked the Swedish Armed Forces to follow developments and to propose appropriate areas for cooperation.<sup>51</sup>

According to Swedish officials, Sweden is most likely to participate in some of the capability clusters, particularly those that are related to ongoing projects established in the EU's PESCO.<sup>52</sup> Joining the FNC's larger formations may, however, be problematic, as this part of the cooperation is intimately linked to NATO's deterrence and defence. Due to Sweden's policy of military non-alignment, it is essential for the current Government that there are clear opt-outs for Sweden in case any such formation is used for collective defence.<sup>53</sup>

## 2.4 Future developments

Since its inception in 2014, the FNC has adapted to changing circumstances. New capability clusters have been added in addition to the larger formations part of the concept. Moreover, several more NATO member states and partners have joined the FNC along the way.

As the framework nation, Germany will play a key role in the future development of the concept. Until now, Germany has provided strong leadership at the senior political and military levels. However, a strong German political commitment demands a corresponding financial commitment in order to meet the capability targets set in the NDPP. In January 2016, Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen presented a plan costed at €130 billion to fully equip the German Armed Forces until 2030. The medium-term financial plans presented since, however, have failed to meet these ambitions.<sup>54</sup> The progress of the FNC will also depend on the future development of Germany's bilateral relationships with participating states. At the moment, progress is slow due to problematic political relations with, for example, Poland and Hungary.<sup>55</sup>

The fact that it will take time to demonstrate any concrete outputs from the collaboration is a significant challenge. Currently, all capability clusters and the

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<sup>51</sup> The proposal from the Armed Forces is expected in early 2019. Regeringen, Ändring av regleringsbrev för budgetåret 2018 avseende Försvarsmakten, Regeringsbeslut Fö2017/01545/MFI, 28 June 2018.

<sup>52</sup> Sweden has decided to take part in the following PESCO projects: EU Test and Evaluation Centre, EU Training Missions Competence Centre, European Medical Command and Military Mobility. Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), updated list of PESCO projects, Overview, 19 November 2018.

<sup>53</sup> Interview, Stockholm, September 2018.

<sup>54</sup> Mölling, Christian and Schütz, Torben, Responsible Defense Policy: This Autumn, Germany Should Pave its Way out of the 46 Billion Defense Investment Gap, *DGAPkompakt*, no. 23, 2018.

<sup>55</sup> Interview, Berlin, October 2018.

five larger formations have a dedicated road map with corresponding milestones. However, the capability clusters are only expected to deliver results by 2023.<sup>56</sup> Planning for the larger formations part of the concept is even more long term, aiming to have all the multinational components operational by 2032.<sup>57</sup> The long planning horizon means that circumstances will almost certainly change along the way and require adjustments to the concept.

Training and exercises will be key to ensuring the interoperability of the larger formations part of the concept. Exercises at the brigade level are already being held nationally or multinationally between some of the participating NATO member states and partners. Germany will, for example, be engaged in exercises related to the German-led VJTF, which will be on standby in 2019 and 2023. However, in order to build formations at the division level, training and exercises need to be extended to higher levels of command.<sup>58</sup>

The FNC also needs to be closely coordinated with ongoing activities in NATO and the EU. The FNC has been tasked with supporting the implementation plan of the EU-NATO Declaration on Closer Cooperation from 2016. There is also a need to synchronise the FNC capability clusters with recently launched projects in the EU's PESCO. There are currently several overlapping projects, particularly in the fields of logistics and medical support. Coordination is therefore necessary to avoid duplication of effort and resources. In addition, the participating defence ministers have expressed their wish to look into the possibilities of obtaining funding for FNC activities from the proposed European Defence Fund.<sup>59</sup>

## 2.5 FNC's potential and limitations

The FNC constitutes an attempt to foster multinational capability development in Europe. Although it is clearly stated that it will not create a new layer between NATO and its member states, it involves a shift of responsibility for coordinating capability development from NATO's civilian and military structures to a larger European member, in this case Germany. It is expected to be beneficial for both smaller participating states and the larger framework nation. States with smaller armed forces stand to gain from the possibility of plugging their niche capabilities into a larger military structure that may not be available at the national level. Germany may, in turn, benefit from the staff and force contributions from other countries, which may fill gaps and increase the sustainability of its armed forces.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Interviews, Berlin, October 2018.

<sup>57</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, Framework Nations Concept, 2nd Progress Report, p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Interview, Berlin, October 2018.

<sup>59</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, Framework Nations Concept, 2nd Progress Report, p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> Interviews, Berlin, October 2018.



The FNC's focus on long-term capability development means that it will probably have little impact on the operational effectiveness of the participating states' armed forces in the short term. The large and heterogeneous group of participants may also limit its potential to build effective force structures. The benefits are more likely to come from common training and exercises, improved interoperability and the modernisation of equipment. However, when it comes to niche capabilities, such as CBRN protection, the FNC is already producing force components for the NRF.

Furthermore, the FNC is clearly related to NATO's collective defence in Europe as opposed to crisis management operations. The larger formations part of the concept is linked to NATO's follow-on forces that are intended to be ready to deploy for collective defence. In the land and air domains, the ambition is to build multinational force structures. In the other domains, the aim is limited to building multinational command structures or increasing the availability of support structures. However, the FNC partner nations do not engage in any planning related to the use of capabilities or larger formations. The use of any resources will be determined in NATO's ordinary force generation process and be subject to the partner nations' national decision making.

Sweden views participation in the FNC as a way to strengthen its bilateral cooperation with Germany. This is part of a strategy to deepen Sweden's security and defence relationships with countries around the Baltic Sea. Sweden is probably more interested in joining individual capability clusters than the larger formations part of the concept. Tying Swedish forces to larger multinational formations aimed at collective defence might be politically sensitive considering the current Government's policy of military non-alignment. However, the opportunity to take part in training and exercises at higher levels of command could be valuable for the Swedish Armed Forces.

A potential limitation of the FNC is the lack of trust in Germany's reliability as a partner and its perceived reluctance to use force. Partners are wary of the German obligation to seek parliamentary approval before any military deployment. They are also sceptical about the current level of readiness of the German Armed Forces. Successive reports of personnel and materiel shortcomings in the *Bundeswehr*, combined with low levels of defence spending, are seen as problematic. In addition, Germany is sometimes accused of devoting more effort to developing structures and processes than to ensuring concrete outputs from the cooperation. This lack of trust may hamper the willingness of partners to tie their armed forces too closely to the German force structure.

Another potential drawback is that the FNC contributes to the proliferation of capability development projects in the EU and NATO. Projects related to the same capabilities are launched under the heading of Smart Defence, FNC and PESCO. The political dynamics of the different initiatives may lead to projects started in one framework being restarted under another framework – known as *re-hatting* –

or projects relating to the same capability being set up in several different forums – so-called *double-hatting*. This may provide an opportunity to demonstrate progress, but will not increase the concrete outputs of individual projects and may ultimately lead to a waste of efforts and resources.

It is therefore important to separate the FNC capability clusters from projects set up in other forums in order to avoid duplication of effort. Projects should either have clearly different objectives or be merged. At the national level, such demarcation needs to be ensured by the department responsible for capability development. At the multilateral level, the Allied Command Transformation (ACT) in NATO and the EDA in the EU can support such synchronisation and coordination.<sup>61</sup>

To conclude, the FNC's potential benefits lie primarily in long-term capability development. The aim is to build capabilities by 2023 and multinational force structures by 2032. The future success of the collaboration will therefore rely on a sustained political and financial commitment. However, the most prominent capability clusters already provide niche components to NATO's deterrence and defence.

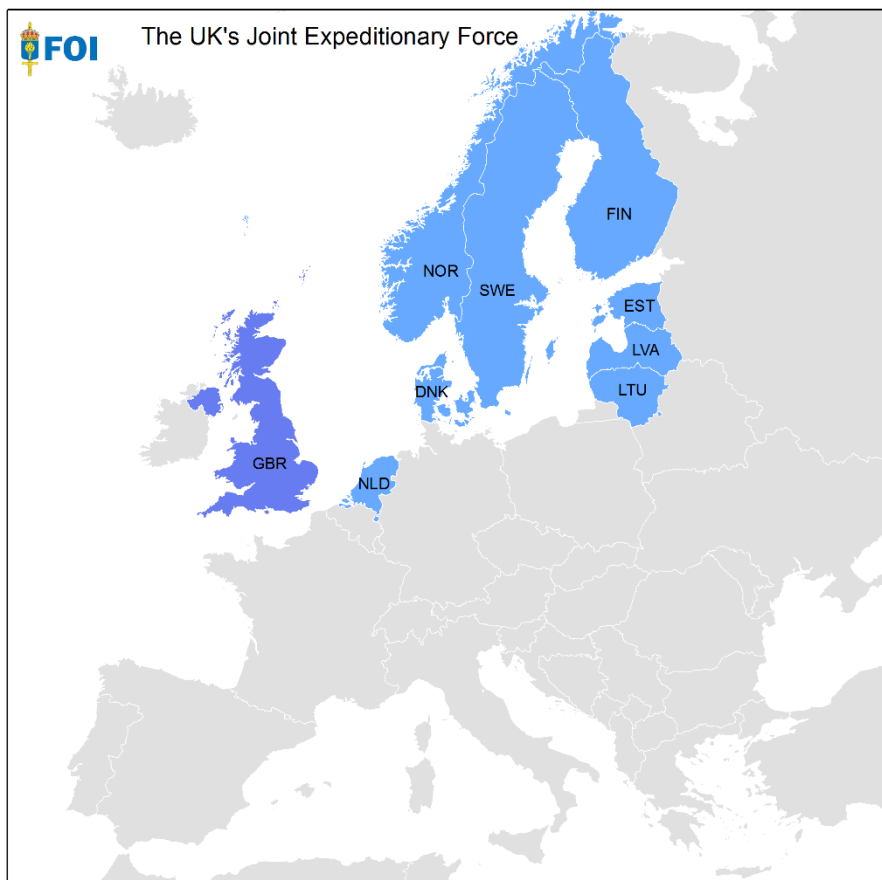
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<sup>61</sup> Interview, Berlin, October 2018; and Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, Framework Nations Concept, 2nd Progress Report, pp. 2–3.



### 3 The United Kingdom's Joint Expeditionary Force

The JEF is a British-led military partnership between nine countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK as the framework nation. The JEF officially reached full operational capability (FOC) with the signing of the Comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding by the defence ministers of all nine partner nations in June 2018.<sup>62</sup>



<sup>62</sup> Regeringen. Undertecknande av det övergripande samförståndsavtalet rörande Joint Expeditionary Force. Protokoll vid regeringssammanträde Fö2018/00849/SI. 20 June 2018; Fiorenza, Nicholas, Joint Expeditionary Force reaches full operational capability, *Jane's 360*, 3 July 2018; and Moller, Joakim Erma, Conference summary: Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), Institut for Forsvarsstudier IFS, 30 May 2018.

When formally announced together with the German-led FNC at NATO's Wales Summit in 2014, the JEF was described as a "rapidly deployable force capable of conducting the full spectrum of operations, including high intensity operations".<sup>63</sup> Although subsumed under the same heading as the FNC, the JEF has developed in a different direction. In contrast to Germany's focus on European capability development, the UK is concerned with developing a high-readiness contingency force under British control.<sup>64</sup>

### 3.1 A high-readiness intervention force

The idea of the JEF was first born out of British military experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. Key to the JEF's development has been an acknowledgement that the reduced size of European national forces makes unilateral action less likely, and that there must therefore be interoperability between nations.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, there was a growing recognition that future operations might include the full range of tasks, from humanitarian relief to war fighting, and the JEF has been promoted accordingly. The British response to the Ebola outbreak, which included assistance from Dutch and Norwegian forces, is an oft-cited example of the JEF's potential. The JEF could also be used in a "sub-Article 5" scenario, before the threshold for Article 5 is reached. In such a case, the JEF would act as an early response force that would hand over to NATO or the EU.<sup>66</sup>

While not a NATO structure, the JEF has been described as having a clear NATO connection, in part due to the general application of NATO standards between the partners. More importantly, the British forces in the JEF force pool would provide the basis for the UK's contribution to the NRF, including the VJTF. According to the Chief of the British Defence Staff, the JEF is designed to "meet [their] NATO obligations".<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> NATO, Wales Summit Declaration, para. 67.

<sup>64</sup> UK Gov. 'NATO: coming home?', Gov.uk speech, 3 September 2014.

<sup>65</sup> JEF, Joint Expeditionary Force Concept of Operations, no. 2, 25 January 2017, pp. 5–6; Saxi, , British and German initiatives for defense cooperation: the Joint Expeditionary Force and the Framework Nations Concept, p. 173; and Saxi, Håkon Lunde, The UK Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), *IFS Insights*, no. 5 (2018), p. 2.

<sup>66</sup> JEF, Joint Expeditionary Force Concept of Operations, p. 5; UK Gov., 'Defence Secretary celebrates UK's partnerships at Airpower 2017', Gov.uk speech, 13 July 2017; UK Gov., UK-led joint force launched to tackle common threats, Gov.uk news story, 30 November 2015; UK Gov., Sweden and Finland join UK-led response force, Gov.uk news story, 30 June 2017; and interviews, London, September 2018.

<sup>67</sup> UK Gov., Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), Gov.uk speech, 17 December 2012; Ruiz Palmer, The Framework Nations' Concept and NATO: Game-Changer for a New Strategic Era or Missed Opportunity?; JEF, Joint Expeditionary Force Concept of Operations, p. 28; and UK Gov., "Opening address to NATO Maritime Conference, MARCOMET", Gov.uk speech, 1 July 2015.

The JEF is part of an evolving British security and defence policy. Like other European nations, the UK had until recently been reducing its spending on defence, albeit less than most. The most recent Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) in 2015 was seen as reversing this trend, placing greater emphasis on the security challenges facing the UK and its allies, and on the potential for conflict with Russia. In this regard, the JEF is seen as satisfying a need to be able to respond to crises in Europe and beyond, and as part of the UK's "international by design" focus.<sup>68</sup>

While the JEF was initiated prior to the UK's referendum on leaving the EU, it has gained greater significance since. There has been speculation among analysts that the UK will be under pressure to redouble its commitment to European defence in order to address the concerns raised by its exit from the EU.<sup>69</sup> Certainly, there is a sentiment among Swedish and British officials, for example, that the JEF is a way of maintaining close security connections between the UK and European countries after Brexit.<sup>70</sup>

In contrast to the more inclusive nature of Germany's FNC, the UK has decided to limit participation in the JEF to select European countries with which it shares a common outlook and existing military ties. That the JEF is a collaboration between like-minded partners is a recurring theme. This aspect is presented as an important contributory factor towards efficiency and quick decision making within the JEF. Above all, it is seen as sending a signal regarding political will and solidarity among partner countries.<sup>71</sup>

## 3.2 Structure and participants

The JEF is comprised of a pool of contingent forces from all nine partner nations. The JEF is not a standing force, but rather a pool of potential forces.<sup>72</sup> The aim is to be able to deploy an integrated joint force of up to 10,000 troops for smaller "niche" to joint medium-sized operations. All the nations involved are able to employ their assigned JEF forces for other national or international commitments. The core of the JEF consists of British forces held at higher degrees of readiness and able to deploy in purely national or ad hoc formations. While the UK is not

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<sup>68</sup> JEF, Joint Expeditionary Force Concept of Operations, 4; interviews, London, September 2018; and RUSI, *Reviewing the Review: Understanding the Implications of SDSR 2015*, RUSI events, 25 November 2015.

<sup>69</sup> Chalmers, Malcolm, *Would a New SDSR be Needed After a Brexit Vote?* RUSI Briefing Paper (2016).

<sup>70</sup> Interviews, Stockholm, June 2018 and London, September 2018

<sup>71</sup> Interviews, London, September 2018 and Stockholm, June 2018; and Moller, Conference summary: Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF).

<sup>72</sup> Interviews, London September 2018

dependent on partner nations to deploy the JEF, its stated preference is to cooperate with others in operations.<sup>73</sup>

As the framework nation, the UK provides the operational HQ and the deployable joint force HQ, as well as the logistics component. Since September 2018, there has been a virtual JEF secretariat at Northwood, with three full-time staff as well as liaison officers from partner nations. Should a crisis unfold, a British military response will be developed by the UK Defence Crisis Management Organisation, which prepares advice for the political level and coordinates any crisis response.

The decision to deploy the JEF lies with the British Prime Minister or Cabinet. There is no single activation process outlined for the JEF – each crisis will unfold differently as all partner nations have their own political and military processes. Appeals to the like-mindedness of the JEF’s partner nations imply that there may be a shared understanding of the type of operations for which the JEF would be used. However, no such scenarios have been made public. Instead, it has been emphasised that the JEF is intended to be scalable and flexible.<sup>74</sup>

In terms of force structure, the JEF consists of two key elements: the Lead Element, which is comprised of light and agile forces capable of rapid deployment; and a Main Intervention Capability, composed of heavier force elements to reinforce the Lead Element. Non-British forces are likely to join as part of the Main Intervention Capability, its composition determined through political and force generation processes.<sup>75</sup> While the JEF is a joint force that includes all services, the army contributes the largest number of troops.<sup>76</sup>

The existing command arrangement is for an operation to be led from the Standing Joint Forces HQ (SJFHQ) in Northwood, which can deploy 10,000 troops rapidly. The UK’s force contributions to the JEF are lead commando, airborne, armoured, aviation, and air and maritime task groups. British JEF forces are held at varying degrees of readiness.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> UK Gov., Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), Gov.uk speech, 17 December 2012; UK Gov., UK-led joint force launched to tackle common threats, Gov.uk News story, 30 November 2015; Moller, Conference summary: Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF); Glatz and Zapfe, NATO’s Framework Nations Concept, p. 2; and JEF, Joint Expeditionary Force Concept of Operations, pp. 7–9.

<sup>74</sup> UK Gov., UK-led high-readiness force trains in inaugural exercise, Gov.uk News story, 29 July 2016; Ruiz Palmer, *The Framework Nations’ Concept and NATO: Game-Changer for a New Strategic Era or Missed Opportunity?* p. 13; interviews, London, September 2018; Saxi, *The UK Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF)*, p. 4; and JEF, Joint Expeditionary Force Concept of Operations.

<sup>75</sup> JEF, Joint Expeditionary Force Concept of Operations, p. 28.

<sup>76</sup> Rossbach, Niklas H., *Storbritannien [United Kingdom]*, in Pallin, Krister (ed.), *Västlig militär förmåga – En analys av Nordeuropa 2017 [Western Military Capability: An Analysis of Northern Europe 2017]*, Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency, 2018, p. 151.

<sup>77</sup> UK Gov., Sweden and Finland join UK-led response force, Gov.uk news story, 30 June 2017; and JEF, Joint Expeditionary Force Concept of Operations, p. 7.

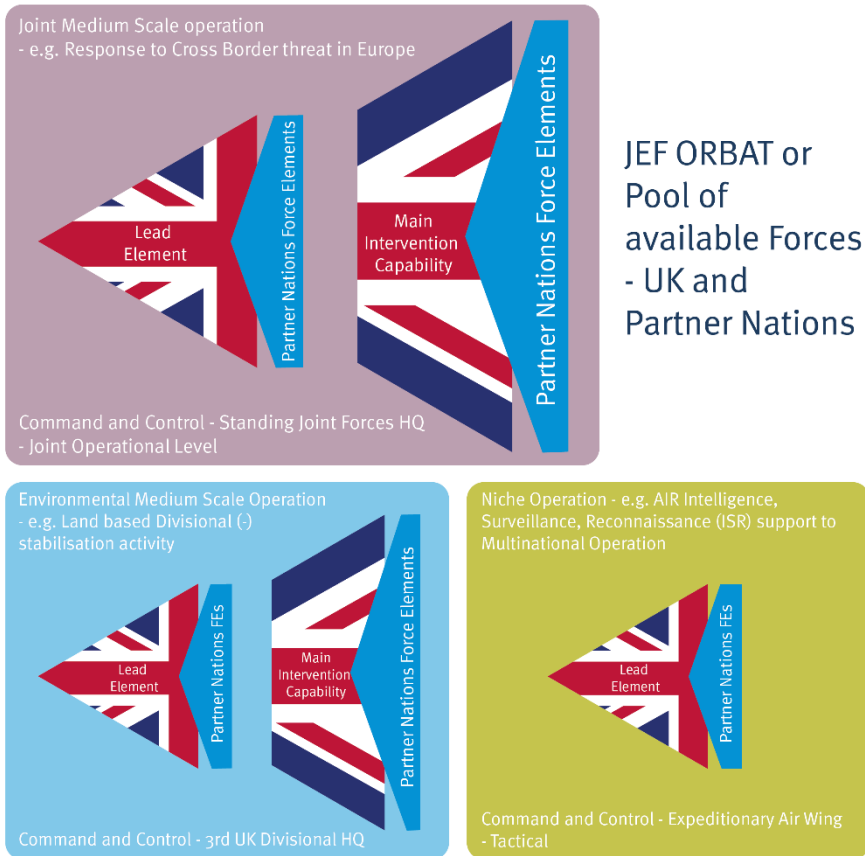


Image: Illustrative JEF force structure<sup>78</sup>

Should the JEF be deployed, other nations will add their capabilities to the British force and provide enhancement to existing British capabilities. Such contributions are not fixed and can be tailored to suit the mission. The British Ministry of Defence will coordinate force contributions from other nations. Partner nations participate in the JEF on a no-commitment basis, and it is acknowledged that a response may not include participation by all partner nations. Partner nations will follow their own national decision making in case of re-tasking of forces.<sup>79</sup>

The contributions to the JEF force pool registered to date vary among the partner nations. The Norwegian contribution has mainly been air and naval forces, the Netherlands has contributed naval and amphibious forces, and Swedish force

<sup>78</sup> Adapted from JEF, Joint Expeditionary Force Concept of Operations, p. 9.

<sup>79</sup> JEF, Joint Expeditionary Force Concept of Operations, pp. 7, 26–29.



contributions are naval. Meanwhile, Denmark has dedicated a battalion and the Baltic states have contributed land units of company size.<sup>80</sup>

The JEF has also set up various working groups to deal with specific policy areas, such as strategic communications and intelligence sharing. The interaction between the JEF nations takes place at various levels: politically via the respective ministries of defence, and operationally at the working group level.<sup>81</sup>

Officially, there is a heavy emphasis on training and exercises, as this is recognised as important for the JEF to become an interoperable and a coherent force. There have already been several exercises of political and military-strategic decision making as well as of the JEF pool. According to Swedish officials, the JEF's political structure has been tested and is largely in place.<sup>82</sup> In 2016, the high-level exercise Joint Venture tested the force HQ for deployment.<sup>83</sup>

The first live exercise coincided with the British tri-service exercise Joint Warrior in the spring of 2018, and these are intended to take place every three to four years. There is a recognised need to develop policies that allow information to be shared freely while at the same time being protected. The next full JEF exercise will take place in 2021 due to the UK's commitments to exercise regularly with NATO and the CJEF with France.<sup>84</sup>

### 3.3 Swedish participation

Sweden and the UK have a long history of defence cooperation, particularly between the navies. Cooperation with the UK is ongoing throughout the Swedish defence structure and is described by Swedish officials as a priority. According to the Swedish Government, the countries share values and an understanding of security developments in the region.<sup>85</sup>

The Swedish and British Ministers of Defence signed a *Programme of Defence Cooperation* in June 2016, which includes more than 50 activities focused on improving interoperability and capabilities. The JEF comprises three or four points

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<sup>80</sup> Moller, Conference summary: Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF); and Saxi, The UK Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF).

<sup>81</sup> JEF, Joint Expeditionary Force Concept of Operations, p. 10.

<sup>82</sup> Interviews, Stockholm, June 2018

<sup>83</sup> UK Gov., UK-led high-readiness force trains in inaugural exercise, Gov.uk News story, 29 July 2016.

<sup>84</sup> JEF, Joint Expeditionary Force Concept of Operations, p. 30; and interviews, London, September 2018.

<sup>85</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, Sweden and the United Kingdom enhance Defence Cooperation. Government.se, 11 June 2016.

on the programme, which is followed up regularly by Swedish and British Policy Directors.<sup>86</sup>

The UK invited Sweden and Finland to join the JEF in February 2017. Both countries officially became JEF partner nations in June 2017, at a signing event attended by the Swedish, Finnish and British ministers of defence in Stockholm. In October the same year, the Swedish Government mandated the Swedish Armed Forces to participate in the JEF.<sup>87</sup>

From a Swedish political perspective, participation in the JEF is seen both as a way to strengthen security relations and as a tool for operations. Swedish commentary on the JEF emphasises the signals that Swedish participation sends regarding Sweden's willingness to cooperate with other nations, thereby increasing the threshold for aggression against Sweden.<sup>88</sup> This is in tandem with a growing focus in the Swedish defence discourse on the potential for conflict in the Baltic Sea region, and an increased focus on territorial defence.

Accordingly, the motivation of the Swedish Armed Forces is in part to strengthen the JEF's regional focus towards northern Europe and the Baltic Sea. Participation in the JEF is also intended to enhance the ability of the Swedish Armed Forces to operate together with other states. During the exercise Joint Warrior, for instance, Swedish staff officers led a Dutch ship, with positive experiences reported.<sup>89</sup>

Sweden has registered a naval contribution to the JEF force pool, comprised of two Visby type corvettes, HMS *Karlstad* and HMS *Nyköping*. Together with their support functions, these corvettes will also be held at high readiness from 2019 as part of the NRF. They are therefore double-hatted. In practice, a Swedish contribution to a JEF deployment could look very different, and will be decided on a case-by-case basis. From the Swedish perspective, this kind of flexibility is an asset but also governed by actual force availability.<sup>90</sup>

A political decision to deploy with the JEF would be taken by the Swedish Government with approval by parliament. Sweden clarified and exercised the political procedures for quick decision making in the context of the EU's Nordic Battlegroup in 2008. However, Sweden has decided not to participate when the

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<sup>86</sup> Interviews, Stockholm, June and September 2018; and Government Offices of Sweden. Sweden and the United Kingdom enhance Defence Cooperation.

<sup>87</sup> Saxi, British and German initiatives for defense cooperation: the Joint Expeditionary Force and the Framework Nations Concept, p. 190; UK Gov., Sweden and Finland join UK-led response force, Gov.uk news story, 30 June 2017; and Regeringskansliet [Government Offices], Regeringen ger Försvarsmakten i uppdrag att delta i brittiskledd snabbinsatsstyrka [The government authorises the Armed Forces to participate in British-led response force], Regeringen.se, 5 October 2017.

<sup>88</sup> Rådmark, Henrik, JEF vässar Sveriges förmåga, *Forum*, no. 6 (2017), pp. 30–32.

<sup>89</sup> Regeringen. Uppdrag till Försvarsmakten att delta i brittiskledda Joint Expeditionary Force, Regeringsbeslut Fö2017/01346/MFI, 5 October 2017; and interviews, Stockholm, June 2018.

<sup>90</sup> P4 Blekinge, Brittisk ambassadör på besök på Marinbasen, *Sveriges Radio*, 15 May 2018; and interviews, Stockholm, June 2018

UK acts as the framework nation for the VJTF, during which parts of the JEF will be on standby.<sup>91</sup>

Sweden has already taken part in several exercises. In July 2018, Swedish corvettes participated alongside British and Finnish ships in the two-week trilateral Exercise Baltic Cross. A Swedish Tactical Air Control Party (TACP) component also participated in the exercise Joint Warrior, which took place in May 2018, along with 12,000 military personnel from 17 nations. At the political level, Sweden has tested decision making and communications, externally with the other JEF members and internally between the Swedish ministries for foreign affairs and defence. It is expected in Sweden that the JEF will feature to a great extent in future regional exercises.<sup>92</sup>

In terms of staff, Sweden has a part-time liaison officer at the JEF secretariat in Northwood. Sweden also has a staff officer stationed at the UK's Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ), also in Northwood. Furthermore, the Swedish Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence participate in ten of the JEF's higher level working groups, including the one on strategic communications.<sup>93</sup>

Sweden's participation in the JEF has not been without domestic controversy. While Swedish politicians generally strive for consensus in the area of defence, opposition parties reported the Swedish Minister of Defence to a constitutional committee for allegedly providing inadequate information to parliament and the media regarding Sweden's affiliation with the JEF. Moreover, the JEF is politically sensitive in Sweden due to its ties with NATO and the divergent views on NATO membership among Swedish political parties.<sup>94</sup>

### 3.4 Future developments

When the JEF was first conceptualised, it was intended for short-notice overseas operations. In accordance with the UK's 2015 SDSR, the JEF was planned to be "international by design". However, the JEF has since grown into a more regional defence collaboration as the defence focus in Europe more generally has shifted to

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<sup>91</sup> Interviews, Stockholm, June and September 2018.

<sup>92</sup> Swaan, Kristina, Nytt samarbetsavtal vässar försvarsförmågan, *Försvarsmakten*, 14 July 2018; Allison, George, HMS Montrose in Exercise Baltic Cross, *UK Defence Journal*, 16 July 2018; UK Gov., UK and allies stand united in face of intensifying threats, Gov.uk News story, 4 May 2018; and interviews, Stockholm, June 2018.

<sup>93</sup> Interviews, Stockholm, June 2018.

<sup>94</sup> Gummesson, Jonas, KU-anmäls – för uppgifter om brittisk elitstyrka, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 10 July 2017; and Anthony and Weintraub, Closing Sweden's Military Security Deficit: the National Debate on NATO Membership, p. 2.

collective defence. The JEF is therefore in part intended to “reassure allies and deter Russia”.<sup>95</sup>

Added to regional tensions in the Baltic Sea are uncertainties surrounding the relationship between the UK and EU member states following the former’s withdrawal from the EU. There are hopes among the Northern Group countries that there will be further British investment in the defence and security of Europe to compensate for Brexit. The JEF is thus partly viewed as a tool for keeping the UK actively involved in European defence cooperation.

Within the Swedish Armed Forces, there are also hopes that Sweden’s contribution to the JEF will evolve over time, for example into a more substantial financial commitment to participation instead of specific force contributions. Such a development is seen as better corresponding to the flexible nature of the JEF. It would, for example, be preferable to register a general naval contribution that would be specified on a case-by-case basis rather than an earmarked contribution. In the exercise Joint Warrior, Sweden was unable to exercise the two corvettes in the JEF pool due to other commitments.<sup>96</sup>

A number of training activities are planned within the JEF in the near future. The UK will organise a defence ministerial exercise in early 2019, intended to forge an understanding of high-level processes among partner nations. There will also be a lower level table top exercise that will see senior military planners testing the JEF’s crisis management response. In the UK, there is a desire to commit the JEF to operations in the near future, and to ensure that the JEF does not remain solely an exercising force. A review of the JEF’s governance structure will also take place now that the JEF has reached FOC.<sup>97</sup>

### 3.5 JEF’s potential and limitations

While the JEF has been launched as a force pool, it is quite obvious that a significant, if not major, feature is its simultaneous role in strengthening security policy relations among the partner nations. This aspect has been explicitly mentioned by Swedish officials. From a Swedish perspective, the security policy aspect of the JEF is focused on maintaining strong defence cooperation with the UK following its departure from the EU, and keeping the UK involved in European defence cooperation, particularly in the Baltic Sea region.<sup>98</sup> Given that the future of security and defence cooperation between the UK and the EU is, at the time of

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<sup>95</sup> Saxi, British and German initiatives for defense cooperation: the Joint Expeditionary Force and the Framework Nations Concept, pp. 173, 188; and Saxi, The UK Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> Interviews, Stockholm, June 2018.

<sup>97</sup> Interviews, London, September 2018.

<sup>98</sup> Interviews, Stockholm, June and September 2018; and Moller, Conference summary: Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF).

writing, yet to be decided, it is seen as important for Sweden to strengthen the bilateral links between the two countries.

For the UK, the security policy aspect of the JEF is twofold: positioning the UK as a solid European defence partner post-Brexit while at the same time demonstrating British leadership in a NATO context.<sup>99</sup> Part of the latter could be interpreted as a response to demands from the USA for greater burden-sharing within NATO.

Participation in the JEF appears to offer strategic benefits for all partner nations, including Sweden. The like-mindedness of the partner nations, in particular, is seen as sending a strong message of reassurance to friends and allies. Meanwhile, the political will and solidarity among partners is viewed as providing deterrence.<sup>100</sup> This perspective is summed up by the Finnish Chief of Planning, who has said that the JEF provides a way for Finland to demonstrate its capabilities “to likeminded countries and other actors in the region”.<sup>101</sup>

At the same time, the JEF’s set-up allows partners to retain their sovereign decision-making capability. There is no formal requirement for partner nations to join a JEF operation. It is instead expected that 80–90 per cent of forces will be British.<sup>102</sup> This could make participation in the JEF more politically palatable as there is no “hard” commitment to future operations. That said, there will certainly be political pressure on partner nations to participate.

The operational aspects of the JEF focus on boosting capabilities and interoperability. One method of improving interoperability between JEF partner nations is through the use of NATO standards and procedures. While NATO standards are not new to Swedes, certain elements could be problematic for Sweden as a non-NATO country. For example, Sweden does not have access to NATO cryptography, which would require a degree of work around in operations. A sustainable solution to this issue will be needed, and this could be dealt with in one of the JEF’s working groups.<sup>103</sup>

Training and exercises have also been the subject of significant focus in the commentary on the JEF. Exercises are intended to foster interoperability, doctrinal similarity and a shared mindset among participating states. A particular focus in future exercises will be on political decision-making processes, and how to translate high-level decision making into military planning.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Interviews, London, September 2018

<sup>100</sup> Interview, London, September 2018

<sup>101</sup> Moller, Conference summary: Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF).

<sup>102</sup> Saxi, The UK Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF).

<sup>103</sup> Interviews, Stockholm, June 2018

<sup>104</sup> Saxi, The UK Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), p. 3; and Saxi, British and German initiatives for defence cooperation: the Joint Expeditionary Force and the Framework Nations Concept, p. 18.

In Sweden, it is expected that the Swedish Armed Forces will benefit from participation in the JEF through exercises with other nations.<sup>105</sup> However, despite the focus on increasing interoperability between the partner nations, exercises that engage the entire JEF will only take place every three years. Due to British commitments to NATO and the CJEF, the next live exercise of the JEF is scheduled for 2021.<sup>106</sup>

The strategic aspects of the JEF thus appear at the outset to carry more weight than any operational benefits. This certainly seems to be the case for Sweden, where it is not expected that the JEF will have a significant impact on military capabilities. Sweden is already relatively integrated into NATO exercises, having participated in Joint Warrior prior to joining the JEF. Moreover, the two corvettes that Sweden has registered for the JEF are already certified as part of NATO's NRF Pool and took part in the NATO exercise Trident Juncture in November 2018. However, there is an intention in the Swedish Armed Forces to use the JEF as a driver, for instance to improve technical interoperability.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Interviews, Stockholm, June 2018.

<sup>106</sup> Interviews, London, September 2018.

<sup>107</sup> Interviews, Stockholm, September 2018.



## 4 Significance for European and Swedish Security

### 4.1 Cooperating in an evolving security context

Grouping smaller nations around a larger framework nation is certainly not a new phenomenon. The use of framework nations in the NATO force structure and in operations after the end of the Cold War was an important tool for building interoperability among NATO member states and partners.<sup>108</sup> However, it seems that this format has gained further prominence in recent years, probably as a result of a widespread perception among European countries of a deteriorating regional security situation.

The new security landscape is seen as demanding quicker and more flexible action than allowed within traditional multilateral institutions such as NATO and the EU. This sentiment was recently expressed by the Norwegian Defence Minister, who said that given the current security environment, the “ability to respond rapidly and effectively” is increasingly important.<sup>109</sup> However, despite broad agreement on *worsening* trends, there is no common threat perception among European states. While the southern European states look south towards instability in Europe’s southern neighbourhood and migration routes, Northern and Eastern European states look to Russia. This may help to explain why so much capability development and so many operations tend to occur in ad hoc formations, rather than in NATO and the EU.<sup>110</sup>

In theory, collaborations around framework nations could address both of these aspects at the same time by allowing a more agile and efficient structure of like-minded partners. Both the UK-led JEF and the German-led FNC envisage an active role for states, which could further enhance flexibility compared to more bureaucratic organisations. The JEF, in particular, is described as a gap-filler that enables faster measures than NATO.<sup>111</sup> Although Germany clearly states that the FNC is not attempting to create a new layer between NATO and its member states, it has de facto led to a shift in responsibility for multinational capability development from NATO’s civilian and military structures to a large European member state.

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<sup>108</sup> Ruiz Palmer, *The Framework Nations’ Concept and NATO: Game-Changer for a New Strategic Era or Missed Opportunity?* pp. 8–10.

<sup>109</sup> Moller, Conference summary: Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF).

<sup>110</sup> Glatz and Zapfe, *NATO’s Framework Nations Concept*, p. 1; and Drent, Margriet, Wilms, Erik and Zandee, Dick. *Making Sense of European Defence*. The Hague: Clingendael, 2017, p. 7.

<sup>111</sup> Moller, Conference summary: Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF).



There is also the matter of optics – more active decision making at the state level instead of within a bureaucratic organisation avoids the perception of bypassing the decision making of national parliaments. Both the JEF and the FNC officially respect the sovereignty of partner nations and do not entail binding commitments to future contributions or operations. The same applies to NATO and the EU, but the political and bureaucratic pressures are generally stronger on the member states. A sense of retained national sovereignty in the FNC and the JEF has made it possible and attractive for non-NATO members to join.

A further part of the reasoning for smaller cooperation formats is the difficulty for larger multilateral institutions to support effective capability development.<sup>112</sup> Within the FNC, there is an acknowledgement that previous efforts in this area, such as NATO's Smart Defence and the EU's Pooling and Sharing, did not work due to a lack of focus and streamlining.<sup>113</sup> The more structured approach to capability development within the FNC, for example, may also make it more attractive than NATO-wide initiatives, since it allows smaller NATO member states to engage with the German force structure.

The literature on defence cooperation has identified a number of criteria that increase the chances for successful cooperation. Among the criteria identified by the Dutch Clingendael Institute is the need to maintain sovereignty and autonomy. When smaller states lose capabilities, they become more dependent on the framework nation. Smaller states thus have to strike a delicate balance between avoiding too much dependency on other nations and ensuring an ability to act, which often requires a degree of cooperation. The level of autonomy maintained by partner nations in both the JEF and the FNC could be an appropriate way to manage this balance, especially on behalf of smaller nations.<sup>114</sup>

Other “success criteria” include trust and confidence among the partner nations, as well as a shared geography, history and security outlook. The exclusive participation in the JEF by countries that share an operational history and certain national security concerns speaks to a number of these factors. The FNC, on the other hand, has a more inclusive approach that goes beyond geography and security outlook. Nonetheless, both collaborations involve a combination of top-down leadership and bottom-up military support, which is also seen as necessary for defence cooperation to succeed.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, *International Defence Cooperation: Efficiency, Solidarity, Sovereignty*, p. 48.

<sup>113</sup> Interview, Berlin, October 2018.

<sup>114</sup> Zandee, Dick, Drent Margriet and Hendriks, Rob, *Defence Cooperation Models: Lessons Learned and Usability*. The Hague: Clingendael, 2016, p. 4.

<sup>115</sup> Sundberg and Åhman, *På tu man hand: En studie om bilaterala och regionala försvarssamarbeten i Europa med fokus på det fransk-brittiska samarbetet*.

However, despite these promising factors, there are a number of potential downsides to defence cooperation in these types of formats.<sup>116</sup> The issue of power asymmetry, for instance, is unavoidable in a collaboration that groups smaller nations around a large framework nation. For a smaller state, there are risks involved in exposure to another, more powerful, state's political system. One potential outcome is *entrapment*. This refers to the risk that participating nations will feel compelled to take part in operations despite lacking the will to do so. This could especially be a risk for the smaller nations in the JEF, including Sweden, given British ambitions to use the JEF in operations now that it has reached FOC.

Another potential downside for smaller collaborations that lack binding commitments is that they rely on the resolve of participating states.<sup>117</sup> This may lead to *abandonment* should partner nations fail to engage in common force deployments. This would be particularly serious in a conflict in the Baltic Sea region, where all nations are dependent on outside assistance. In the case of JEF, the partner nations will be dependent on the UK's willingness to act as it will have the leading role in decision making as well as in deployment of the force.

A more likely risk for both the JEF and the FNC is that of *free-rider* states with limited resources that become involved to the extent that they can benefit but do not contribute substantially. All these factors entail a broader risk of damaging the credibility of the collaborations, with implications for regional security and defence. This once more underscores the need for trust and solidarity between partner nations.

At the European level, the FNC and the JEF risk contributing to the proliferation of collaboration initiatives, which, left uncoordinated, could lead to fragmentation. There are concerns that the various groupings could duplicate efforts, waste resources, set the wrong priorities or create unnecessary bureaucracy. Should they develop in completely separate directions, the ultimate risk is that they could threaten interoperability and the political cohesion of NATO and the EU. In this regard, it will be important to ensure that the various constellations do not compete with each other, or with the EU and NATO. To this end, it has been suggested that existing multilateral institutions, such as the EU and NATO, should play a coordinating role to ensure cohesion, with a view to fulfilling collective requirements and resolving any capability shortfalls. It is certainly important that

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<sup>116</sup> Statens offentliga utredningar, *Säkerhet i ny tid - Betänkande av Utredningen om Sveriges försvars- och säkerhetspolitiska samarbeten*, p. 56; and Sundberg and Åhman, *På tu man hand: En studie om bilaterala och regionala försvarssamarbeten i Europa med fokus på det fransk-brittiska samarbetet*.

<sup>117</sup> Glatz and Zapfe, *NATO's Framework Nations Concept*, p. 3.

interoperability and the use of NATO standards remain the basis for all collaborations.<sup>118</sup>

## 4.2 Different framework nations, different models

As military cooperation around a framework nation becomes a more prominent feature of European defence, it will be important for European NATO member states and partners to understand the fundamental differences between the two models developed by Germany and the UK. This will facilitate informed decisions regarding which grouping to join, and for what purposes.

The common denominator between the two is that they are both led by a major European military power acting as a framework nation. Consequently, the security outlooks of the two framework nations have a considerable impact on the resulting collaboration models. This could lead to the creation of two different “coalitions of the willing” pulling in different directions.

German defence policy is primarily set in a multinational context and is focused on building up forces for territorial and collective defence, including heavy formations. British defence policy is more oriented towards rapid reaction, including decision making, focused on lighter and deployable forces for power projection.<sup>119</sup> These differences are reflected in the differing priorities of the German-led FNC and the UK-led JEF. Whereas Germany has set out a model for developing multinational capabilities and force structures, the UK has set up a modular expeditionary force for rapid crisis response.

Accordingly, the FNC focuses on long-term capability development. It aims to build new capabilities and multinational force structures, meeting targets set by the NDPP by 2032. In contrast, the JEF is attempting to build operational forces in the short term by pooling existing capabilities. It is illustrative that the JEF was declared fully operational in June 2018.

Although the two collaborations originally aimed to build capabilities for different purposes, over time they have evolved in a similar direction with respect to operational tasks. The FNC is promoting the development of follow-on forces in a NATO context, focusing on deterrence and defence in continental Europe. The JEF is aiming to create an expeditionary force able to conduct initial entry operations of shorter duration without any stated geographical preference. However, the JEF has in recent years become a more regionally focused defence

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<sup>118</sup> Drent, Zandee and Casteleijn, *Defence Cooperation in Clusters: Identifying the Next Steps*, pp. 16–18; Zandee, *Core Groups: The Way to Real European Defence*, p. 4; and Glatz and Zapfe, *NATO’s Framework Nations Concept*, p. 4.

<sup>119</sup> For a discussion see Drent, Wilms and Zandee, *Making Sense of European Defence*, p. 8.

collaboration intended also to reassure NATO member states and partners and deter Russia.

The two models have a different relationship with existing multilateral cooperation within NATO and the EU. While the FNC was initially very closely linked to NATO defence planning, it has since also become a tool for supporting the EU's level of ambition. The JEF is less tied to NATO planning and can be used by the participating states for sub-Article 5 operations without a NATO decision. Given the UK's decision to leave the EU, the JEF is not formally connected to the EU's level of ambition. However, it is viewed by many as a way to maintain close collaboration between the UK and like-minded EU member states as a compensation for Brexit. Capabilities developed and forces set up within either the FNC or the JEF can, however, be used in any NATO, EU or other operation.

Furthermore, the structures of the cooperation models differ in some respects. Germany is focused on establishing multinational coordination structures around the German Armed Forces, while the UK is promoting a British-led modular force with flexible contributions from participating states. Germany thus stresses the need for a more structured approach to capability development, while the UK promotes a more flexible approach to operational cooperation.

Finally, the opportunities for other NATO member states and partners to join differ between the two models. Membership of the FNC numbers more than 20 NATO member states and partners, mainly drawn from Northern, Central and Eastern Europe. In addition, the FNC is aiming to be open to and inclusive of non-participating states, which can join as observers. The deepest integration within the FNC, however, will probably be established with Germany's closest bilateral partners. The JEF, by contrast, is more of an exclusive club of like-minded NATO member states and partners in Northern Europe. Its participants share a number of national security concerns and the aim is to foster a common strategic culture.<sup>120</sup>

Although the FNC and the JEF were launched under the same banner at NATO's Wales Summit, it is unclear how they currently relate to each other. According to officials, NATO's ACT ensures some coordination between the two initiatives, as well as the Italian grouping. In addition, the EDA has been invited to join the FNC in order to support coordination with ongoing capability development projects in the EU.

The FNC and the JEF can, in theory, be considered largely complementary, which would make it possible and even worthwhile for NATO member states and partners to take part in both. For instance, a state could develop capabilities within the FNC that could later be used as part of a JEF operation. From another point of view, the JEF could provide the initial forces in an operation that would subsequently be followed by force structures developed as part of the FNC. While

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<sup>120</sup> Saxi, *The UK Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF)*, p. 4.

they may both contribute to NATO's force structure, their relationship to the NATO command structure is unclear.

In practice, however, the resources available to smaller European NATO member states and partners are limited. It would therefore be wise to carefully consider which of the two cooperation models best fits their interests. To some extent that would involve a choice between which of the two framework nations, Germany or the UK, best match their security outlook and share their security interests.

### 4.3 Implications for Swedish and Baltic Sea security

The Swedish decision to join the German-led FNC and the UK-led JEF is in line with Swedish ambitions to create a web of closer security and defence relations with key countries around the Baltic Sea and beyond. Establishing close relationships with Germany and the UK, and keeping them engaged in the Baltic Sea region, is expected to benefit both Swedish and Baltic Sea security. The UK's decision to leave the EU has created an additional impetus to find ways to maintain close defence relations with the UK.

Of the two collaborations examined in this report, the JEF appears to have the greater potential to contribute to Baltic Sea security. This is because the JEF is promoting ties between like-minded countries and attempting to keep a major European military power engaged in the region. The JEF combines the bolstering of strong defence ties between neighbours with access to capabilities at a high state of readiness. The establishment of channels of communication and procedures for rapid decision making increases the likelihood of the JEF's resources being put to use. Combined with regular training and exercises, this can strengthen deterrence and raise the threshold for an armed attack.

Although Germany is an increasingly important actor in the Baltic Sea, the FNC does not have the same regional dimension as the JEF. The focus of the larger formations of the FNC is rather on territorial defence in continental Europe. This may, however, strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence, which will also be beneficial for Baltic Sea security. Furthermore, in the maritime domain, the ambition to set up a component command in the Baltic Sea region could be of value to regional maritime operations.

The Swedish Armed Forces could benefit from these collaborative formats in a number of ways. Both collaborations involve a focus on interoperability, which is recognised as a crucial aspect of Swedish defence, in that it adds to the ability to operate together with other countries when necessary.<sup>121</sup> The FNC provides an

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<sup>121</sup> Government Offices of Sweden. *International Defence Cooperation: Efficiency, Solidarity, Sovereignty*, p. 23.

opportunity to take part in multinational capability development projects and higher levels of command. The JEF offers a way to maintain levels of interoperability previously developed in international operations and to strengthen them in a regional context. It is also expected to improve technical interoperability between Sweden and NATO member states. In both the JEF and the FNC, Swedish staff officers will have the opportunity to join international staff elements in the UK and Germany, respectively.

Participation in these international collaborations, however, also involves risks for Sweden. The power asymmetry between the framework nations and the smaller participating states, as well as the mutual dependence between participating states, may lead to uncomfortable situations. Even though the JEF and the FNC do not involve any binding commitments, there would be pressure on Sweden to take part in and contribute resources to any JEF deployment.

On the other hand, neither the JEF nor the FNC involve any guarantees that the other participants would engage in a regional crisis in the Baltic Sea region. Should a regional crisis occur, most Nordic and Baltic countries would prioritise national defence efforts and would rely on support from major military powers outside of the region, such as the USA and the UK. For most of the FNC and JEF partner nations, defence efforts would be coordinated through NATO. For Sweden and Finland, however, the FNC and the JEF do not involve any defence obligations and/or guarantees. Participation cannot therefore be considered equivalent to NATO membership.

Another problematic feature of international collaboration is that current Swedish defence efforts are directed at maintaining a broad set of capabilities at the national level. As long as Sweden maintains its status as militarily non-aligned it may prove difficult to take part in collaborative efforts such as the FNC, where capabilities and force structures are developed in a multinational context while smaller states are encouraged to provide niche capabilities within the framework of a larger military power. In the case of Sweden, this may lead to an unwelcome dependence on other nations.

Participation in these defence collaborations could also put a strain on limited resources. There is currently a tendency to duplicate capability development projects or double-hat force contributions in several collaborative formats. This can lead to a waste of effort and resources. It might also divert resources from priority national defence needs.

As argued above, the importance of these collaborations as a security policy instrument is closely linked to their credibility. For Sweden, there are several risks involved in relying too much on these collaborative formats. Both the FNC and the JEF risk only leading to a re-labelling of earlier collaborative efforts. The FNC already faces accusations of being primarily a bureaucratic exercise that will not lead to improved operational capabilities. The JEF's credibility, in turn, will be

dependent on its use and the willingness of partners to participate in operations. If the collaborations do not provide any tangible results, they will soon lose their credibility and value as a tool for enhancing security.

## 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The German and British-led defence collaborations examined in this report form part of a larger trend for smaller defence collaborations in Europe. This particular collaborative format around a framework nation has become a way to address a deteriorating security situation in Europe. However, the emergence of new “core groups” or “coalitions of the willing” in Europe will undoubtedly have an impact on existing multilateral institutions such as NATO and the EU.

For individual NATO member states and partners, the advantages of this new form of multinational cooperation are manifold. The German-led FNC and the UK-led JEF demonstrate the strength of existing security and defence ties between participating states. This could contribute to enhanced security from a regional perspective. Moreover, the collaborations offer smaller states an opportunity to maintain and develop national capabilities within a structured multinational context. The framework nations might in turn benefit from access to staff officers and niche capabilities, which would fill gaps and increase the sustainability of their forces while allowing them to retain full-spectrum capabilities.

The FNC and the JEF also present a way to maintain and improve the interoperability gained in international operations through regular training and exercises. Increased contacts at the political and military levels and, in the case of the JEF, familiarisation with national decision-making processes and the establishment of lines of communication could prove invaluable preparation for common action in a crisis situation.

In general, the large number of defence collaborations available in Europe also poses difficulties for individual states. Efforts to fill new initiatives with concrete outputs put a strain on scarce resources and risk diverting resources away from necessary investment in national defence capabilities. Cooperating around a larger framework nation also involves a degree of power asymmetry, which, for smaller states, may lead to an unwelcome dependence on a larger military power.

The success of these defence collaborations will stand on the resolve of the participating countries and the amount of resources they are allocated. There are a number of situations that could undermine the credibility of the newly established collaborative formats. The JEF’s success is, for example, dependent on the participating states living up to their commitments in case of a deployment. Similarly, capability development initiatives within the FNC need to produce tangible results and lead to new or improved capabilities. Otherwise, the collaborations will lose credibility and may only lead to a new level of bureaucracy.

In Sweden, the deteriorating security situation around the Baltic Sea has provided a new impetus for international defence cooperation. This has mainly taken the form of strengthened bilateral and regional relationships rather than increased



multilateral engagement. Given Sweden's limited resources, it will be essential for Sweden to encourage an overall coordination of collaborative efforts by existing multilateral institutions in order to avoid fragmentation and a duplication of efforts. All collaborations need to promote interoperability, based on NATO standards, between the armed forces of participating states.

Before joining any collaborative initiative, Sweden should carefully analyse the benefits and limitations of new and existing formats for cooperation. It might be worthwhile to participate in several groupings and take advantage of their respective strengths. However, due to the limited resources available, Sweden needs to prioritise the formats that it determines will provide the greatest outputs.

In any such assessment, the Swedish Government should extend its vision beyond the political relevance of different cooperation initiatives. It will also be crucial to look for concrete benefits for the armed forces in terms of capability development or operational capability. On a more general level, participating in both the FNC and the JEF provides an opportunity to gain insight into multinational cooperation in a NATO context.

Within the FNC, potential benefits are mostly related to long-term capability development. Sweden could gain from participating in clusters related to prioritised capability needs. Furthermore, Sweden could take advantage of opportunities for placements for liaison officers and to participate in training and exercises in the larger formations part of the concept. This would promote a familiarisation with levels of command not available to the Swedish Armed Forces. Sweden should also follow developments in the maritime domain and the German ambition to set up a component command in the Baltic Sea region.

Within the JEF, the potential benefits are related to enhanced procedures for rapid decision making and improved capabilities for expeditionary operations outside of Europe, as well as sub-Article 5 operations in a regional context. Sweden needs to be prepared to take part in operations now that the force has been declared fully operational. Given the JEF's regional membership, Sweden could look for opportunities to tie the JEF closer to Baltic Sea security, for example through exercises in a regional context. Sweden should also take advantage of training and exercises to enhance interoperability and facilitate rapid decision making at the political and military-strategic levels.

A similar analysis needs to be undertaken when considering future defence collaboration initiatives, such as the newly launched French E12. Given that Sweden's participation in the FNC and the JEF is closely linked to its bilateral security relationships with Germany and the UK, it may also be worth strengthening relations with France. Any such decision, however, needs to be based on a prioritisation of scarce defence resources and the potential for concrete outcomes from the collaboration under consideration.

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European military cooperation appears to be on the rise and is gaining increasing attention as a solution to the problem of limited national defence capabilities. One form of cooperation features the setting up of multinational formations under the leadership of a framework nation. Sweden has joined two such formats: the Framework Nations Concept (FNC) led by Germany and the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) led by the United Kingdom. Given the growing attention paid to these types of cooperation initiatives, what is the significance of the FNC and the JEF for security and defence in Europe, and in particular for Sweden and the Baltic Sea region?