

Editorial

Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine has upended the European security architecture and poses a fundamental challenge to the international order. In the process, changes have been unleashed in the foreign and security policies and domestic politics of the Nordic and Baltic countries. For Finland and Sweden this has meant an end to their long-held commitments to military non-alignment.

Meanwhile, all the Nordics are, each in their own way, impacted by changes in NATO's force posture, EU sanctions on Russia, the imperative to support Ukraine's war effort and help refugees displaced by Russia's attack. As the war has entered an attrition stage, questions abound regarding the willingness and ability of the West to continue its support for Ukraine.

In this issue, Russia's war of aggression is examined from Nordic perspectives, which includes various theoretical and empirical angles. These perspectives increase our understanding of the impact of Russia's aggressive action and offer analytical lenses to make sense of the new security dynamics in Northern Europe.

In their article, Kristin Haugevik, Katja Creutz, Matti Pesu and Øyvind Svendsen study Finland and Norway's evolving narratives about one another as neighbours, partners, and allies against the backdrop of political and scholarly discourses about the broader Nordic security community. They argue that the swift reframing of the Finnish–Norwegian relationship was possible after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 because it was formulated against the backdrop of the already established narrative about the well-functioning and trustful Nordic security community.

Tapio Juntunen and Emma Rosengren examine the nuclear dimension of NATO enlargement in the Baltic Sea region. Their article compares domestic deliberations about nuclear weapons, disarmament, and extended nuclear deterrence in Finland and Sweden from 2016 to 2022 in two successive contexts: debates about the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) from 2017, and about NATO membership after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Their aim is to reveal how joining a nuclear alliance was made possible in two historical contexts marked by non-alignment and opposition towards nuclear weapons.

In his article, Waltteri Immonen studies how Finnish parliamentary parties turned to favouring NATO membership, which they had previously opposed. Immonen argues that the parties employed a realist strategy of security, bolstered by political nationalism to express unity with the population to justify their shift. This amounted to an attempt to depoliticise the issue altogether. The study shows that nationalism can explain why states join international organisations rather than representing only a disruptive force in close interstate cooperation.

There are also a number of insightful discussion articles in the issue. Albert Weckman and Anton Brännlund underline the increasing importance of public attitudes on security and defence. They argue that 'the future security discourse should extend beyond traditional state-centric paradigms, incorporating a broader understanding of how democratic societies perceive threats and their responsibilities towards collective defence'.

Andris Banka revisits the old plans of Ronald Asmus, a key NATO enlargement architect on the US side, to woo the Finns and Swedes to join NATO ranks, which would have arguably alleviated the Baltic problem of strategic depth. At the time, Nordic leaders balked at the idea and conveyed their unwillingness to carry Baltic security burdens on their shoulders. Banka shows that as Finland and Sweden have now joined the alliance, it is worth revisiting the arguments and discussions

surrounding the proposal of putting Nordic countries in charge of Baltic security.

In his discussion article, Brendan Humphreys analyses the term ‘neutrality’ and the problems of finding a single definition relevant to post-Cold War politics. Humphreys examines the unique role and high profile that the Nordics have enjoyed in diplomacy and peacekeeping and also inquires if NATO membership for Sweden and Finland is being secured to the detriment of international diplomacy and conflict resolution.

In their discussion article, Mathieu Landriault and Julie Renaud analyse Russian information campaigns and show how Russia mounts them through its press agencies to discredit NATO’s presence in the Arctic region. They write that there was an increase in Russian media coverage of the Arctic in relation to NATO in May 2022, ‘attributable to the announcement by Sweden and Finland of their decision to join NATO. Russian intention here was clear: portray NATO enlargement as jeopardising Arctic stability and creating a source of tension for the Arctic region’.

Tyynne Karjalainen contributes to the emerging academic and expert debate about peace in Ukraine and security order in Europe by discussing, firstly, the omission of Ukrainian perspectives from the debate, and secondly, by providing an elementary introduction to that perspective by reviewing recent Ukrainian literature and commentary. Her discussion article echoes the proposal of many Ukrainian and other authors: to leave behind the European security order that enabled Russia’s aggression in the first place, the perspective of the ‘peripheries’ should be placed at the centre of imagining peace and security in Europe in the future.

Kyungmee Kim, Cedric de Coning, Emma Hakala, Tobias Etzold and Minoo Koefoed examine the peace and security implications of climate change for Nordic region. They argue that the Nordic countries can gain considerably by acting together on climate security. As they are facing similar risks and share similar approaches to civil preparedness, these states could join forces in developing effective responses. Rather than all individually building up risk analysis models or monitoring systems, they could pool resources for collaborative approaches.

The issue also includes a book review by Sofiya Voytiv on **Kacper Rejkawek’s book** *Foreign Fighters in Ukraine: The Brown-Red Cocktail* (Routledge 2023). Finally, there is Helmi Räisänen’s excellent lectio praecursoria: Reimagining crisis management.

We hope that this NRIS issue on Russia’s war of aggression from Nordic perspectives creates active academic and societal debates on these themes. We are looking forward to receiving new NRIS submissions on various aspects of international politics and the Nordics.

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