



NORPOLFACTOR WP 1

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Polish-Norwegian Perceptions and Interactions

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Contents

1 INTRODUCTION / 7

Presenting the NORPOLFACTOR Project / 7

Broad Understanding of Security – Norwegian and Polish Approaches / 8

Perceptions, Self-perceptions and Perceptual Gaps – Operationalising Key Concepts / 9

2 NORWEGIAN PERCEPTIONS OF POLAND / 10

Key Factors Shaping Mutual Perceptions / 10

Perception of Poland in the Norwegian Public Debate / 12

Poland in the Key Norwegian Strategic Documents on Foreign and Security Policy / 13

The Impact of the War in Ukraine on Perceptions of Poland / 15

3 POLISH PERCEPTIONS OF NORWAY / 17

Norway's Image in the Public Debate in Poland: Between Ignorance and the Magic of Myths and Nightmares / 17

Norway in Key Polish Strategic Documents: On the Northern Outskirts / 19

The Impact of War on Polish Perceptions of Norway: Becoming an Important Energy Partner / 20

4 NORWEGIAN SELF-PERCEPTIONS (AND SELF-DECEPTIONS?) / 22

Norway's Special Relations with Russia: The Balancing Act / 23

Norway as NATO in the North: The Ambivalent Ally / 25

Norway as a Compulsive Peacemaker: Values, Interests, and Status / 27

5 POLISH SELF-PERCEPTIONS AND SELF-DECEPTIONS / 29

A Sense of Danger and Distrust / 29

Polish Conviction of the Threat to Their Country / 30

Eastern Policy: A Special Role and Prometheanism / 31

Between the West and the East... again? External Criticism and 2023 Election / 33

6 POLAND AND NORWAY: PERCEPTUAL GAPS / 34

7 POLISH-NORWEGIAN INTERPLAYS: AREAS OF COOPERATION AND POINTS OF CONTENTION / 37

NATO Partners / 39

Cooperation of Defence Industries / 41

Energy Security / 42

Societal Security and Resilience – Democratic Backsliding and Polarisation as a Security Challenge / 43

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Introduction

Presenting the NORPOLFACTOR Project

The aim of the project *Norway and Poland as actors in a changing security landscape* (NORPOLFACTOR) is to develop enhanced knowledge of the security-related challenges, risks and threats Poland and Norway face in their strategic environment in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Russia's full-fledged war against Ukraine is a watershed event that has changed perceptions of security in Europe, in the transatlantic context and globally. Since both Poland and Norway border an increasingly assertive Russia and are NATO's front states on the Eastern and Northern flank, it was important to examine the impact this strategic challenge has had on their foreign, security, and defence policies. We expect that the realisation of this joint Polish-Norwegian project will provide an important input to policymaking in both countries.

The aim is to help national decision-makers to better coordinate their policies in the bilateral context and in various international fora. This cooperative effort also aims to provide support for national and international stakeholders responsible for the formulation and implementation of security and foreign policies in areas of strategic importance for both national Polish and Norwegian policies and for policies of international organisations Poland and Norway are members of or are affiliated with in other ways.

In this working paper, we aim to map mutual perceptions of Poland in Norway and Norway in Poland, the basic ideas informing their approaches to security-related challenges caused by their location in Russia's neighbourhood as well as what could be termed as areas of cooperation and points of contention in their cooperation.

Broad Understanding of Security – Norwegian and Polish Approaches

Although the main focus of the NORPOLFACTOR project is the impact the Russian war in Ukraine has had on perceptions of hard security in Poland and Norway, this war has also revealed the importance of other security aspects. This explains why, in this project, we have decided to adopt a broad approach to security, including military security and questions related to broadly understood political, economic, societal and even environmental security. Such an approach aligns with the broad approach to security proposed in the seminal work of Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde¹ that treats security not only as the absence of military threats to the state. Instead they propose a multifaceted conceptualisation of security as a particular type of politics extending beyond traditional military power to include political, economic, environmental, and societal dimensions. In addition, such an approach also expands the referent objects of security beyond the state to include individuals, societies, companies, and more. The ongoing war in Ukraine with Russian massive attacks on civilian infrastructure has demonstrated that this comprehensive and multifaceted approach to security is necessary in a situation when potential adversaries are expected to inflict damage not only to military infrastructure but also to other elements of critical infrastructure that is necessary to secure the smooth functioning of the attacked state and society.

However, we assume that this broad approach to security has been, for various geographical, historical, and societal reasons, received and implemented differently by the national policymaking communities in Norway and Poland. Norway is a relatively small country in demographic terms, peripheral in geographic terms and safely anchored in the NATO alliance since its inception in 1949. In shaping security policy, Norwegian policymakers tend – at least officially – to rely on hard security guarantees provided by their NATO membership and have been, therefore, more willing to adopt a broad approach to security in which military security is viewed as only one element of security spectrum that in addition includes economic, environmental, political, and societal security. In the case of Poland, with its historical experience of being overrun by its more powerful neighbours and with its independence curbed by the forced membership in the Eastern bloc ruled by Moscow, the question of hard military security as a means of securing the existence of the nation and the state has been the main idea informing Polish approach to security. This also explains why Poland defined joining NATO and the EU as the best way of anchoring Poland in the Western community, which would provide hard security guarantees, and thus as the top strategic priority in the first years after regaining independence in 1989.

Perceptions, Self-perceptions and Perceptual Gaps – Operationalising Key Concepts

The NORPOLFACTOR project aims to increase the level and improve the quality of cooperation between Poland and Norway in the broadly understood security field. To achieve this goal, it is therefore important to better understand how these two perceive each other and how similar or different their understandings of security challenges they must deal with are. It is even more critical to examine to what extent the approaches they chose when addressing the security challenges they face can facilitate or hinder their bilateral and multilateral cooperation on security.

In this brief study, we will, therefore, start by exploring how Poland is perceived in the public and expert debate in Norway, as well as how Norway is perceived in the Polish public and expert debate. In the ensuing part, we will also explore how the self-perceptions of Poland and Norway as security actors should be factored in in this examination. They can also influence mutual perceptions and the interest in and ability to strengthen their security cooperation. Finally, in the last two sections of this working paper, we examine how the perceptual gaps identified in the examination of national approaches to security in the previous sections can challenge

or facilitate closer strategic cooperation between Poland and Norway.

For instance, until the 2014 annexation of Crimea and occupation of parts of the territory of Ukraine by forces supported by Russia, there was clearly a perceptual gap in the perception of Russia in Poland and Norway. In the case of Poland, because of the historical experience, Russia had been viewed as a highly probable source of a strategic threat to the very existence of an independent Poland, even in the circles that had tried to launch a reset in Polish-Russian relations. In the case of Norway, Russia had been viewed as a potential source of strategic trouble in the High North but not as an existential threat to the very existence of Norway as an independent state. What has happened after 2014 and even more so after the Russian aggression against Ukraine launched on 24 February 2022 has been the apparent convergence of the Polish and Norwegian perception of Russia as a strategic threat, which is one of the factors that can facilitate bilateral cooperation on how to address security challenges caused by Russia's aggressive behaviour in the strategic neighbourhood both Norway and Poland are a part of.

2

Norwegian Perceptions of Poland

Key Factors Shaping Mutual Perceptions

In this part of the study, we explore how Norwegian perceptions of Poland have evolved by examining how Poland has been represented in Norway, how Poland figures in the critical official Norwegian policy documents with a focus on national security and foreign policy and finally on how the war in Ukraine has contributed to changing perceptions of Poland in the Norwegian debate.

Before presenting how the perception of Poland has evolved, it is important to list at least some factors that have influenced these perceptions over the past decades. Until the end of the Cold War in the public debate in Norway, Poland was viewed first and foremost as a member of the Warsaw Pact, a military alliance controlled by the Soviet Union that was preparing for a war against NATO, another military alliance of which Norway was one of the founding fathers in 1949. However, this historical perception of Poland as one of the Soviet vassal states was strongly influenced by several factors. First, there was a vivid memory of the participation of the Polish troops in the battle of Narvik in 1940. Second, the perception of Poland was influenced by the the Cold War era political struggles, mainly the emergence of Solidarity as a unique political factor in the region. The direct and broad support provided by the Norwegian society to Solidarity and Poles, more generally after the introduction of martial law in December 1981, was followed

by the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Lech Walesa in 1983. Thousands of Polish political refugees found their way to Norway after 1981, which also influenced Norwegian perceptions of Poland. In addition, in the 1980s and 1990s, many Poles viewed Norway as an attractive country to work in – legally and illegally – and this migration put Poland and Poles higher on the national Norwegian agenda and Norway on the Polish one.

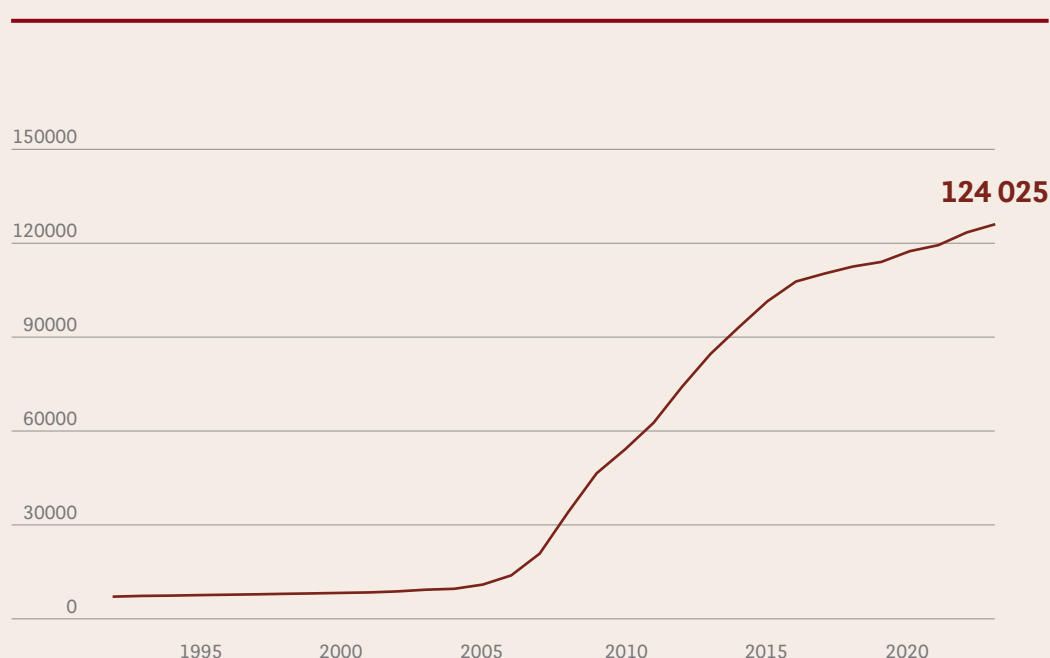
Another major historical development that had a huge impact on how Poland has been perceived in Norway and how Norway has been perceived in Poland was the end of the Communist rule in Poland and Poland's turn to the West. This turn to the West was institutionalised with Polish membership in NATO in 1999 and in the European Union in 2004. These two memberships have clearly impacted the perception of Poland and Poles in Norway. Poland was no longer viewed as a potential source of strategic threat, as was the case during the Cold War, but as a new NATO ally. In 2008, only four years after the accession of Poland to the EU and the opening up of the Norwegian labour market,² 32 069 Poles became the biggest foreign group in the country. By the end of 2023, there were 124,025 Polish citizens living in Norway – they form 2.4% of the country's population and continue to top the list.³ This exponential growth of the Polish community in Norway has put Poland and Poles on the agenda

not only centrally, where questions related to the impact of the massive labour migration on the Norwegian model of welfare state received some attention,⁴ but also in 352 of Norway's 356 municipalities, which, according to a 2021 study, have received migrants from Poland.⁵ In the same way, these thousands of Poles living in Norway, with their families still in Poland, have contributed to shaping perceptions of Norway in Poland.

Finally, and most recently, the issue of democracy backsliding in Poland and other countries has attracted some attention in Norway and, more generally, in the Western public debate and was viewed as posing a challenge to bilateral relations at the political level. The perception of the Polish political authorities acting in ways incompatible with the principles of the rule of law as defined by the European and transatlantic institutions⁶ had negatively impacted bilateral relations.

The tensions culminated in 2017 when the Norwegian authorities decided to suspend negotiations with Poland on how to assign the EEA Grants that were to support the development of the Polish civil society⁷ and at the symbolic level when the prestigious Norwegian Rafto-prize was in 2018 awarded to the Polish human rights ombudsman Adam Bodnar for his work on the protection of minorities and human rights in Poland that many saw as being challenged by what in the public debate in Norway was described as a new populist-conservative government.⁸ The issues related to democratic backsliding influenced not only the development of bilateral relations between Norway and Poland but also relations between Poland and the EU that introduced various punitive measures in response to what was viewed as implementation by the Polish decision-makers of policies that were not compatible with the principles of the rule of law.⁹

Figure 1. Number of Poles Living in Norway



Perception of Poland in the Norwegian Public Debate

Mapping the image of Poland in the Norwegian public debate is a timely question. To address this question, we decided to conduct a quantitative examination of the representation of Poland in the Norwegian public space by analysing what broader topics Poland has been associated with in the Norwegian media between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2022. We used www.retriever.no, the key resource for examining Norwegian media content, to map how Poland was represented in the Norwegian media. We conducted several dozen searches for a set of search strings, including “Polen” (Norwegian name of Poland) and terms we expected to be associated with events in Poland and in the bilateral Polish-Norwegian context. In addition, we conducted searches to map what other actors Poland is associated with and which more general topics the country was most associated with in the same period.

There were 118,764 articles registered in this period in which the term *Polen* (Poland) was mentioned in the whole corpus of Norwegian media. After having conducted several searches using more advanced features in the system, we grouped these searches into several more general categories, such as Polish domestic politics, Poland’s relations with its Western partners, Poland’s relations with its Eastern neighbours, issues related more directly to Polish-Norwegian bilateral ties and questions related to energy and security. Table 1 presents the results of this general quantitative examination of the content of Norwegian media covering Poland in descending order, starting with general topics that received the most attention and ending with topics that attracted the least attention.

Table 1. Poland in Norwegian media: general categories¹⁰

General topic	Number of articles	Share of articles mentioning Poland
Foreign relations West	136112	114.6%
Norway	65975	55.6%
Foreign relations East	48425	40.8%
Security	23174	19.5%
Polish domestic politics	12864	10.8%
Energy-related issues	8907	7.5%

The general conclusion drawn from this brief quantitative examination is that topics concerning the international situation strongly dominated the Norwegian media’s representations of Poland. Poland and Norway are mentioned in more than 50%, Poland and Germany in more than 24%, Poland and Ukraine in 20.9%, Poland and Russia in 19.9%, Poland and the USA in 16%, Poland and the EU in 14.9%, Poland and NATO in 4.9% of articles mentioning Poland.

Security-related questions also received a relatively high level of attention – war-related questions were, for instance, mentioned in 6.3% of all Poland-related texts, with less attention being paid to such issues as security (3.7%), defence (2.3%), crisis (2.2%), conflict (2.1%), infrastructure (1.5%) or sabotage (0.4%).

Concerning issues related to Polish domestic politics, the attention seemed to be focused on developments in the Polish economy (3%), key political figures shaping policy in the country, such as President Duda (1.9%), Prime Minister Morawiecki (1.5%), PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński (0.6%) or leader of the Polish opposition Donald Tusk (0.3%). Also, questions related to the situation of the migrants and refugees (1.7%), the LGBT community in Poland (0.8%), those concerning the rule of law (0.4%), populism and polarisation (0.3% each) were covered in the Norwegian media in this period, receiving less attention than issues related to the international developments.

Finally, considering that energy cooperation is an important topic in bilateral Polish-Norwegian relations, we also decided to examine whether the questions related to energy and climate policy in the Polish context attracted any attention from the Norwegian media. Unsurprisingly, issues related to natural gas and oil topped the list, although they received relatively little attention as they popped out in 3.3% and 2.9% of all Poland-related articles. Also, the coal-related questions were covered with even less attention (1%). Baltic Pipe – the flagship of Polish-Norwegian energy cooperation – attracted even less attention as the term was mentioned only in 0.3% of articles related to developments in Poland.

Poland in the Key Norwegian Strategic Documents on Foreign and Security Policy

Before the Russian aggression against Ukraine and despite some positive developments in bilateral relations between Norway and Poland – including the presence of a large Polish ethnic diaspora in Norway, Poland becoming the main European market for the export of maritime products from Norway, and the construction of the Baltic Pipe connecting Norwegian gas fields with a new market in Central Europe – Poland was not very present in the official Norwegian documents on foreign, defence and security policy.

In 2008, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a lengthy report on the main lines of Norwegian foreign policy¹¹ in which Poland is mentioned four times as an important EU neighbour with which Norway should cooperate to pursue its interests, as one of the three most important European markets for Norwegian maritime products, as an important actor in the Baltic Sea region, and finally as one of the 19 so-called “focus-countries” in which the reputation of Norway as an international actor has been measured.

In a 2008 Ministry of Defence document on priorities in defence policy, Poland is mentioned once, together with the Czech Republic, in the

context of the work on the development of the US missile defence system in Europe.¹²

In 2011, the Ministry of Defence published its strategic document on defence policy,¹³ mentioning Poland three times. First, when the British initiative on the Northern Group including the Nordic and Baltic countries as well as Great Britain, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland and Belgium from 2010, is discussed. Secondly, in the context of bilateral Polish-Norwegian defence cooperation, which is described as good but not very active, even though Poland had acquired some Norwegian military equipment that should contribute to the strengthening of this cooperation.

In 2015, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a lengthy report on global security challenges, in which Poland was mentioned once, with Germany and Ukraine as countries that experienced cyberattacks conducted most probably by Russian hackers from CyberBerkut group against their government websites.¹⁴

The Ministry of Defence 2016 report on the national defence industry strategy from 2016 mentions Poland once, together with Germany, as a large European nation that does not have an

official defence industrial strategy but pursues policies in this area.¹⁵

In 2016, Norwegian authorities published *The Norwegian Government's strategy for cooperation with Poland*.¹⁶ This document described in detail the goals that were to be achieved in relations with Poland. They included the expansion of political collaboration with Poland on foreign and security policy, and in particular on matters relating to European cooperation and NATO, the increased awareness and understanding in Poland of Norwegian interests and positions on important international issues, including EU/EEA matters, as well as promoting closer cooperation between Norway and Poland in international forums and institutions. In addition, the strategy called for ensuring strategic use of the EEA and Norway Grants as a basis for closer cooperation with Poland in areas where Norway had interests to safeguard, strengthening the Norwegian–Polish cooperation in the fields of energy, climate change and the environment. Moreover, this official document discussed questions related to trade and investments between Norway and Poland, as well as the efforts of Norwegian companies to invest in the Polish market, especially in energy, defence-related products and seafood. The publication and implementation of this strategy also resulted in

increased awareness and knowledge of Norway and Norwegian policy in Poland and in reinforcing and strengthening Norway's positive image in Poland.

In a 2017 study on the main lines in Norwegian foreign policy presenting its main challenges and priorities, Poland is not mentioned at all, and four countries – Germany, France, the UK and the Netherlands – are defined as the most important partners in Europe.¹⁷

In 2018, Poland was mentioned in a Ministry of Knowledge report on Nordic cooperation as a country pursuing, together with Hungary, populist policies that pose, together with such developments as Brexit and uncontrolled migration, a challenge to the normative foundations of European cooperation that must be strengthened to address these serious problems.¹⁸

In a 2021 study on security cooperation published by the Ministry of Defence, Poland is mentioned as one of the countries – together with the USA and Malaysia – that had acquired Norwegian NSM missiles.¹⁹ The 2021 document on societal security published by the Norwegian Ministry of Justice²⁰ Poland is mentioned only once as a country joining the Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki.

The Impact of the War in Ukraine on Perceptions of Poland

The quantitative examination of the coverage of Poland in Norwegian media has revealed the impact that Russian aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 had on the representations of Poland in Norwegian media. Figure 2 demonstrates how the outbreak of the war influenced the media debate with much more focus on questions related to security (war), the role of NATO, as well as the impact of developments in the Eastern neighbourhood where Russia conducted its military operations against Ukraine. Before the outbreak of the war, Poland had been perceived as a relatively active member of the international community and a country facing some internal problems as well as some difficulties in relations with the EU – which was especially visible in the coverage of Poland in key

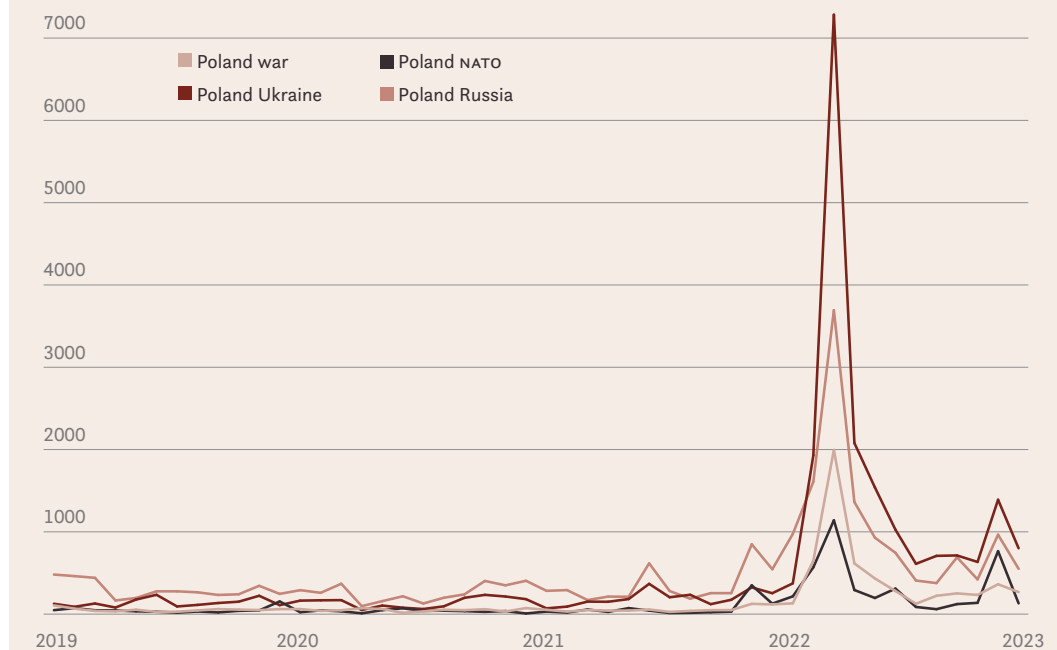
Norwegian newspapers (*Aftenposten*, *Dagbladet*) and the national broadcaster NRK. However, the outbreak of the war resulted in a reframing of Poland in Norway's public discussion, placing Poland very clearly in the context of the war raging in its vicinity and underlining the very positive role played by Poland and by Polish society in dealing with immediate effects of the Russian aggression.

The outbreak of the war in 2022 resulted in a complete revision of Norwegian policy towards Russia. Another consequence was that it focused much more on the public and policy debate on the situation on the eastern flank of NATO and the role Poland, as the most important NATO member bordering Ukraine, has played

in this new strategic context. Both Norwegian media and Norwegian policymakers have since February 2022 paid much more attention to the situation developing in this part of Europe. The reaction of Polish society, which opened its homes and hearts to refugees from Ukraine, and the role of Poland as a transit area for supplies of help, including military aid, to Ukraine gained

much attention and appreciation in Norway. In addition, Poland's ambitious rearmament program that came about in the aftermath of the Russian aggression against Ukraine was widely viewed as a factor strengthening NATO's ability to address the re-emerging Russian threat. Several official Norwegian policy statements also reflected this new approach to Poland.

Figure 2. Mentions of Various Terms in Texts Covering Poland over Time



Poland's role as a country providing shelter to millions of Ukrainian refugees was noticed in a 2022 document on the changing priorities in the Norwegian defence sector in which Poland was mentioned – along with Hungary, Romania and Slovakia – as a country that has successfully managed massive flows of displaced people from the war-torn Ukraine.²¹

This new focus on Poland has also been evident in the Norwegian Defence Commission's report published in 2023,²² which mentions Poland 21 times. Poland was mentioned as a country where NATO deployed reinforcement forces and as one of the countries – along with France, Germany and Italy – where the growth of nationalist currents could have dramatic consequences. Poland's history and geography were

mentioned as factors that made Poland behave in a different way than the countries in Western Europe. Also, Poland's role as a receiver of the LNG from Norway was mentioned. With Latvia and Lithuania, Poland was praised as a country increasing its per capita defence spending. Poland's role as a buyer and user of K9 artillery produced in South Korea and a possible European hub for the production and maintenance of these advanced systems was also mentioned as an significant factor in reducing Europe's strategic vulnerability. Poland and Germany are mentioned as important partners of the Nordic countries. Also, Poland's plans to spend about 5% of GDP on defence are praised.

In more general terms, this document assesses that due to massive rearmament plans,

Poland will become a more important actor for Europe's security in the coming years. Given Poland's plans to spend at least 3% and perhaps up to 5% of its GDP on defence and to build a defence with up to 1,500 tanks, 500 rocket artillery units and 300,000 soldiers, Poland will also likely become a central player in the defence of Central Europe, the Baltic Sea and the Baltic countries. Also, Poland's close cooperation with the US is viewed as a positive development. The document describes Poland as a more important defence industrial player and mentions the sale of hand-held air defence to Norway in

2022 as a positive development. The Defence Commission concluded, therefore, that Norway should look at opportunities to strengthen its defence cooperation with Poland, also as a way of dealing with the negative impact Norway's underinvestment in defence could have on the country's credibility as an ally and its ability to contribute to collective security. Finally, Poland, the Nordic countries, and Germany – countries expected to invest heavily in air defence systems – were mentioned as the countries that could be relevant to integrating a Norwegian air defence system.

3

Polish Perceptions of Norway

Norway's Image in the Public Debate in Poland: Between Ignorance and the Magic of Myths and Nightmares

The image of Norway in Poland before Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was not clear-cut. An important reason is that historical links between Poland and Norway have been weak, and it is only the last two decades when the intensity of cultural and political exchange – triggered by shared membership in NATO, the common European market and by the influx of Polish migrants to Norway (with an significant though not comparably big movement of Norwegian university students to Poland) – has led to the establishment of a distinct image of Norway. Common stereotypes drawn from the reputation of Scandinavian countries continue to be repeated, as exemplified by cultural historian Nina Witoszek, who writes that “Norway gives the impression of being a country where most of the ideals for which the European left has battled for the last two hundred years have been realised: to combine equality with freedom and justice – and to make a fabulous fortune in the process” [translations are by Damian Szacawa unless otherwise attributed].²³ The 22 July 2011 terrorist attack received extensive media coverage in Poland and was perceived as a blow to the otherwise idyllic image of societal harmony. As a result, however, a more visible interest in the realities of Norwegian politics developed, and the publication of books related to 22 July,

such as Åsne Seierstad's ‘One of Us’ (first Polish edition 2013), enabled a new level of engagement for the Polish public.

Polish expert perceptions of Norway have been influenced by the Norwegian internationally promoted self-image as the champion of peaceful dispute resolution in the 20th and 21st centuries in, for example, the Middle East, Sudan, Eritrea and Sri Lanka, through peace negotiations.²⁴ This external image perception of Norway results from an excellent domestic quality of life, including low unemployment, high incomes, equal opportunities for men and women, a broad social benefits package, and high levels of education and healthcare.²⁵ Last but not least, in Poland, this “land of fjords and the Northern Lights” is associated with tourist attractions and breathtaking landscapes.²⁶ At the same time, Norway's practices of extracting oil and natural gas and continuously investing in the exploration and development of new fossil fuel deposits have been criticised for green hypocrisy.²⁷ Therefore, Norway's ambitious climate policy and subsidies for electric cars, combined with the belief of living in a country that is exceptionally concerned about the environment and harmonious coexistence with nature, is viewed as nothing short of green-washing.²⁸

On the other hand, the second set of opinions influencing the perception of Norway's image in Poland derives from the fact that this relatively small northern state is inhabited by more than 120 000 (and according to unofficial data, even as many as 150 000–180 000) Poles,²⁹ who are the nation's largest ethnic group, of course except for ethnic Norwegians. A dynamic increase in the number of Poles that took place after 2004, when the post-Solidarity Polish diaspora was joined by new economic migrants (initially primarily men) who then began bringing their families after 2010,³⁰ has not gone unnoticed, especially in their relations with both Norwegians and state institutions (e.g. the Norwegian Child Welfare Services – Barnevernet), leading to some tensions. With time, the apparent glass ceiling that some of the migrants encountered, blocking their further advancement and integration in Norwegian society, coupled with the anti-Western rhetoric of the populist government, spawned narratives of disenchantment with the Norwegian (welfare) state and society. This was succinctly captured by the Oslo-based author Ewa Sapieżyńska, who claimed that “news and tv series show a rather one-sided picture of Poles: mainly as those occupying the bottom of the wage ladder, rhyming ‘Catholic’ with ‘alcoholic’... They are (we are) accused of ‘suffocating’ wage growth and, during the COVID-19 pandemic, of mass ‘importation’ of coronavirus”.³¹ These negative impressions were also matched by a broader interest in Norway as an example to be emulated in terms of democratic governance or way of life, with Polish radio broadcasters TOK FM and RNŚ featuring regular reports by Norway-based correspondents, and non-fiction literature on Norway gaining a broader readership. The total result of the growing diaspora and intensified societal level contacts resulted surely in greater visibility of Norway in the Polish public debate and collective imaginary, featuring both the negative and the positive elements.

Regarding Norwegian state institutions, it should be noted that the primary area of greatest

misunderstanding concerned child protection and public discourse about Norwegian institutions, mainly Barnevernet. The cultural differences between Norwegian society and Polish migrants, as well as the problems that Barnevernet had in adapting to the new social realities in Norway and Europe, meant that for some Polish migrants, it was difficult to understand and trust the Norwegian state, which undermined social integration.³² Unfortunately, the predictions of Jakub Godzimirski et al., who in 2015 warned of the ‘devastating effect’ of this misunderstanding and called for a wake-up call and action by the relevant authorities, have come true.³³ In the eyes of the parents involved, the Norwegian state can sometimes appear to play the role of “family-policeman.” In recent years, this element of perceived anti-immigrant repression has often been highlighted by right-wing media in Poland as a counterargument to the Norwegian critique of Polish rule of law standards and governance practices. Barnevernet has been referred to as the Gestapo or “state child kidnappers”, while the parenting methods used in Norway have often been criticised as part of a “totalitarian democracy” that contradicts traditional Polish values, according to which, parents, and not state institutions, are mainly responsible for raising a child.³⁴ Activities of Barnevernet, as well as the decision of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in February 2019 to expel the Polish consul Sławomir Kowalski from Norway, were cited as examples of the ‘degeneration’ of the Norwegian system.³⁵ However, as both Witoszek³⁶ and Czarnecki³⁷ point out – the statutory purpose of Barnevernet is to protect minors from violence by guardians, and a more fact-based debate on both Norwegian welfare services and Polish parenting practices has been initiated partly in response to the controversy.

All these factors make the image of Norway in Poland extremely convoluted, ranging from mythical images of it as a land of harmony and prosperity to the nightmare of a wealthy country exploiting Polish migrants.

Norway in Key Polish Strategic Documents: On the Northern Outskirts

After the end of the Cold War, Poland transitioned from communism to democracy and joined NATO (1999) and the European Union (2004). Since then, as Pawłuszko notes, there has been no consensus among Polish political elites regarding Warsaw's strategic priorities.³⁸ This reality is well reflected in the differences seen in the declared goals of the strategic documents produced during each side's time in power: the liberal "Priorities of Polish Foreign Policy, 2012–2016"³⁹ and the conservative "Polish Foreign Policy Strategy, 2017–2021."⁴⁰ Moreover, although Poland's geographical location would allow it to play not only the role of a "bridge" but also a "transmitter" between Northern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe, in practice, during the post-Cold War period, the northern direction was not a priority for Polish foreign policy. Much of the foreign and security policy prioritised the East-West horizontal line.⁴¹

For this reason, Norway appears relatively rarely in the Polish government's foreign policy strategic documents during the analysed period of the recent decade. In the "Priorities of Polish Foreign Policy, 2012–2016" strategy, Nordic countries, including Norway, were identified in March 2012 as a model and development goal for Poland to improve the quality of life. This is because the Polish government believed that Nordic countries demonstrated the importance of an efficient economy, a modern education system, and the systematic integration of green technologies to create conditions for sustainable development. Consequently, Poland's government used "Sweden's and other Nordic countries' models for modernisation and innovation of the economy".⁴² This aspiration was evident in Poland's bilateral and multilateral relations – as it was noted that economic development was becoming an increasingly important area of co-operation around the Baltic Sea.

However, if in the 2012 strategy, the Nordic states served to some extent as a kind of benchmark for evaluating Poland's development, they were mentioned only incidentally in the 2017

Strategy.⁴³ Together with many other Central European states (especially the so-called Bucharest Nine), they were included in the regional dimension, one of the three dimensions of Poland's security policy. Somewhat between the lines, however, one could see the desire to access Norway's natural gas resources to ensure energy security in Poland and Central Europe. Therefore, Norwegian resources propelled the development of transmission infrastructure along the North-South axis and thus contributed to the Three Seas Initiative, which was defined as one of the main goals of Polish foreign policy.⁴⁴

The importance of resources was underlined several times during a so-called exposé (information on the principles and objectives of Poland's foreign policy), which was delivered by Poland's Foreign Minister in the Sejm (lower house of the national legislature of Poland). Both ministers – Jacek Czaputowicz⁴⁵ in 2019 and Zbigniew Rau⁴⁶ in 2023 – pointed to the importance of constructing the Baltic Pipe gas pipeline system that connects Norway, Denmark and Poland. The resulting increase in natural gas availability has supported Poland's energy transition, with the pipeline already contributing to the further diversification of the directions of blue fuel supplies to Poland. In addition, the opening of gas interconnectors with Lithuania (May 2022) and Slovakia (August 2022) overcame the energy isolation of the Baltic States and influenced the liberalisation of the gas market in Central Europe.⁴⁷

For these reasons, Norway operates in a broader security context today by ensuring energy security for Poland.⁴⁸ The construction of gas transmission systems (like Baltic Pipe) was also one of the priorities of the Energy Policy of Poland until 2040 (EPP2040), adopted in February 2021 by the Council of Ministers.⁴⁹ The implementation of Baltic Pipe was part of the programme for constructing interconnections in the energy market of the Baltic States, e.g. the GIPL pipeline between Poland and Lithuania and the Balticconnector between Estonia and Finland.

In Poland's strategic documents, Norway has also been treated as a long-standing NATO member that views increased Russian activity in the High North as a threat.⁵⁰ For many years, Norway has been reluctant to put the issue on a knife-edge, preferring a strategy based on deterrence and bilateral cooperation.⁵¹ However,

the 2014 annexation of Crimea by Russia, and especially the launch of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which has been associated with the aspiration to change Europe's security architecture, have raised serious concerns about Russia's real intentions.⁵²

The Impact of War on Polish Perceptions of Norway: Becoming an Important Energy Partner

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has had a severe impact on Poland's perceptions of Norway. As mentioned in the previous section, the full-scale war has underscored the importance of Poland's regional security and energy independence – two areas where Norway plays a significant role for Poland.

Firstly, the war led to Warsaw's reassessment of foreign policy and reinforced its belief that allied guarantees and bilateral relations with European states are an essential component of Poland's security policy.⁵³ In Poland, Norway, as a NATO member and close EU partner, has been portrayed as a stable and reliable ally in the face of Russian aggression – the consequences of which are also visible in the High North and the Arctic.⁵⁴ Cooperation between the defence companies from Poland and Norway is also considerable. Norwegian missile systems have been operating at the Maritime Missile Unit (MMU) since 2015, and a new contract worth around EUR 1.8 billion was announced during the last MSPO in Kielce in September 2023. According to this contract, Kongsberg Defence & Aerospace will supply "several hundred" Naval Strike Missile (NSM), command vehicles, launchers and other elements for two new MMUs between 2026 and 2032.⁵⁵

Norway's support for Ukraine (including military support for Ukraine's defence and humanitarian assistance for war victims) and its participation in sanctioning Russia are in line with Poland's foreign policy priorities.⁵⁶ These factors reinforce Norway's image as a strategic partner for Poland, maintaining regional security by

guarding European NATO states against a potential Russian attack from the North Atlantic. Mateusz Morawiecki, the former Prime Minister of Poland, emphasised this image perception in March 2022 during a telephone conversation with the Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre and again during a subsequent visit to Oslo.⁵⁷ Recent research from the Kiel Institute for the World Economy shows that Norway has provided a total of over EUR 7.5 billion (as of 16.02.2024) in support to Ukraine, thus ranking 5th in the world in financial contributions.⁵⁸ Regarding its support as a percentage of its GDP, Norway is third behind Estonia and Denmark in contributions. This high level of financial support is due to regular contributions to Ukraine under the Norwegian Parliament's so-called five-year Nansen Support Programme for Ukraine. It has a total value of 75 billion kroner (EUR 6.6 billion) and envisages transferring around 15 billion kroner (EUR 1.3 billion) to Ukraine annually. The funds will come from an oil tax paid to the State Oil Fund (Oljefondet), valued at 15 765 billion kroner at the end of 2023.⁵⁹ Such conduct by Norway contributes to building a positive image of the country in Poland.

Concerning the energy sector, Poland has demanded an EU embargo on Russian gas, oil, and coal almost from the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. In this context, Norway was mentioned most often as an available alternative destination for replacing Russia's energy resources.⁶⁰ However, the war-triggered surge in energy commodity prices and Oslo's increased EU market share have contributed to a negative image of Norway, which indirectly

benefited from the rise in energy prices. Oslo has been reproached for this on several occasions by representatives of EU countries, including Poland, who accused Norway of Ukraine war-profiteering.⁶¹ In this context, Poland's then Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki made a high-profile statement criticising Norway for its increasing earnings from selling fossil fuels. Morawiecki encouraged young people to urge their Norwegian friends to pressure their government to share the profits earned from selling oil and gas.⁶²

More frequently, representatives of Poland have emphasised the issue of energy security in the context of Norway's unique role in Europe's supply system. The most widely quoted examples of its significance are in the unrealised 2001 Norwegian contract⁶³ and the construction of the Baltic Pipe gas pipeline between 2020 and 2022.⁶⁴ As Paszkowski notes, "both PiS and PO were in favour of energy cooperation with Norway."⁶⁵ The two main parties agreed on constructing the Baltic Pipe gas pipeline, arguing that this investment was necessary to ensure

Poland's energy security (PiS) and diversify the structure of natural gas imports (PO). The project is a prime example of Norway's impact on Poland's energy security, offering an alternative to Russian gas and thus enhancing perceptions of Norway as a key energy partner.

Moreover, there are many indications that Norway will remain one of Poland's most important partners, having supplied 6 BCM to Poland in 2023 through the Baltic Pipe pipeline and currently providing almost half of the EU's natural gas supply.⁶⁶ It will also be involved in Poland's energy transition for the next 10–30 years through the development of offshore wind power⁶⁷ and hydrogen/biomethane technologies.⁶⁸ This is possible due to the broader context of climate and energy relations between the EU and Norway, including the 2023 Green Alliance,⁶⁹ as well as some other short- and long-term areas of cooperation (e.g. the development of zero-emission technologies in transport, renewables, and support for research and innovative environmentally friendly technologies such as CO₂ removal, capture, and storage (CCS) technologies).⁷⁰

4

Norwegian Self-Perceptions (and Self-Deceptions?)

Norwegian foreign and security policy, as is the case for most states, is rooted in deep-seated self-perceptions. These perceptions both constrain and shape policies and practices, which in turn serve to strengthen, question and sometimes alter the self-perceptions they stem from.⁷¹ Embedded in such perceptions are inherent tensions, contradictions and fault-lines that constitute a latent potential for change. The implication of this is that Norwegian self-perceptions are multiple and multifaceted. Both in theory and in political practice, the decades after the Second World War (wwII) reshaped existing self-perceptions and forged new ones that have had lasting implications for Norwegian policies to the present day.

Norway's self-perception as an actor on the international stage has been shaped both by geography and by pivotal historical experiences that also hold particular importance in the shaping of Norway's post-wwII security policy identity. Over time, it became apparent that Norway could, or had to, carve out a more active role in influencing its environment. Norway gained independence as a modern state relatively late, in 1905, after leaving a union with Sweden that was *forced upon* Norway by European great powers after a brief moment of national revival in 1814. In addition, Norway's geographically peripheral role proved *not* to be a shelter from the great power politics of continental Europe during and after wwII. The experience of being invaded and occupied by Nazi Germany on 9 April 1940 revealed the futility of the policy of neutrality,

and also Norway's lacking ability to deter and repel an invasion. Norway's apparent need for allies and its strategically precarious geographical location meant that Norwegian policy had to change, resulting in the deliberate policy of seeking a balanced relationship with the Soviet Union, and later with the Russian Federation.

For a few decades after regaining independence in 1905, the strategy of neutrality appeared to be a success. During wwI, despite pressure from the war's belligerents and having sought-after commodities and the world's largest merchant fleet, Norway remained a "neutral ally"⁷² while profiting immensely from trade with the resource-hungry continental powers. However, this approach proved to be unrealistic in the years leading up to World War II when, as Riste wrote, "Norway watched the gathering storm in an almost fatalistic commitment to the neutrality of the past".⁷³ Its brittle neutrality was shattered on the 9th of April 1940, when German ships, aircrafts, and troops broke through the poorly equipped and hastily organised Norwegian defences. Within two months, most of the Norwegian resistance was subdued, forcing the King and Government into a five-year exile in London, an exodus in which the foundations of Norwegian post-war policies were re-forged by the harsh experience of war, occupation, and the impact of great power rivalries.

Already in 1941, the idea of Norway joining a future Atlantic security community had taken root amongst the Norwegian Government-in-exile

in London. This vision, however, was contested within the ruling Labour Party and would remain contested within Norwegian politics in general. Alternative visions of Norway's role in the world would continue to shape and challenge the path taken in 1949 when Norway signed the Atlantic Treaty.⁷⁴ Although its self-perception as a neutral state removed from world politics had collapsed in the span of a few years, Norway decided to adopt a special approach to its relations with the Soviet Union, and later with Russia. Norway's self-imposed restrictions curbed allied military activity and presence close to the Russian border. Such an approach was meant to reduce strategic tensions and avoid accidental escalation in relations between the two emerging political and ideological blocs. On the other hand, the eagerness to engage with the Soviets was also driven by a sincere belief in dialogue, common interest, and in building bridges between the East and the West.

The experience of no longer being able to stay out of great power competition would mean that Norway's role and place in world politics had changed against a backdrop of an emerging bipolar world order. Geography was no longer a shelter; instead, it emphasised Norway as a strategically important borderland – or frontline – between the East and West. The new

geopolitical reality spawned vigorous political discussions on the role of Norway as a small state in a world of great power rivalry. In later decades, augmented by oil-fueled prosperity and a persistent missionary impulse, Norway took on a more ambitious and self-assertive role in international politics.⁷⁵

In the decades after the Cold War, the dissonance and conflict between the variety of self-images have become apparent and the subject of debate.⁷⁶ NATO membership and questions of security and defence routinely clash with Norway's self-perception as an altruistic force for progress, development, reconciliation, and mediation, which may be at odds with Norway as a trading nation acting out of pure self-interest. These and other questions invigorate domestic political debates on the international role of Norway. In the following sections, we will therefore outline some of the historical sources and contemporary drivers of current Norwegian self-perceptions and policies, expressed through three dominant themes in Norwegian Foreign and Security Policy: Norway's special relationship with Russia, Norway's self-assigned role as NATO in the North, and Norway's self-perception and image as a peaceful nation with a role to play on the international stage.

Norway's Special Relations with Russia: The Balancing Act

In September 1945, the Soviet 14th army withdrew from the northernmost Norwegian county of Finnmark, almost a year after it had crossed the border in pursuit of the retreating German forces. The Soviet decision to voluntarily leave Finnmark without asking for any concessions is perhaps the most influential moment in the forging of Norwegian-Russian post-wwII relations.⁷⁷ The relationship was arguably *the* defining factor in the development of Norway's post-wwII foreign and security policy. This is not because the relationship with Russia was Norway's most important in terms of commercial, political, or cultural interactions. The importance of the relationship stems from the fact that it is, at its core, vital to the fundamental security of the Norwegian state. Consequently,

it has also been a key factor in shaping both Norwegian politics and Norway's relations with its most important allies after wwII.

Norway's shift towards the Atlantic security community during and after the war was not a given. The country's self-perception as an outsider to great power politics was rigid, as was its neutrality tradition. The founding of the UN and the vision of a neutral Nordic block or alliance for a period had considerable traction and support in Norwegian politics. Eventually, the Nordic path lost out to the Atlantic security alternative, cemented by the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949. This move had a decisive impact on relations with the USSR and later with Russia. The situation was slightly paradoxical because

the decision to join the alliance was driven by a new fear of the communist threat stemming from the USSR, with the Soviet-backed coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948 as an eerie backdrop. At the same time, while also wanting to reduce tensions and prevent escalation in the region, Norway needed American funds and weaponry. As a result, the Norwegian government put in place a number of self-imposed restrictions on military activity close to the Soviet border. Most importantly, in peacetime, no nuclear weapons or allied bases would be allowed on Norwegian soil. So, the fear of a communist power that had to be contained and deterred was accompanied by a belief in reassuring signaling that was to serve Norwegian and allied interests by reducing tensions in relations between the world's superpowers.

This duality of deterrence and reassurance (in Norwegian *avskrekking og beroligelse*)⁷⁸ has become the backbone of Norwegian security policy, although its practical expressions have become less militarily relevant over the years.⁷⁹ While Norway's deterrence mainly rests on NATO membership and the alliance's assurances of coming to Norway's rescue, the reassurance policies were designed to make sure that the practical expressions of this deterrence were tailored to reduce tensions and risks in relations with the USSR/Russia. Reassurance is therefore best understood as a tool to *calibrate* deterrence.⁸⁰

The Norwegian self-perception as a benevolent actor and peacemaker also prescribed a more *active* form of reassurance which saw the world in more liberal terms, as a plus-sum game where peace and security could be fortified by increasing interaction and cooperation.⁸¹ Hence, the relationship has also included several non-military initiatives and policies that have attempted to deepen ties and lower tensions between countries. Some initiatives were bottom-up and low-level (at least from the Norwegian side), such as the interaction between Norwegian and Soviet labour unions⁸², as well

as cultural exchange programs and grass-roots-level cooperation in the border regions. Here, it should be mentioned that the efforts to foster de-securitisation in the High North have sometimes been reciprocated from the Soviet/Russian side, even before the end of the Cold War. The most prominent example is perhaps Mikhail Gorbachev's proposal for more constructive cooperation between the two blocs presented during his visit to Murmansk in 1987.⁸³

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the hope in Norway was that the new Russia was on the road to democratisation and would, in a long-term perspective, become a full-fledged member of the family of democratic nations. There was, therefore, much less focus on deterrence-related aspects and more focus on reassurance and new elements of strategic engagement with Russia to help the new neighbour deal with various challenges related to the transition from a planned to a market economy, and from an authoritarian system to a democratic one. A new institutional framework, the Barents Region, was set up in 1993 to strengthen regional cooperation. Norway and other states invested a lot of means and effort to help Russia deal with various transition-related challenges. However, these efforts notwithstanding, Russia has since evolved in a completely different direction.

The Russian military invasions of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022, in clear defiance of international law, has led the West to a severing of almost all forms of ties and cooperation. The idea of building special relations with Russia, which had driven Norwegian policy towards its eastern neighbour since the decision to join NATO in 1949, has been dealt a lethal blow. Although the idea of reassurance lives on in the form of the upholding of many self-imposed restrictions, deterrence now dominates the current debate on relations with Russia that is viewed as posing an even more severe security challenge than its Soviet predecessor used to during the Cold War.

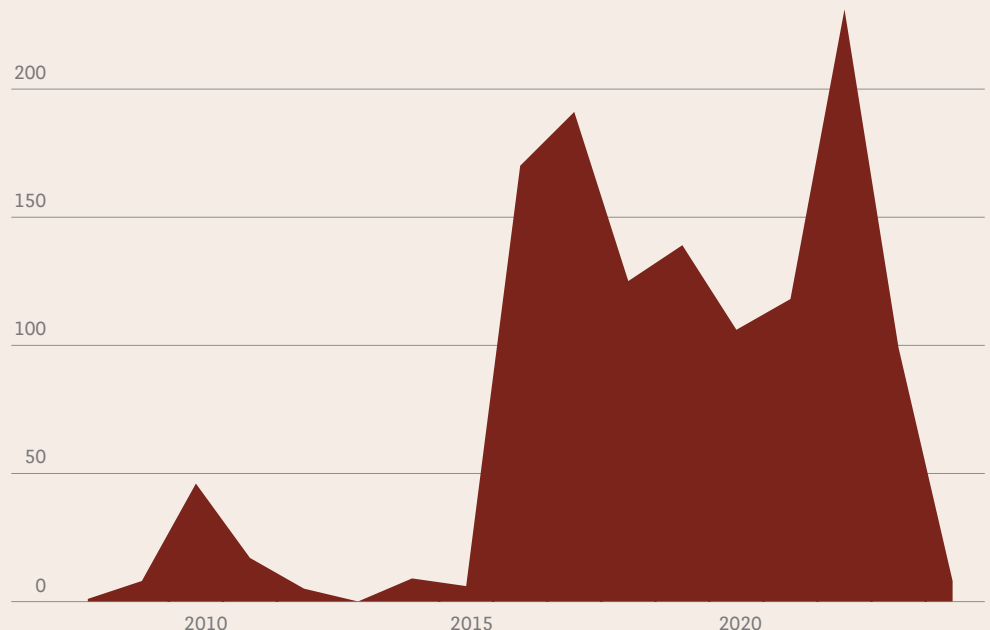
Norway as NATO in the North: The Ambivalent Ally⁸⁴

“We are NATO in the North”, stated then Minister of Defence Ine Eriksen Søreide in a 2016 presentation of the new long-term plan for the Norwegian Armed Forces.⁸⁵ The plan spoke of a more insecure world where Norway had to take responsibility for securing NATO’s northern flank. However, the Norwegian self-ascribed image of NATO in the north has an ambiguous character. In practice, the Norwegian attitude towards NATO has been characterised by a dual approach where many integration measures have been a Norwegian policy for decades, while, at the same time, Norway has enacted ‘screening’ measures to keep other aspects of alliance integration at a distance.⁸⁶ This duality illustrates how specific self-perceptions influence the practical side of Norway taking up the role of NATO in the North, where policy-makers have had to incorporate different aims that can be contradictory: “Signaling peacetime control and situational awareness to the rest of NATO while (2) also trying to attract allies to training, exercises, and commitment of troops. At the same time, Norway needs to (3)

signal deterrence towards Russia with NATO and (4) show some restraint and signal reassurance”.⁸⁷ Shaping and steering the military activities in the High North has therefore been a key priority for Norwegian governments since Norway joined NATO. Inherent to these practices is the belief that Norway’s relationship with Russia makes Norwegian practitioners and policy-makers uniquely positioned to strike a delicate balance between deterrence and continued low tension levels in the north.

However, the term ‘NATO in the North’ is a recent addition to the Norwegian discourse. The term gained traction in 2015, increasingly being used by, among others, then Minister of Defence Ine Eriksen Søreide (see Figure 3). It has functioned as a way to marshal support for increased spending in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2014 while also advancing the notion that Norway has both an opportunity and responsibility to be the guardian of the High North as a zone of low tension.⁸⁸

Figure 3. The use of ‘NATO i nord’ (“NATO in the north”) in the Norwegian public discourse from 2008 to 2024 — data gathered from Retriever.



In practice, however, the rhetorical image of Norway as NATO in the North rings somewhat hollow as Norway depends on allied presence to supplement the limited ability of Norwegian capabilities to monitor and deter Russia. A 2017 government White Paper stated that Norway should continue to facilitate ‘a greater Allied presence and more frequent Allied exercises in the north’, underlining the fact that the slogan by no means signals Norwegian ambitions of unilaterally acting on the alliance’s behalf.⁸⁹ NATO’s gradual return to collective defence has served to invigorate the renewed focus on the High North, a development for which the Norwegian government has advocated.⁹⁰

The deteriorating relationship between Russia and NATO means that the Arctic is no longer a ‘forgotten flank’, as was the case before the advent of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) in the 1950s and to a certain degree in the years after the end of the Cold War. The renewed geopolitical tensions underscore that the area remains an important focal point in the strategic competition between NATO and Russia. For Norway, the increased strategic importance of northern Norway in this new security context also makes it more important for NATO allies, who will be more motivated to help Norway in the event of a military conflict with Russia.⁹¹ While Norway has historically insisted on securing the land domain in the North without a peacetime presence of allied forces (due to the policy of *beroligelse*), the situation in the maritime domain has been quite the opposite for several reasons. Allied nations have a strong interest in keeping track of the Russian strategic submarines. Norway has lacked the indigenous capacity to handle this task on behalf of NATO despite a considerable Norwegian intelligence gathering capability. The maritime dimension remains the most strategically important, both for Norway and its allies.⁹²

While Norwegian deterrence was, and is, anchored in NATO’s article five, in practice, Norway has developed a close relationship with the US, structured around a host of bilateral agreements that undergirds the NATO canopy.⁹³ The US-Norwegian relationship has been the subject of considerable controversy in Norwegian domestic politics. That has had practical consequences for the prepositioning of allied equipment and the location of reinforcement facilities in Norway. Due to the concern for Russian sensitivities,

which secured the domestic consensus regarding Norwegian security policy, storage facilities were placed further south than what would make sense from a purely military perspective. Nuclear weapons were forbidden in times of peace, and some types of equipment that would normally be part of a packaged American pre-positioned Marine brigade were not allowed to be stored in Norwegian facilities.⁹⁴

Despite the domestic political friction over the years, the relationship with the US has grown even closer. In 2021, the two countries signed a new Supplementary Defense Cooperation Agreement (SDCA) that granted the US exclusive rights and access to designated areas of Norwegian military installations, an agreement that was expanded in 2024.⁹⁵ US and allied interests in the region can be crudely measured by proxy, such as the type and frequency of their port visits and patrols since 2014. This pattern signals that changing practices are slowly chipping away at both the formal and informal self-imposed restrictions on military activity in the North.

While the Allied interest in the High North from the Norwegian perspective is both welcome and vital, it remains a Norwegian priority to shape operations to fit with the traditional Norwegian policy of deterrence and reassurance – within the NATO framework. This framework, however, is now changing. In many ways, Finland and Sweden’s NATO membership is a boon for Norwegian strategy-makers. Not only are the two new member states militarily capable allies and neighbours, but their signing of the NATO treaty also ensured that Norway’s role in the alliance would be expanded from being a frontline state close to the Kola basing complex to also being the strategic depth and westernmost logistics node of a larger Nordic NATO area.⁹⁶ It clearly helps the stated Norwegian policy of encouraging continued allied presence in the region, but it also provides the potential for developing a more credible Nordic deterrent within a broader NATO framework.

The development of integrated Nordic defence plans under the same NATO command builds on existing Nordic cooperation efforts and provides the Norwegian government with a very convenient policy solution⁹⁷; it is both politically palatable and in line with the consensus-based notion of keeping the North as a zone of low tension – by balancing the apparent need for

allied presence with a policy of reassuring the Russians of the region's defensive intentions. However, it remains to be seen whether the new Nordic members subscribe to the same ambiguous strategic mindset. Either way, as both new

and old allies are keen to monitor and secure the once 'forgotten flank', the political catchphrase 'Norway as NATO in the North' has all but disappeared from the Norwegian political vocabulary.

Norway as a Compulsive Peacemaker: Values, Interests, and Status

During the 1980s, Norway's growing prosperity was accompanied by a growing self-assertiveness and ambition to play a more prominent role in the world. Norway had by then gained a reputation as a peaceful and trustworthy intermediary, and aid was already a significant component in the practical execution of the existing missionary impulse that had long traditions. This combination was now becoming a powerful tool for doing more than helping – it could also elevate Norway's status in international circles. Norway's role as a mediator in several peace processes, more than any other policy area, offered a way to combine its value-based role as a force for good in the world with its self-interest to raise Norway's prestige and standing in the world. The end of the Cold War expanded the room for action, meaning that Norwegian politicians and policymakers now seemingly had the means to reach their desired ends,⁹⁸ whether that meant helping or gaining status.

This room for action also meant that the Norwegian governments were more willing to take a stand and some risk to advance causes they deemed worthy and in the self-interest of a small state. For instance, Norway, along with the other Nordic states, were early and staunch supporters of the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa in the mid- to late 1980's.⁹⁹ The so-called Oslo Accords proved to be an early culmination point of Norway's peace and reconciliation efforts. The first accord was signed at the White House in September 1993. Still, the peace process proved to be unfruitful after being actively undermined by actors on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides. Later peace efforts in various settings had a mixed track record, the highlight being the relatively successful

but ongoing process in Colombia. The role of peacemaker carried relatively little risk while promising high rewards if successful. It also allowed Norway to balance values and interests.

Striking this balance became more complicated and acute as Norway took a more active role in promoting humanitarian efforts. Later, NATO's out-of-area operations strained Norwegian self-perception as a peaceful nation. The twenty-year operation in Afghanistan and the bombing campaign in Libya in 2011 could not easily be categorised as humanitarian efforts, showing that being a loyal ally had become a more important interest when Norway sought to draw attention to securing NATO's northern flank.

The war in Ukraine has focused on Norway as a provider of aid and its willingness – some would say eagerness – to be active on the international stage. The historical lineage of this image and self-perception was intentionally brought to the fore when current prime minister Jonas Gahr Støre announced that the 75 billion NOK (approx. 6.5 billion EUR) programme to help Ukraine would be named after Fridtjof Nansen. Nansen was the League of Nations' first High Commissioner for Refugees between 1920 and 1930 and rose to fame as a polar explorer. He later won the Nobel Peace Prize for his humanitarian efforts, after having spent considerable time in, among other places, Ukraine working to alleviate the suffering and starvation in the years after WWI.¹⁰⁰ The 2023 Nansen Support Programme consists of both civilian and military aid, slated to deliver both civilian and military assistance until 2027. The programme signalled long-term support while also underlining that the government found the cause to be in accordance with Norwegian values and

interests. Being a loyal ally and supporting Ukrainian sovereignty was more important for Norwegian security than placating the Russian government. Despite taking this clear stance, critics have argued that the sum does not reflect well on Norway when considering that the conflict has led to an ‘embarrassingly’ high windfall profit for the Norwegian state.¹⁰¹

Despite the Norwegian image and self-perception as an altruistic state, Norway has been characterised as an obsessive status-seeker.¹⁰² The impulse to be, and the rationale of being, a ‘do-gooder state’¹⁰³ cannot be reduced to only wanting status for status’ own sake. Leira has pointed to two main reasons for Norwegian policies.¹⁰⁴ First, an altruistic tendency is evident in the sheer number of NGOs providing aid and the relative generosity of Norwegian development funding. In this sense, status is a by-product that may well be useful or an end itself, the value of which is self-evident. Another often pointed-to rationale for the ‘do-gooder’-status is that it provides Norwegian politicians and decision-makers with a seat at the table when important matters are discussed.¹⁰⁵

Despite some government-to-government policy fluctuations, Norway continues to be one of the highest per capita providers of aid, as well as a staunch supporter of multilateralism and a rules-based international order. The result of these continued efforts is an institutionalisation of the peace and reconciliation efforts as part of the broader policy of Involvement (*engasjementspolitikken*).¹⁰⁶ This institutionalisation builds on the rationale that a more peaceful and well-organized world is one in which Norwegian security, interests (and often values) and those of many other small and medium states are better served. However, what counts as Norwegian interests is a matter of some political contestation. Current Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, in a 2006 speech, argued that the policy of Involvement promoted both values and interests:

This policy of engagement is a matter of both values and interests: Values, because we, as a wealthy nation in a peaceful corner of Europe, have a moral responsibility to engage in the cause of peace and development for others. [...] Interests, because ultimately, our security is best served by less suffering, less instability, and more progress in the fight against world poverty. Today, the question of interests is less a question of geography and strategic areas.¹⁰⁷

Later governments have, to a large degree, continued the involvement *policies* while downplaying the values-as-interests thesis in exchange for a less morally charged defence of how multilateralism and engagement can promote both values and interests – but also function as hard currency that can be exchanged for other policy ends.¹⁰⁸ A government white paper from 2018 aptly sums up the Norwegian interests and the underlying self-perceptions:

Organisations such as the UN, NATO, the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO are not just organisations we are a member of. They are also organisations that Norway contributed to founding. Norway has not been a passive spectator to the rise of the rules-based world order, but an active participant in building it. Now we must defend and further develop what we have helped to create.¹⁰⁹

5

Polish Self-Perceptions and Self-Deceptions

Like many European countries, Poland, throughout its long history, has constructed a range of beliefs and myths about itself. The more than 1,000-year-long history of the Polish state includes many difficult moments, including a 120-year-long disappearance from the world map resulting from conquests by neighbouring powers and over forty years of limited sovereignty under Soviet domination after World

War II. This tumultuous history has led to the formation of many social beliefs among Poles about their country's role in the world. Some of these beliefs stem from historical experiences and have deep justification, while others are more debatable and have served to create myths aimed at maintaining identity and national pride in difficult periods of history.

A Sense of Danger and Distrust

Poland's difficult history, full of wars, hostile invasions, and periods of occupation, translates Poles' strong sense of threat and concern for their security. Throughout its history, Poland fought numerous wars with its neighbours – the German and Muscovite States, the Russian Empire, Sweden, and Turkey – and in the late 18th century, it was divided and absorbed by three European powers – Austria, Prussia, and Russia – for over 100 years. After regaining independence in the aftermath of World War I, Poland lived under the shadow of threat from two aggressive powers seeking to undermine the status quo in Europe: Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Polish concerns proved justified as the country became the first victim of World War II, losing over 5 million citizens (the highest proportion in regard to the total population among

countries fighting in WWII), a significant portion of its national wealth;¹¹⁰ and Poland's borders were shifted westward, resulting in the loss of historically Polish territories to the east. Furthermore, due to World War II, the country fell under the Soviet Union's sphere of influence and was forced to adopt a socialist system, which limited its economic development for decades.

Based on these experiences, Poles have grown used to perceive their country as permanently threatened. They are also prone to look upon their neighbours with distrust, especially Russia, with whom Poland shares a history of long-standing rivalry. As was recently noted, the current generation of young adults is the first in Poland's modern history to have grown up and come of age in a sovereign and peaceful

country, hence the first to question the paradigm in which the existential security of the state continues to be the main reference point.¹¹¹

Despite this trend, traditional historical concerns were revived with Russian military aggression against Georgia in 2008 and, subsequently, Ukraine in 2014 and 2022 as indicated by the Polish National Security Strategy of 2020.

In the Polish security imaginary, the most severe threat is the neo-imperial policy of the authorities of the Russian Federation, which is also pursued by means of military force. The aggression against Georgia, the illegal annexation of Crimea and activities in eastern Ukraine have violated the basic principles of international law and undermined the pillars of the European security system. It should be assumed that the

Russian Federation will continue its policy of undermining the current international order, based on international law, in order to rebuild its power and spheres of influence”¹¹²

The negative assessment of Russia contained in the Strategy is shared by Polish society. According to public opinion polls commissioned by the Casimir Pulaski Foundation and NUPI, close to 90% of Poles support a tough stance towards Russia, and almost the same percentage believe that increased Russian influence in the world is something negative. Close to 80% of Poles indicate that Poland and Europe should adopt a tougher line towards Russia, including economic sanctions, with 65% believing that Poland should defend its political position more strongly in relation to Russia, even if it may come at the expense of Polish economic interests.¹¹³

Polish Conviction of the Threat to Their Country

According to the aforementioned survey, 43% of Poles currently consider the threat to their country high or very high, with another 43% considering it medium. In comparison, a strong sense of security is only felt by 13% of Polish people and is also accompanied by distrust of the attitudes of other states and alliances. This also stems from historical experiences. In Polish collective memory, there is a strong belief that Poland was abandoned by its allies, namely France and Great Britain, who, despite diplomatic commitments, did not provide real assistance when Nazi Germany invaded Poland in 1939. Furthermore, the “spirit of Yalta” still strongly influences Polish perceptions of international politics. Poles believe that despite fighting on the side of the anti-Nazi coalition for the entirety of WWII, suffering dramatic losses, and not collaborating with Nazi Germany at the state level in any way – unlike, for example, France, Finland, or Romania – Poland lost a significant portion of its territory and was handed over to the dominance of the Soviet Union (what symbol is the Yalta Conference in 1945), which imposed a socialist system on the country through terror.

Despite the generally very positive opinion regarding Poland’s NATO membership and allied relations with the US (according to the aforementioned public opinion poll for the CPF and NUPI, close to 70% of Poles have a positive attitude towards NATO, 65% believe that the best response to current threats is through closer cooperation with NATO and the US), in Poland’s public debates, historical analogies are indicating the unreliability of external security guarantees and the necessity to rely primarily on oneself. As the former director of the Polish Institute of International Affairs recently pointed out in “Gazeta Wyborcza,” “The problem is that by being vassals, we are never completely masters of our own destiny, and yet our patron (currently the USA) may change its mind and abandon the practice of extending a protective umbrella over its vassals, or it may simply lose the ability to fulfil its obligations. The history of alliance relations in the interwar period should be a lesson that cannot be ignored.”¹¹⁴

Eastern Policy: A Special Role and Prometheanism

Poland's difficult history is also associated with a collective belief in its somewhat special historical, or even providential, role in Europe, identified with concepts such as the "bulwark of Christianity." It derives from historical experiences such as the Battle of Vienna in the 17th century, in which Polish forces arrived to the aid of and saved the capital of the Habsburg Empire from being captured by the Ottoman Empire, likely saving a large part of southern Europe as well. Similarly, the Polish-Bolshevik War (1919–1921) is considered to have halted the spread of revolution and communism to the West. References to Poland's special role are also strongly present in the country's culture, including the works of major Polish authors such as Adam Mickiewicz's concepts of the "Christ of Nations" or Juliusz Słowacki's "Winkelried of Nations." According to these concepts, the Polish nation sacrifices itself and suffers losses so that other European nations can enjoy peace and freedom. In contemporary history, this myth has found some basis in the struggle of Poles against the communist system and the role of the "Solidarity" movement's role in the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the end of the Cold War.

The belief that Poland holds a special role in history is also linked to a sense of fulfilling a historical mission in the East. Due to its geographical location, Poland was influenced by both Western and Eastern cultures. Poland's Christianization in the Western rite guaranteed its identification with Western civilisation. However, its later conflicts with the Teutonic Order and Poland's personal union with Lithuania, and later the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, necessitated a focus on the East for several centuries. The Polish-Lithuanian state had to make efforts to ensure the security of its borders against the Grand Duchy of Moscow (and later its successor, the Russian Empire), the Tatars, and the Ottoman Empire, as well as to suppress rebellions and centrifugal movements in the Eastern provinces. These factors limited the Commonwealth's involvement in political developments in Western Europe. Eastern influences also penetrated Polish culture, influencing costumes and military tactics.

After World War I and Poland's reinstated independence, one of the greatest threats to the country's security, the Soviet state, was located in the East, again necessitating political activities in that direction. According to Poland's "grand strategy" at that time, Warsaw supported the independence aspirations of Central and Eastern European nations, which it saw as potential allies for balancing against Germany and the Soviet Union. Poland's leader in the interwar period, Józef Piłsudski, advocated for the creation of strong Lithuanian and Ukrainian states allied with Poland, deemed "the federative concept." As Piłsudski pointed out regarding Ukraine,

We want to give [Ukraine] the opportunity for self-determination and governance by its own people. I have put the card on the table to do something for the future of Poland, although in the way weakening the capabilities of the future, powerful Russia, it is needed to assist in creating Ukraine, which will be a barrier between us and Russia for long, long years.¹¹⁵

Piłsudski also emphasised the strong link between Poland's security and Ukraine's independence and entered into a military alliance with the leader of the Ukrainian People's Republic, Symon Petliura, during the Polish-Bolshevik War.

The intellectual basis for Poland's Eastern policy in the interwar period was the Promethean movement – an international association of intellectuals from Central and Eastern European countries supporting the independence aspirations of nations dominated by the Soviet Union. As Bartłomiej Światłowski indicates, the Promethean movement "was both a political and current political undertaking. The idea of liberating nations from the influence of the Russian Federative Socialist Republic (RFSRR) was accompanied by realistic, intelligence, and publishing daily work, around which an institutional-environmental network was built."¹¹⁶ Intellectually, it boiled down to the vision of a disintegrated Soviet state prompted by support for the independence of the nations within

it, thus combining political realism—defined by a strengthened Polish geopolitical position against a dangerous neighbour—with support for the liberal right of nations to self-determination. Institutionally, it was represented, among others, by the Eastern Institute established in 1925. In Poland, the belief of a cultural void in the East, which could be filled by the Polish state as a carrier of Western civilisation, also inspired the sense of a mission.¹¹⁷

After the war, the Promethean movement's ideas were promoted by emigre circles established around the Paris-based magazine "Kultura" led by Jerzy Giedroyc and Juliusz Mieroszewski—the key foreign policy thinker in this milieu. The most characteristic concept of the Eastern policy of the Parisian cultural environment was the "ULB concept, which included Poland's recognition of its newly delineated postwar eastern border, supporting Ukraine, Lithuania, and Belarus's independence and seeking improved relations with Moscow. Mieroszewski argued that "the ULB area determined the form of Polish-Russian relations, pushing one of them to either imperialism or satellite status". However, although he wrote from a seemingly detached geostrategic perspective, he also claimed: "I do not believe in that "either us or them" system ... today it is an anachronism, a barbaric anachronism. Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Belarusians in the 20th century cannot be pawns in a historic Polish-Russian game" (1974: 12).

While the "ULB area" is often mistakenly seen as an idea for turning Poland's three eastern neighbors into a protective buffer zone against Russia, echoing Piłsudski's "federation", it was in fact an integrative concept. Poland, as a "Central European" power, can play different roles, but Mieroszewski was argued already in 1962 that "the traditional Polish concept of a "bulwark", protecting the West from the East, needs to be dropped and replaced by that of a "bridge" [...] we need to become the catalyst of change in Russia".¹¹⁸

The ULB concept promoted by "Kultrura" was revolutionary at the time because it involved abandoning territorial claims to eastern territories in the name of reconciliation with neighbouring nations, including Russia.¹¹⁹ These ideas inspired Polish dissident circles as well as the nascent Solidarity movement, which issued

an 'Appeal to the workers of Eastern Europe' in 1981, clearly Promethean in its spirit. Following the 1989 elections and democratic transition, the Mieroszewski-Giedroyc inspired vision of Eastern policy have informed foreign policy elites of the new Third Republic and the ULB became something of a diplomatic axiom from left to right.¹²⁰

Poland's particular interest in the East and its "Promethean" sense of mission there are additionally legitimised in the eyes of Poles by the Polish peaceful transition from a communist state to a democracy. The aforementioned "Solidarity" movement symbolised democratic change in Central and Eastern Europe. After years of persecution, the Polish opposition finally managed to engage the communist authorities in the late 1980s in talks in the form of "Round Table Negotiations" held from February to April 1989. These negotiations led to partially free elections in Poland in June 1989 and eventually to forming a non-communist government under Tadeusz Mazowiecki. This government initiated painful economic reforms aimed at transitioning from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. The changes during this period enabled the gradual democratisation of the country—with entirely free elections in 1991—and its economic stabilisation, which eventually paved the way for Poland to join NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004. Therefore, there is a belief in Poland that due to its unique experience with such a rapid process of building a liberal democracy (which took centuries in many Western countries) and introducing a market economy, Poland is well-positioned to share its experiences and serve as an example to countries that are yet to undergo this process, especially those in Eastern Europe still under Russia's political influence.

In practice, the contemporary Polish sense of responsibility for Eastern states and its willingness to support them in their systemic transformation was seen in the Eastern Partnership of the EU—a joint proposal from Poland and Sweden. Poland politically supported the Ukrainian people during the Orange Revolution and Euro-maidan, and after the start of the second phase of the Russian war against Ukraine in 2022, it became one of the largest donors of military aid and a safe haven for more than 1.5 million refugees.

Between the West and the East... again?

External Criticism and 2023 Election

The external perception and self-perception of Poland globally as a successful example of democratisation has been weakened in recent years by the conservative Law and Justice government's populist tendencies and its adoption of actions considered controversial from a rule of law and liberal democracy perspective (similar issues have occurred in other countries in the region, notably Hungary) during its rule from 2015 to 2023. Topics such as the reform of the justice system, minority rights protection, abortion restrictions, and the approach to the media have caused both internal divisions and international criticism.

As a result, Polish authorities have been in dispute with the European Commission and some EU member states, remaining outside the mainstream of European politics. This has led them to question the long-standing dogma of Polish foreign policy, which was its pro-European, integrationist stance combined with pro-NATO Atlanticism. In the early 1990s, Polish as well as other political elites in the region have emphasized the peculiar geopolitical situation of "Central Europe" which they clearly positioned close to the "West" and separate from the "East". The "return to Europe" narrative was pivotal for Polish, Czech, Slovak and Hungarian aspirations to join the European Union and NATO.¹²¹ The emphasis on a "Western" identity was of paramount importance in the process, while "Easternness" was associated with problematic governance and incomplete or failed democratic transition.¹²² However, in response to Western critique, some members of the Polish ruling political elite adopted an "Eastern" identity. "We will always be an Eastern land"—claimed Marek

Magierowski, the state secretary to Poland's president Andrzej Duda.¹²³ The heroic stance of Ukrainians faced with Russian invasion, coupled with a rather lukewarm initial response in many Western societies, has boosted this revival of "Eastern" identity. Taken together, the fundamental question of Poland's place in Europe, its role towards both Western and Eastern neighbours has become open, and populist attempts at playing the 'bad Brussels' card have also put the issue of membership in the EU, previously unquestioned, on the table.

A change in this area may be represented by the victory in the parliamentary elections in October 2023 by a coalition led by the former President of the European Council, Donald Tusk. The Tusk government intends to strengthen the rule of law, rebuild weakened democratic institutions, and improve cooperation with European institutions and key EU countries, including Germany and France. That could enable Poland to build a strong political position in Europe. Poland's ambition seems to be to transform the Weimar Triangle formula into a driving force for European integration, expanding beyond the existing German-French tandem dominant in this regard. However, for this to be possible, Poland needs to expand its area of interest and—in addition to security and Eastern issues, which are its traditional areas of interest—build a positive and constructive agenda in other key European matters such as climate issues, migration policy, or the strategic autonomy of the European Union. Only after achieving this can Poland play a stronger role in Europe aligned with its traditional aspirations and sense of responsibility in the region.

6

Poland and Norway: Perceptual Gaps

There are various ways to gauge perceptual gaps between Poland and Norway in the field of security. A good point of departure for such a perceptual gaps gauging exercise is to examine the results of two public opinion surveys conducted by the NORPOLFACTOR project in Spring 2023 in Poland and Norway. In this survey, we asked a representative group of Poles and Norwegians to answer 31 questions concerning various security aspects. In this brief examination of the perceptual gaps revealed by this survey we will focus on the questions where differences in answers given by the Polish and Norwegian respondents have been the most significant. We divide these perceptual differences into several categories: 1) the very significant PL difference when the gap between answers given by the Polish respondents is higher than 20% points; 2) the significant PL difference when the gap between answers given by the Polish respondents versus Norwegian respondents is higher than 10% but lower than 20% point; 3) the non-significant PL/NO difference when the difference is lower than 10% points both ways; 4) the significant NO difference when the difference between answers given by Norwegian respondents is higher than 10% but lower than 20% points; 5) the very significant NO difference when the difference between answers given by Norwegian respondents is higher than 20% points.

Figure 4 presents the results of the examination of these perceptual gaps as revealed by the survey conducted in Spring 2023 and gives a very good picture of in which areas the gaps between

the Polish and the Norwegian respondents were deepest. This overview presents only the gaps in two categories: the very significant ones where the gap is higher than 20% points and the significant ones where the gaps are higher than 10 but lower than 20% points and in two subcategories, looking at the gaps between Polish and Norwegian answers and between answers provided by Norwegian respondents and the Polish ones.

Figure 4. Perceptual gaps between Polish and Norwegian respondents, based on the results of the NORPOLFACTOR survey conducted in Spring 2023

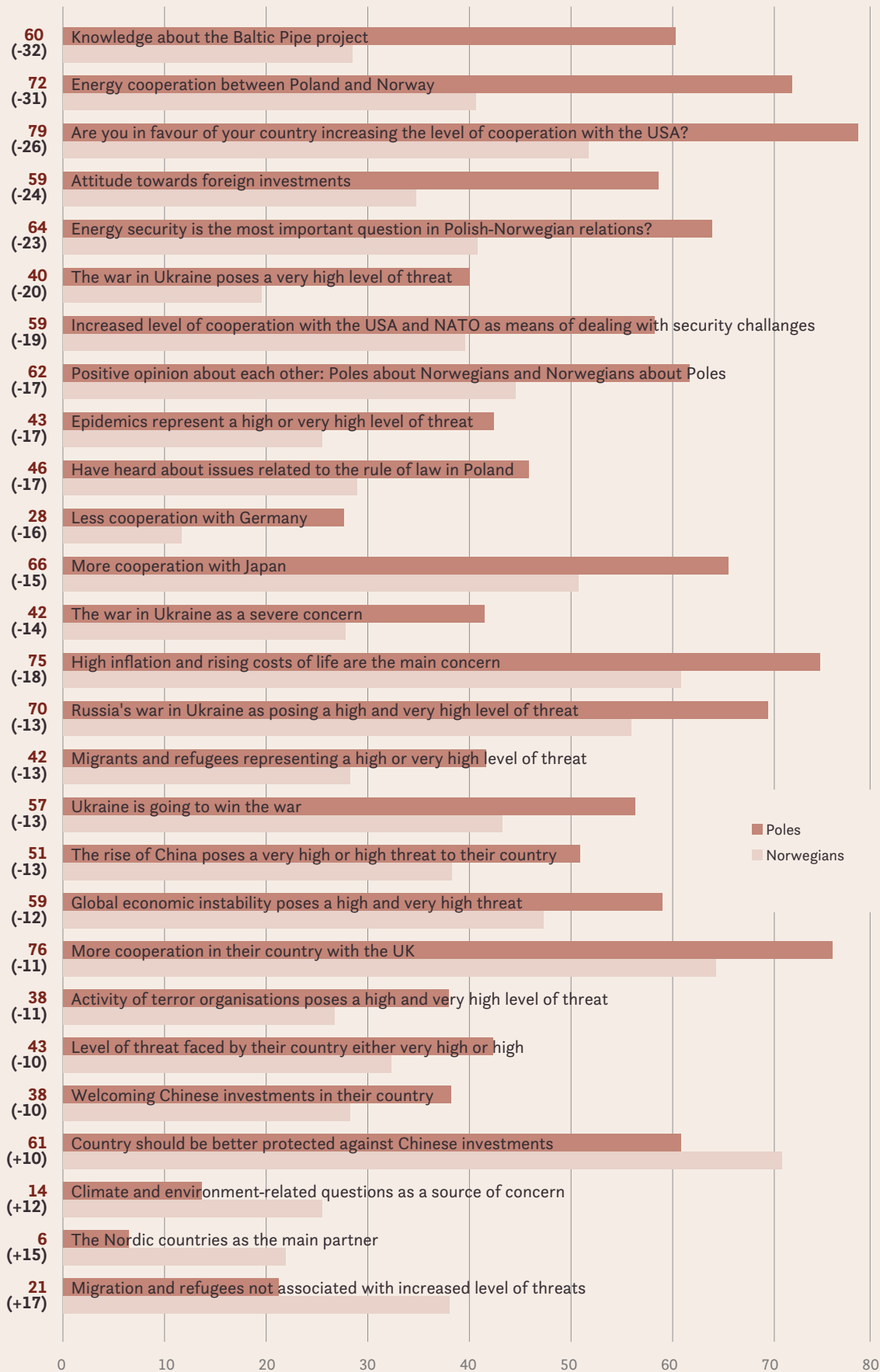
The examination of national survey results revealed that there were no questions where there was very significant NO difference/bias (more than 20% points gap) in answers provided by Norwegian respondents compared with those given by the Polish respondents.

The survey has revealed that Poles knew more about energy cooperation between Norway and Poland, including Baltic Pipe, and considered energy cooperation as very important, that Poles were much more positive than Norwegians when it came to increasing the level of cooperation with the USA and feared more than Norwegians the negative impact the war in Ukraine could have on their security. Polish respondents had also a significantly better opinion about Norwegians than Norwegians had about Poles. In addition, Poles feared more than Norwegians the negative consequences of a new

epidemics, and were more aware of issues related to the rule of law in Poland. More Poles than Norwegians were also skeptical towards increasing the level of cooperation with Germany and were at the same time more enthusiastic about increasing the level of cooperation with Japan and the UK. At the same time and for obvious geographical reasons significantly more Poles than Norwegians feared the impact war in Ukraine can have on their life and responded that Russia's war in Ukraine poses a very high or high threat to their country. At the same time more Poles than Norwegians believed that Ukraine will be able to win the war against Russia. Poles were also more than Norwegians inclined to be concerned with the impact of high inflation and rising costs of life on their situation as well as with the possible negative impact of the global economic instability. In addition, they were also more concerned the activity of terror organisations and with negative impact migrants and refugees can have on their situation. In general,

more Poles than Norwegians expressed opinion that the level of threat facing their country was either very high or high. When asked about the role of China, more Poles than Norwegians expressed opinion that the rise of China represents a high or a very high level of threat, but at the same time they were more than Norwegians willing to welcome Chinese investments.

In four categories of questions there were also significant gaps in opinions expressed by Norwegians as compared with opinions expressed by Poles. Norwegians have expressed more positive opinions about the impact migrants and refugees have had on their country, they were much more interested in increasing the level of cooperation with the Nordic countries, and were more than Poles concerned with questions related to climate and environment and also expressed more often opinion that their country should be better protected against Chinese investments.



7

Polish-Norwegian Interplays: Areas of Cooperation and Points of Contention

There are several areas in Polish-Norwegian relations where cooperation over the past decade wvsues that have posed some challenges in bilateral relations and the broader context.

A 2014 study on bilateral Polish-Norwegian relations¹²⁴ concluded that Polish and Norwegian interests in the field of security overlap and presented the following conclusions on what Norway and Poland could do to improve the level of their bilateral cooperation in the sphere of national security.

Poland was strongly advised to complete the process of building a comprehensive national security system in which different state agencies and services should communicate and better cooperate with each other, in which their powers and competencies are specified and divided. Such a system was also to operate under a unified and effective command subsystem. It was also argued that in order to build a viable national deterrence potential, the future structure, tasks and equipment of the armed forces had to be further defined and long-term financing assured. In addition, it was recommended that Poland strike the right balance between investing in European defence capabilities, which will be primarily dedicated to out-of-area operations and enhancing its own military capacity to defend its territory and borders. Also, the question of how the innovation stemming from the defence industry activities could be better utilised by the companies on the civil market was raised.

When it comes to Norway, the first point on the list of what the authors of the report recommended Norway should do to be a more attractive partner was the question of increasing the level of military spending to 2% of GDP as encouraged by the Alliance and spending this additional funding on projects related to collective defence and strengthening Norway's position in the region. Another issue raised by the authors of the report was the question of how Norway should make its regional security cooperation with some EU members (Sweden, Finland and Denmark) serve the purpose of strengthening its security cooperation with the EU in a situation when the perspective of becoming a full-fledged member of the EU with full access to the EU's security policymaking table was – and is still – rather bleak. Also, the question of Norway's approach to Russia, which had embarked on the policy of militarisation of its relations with its neighbours, was put on the agenda.

The Norwegian approach to Russia, which had traditionally been shaped by a combination of elements of sufficient deterrence and reassurance, was, at the time of writing, still viewed as a promising solution for other members of the alliance. Namely, the successful solution of the problem of delineation of the sea border between Norway and Russia agreed in 2010, was mentioned as a positive policy outcome of adopting the balanced approach to Russia, combining elements of deterrence and reassurance.

A 2021 study on how Polish and Norwegian approaches to various security challenges can either strengthen or weaken NATO¹²⁵ presented a list of factors that could impact these questions. Based on a thorough examination of factors that historically led to the collapse of the alliances, this study identified the experience of strategic defeat, diverging threat perceptions, diverging perceptions of national interests, and questions related to the ability and willingness to abide by written and unwritten agreements and rules as key factors influencing cooperation. The study also argued that the way both Poland and Norway approach these questions could have both positive and negative impacts on the cohesion of the alliance and shape and content of bilateral security cooperation between Poland and Norway.

Summing up the findings of this study, a list of issues that by the end of 2019 played a key part in this context was presented and included the following issues:

- The re-emergence of Russia as a strategic challenge or threat has put the fear of a strategic defeat again on the top of national agendas in both Norway and Poland;
- the same re-emergence of revisionist Russia has contributed to cementing cooperation among the NATO members, especially those sharing borders with Russia – including Norway and Poland, whose policies towards Russia have partly converged;
- That has provided strong incentives to make NATO and the USA more committed to European affairs, which has proven more

challenging because of Donald Trump's transactional approach to cooperation and his repeatedly raising the issue of burden sharing – the main intra-NATO contentious issue;

- these recent developments have given Norway a more central role in NATO because of the renewed focus on the Atlantic connection, but Norway faces a challenge of achieving the 2% of the GDP defence spending benchmark as well as improving its military capabilities, especially its land forces;
- the same developments have turned Poland into a pivot country on NATO's Eastern flank, where new NATO and US forces have been deployed, and new NATO infrastructure is being developed in response to the Russian challenge;
- Poland shows commitment to deliver on military capabilities but faces problems with coordination of this policy as it belonged at that time to the exclusive club of NATO members who have met the 2% of the GDP benchmark;
- however, Poland was often referred to as a 'democratic backslider': a country that does not live up to democratic expectations, which is sometimes viewed as an issue undermining internal cohesion in both NATO and the EU.

To what extent do the issues shaping relations listed above still matter in 2024 and contribute to shaping Polish-Norwegian cooperation in the area of national security?

NATO Partners

One of the natural areas of cooperation between Poland and Norway is in the sphere of security and defence. Both Poland and Norway are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which enjoys significant societal support in both countries (69% of Poles and 67% of Norwegians expressed a positive attitude towards NATO in public opinion polls ordered by the Casimir Pulaski Foundation and NUPİ). Additionally, they have strong bilateral military cooperation with the United States. Both countries also share borders with the aggressive Russian Federation and are concerned about the security of the Baltic Sea.

Poland and Norway also have a similar perception of security. Over 32% of Norwegians and 43% of Poles consider the level of threat to their country as high or very high (respectively, 43% and 48% consider it as moderate), with 70% of Poles and 56% of Norwegians considering Russia's aggressive policy and the war in Ukraine as significant or very significant threats to security. Poles and Norwegians also have relatively similar attitudes towards the threat posed by China's rising power (51% of Poles and 38% of Norwegians consider it a significant or very significant threat), terrorism (38% and 28%, respectively), and climate change (50% and 42%, respectively).

Poland and Norway also have relatively well-developed and advanced armed forces and defence industries, respectively, making them suitable for broader strategic cooperation.

As mentioned, Poland and Norway are heavily integrated into NATO structures and have advanced military cooperation with the United States. Norway and Poland have significant geographic importance in military terms, and both countries were among the first victims of World War II. Following the illegal annexation of Crimea and the first phase of Russian aggression against Ukraine, Poland has increasingly become a centre of NATO and US military activity in Europe, hosting numerous large-scale military exercises. In Poland, one of the battlegroups established in the framework of the Enhanced Forward Presence initiative announced at the

NATO Summit in Warsaw is stationed on a rotational basis, similar to the Armored Brigade Combat Team deployed as part of the US European Deterrence Initiative. Poland also hosts a subunit of the Combat Aviation Brigade and a combat sustainment support battalion from the United States. After Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022, the US also decided to permanently deploy a command component (Forward Operating Station) of the US Army's V Corps in Poland. Additionally, Poland is the location of a key element of NATO Ballistic Missile Defence – the Aegis Ashore installation established as part of the European Phased Adaptive Approach initiative, which is the US contribution to NATO's missile defence. Polish territory also hosts allied command structures such as the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) and Multinational Division North East.

As one of the founding members of NATO, Norway hosts numerous allied exercises on its territory (for example, Nordic/Cold Response, which takes place every two years) and training programmes to prepare allied units for operations in arctic conditions. Moreover, since 1981, elements of equipment and gear of the US Marine Corps have been stationed in Norway as part of the Marine Corps Prepositioning Program-Norway (MCPN), allowing for rapid deployment of American units in crises or conflicts.

The organisation of numerous exercises by both countries and their participation in various NATO initiatives promotes contacts and increases interoperability between their armed forces. Although both countries contribute to the security of NATO's eastern flank (as part of the Enhanced Forward Presence, the Norwegian company is stationed in Lithuania, and the Polish tank company is stationed in Latvia – both under the command of Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin), it seems they have the potential for greater engagement. Norway, for example, possesses advanced anti-aircraft defence systems, which are crucial from the perspective of the Baltic States that lack such capabilities. These systems are also vital to Poland, which is currently profoundly modernising its own air

and missile defence to develop the necessary capabilities within just several years (these are a significant addition in the context of incidents of Russian missiles violating Polish airspace). With the introduction of 64 F-35 aircraft, Norway will have one of the strongest air forces in the Alliance, allowing for greater contribution to Air Policing missions in the Baltic States and the temporary reinforcement of Poland's air defence in crisis situations (which has already been the case during Russia's aggression against Ukraine when Polish airbases were reinforced with allied aircraft).

On the other hand, Poland can strengthen the defensive capabilities of NATO's northern flank, using its specialised mountain infantry units (21st Podhale Rifles Brigade), units capable of rapid deployment (6th Airborne Brigade), and its extensive special forces component, which would require regular exercises and coordination.

Both Norway and Poland view their membership in NATO as the best way of addressing hard security-related challenges in their strategic environment. After the Russian aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the Norwegian and Polish approaches to relations with Russia have almost entirely converged, and Russia is now the leading external actor shaping both Polish and Norwegian thinking about security as well as their threat perceptions. This perception of Russia as a source of strategic threat has cemented their approach to NATO as the best way to address hard security challenges.

However, Norway and Poland, being dependent on NATO – and maybe first and foremost the

US – support in case of a Russia-related crisis developing in their neighbourhood, show certain nervousness concerning the reliability of Article 5 that stipulates when NATO is obliged to come to the rescue of its members facing security-related problems. This nervousness is caused partly by political factors and partly by what could be termed structural factors.

As far as political factors are concerned, it is feared in both countries that the possible re-election of Donald Trump as the US president in November 2024 can have a negative impact on the internal cohesion of NATO and undermine the credibility of NATO's deterrence. Considering that Poland plans to spend 4% of its GDP on defence, meeting the NATO 2% requirement, while Norway still has not achieved this level of defence spending, one could expect that the level of nervousness should be higher in Oslo than in Warsaw. However, although Poland meets the expectation the new Trump administration could use as a strategic benchmark when deciding which of the NATO allies deserve to be rescued by the US, Poland probably feels more exposed to the consequences of a possible escalation of the conflict in Ukraine than Norway. On the other hand, Norway fears Russia's reactions in the High North, where Russia has deployed its nuclear second-strike capabilities that will play a more prominent role in Russian strategy as a strategic deterrent if conflict with the collective West were to escalate and feels therefore not very secure. What makes experts and decision-makers in Oslo worry is not only the potential political spill-over effects of Donald Trump's return to the White House but also the uncertainty as to the allies' capabilities to come to Norway's rescue in a crisis.¹²⁶

Cooperation of Defence Industries

To address at least some security-related challenges, Norway and Poland have, over the past several years, embarked on a much stronger bilateral cooperation in addressing national security challenges through stronger cooperation on practical security measures. Two examples of this practical cooperation are 1) Poland's innovative participation in the NSM program and acquisition of additional elements of the NSM system in 2023¹²⁷ that has already strengthened Poland's ability to defend its coast and 2) Norway's purchase of several hundred of Polish Pi-*orun* MANPADS¹²⁸ that will strengthen Norway's ability to have a more efficient and multi-layered air defence. However, although Poland in September 2023 signed the biggest-ever contract on the export of NSM missiles with the Kongsberg Group worth 16 billion NOK, in historical terms, supplies of military material from Norway to Poland were not very impressive. In the latest official document on the export of military material from Norway covering the years 2019 to 2022, Poland occupied the 13th position on the list of clients of the Norwegian defence sector. With a share of 1.6% (slightly more than 374 million NOK) of the total value of export of military equipment in this period, Poland was beaten not only by traditional customers such as the US (40.5%), Qatar (13.6%) and the Netherlands (5.4%), but also by Lithuania (3.6%), Germany (3.8%), Sweden (3.7%), the UK (3.3%) France (2.7%), Indonesia (2.6%), Belgium (2.6%), Australia (2.6%) and Finland (1.8%).

As was mentioned, Poland and Norway have relatively well-developed defence industries and good experiences in industrial cooperation. The Polish state defence industry is mainly grouped under the Polish Armaments Group, which employs nearly 20,000 people, operating in all domains, and possessing capabilities to produce equipment ranging from small arms to very modern infantry fighting vehicles, self-propelled howitzers, and portable anti-aircraft systems and passive radars.¹²⁹ On the other hand, the

Norwegian defence industry is mainly grouped under Kongsberg Defence and Aerospace (KDA), a part of the broader Kongsberg Gruppen. KDA employs approximately 3,500 people and specialises primarily in internationally recognised missile systems – anti-ship Naval Strike Missile (NSM) and cruise missile Joint Strike Missile – as well as the NASAMS (Norwegian Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System) air defence systems. In 2011, NSM systems were introduced into the equipment of the Polish Navy's naval missile unit. These systems proved to be so fitting to Polish needs that in 2023, the Polish government decided to acquire equipment for two additional missile units to be delivered between 2026 and 2032. The NSM system proved to be an excellent field for industrial cooperation because, as part of the offset at the Military Electronic Works in Zielonka, a centre for servicing the NSM system was established (with competencies in maintaining support vehicles and command systems, and the effector itself).

Furthermore, a large part of the components for the MJR are supplied by the Polish defence industry (PIT-RADWAR S.A. supplies, among others, command and communication vehicles and workshop vehicles for the MJR), closely cooperating with the Norwegian side. Based on this cooperation, Poland and Norway could deliver complete and competitively priced sets in a configuration similar to the MJR for export customers in the future. Poland's acquisition of F-35 aircraft will, in turn, provide a field for similar cooperation with JSM missiles, and here, experiences in previous industrial cooperation can be a valuable guideline.

Although the idea of Polish-German-Norwegian cooperation in acquiring submarines discussed some years ago had failed, sharing experiences with Norway in this regard may prove to be valuable as Poland announces the continuation of efforts to purchase this submarine capability.

Over the past two decades, three attempts have been made to strengthen energy cooperation between Norway and Poland. The agreement on cooperation between the Norwegian and Polish energy companies was signed in the presence of the two prime ministers on 3 September 2001.¹³⁰ According to this agreement, from 2008 onward, Poland was to receive 74 BCM of natural gas from Norway over 16 years. However, this agreement was stranded after the change of government in Poland in 2001.

The second effort to build stronger energy relations between Norway and Poland was undertaken in 2007 when the so-called Skanled project connected Norwegian gas fields with gas customers in Sweden and Denmark, and possibly, through the Baltic Pipe, with Poland. The Skanled was to have a transport capacity of 7 BCM of gas per year, was to be operational by 2012 and cost EUR 10 billion. However, in 2009, it turned out that the changing economic situation caused by the 2008 deep economic crisis resulted in many of the project participants withdrawing, and in April 2009, the Skanled group decided to suspend its realisation.¹³¹

The third, this time successful, attempt at tightening energy relations between Norway and Poland was launched in 2016 when plans for building a gas connection between Norway and Poland via Denmark were revived and received support from the EU. In January 2018, the Danish company Energinet and the Polish Gaz-System signed 15-year capacity agreements with market participants; in 2018, public hearings took place in Denmark, Sweden, Germany and Poland and construction of the pipeline was given the green light after tender procedures were held in 2019. On 27 September 2022, the Baltic Pipe was opened after two years of work on the project. The pipeline can transport up to 10 BCM of Norwegian gas to Poland and thus helps Poland and other countries in the region meet their energy needs.¹³² According to data from the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Gas (ENTSO-G), the Baltic Pipe that supplied 6.5 BCM was Poland's most crucial gas source in 2023. According to Polish

data, the Baltic Pipe supplied 6.2 BCM of gas to Poland, which represented 44% of the total gas imports to Poland and approximately 36% of the total gas consumption that, according to preliminary estimates, was to reach 17 BCM.¹³³ However, there were days in 2023 when the Baltic Pipe's transport capacity was used to the full extent, and more than 27 million cubic meters of gas per day were shipped between Denmark and Poland.¹³⁴

The circumstances under which the pipeline was launched were even more dramatic than the most pessimistic experts could have expected. After Russia launched its aggressive war against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 – and even before – the gas market in Europe experienced huge volatility and skyrocketing prices. The question of Europe's energy security rose to the top of the European agenda after various measures were taken by the more belligerent Russia and the EU response to Russian aggression. The day before the launch of the Baltic Pipe, another dramatic event took place that raised awareness of the fragility of the existing critical energy infrastructure in Europe as three of four Nord Stream 1, and Nord Stream 2 pipelines were blown up under very unclear circumstances.

The dramatic events surrounding the construction and the opening of the Baltic Pipe have made national and European policymakers more aware of the challenges faced by European consumers of energy who had to deal with many problems caused by Russia's war in Ukraine and measures implemented by both Russian and European policymakers. Being a major producer and exporter of gas that in 2022 and 2023 was the most sought-after commodity in Europe, Norway has become an even more crucial energy partner for those countries, including Poland, that decided to sever their energy relations with Russia in response to its aggression. However, even before the outbreak of the war and the opening of the Baltic Pipe in 2022, Norway had played an increasingly important role in Poland's energy calculations. After opening the Polish LNG terminal in Swinoujscie in 2015, some of the LNG shipments to Poland came from

Norway. In addition, several Polish energy companies decided to invest in Norway to access Norwegian resources and became increasingly more important actors on the Norwegian Continental Shelf (NCS).

In 2023, PGNIG Upstream International, with its 115 employees and turnover of NOK 43 billion, occupied 24th place on the list of the most prominent Norwegian companies and Lotos

Exploration and Production Norge, with its 34 employees and NOK 5.6 billion turnover, was number 223 on this list.¹³⁵ At the same time, in 2021, the Norwegian partly state-owned energy company Equinor acquired the Polish renewables company Wento with a portfolio of several solar energy projects with a total capacity of about 1.6 GW. Equinor also has a 50% stake in two development projects for offshore wind in the Polish sector of the Baltic Sea.

Societal Security and Resilience – Democratic Backsliding and Polarisation as a Security Challenge

Over the past decade, issues related to broadly understood societal security have contributed to a slight souring in bilateral Polish-Norwegian relations. Two issues related to social and political developments have played a specific negative role in shaping Polish-Norwegian political ties and cooperation.

First, because more than 100,000 Poles live more or less permanently in Norway, questions related to the situation of this Polish community in the country have impacted the shape and content of Polish-Norwegian relations. In several studies on the impact of diasporas on foreign policy in Norway, more generally¹³⁶, and the impact of the Polish diaspora in Norway, more specifically¹³⁷, several issues have been identified as having a direct and indirect impact on bilateral relations. At some stages, one of the issues that have influenced negative perceptions of Norway in Poland and caused some tensions in bilateral Polish-Norwegian relations was the treatment of the Polish families by Norwegian institutions responsible for childcare. The so-called Barnevernet cases have contributed to souring Polish-Norwegian ties, especially after tension reached a peak in January 2019 when the Polish consul in Oslo, Sławomir Kowalski, who tried to help Polish families facing these types of problems was declared by the Norwegian authorities a *persona non grata* and was forced to leave Norway.¹³⁸ However, over the past years, the tensions over these issues have eased, also because the Norwegian authorities were

forced to introduce some changes to the system of childcare to address problems that have caused some reactions not only from Poland but also from other countries and institutions.

The second issue influencing Polish-Norwegian relations over the past decade was the question of Poland being perceived as a country developing in a more illiberal direction, with particular attention paid to undermining rule of law standards, perceived violation of sexual minority rights and the development of an anti-Western rhetoric between 2015 and 2023.

One could wonder whether questions related to the situation of the Polish diaspora in Norway or to the adoption of specific policies in Poland should be addressed in a paper that aims to map areas of cooperation and contention in the security field. However, since we have decided to adopt a broad approach to security, questions related to societal security deserve closer scrutiny.

First, the situation of the Polish diaspora in Norway and problems caused by the controversies related, for instance, to the situation of Polish families in the country, can indeed have a negative impact on bilateral relations. That, in turn, can influence the level and the scope of cooperation between Poland and Norway in the international organisations of which they are both members. Both Poland and Norway face similar security challenges related to Russia's more aggressive policy in Europe. Both depend

on NATO support in case of a crisis. A situation of the conflict of interests between two members of the alliance can, therefore, have negative consequences for the internal cohesion of the alliance as well as for its ability to address common challenges in concert, which is required when decisions on joint action in both NATO and the EU are to be taken.

Second, the political situation developing in Poland between 2015 and 2023, which many partners viewed as posing a challenge to the observation of rules agreed upon when Poland had decided to join both NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004, could pose another set of problems in a situation of crisis. One possible problem could be the willingness of the international partners to mobilise support in their societies for Poland in a crisis when this support would play a crucial role in securing the country's security. A study on the reasons for the demise of international alliances listed questions related to the inability or unwillingness of alliance partners to abide by agreements as one of the reasons for their disbandment.¹³⁹ That is also clearly the case with the current situation in both NATO and the EU. The debate on burden sharing in NATO and normative aspects of cooperation in the EU are the most prominent examples of how the non-abiding of the agreed rules can undermine the internal cohesion of both organisations. Here, Norway and Poland must address some issues to be considered reliable partners. In the case of Norway, the main NATO-related challenge is the question of reaching the 2% defence spending benchmark. In contrast, in the case of Poland, the issue of democratic backsliding was the main bone of contention in the country's relations with the EU.

The question of democratic backsliding that has tainted the image of Poland between 2015 and 2023 has also had a strong and negative impact on the internal cohesion of Polish society, and the level of polarisation has grown exponentially over the past decade. This, in turn, can harm societal resilience and the level of trust in the country, making it more exposed and vulnerable to various types of overt and covert measures adopted by adversarial powers, such as Russia.¹⁴⁰ For instance, Russia or other adversarial powers can try to exploit these internal divisions to sow discord and undermine internal cohesion in the countries in question and indirectly in

organisations these countries are members of. Undermining the internal cohesion of the West is viewed in Moscow as an important prerequisite for Russia's success in its confrontation with the West, as in the ongoing war in Ukraine, which the Kremlin presents as a proxy war with the West. We should, therefore, expect Russia to exploit any chance of weakening this cohesion by playing its hybrid divide and rule games in countries in which deep internal divisions and polarisation make this type of grey zone operations most promising.¹⁴¹

The ongoing war in Ukraine has demonstrated that to be able to deal with both covert and overt aggression, the issue of societal resilience and cohesion is of crucial importance because what is needed is a whole society approach. This idea of engaging and mobilising the entire society during a crisis is also the backbone of the Norwegian and, more broadly, the Nordic approach to total defence. This concept and practice of preparing the entire society to meet extraordinary situations, such as crisis, conflict, war or natural disaster, received much attention during the Cold War and was adopted in all Nordic countries. When developed during the Cold War, the concept of total defence in the Norwegian context meant that the defence of Norway should be built on both military defence and broad civil emergency preparedness. The objective was to safeguard Norway's territory, independence, and national values, and to protect the civilian population. However, these questions received much less attention in the public debate during the long post-Cold War peace period.

With open Russian aggression against Ukraine starting in 2014 and escalating in February 2022 to a full-scale war that demonstrated Russia's willingness and ability to damage elements of critical infrastructure, access to which is important for society to meet its basic needs, the idea of total defence has received a new lease of life. That also means that the question of societal polarisation and divisions should be factored into the strategic calculations of those who are responsible for shaping security and defence policies in both Norway and Poland. In the wake of the Russian aggression in 2014, the issue of total defence has therefore received a lot of attention in the Norwegian decision-making and expert community.¹⁴²

The Norwegian experience with total defence, including questions related to civil preparedness as an important element of the total defence, can be shared with Polish decision-makers and its expert community, who will have to implement aspects of the total defence in the Polish context in a situation when Poland is more exposed to negative consequences of the conflict in Ukraine for purely geographical but also for some specific political reasons. Potentially, the most important political and social challenge that Poland must deal with is the question of the relatively low level of social trust caused partly by the deep polarisation of the society over the past decade but partly by the nation's historical experience. Here, Norway, a country characterised by a very high level of social trust, can also play a positive part in helping Poland deal with this important problem. This could be done by sharing expertise on building a high-trust society and providing support within the EEA framework, an important policy tool Norway can apply to projects in Poland to contribute to closing the deep societal gaps of both an economic and political character. Helping Poland restore a higher level of societal cohesion and trust will make the country less receptive to any malign interferences and thus improve its ability to address various types of overt and covert challenges, improving not only its own security but also the security of its NATO and EU partners.

Another field in which Norway can share some experience with Poland is the question of how Poland can meet the emerging challenge of becoming a country receiving more both labour and forced migrants. The NORPOLFACTOR survey conducted in Spring 2023 revealed some significant gaps in perceptions of risks and

challenges related to migration. Poles seemed to be more sceptical towards migration as a phenomenon and migrants in general, while Norwegians demonstrated much less concern towards questions related to migration. Over the past decades, the situation in the field of migration in Norway has changed dramatically. In 1970 Norway was, like Poland of the early 2000s, a very homogenous society as the share of migrants in the country's population was very low – there were 57,000 of them, and they represented 1.5% of the population. By the end of 2023, there were, according to official data, more than 877,000 migrants living in Norway, and their share of the population increased to 16%. It is also worth reminding in this context that Poles living in Norway are still the biggest group of migrants and they alone represent more than 2% of the population of the country. The Norwegian relatively positive experience of dealing with such a huge inflow of migrants in a relatively short – in historical terms – time is definitely something that the Polish authorities and society can learn some positive lessons from. Poland is already facing a number of challenges and tensions related to migration, including the huge inflow of forced migrants from Ukraine and the increased number of labour migrants reaching Poland from even more remote areas to fill the emerging gaps in the Polish labour market. The Norwegian experience of dealing with this challenge is therefore highly relevant, especially if the Polish authorities want to deal with the issue of xenophobia that is often misused in the political context and, not least, are interested in avoiding various types of migration and integration-related pitfalls that can result in more tensions and create various kinds of problems.

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