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Reimagining Regional Security: The
Baltic Nexus and NORDEFCO in the
Neo medievalist Context of the
Ukrainian War

Cătălin Gabriel Done



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Abstract

This paper explores the reimagining of regional security in the Baltic region within the context of the Ukrainian war, utilizing a neo medievalist framework. Focusing on the Baltic Nexus and the Nordic Defense Cooperation (NORDEFECO), it examines how these regional security initiatives contribute to broader European security dynamics amidst the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. By analyzing the principles of neo medievalism and their application to regional cooperation, the paper sheds light on the evolving nature of security architectures in response to contemporary geopolitical challenges. Through case studies and empirical analysis, it seeks to elucidate the implications of the Baltic Nexus and NORDEFECO for European security, highlighting their role in fostering resilience and cooperation in the face of external threats.

Keywords

Ukrainian war, neo medievalism, European security

Author

Catalin-Gabriel Done is Vice President of the Experts for Security and Global Affairs Association, an expert in security and Nordic cooperation, and a PhD candidate at the University of Naples "Federico II" - Department of Political Sciences. Throughout his research activity, he has focused on political processes in Scandinavia, paying close attention to how regional cooperation has influenced the Nordic social and security system. Email: catalin-gabriel.done@esga.ro

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Introduction

The conflict in Ukraine has reverberated across Europe, reshaping perceptions of security and cooperation among nations on the continent. Since its eruption in 2014 following Russia's annexation of Crimea and support for separatist movements in eastern Ukraine, the war has posed significant challenges to the stability and integrity of European security frameworks (Menkiszak 2014; Ghigiu 2023; Howorth 2023).

This conflict, characterized by a complex web of political, ethnic, and territorial disputes, has defied easy resolution, fueling tensions between Russia and Western powers and exacerbating divisions within Ukraine itself. The ongoing violence and humanitarian suffering in eastern Ukraine underscore the urgent need for a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

The implications of the Ukrainian war for European security have been profound. Trust between Russia and the West has eroded, leading to heightened military tensions and a renewed focus on defense preparedness across the continent. The annexation of Crimea has challenged the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty enshrined in international law, prompting a reassessment of Europe's security posture. Moreover, the conflict has exposed European countries to hybrid warfare tactics, including disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks, and covert military operations. These asymmetric threats have tested the resilience of European institutions and underscored the need for greater cooperation and coordination in countering hybrid threats.

Additionally, the influx of refugees from Ukraine has placed strains on neighboring countries' social and economic resources, highlighting the interconnectedness of security challenges in the region (Guild and Groenendijk 2023).

Baltic and Scandinavian countries have sought to bolster cooperation and coordination through various mechanisms and initiatives in response to the Ukrainian war and its implications for regional security. Recognizing the importance of collective defense and solidarity, these nations have reaffirmed their commitment to NATO's deterrence and defense posture, enhancing military capabilities and conducting joint exercises to demonstrate resolve in the face of external threats.

Furthermore, the Baltic states have spearheaded efforts to strengthen regional cooperation through platforms such as the Baltic Defense College and the Baltic Sea Region Energy Cooperation (BASREC), fostering dialogue and collaboration on security issues of common concern. Similarly, Nordic countries have deepened their defense cooperation

through NORDEFECO, a framework to enhance interoperability and coordination among Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.

In the face of evolving security threats and geopolitical uncertainties, the Baltic and Nordic countries have recognized the imperative of enhanced cooperation to safeguard regional stability and resilience (Þór Hilmarsson 2021). Central to this endeavor are two key regional security frameworks: the Baltic Nexus and the Nordic Defense Cooperation (NORDEFECO). These frameworks represent concerted efforts by Baltic and Nordic nations to forge closer ties, pool resources, and coordinate responses to common security challenges.

The Baltic Nexus emerges as a cornerstone of regional security cooperation, uniting Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in their shared commitment to collective defense and resilience-building (Hökmark and Oksanen 2024). Rooted in historical ties and geographical proximity, the Baltic Nexus embodies a strategic vision of solidarity and cooperation among Baltic states. At its core lies the principle of mutual assistance and collaboration, aimed at bolstering the region's capacity to deter external aggression and respond effectively to emerging security threats. Moreover, the Baltic Nexus is a conduit for enhanced cooperation with external partners, including NATO and the European Union. By aligning their defense policies and capabilities with broader Euro-Atlantic frameworks, Baltic states amplify their voice on the international stage and contribute to the collective security of the wider region (Westgaard 2023). The Baltic Nexus thus represents a vital component of European security architecture, reinforcing the importance of regional solidarity in safeguarding common interests and values.

At its inception, NORDEFECO focused on enhancing defense capabilities and operational readiness through joint exercises, information sharing, and harmonizing defense procurement processes. Over time, however, the scope of NORDEFECO has expanded to encompass a broader range of security issues, including cyber defense (Nordiskt samarbete 2022), maritime security, and hybrid threats (Kertysova and Gricius 2023; Bjarnason 2020). This evolution underscores the adaptability and relevance of NORDEFECO in responding to emerging security dynamics.

Crucially, NORDEFECO operates on the principles of consensus-building and voluntary participation, allowing member states to pursue cooperation at their own pace and according to their respective national priorities. While NORDEFECO does not possess a formal institutional structure or supranational authority, its informal nature facilitates flexibility and

innovation, enabling member states to leverage collective resources and expertise in pursuit of common objectives.

Furthermore, NORDEFECO serves as a platform for enhancing cooperation with NATO and other international partners, reinforcing the transatlantic link and contributing to a more coherent and effective security architecture in the Nordic-Baltic region. By aligning their defense policies and capabilities, Nordic countries strengthen their collective resilience and ability to respond to diverse security challenges, from traditional military threats to non-conventional risks.

This working paper undertakes a comprehensive examination of the Baltic Nexus and the Nordic Defense Cooperation (NORDEFECO) within the framework of neo medievalism, shedding light on their adaptive responses to contemporary security challenges amidst the Ukrainian conflict. By analyzing these regional security frameworks through a neo medievalist lens, this paper seeks to elucidate their role in fostering resilience, cooperation, and integration in the Baltic and Nordic regions while exploring their broader implications for European security architecture.

Neo medievalism, as a theoretical paradigm, offers a nuanced understanding of contemporary regional cooperation and integration, emphasizing decentralized governance, networked diplomacy, and overlapping spheres of authority reminiscent of medieval Europe. In the Baltic Nexus and NORDEFECO context, neo medievalism provides a conceptual framework for analyzing the fluid and dynamic nature of regional security arrangements, characterized by overlapping memberships, ad-hoc coalitions, and non-state actors' involvement.

Through this neo medievalist paradigm, the examination of the Baltic Nexus and NORDEFECO extends beyond traditional state-centric analyses, considering a diverse array of actors, including subnational entities, transnational organizations, and private sector stakeholders. This perspective acknowledges the complex interplay of interests and identities shaping regional security dynamics, transcending traditional boundaries and hierarchies.

Moreover, neo medievalism highlights the adaptive strategies employed by regional actors in response to fluid security environments, emphasizing flexibility, resilience, and pragmatic cooperation over rigid institutional structures (Duran 2019). In the case of the Baltic Nexus and NORDEFECO, this entails exploring how these frameworks navigate

uncertainties and asymmetries, leveraging networks and alliances to enhance collective security and address common challenges.

By situating the analysis within a neo medievalist context, this working paper aims to uncover the underlying dynamics of regional security cooperation in the Baltic and Nordic regions, transcending conventional narratives of state-centric security architectures. It seeks to elucidate how the principles of neo medievalism inform the evolution of the Baltic Nexus and NORDEFECO, shaping their strategies, priorities, and outcomes in response to contemporary security threats, including the Ukrainian conflict and European cooperation.

Furthermore, by examining the Baltic Nexus and NORDEFECO through a neo medievalist lens, this paper contributes to broader debates on European security architecture, offering insights into the adaptive potential of regional frameworks in an increasingly complex and uncertain geopolitical landscape. Ultimately, the analysis presented in this paper aims to inform policymakers, scholars, and practitioners about the evolving nature of regional security cooperation in Europe and its implications for broader peace and stability on the continent.

Unravelling Neo medievalism: Relevance and Application in Regional Security Contexts

Neo medievalist theory presents a conceptual framework that challenges traditional understandings of sovereignty, governance, and security in contemporary contexts. At its core, neo medievalism suggests a return to a more fluid, decentralized system reminiscent of medieval Europe, where multiple actors exert influence across various spheres of authority (Faludi 2020). In this paradigm, the state's monopoly on power diminishes, giving rise to a complex web of overlapping jurisdictions, transnational networks, and non-state actors. The relevance of neo medievalist theory to contemporary security studies lies in its ability to capture the intricate dynamics of modern security challenges. Unlike traditional state-centric approaches, neo medievalism acknowledges the diverse actors shaping security outcomes, including subnational entities, international organizations, and non-governmental actors. This broader perspective enables a more nuanced understanding of security threats and responses in an interconnected world.

Neo medievalist theory highlights the role of networks and alliances in shaping security outcomes, emphasizing the importance of cooperation and collaboration among various actors (Cerny 1998). In contrast to hierarchical structures, neo medievalism

emphasizes the fluidity and adaptability of networked governance arrangements, which are better suited to addressing complex and evolving security challenges. Moreover, neo medievalist theory underscores the role of information and communication technologies in facilitating transnational interactions and shaping security dynamics. In an era of globalization, digital connectivity enables non-state actors to exert influence across borders, blurring traditional distinctions between domestic and international security concerns.

Furthermore, as Faludi (2020) underlined, neo medievalism challenges conventional notions of territoriality and sovereignty, suggesting that security threats often transcend national boundaries and require collective responses. This perspective is particularly relevant in addressing transnational issues such as terrorism, cyber threats, and organized crime, which defy unilateral solutions and necessitate cooperation between states and non-state actors. Moreover, neo medievalism emphasizes the interconnectedness of security challenges, recognizing that events in one part of the world can have ripple effects across regions and continents. This interconnectedness underscores the need for holistic and integrated approaches to security that address underlying causes and interdependencies.

In the realm of Nordic-Baltic cooperation, neo medievalist principles manifest in multifaceted ways, shaping the dynamics of regional security arrangements. At its core, Nordic-Baltic neo medievalism emphasizes decentralized governance, networked diplomacy, and overlapping spheres of authority, providing a conceptual framework that is well-suited to understanding the complexities of public security cooperation in this region (Cedergren et al. 2021; NordForsk 2023). One manifestation of neo medievalist principles in Nordic-Baltic cooperation is the emphasis on multilateralism and inclusivity. Regional security initiatives provide platforms for dialogue and collaboration among diverse actors, including states, subnational entities, and international organizations. This emphasis on inclusivity reflects the neo medievalist notion of overlapping jurisdictions and shared governance, where a multitude of actors with varying degrees of influence shapes security outcomes, as Gunilla Herolf well observed (2013).

Moreover, neo medievalist principles inform Nordic-Baltic security cooperation's flexible and adaptive nature. The neo medievalist governance arrangements prioritize pragmatism and resilience, allowing for agile responses to emergent security challenges. This flexibility is evident in the ad-hoc coalitions and informal networks characterizing Nordic-Baltic security cooperation, enabling states to pool resources and expertise to pursue

common objectives. Additionally, neo medievalist principles encourage a holistic and integrated approach to security governance in the Nordic-Baltic region. Rather than focusing solely on military deterrence or territorial defense, Nordic-Baltic cooperation encompasses various security issues, including social and civil security, energy security, and environmental protection. This comprehensive approach reflects the neo medievalist understanding of security as a multifaceted and interconnected phenomenon, where economic, social, and environmental factors are intertwined with traditional military concerns.

Recognizing the dynamic and uncertain nature of contemporary security challenges, Nordic-Baltic states invest in capabilities and initiatives aimed at enhancing their collective resilience. This includes efforts to strengthen critical infrastructure, improve emergency preparedness, and promote societal cohesion, reflecting the neo medievalist emphasis on adaptability and self-reliance in the face of adversity. In the context of neo medievalism, Sweden and Finland's accession to NATO represents a significant departure from traditional notions of sovereignty and security governance. By joining NATO, Sweden and Finland have effectively ceded a degree of sovereignty to the alliance, participating in collective defense arrangements and committing to mutual assistance in the event of security threats.

Moreover, Sweden and Finland's accession to NATO reflects the emphasis on networked diplomacy and cooperative security frameworks. Rather than relying solely on bilateral agreements or unilateral measures for defense, both countries are part of a broader network of alliances and partnerships to promote stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic region. This shift towards networked governance aligns with the neo medievalist vision of security cooperation, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and coordination among diverse actors to address shared challenges.

So, neo medievalist principles inform the role of non-state actors in Nordic-Baltic security cooperation. Civil society organizations, academic institutions, and private sector stakeholders play an increasingly important role in shaping regional security outcomes, contributing expertise, resources, and alternative perspectives to regional security debates. This engagement reflects the neo medievalist understanding of security as a shared responsibility, where multiple actors collaborate to address common challenges.

The Baltic Nexus – regional security and cooperation

In the face of evolving security threats and geopolitical uncertainties, the Baltic Nexus and the Nordic Defense Cooperation (NORDEF) stand out as adaptive frameworks for regional security cooperation. These frameworks have demonstrated a capacity to respond effectively to emerging security challenges, including the Ukrainian conflict and Russian aggression, by leveraging flexibility, resilience, and collaborative approaches.

The Baltic Nexus, rooted in the historical ties and geographical proximity of Baltic and Scandinavian states, embodies a neo medievalist approach to regional security cooperation. Unlike traditional security architectures, which are often rigid and hierarchical, the Baltic Nexus emphasizes decentralized governance and networked diplomacy, allowing for agile responses to dynamic security environments. By fostering inclusivity and dialogue among diverse stakeholders, the Baltic Nexus promotes a sense of collective ownership and responsibility for regional security, enabling Baltic and Nordic states to adapt to changing threats and circumstances.

Similarly, NORDEF is a flexible and adaptive framework for defense cooperation among Nordic countries. Established in 2009, NORDEF aims to enhance military interoperability, resource-sharing, and crisis management capabilities among Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. Through joint exercises, information-sharing mechanisms, and collaborative projects, NORDEF facilitates cooperation and coordination among Nordic defense forces, enabling member states to respond effectively to common security challenges, such as Russian military activities in the Baltic Sea region. Moreover, both the Baltic Nexus and NORDEF have demonstrated a capacity to evolve in response to shifting security dynamics and priorities. In recent years, these frameworks have expanded their focus to address emerging security threats, including hybrid warfare tactics, cyberattacks, and disinformation campaigns. The Baltic Nexus and NORDEF enhance their relevance and effectiveness in safeguarding regional stability and resilience by adapting their strategies and priorities to reflect evolving security challenges.

Furthermore, the adaptive nature of the Baltic Nexus and NORDEF enables Baltic and Nordic states to leverage their collective strengths and resources to address shared security concerns. Member states enhance their military capabilities and readiness by collaborating on defense procurement, joint training exercises, and capacity-building initiatives while fostering regional interoperability and cohesion. This collective approach to

security cooperation enhances the deterrence posture of Baltic and Nordic states, sending a clear signal of unity and resolve in the face of external threats.

Additionally, the adaptive strategies employed by the Baltic Nexus and NORDEFECO enable member states to navigate complex security environments and mitigate risks effectively. By embracing flexibility and innovation in their approaches to security governance, these frameworks enhance their resilience and capacity to withstand external pressures, including Russian aggression and geopolitical instability. Through continuous dialogue, assessment, and adjustment, the Baltic Nexus and NORDEFECO remain dynamic and responsive mechanisms for promoting peace, stability, and cooperation in the Baltic and Nordic regions.

We want to underline that Web governance plays an essential role in building frameworks that address emerging common security threats. As these threats increasingly transcend traditional boundaries and manifest in cyberspace, effective governance mechanisms are essential for coordinating responses and mitigating risks. Platforms such as the Nordic Council, the Arctic Council, NORDEFECO, and even the EU and NATO have expanded their focus to incorporate cybersecurity and information warfare as integral components of their security agendas, recognizing the interconnected nature of contemporary security challenges.

In addressing hybrid warfare tactics, web governance facilitates collaboration among Baltic and Nordic states to identify, assess, and respond to multifaceted threats that blend conventional military aggression with non-traditional tactics. By establishing information-sharing platforms and joint response mechanisms, frameworks like NORDEFECO enhance situational awareness and coordination, enabling timely and coordinated actions to counter hybrid threats. Moreover, web governance frameworks facilitate the development of norms, standards, and best practices for deterring and mitigating hybrid warfare tactics, promoting a collective and coordinated approach to defending against these complex security challenges.

Cyberattacks represent another area where web governance is crucial in enhancing regional security frameworks. Baltic and Nordic states, recognizing the growing significance of cybersecurity in modern warfare, have integrated cyber defense capabilities into their collective security strategies. Through joint cyber exercises, capacity-building initiatives, and information-sharing mechanisms, frameworks such as the Baltic Nexus and NORDEFECO

strengthen their resilience against cyber threats and enhance their ability to effectively detect, attribute, and respond to cyberattacks. Furthermore, web governance frameworks facilitate cooperation with international partners, including NATO and the European Union, in addressing cyber threats and promoting cyber resilience across the region.

Disinformation campaigns pose yet another challenge to regional security, requiring innovative approaches to combat misinformation and propaganda. Web governance mechanisms enable Baltic and Nordic states to coordinate efforts to counter disinformation, enhance media literacy, and promote fact-based narratives. By leveraging digital platforms and communication channels, the Nordic and Baltic states disseminate accurate information, debunk false narratives, and raise public awareness about the dangers of disinformation. Additionally, web governance frameworks facilitate cooperation with civil society organizations, media outlets, and technology companies to effectively develop strategies and tools for combating disinformation campaigns.

In limiting Russian political and military expansion, the Baltic region employs a combination of diplomatic, economic, and military measures supported by robust web governance frameworks. Common initiatives include diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions, and military deterrence measures to deter Russian aggression and promote regional stability. Furthermore, Baltic and Nordic states collaborate closely with international partners, including NATO and the European Union, to coordinate responses to Russian provocations, enhance defense capabilities, and strengthen resilience against external threats. Through joint military exercises, intelligence-sharing agreements, and strategic partnerships, NORDEFECO contribute to a unified and coordinated approach to countering Russian political and military expansionism in the Baltic Sea region and beyond.

Assessing the impact of the Baltic Nexus and NORDEFECO on European security dynamics reveals their significance in shaping regional and broader continental security frameworks. These initiatives have bolstered the Baltic and Nordic states' defense capabilities and have also contributed to enhancing overall European security cooperation and resilience. NORDEFECO has become an integral component of the European security architecture by fostering interoperability, coordination, and solidarity among participating states.

One key aspect of their impact is the reinforcement of NATO's collective defense posture. The Baltic Nexus and NORDEFECO's initiatives complement NATO's efforts in the

region, providing additional layers of deterrence and defense against potential threats, particularly from Russia. Enhancing military interoperability and readiness among Baltic and Nordic states contributes to NATO's ability to respond effectively to contingencies in the Baltic Sea region, strengthening the alliance's overall defense capabilities and credibility.

Moreover, the Baltic Nexus serves as confidence-building measures within the European security framework, promoting trust and cooperation among neighboring states. By facilitating dialogue, joint exercises, and information-sharing mechanisms, the regional initiatives foster a sense of solidarity and mutual support among participating countries, contributing to regional stability and conflict prevention. This enhanced cooperation strengthens the security of the Baltic and Nordic regions and fosters a broader culture of security cooperation within Europe.

Furthermore, the Baltic Nexus and NORDEFECO's impact extends beyond military cooperation to encompass broader security dimensions, such as resilience-building. By addressing these multifaceted security challenges through joint initiatives and cross-border cooperation, these frameworks enhance the resilience of the Baltic and Nordic regions and contribute to the overall stability of Europe. This comprehensive approach reflects a recognition of the interconnectedness of security threats and the importance of holistic responses in safeguarding regional and continental security. In addition, the Baltic Nexus and NORDEFECO's impact on European security dynamics is evident in their contribution to promoting transatlantic solidarity and cooperation. As key partners of NATO, Baltic and Nordic states play a crucial role in maintaining the transatlantic link and reinforcing the bond between Europe and North America. By strengthening defense cooperation and alignment with NATO's priorities, these frameworks enhance transatlantic unity and cohesion, thereby bolstering the collective defense and security of the Euro-Atlantic community.

An in-depth examination of specific case studies related to the Baltic Nexus and NORDEFECO provides valuable insights into these regional security frameworks' practical implications and effectiveness. One such case study revolves around the Baltic Air Policing mission, which exemplifies the collaborative efforts of Baltic and NATO forces to safeguard Baltic airspace. Since 2004, NATO member states have taken turns deploying fighter aircraft to patrol Baltic airspace, providing air surveillance and interception capabilities in response to airspace violations and potential threats. This mission, supported by NORDEFECO,

underscores the importance of joint defense initiatives in enhancing regional security and reassuring Baltic states of NATO's commitment to their defense.

Another notable case study is the Baltic Naval Squadron, a joint maritime task force established under NORDEFECO to enhance maritime surveillance, security, and response capabilities in the Baltic Sea region. Comprising naval vessels from Baltic and Nordic countries, the Baltic Naval Squadron conducts joint patrols, exercises, and operations to counter maritime threats, including illegal fishing, smuggling, and maritime piracy. This collaborative approach strengthens naval cooperation among Baltic and Nordic states and contributes to maritime security and stability in the Baltic Sea area, thereby supporting broader European security objectives.

Furthermore, the Baltic Cyber Shield initiative represents a case study in cybersecurity cooperation among Baltic and Nordic states. Baltic and Nordic countries have launched joint initiatives to enhance cyber resilience and response capabilities in response to growing cyber threats, including cyberattacks targeting critical infrastructure and government institutions. The Baltic Cyber Shield initiative, supported by NORDEFECO and other regional frameworks, facilitates information-sharing, capacity-building, and joint exercises to strengthen cybersecurity defenses and promote a coordinated response to cyber threats. This collaborative approach reflects the recognition of cyberspace as a critical domain for regional security and underscores the importance of collective action in addressing cyber challenges effectively. Moreover, the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), which includes Baltic and Nordic countries as well as the United Kingdom, offers a compelling example of interoperability and expeditionary cooperation in the Baltic Sea region.

Established under NORDEFECO, the JEF enables participating states to conduct joint military exercises, training, and crisis response operations, enhancing their ability to operate together in diverse security environments. Through the JEF, Baltic and Nordic states deepen their defense cooperation with key NATO allies, strengthen their expeditionary capabilities, and contribute to broader European security objectives, including deterrence and crisis management.

Additionally, the Nordic-Baltic Cooperation on Energy Security (NB8) provides a large cross-border cooperation in addressing energy security challenges in the Baltic Sea region. Baltic and Nordic countries enhance their energy resilience and reduce vulnerabilities to external disruptions through joint initiatives and projects, such as energy infrastructure

development, diversification of energy sources, and emergency response planning. This collaborative approach, supported by NORDEFECO and other regional frameworks, contributes to energy security and stability in the Baltic Sea area, bolstering overall regional security and cooperation.

Furthermore, the Joint Baltic-Nordic Training and Exercise Initiative (JBTEI) enhances military interoperability and crisis response capabilities among Baltic and Nordic states. Through joint training exercises, simulations, and scenario-based drills, participating countries improve their ability to coordinate and respond effectively to security threats, including hybrid warfare tactics, terrorism, and natural disasters. By fostering interoperability and cooperation among Baltic and Nordic defense forces, JBTEI enhances regional security and resilience, promoting stability and confidence-building in the Baltic Sea region.

Nevertheless, this could not have been possible without a formal and informal network providing the framework for cooperation. Including subnational entities, transnational organizations, and private sector stakeholders in regional cooperation frameworks like NORDEFECO significantly enhances the level of security and civil protection in the Baltic region. Firstly, involving subnational entities such as local governments and regional authorities allows for a bottom-up approach to security governance. These entities often have intimate knowledge of local security challenges and can play a crucial role in implementing and coordinating security measures at the grassroots level. By empowering subnational actors to participate in security decision-making processes, NORDEFECO ensures that security efforts are tailored to local needs and realities, increasing their effectiveness.

Secondly, the involvement of transnational organizations, including intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), brings additional expertise, resources, and perspectives to regional security cooperation. Organizations like the European Union (EU), NATO, and the Baltic Assembly are vital in coordinating security initiatives, promoting dialogue among member states, and facilitating capacity-building efforts. Through collaboration with these transnational entities, NORDEFECO gains access to a broader range of capabilities and resources, enabling it to address security challenges more comprehensively and effectively.

Furthermore, integrating private sector stakeholders into regional cooperation efforts enhances the resilience and innovation of security measures in the Baltic region.

Private companies, particularly those in defense, technology, and critical infrastructure industries, possess specialized knowledge, technologies, and resources that can bolster security and civil protection efforts. By partnering with private sector entities, NORDEFECO can leverage their expertise to develop cutting-edge solutions for cybersecurity, critical infrastructure protection, and emergency response, thereby enhancing the overall security posture of the Baltic states.

Moreover, involving diverse stakeholders fosters a culture of shared responsibility and collaboration in addressing security challenges. By engaging subnational entities, transnational organizations, and private sector stakeholders in security governance, NORDEFECO promotes a sense of ownership and cooperation among all actors involved. This collaborative approach facilitates information-sharing, joint training exercises, and coordinated responses to security threats, ultimately strengthening the collective resilience of the Baltic region against both traditional and emerging security risks.

Subsequently, including non-traditional actors in security cooperation efforts helps address the complex and interconnected nature of modern security challenges. Issues such as cyber threats, hybrid warfare, and transnational organized crime require multidimensional responses that go beyond traditional military measures. By involving subnational entities, transnational organizations, and private sector stakeholders, NORDEFECO ensures that security efforts are holistic and adaptive, capable of addressing a wide range of security threats in an increasingly interconnected world.

Back to the Future: Extending NORDEFECO's Model – The Case for Replication in the Black Sea Region

The success and effectiveness of NORDEFECO in promoting security cooperation among Baltic and Nordic states offer valuable lessons and insights that can be replicated in other regions facing similar security challenges. One such region is the Black Sea, which shares commonalities with the Baltic Sea in terms of geopolitical dynamics and security threats. The need to replicate NORDEFECO's model in the Black Sea region is evident when considering the strategic importance of the Black Sea and the increasing militarization and instability in the region.

Tactically, replicating NORDEFECO's model in the Black Sea region could enhance littoral states' defense capabilities and interoperability, including Romania, Bulgaria,

Ukraine, and Georgia. These countries face shared security threats, such as Russian aggression, hybrid warfare tactics, and maritime disputes, which require a coordinated and collaborative response. By establishing a framework similar to NORDEFECO, Black Sea littoral states could enhance their collective defense posture, deter potential adversaries, and promote regional stability and security.

At the same time, geopolitically, extending NORDEFECO's model to the Black Sea region could strengthen NATO's eastern flank and contribute to a more balanced and cohesive security architecture in Europe. With Russia's annexation of Crimea and ongoing military buildup in the region, the Black Sea has become a hotspot for geopolitical competition and security tensions. Replicating NORDEFECO's model could help consolidate the defense capabilities of Black Sea littoral states, enhance their resilience against external threats, and promote NATO's strategic interests in the region.

Moreover, the establishment of a Black Sea Defense Cooperation framework could foster trust-building and confidence-building measures among Black Sea littoral states. By facilitating joint military exercises, information-sharing mechanisms, and capacity-building initiatives, BSDC could promote dialogue and cooperation among countries with historically fraught relations, such as Romania and Ukraine, as well as Turkey and Greece. This collaborative approach could contribute to de-escalating tensions and promoting regional stability in the Black Sea area.

Furthermore, replicating NORDEFECO's model in the Black Sea region could enhance maritime security and cooperation among littoral states in the context of the post-war era, addressing common challenges such as illegal fishing, maritime piracy, and environmental degradation. By establishing joint maritime patrols, information-sharing mechanisms, and search and rescue operations, Black Sea littoral states could improve their maritime domain awareness and response capabilities, thereby enhancing security and stability in one of the world's most strategically important waterways. Extending this neo medievalist cooperation model to the Black Sea region could facilitate greater integration and alignment with NATO and EU security initiatives, promoting coherence and synergy in regional security governance. By coordinating efforts with existing frameworks such as the NATO Black Sea Maritime Patrols and the EU's Black Sea Synergy, BSDC could enhance the effectiveness of collective security efforts and contribute to a more unified approach to addressing shared security challenges in the Black Sea area.

Forging a Neomedieval Security Pact: Romania's Role in Black Sea Cooperation

Romania can be at the forefront of efforts to establish a neomedieval security pact in the Black Sea region, leveraging its robust political and strategic capacities to advance collective defense and civil protection initiatives. Politically, Romania has emerged as a vocal proponent of enhancing regional security cooperation in response to escalating tensions and challenges posed by Russia's assertive actions in the region. Through active engagement in multilateral forums and diplomatic initiatives, Romania has demonstrated its commitment to promoting stability and resilience-building efforts among Black Sea littoral states.

Strategically, Romania possesses military capabilities and an infrastructure that position it as a key player in shaping security dynamics in the Black Sea (Geoană 2023). With a modernized armed force equipped with advanced weaponry and technology, Romania is well-equipped to contribute to military deterrence efforts and provide leadership in joint defense initiatives. Its participation in NATO's enhanced forward presence in the region underscores Romania's commitment to bolstering collective defense capabilities and deterring potential aggressors, further solidifying its strategic role in Black Sea cooperation. Moreover, Romania's expertise in civil protection and disaster response enhances its capacity to coagulate civil protection forces in the Black Sea region, complementing military deterrence measures. The country's comprehensive civil protection mechanisms and experience in managing natural disasters position it as a valuable resource for promoting resilience and readiness to address non-military threats, such as environmental disasters and humanitarian crises. By integrating civil protection capabilities with military deterrence efforts, Romania fosters a holistic approach to regional security that addresses both conventional and non-conventional challenges.

Furthermore, Romania's status as a NATO member state and its membership in the European Union provide it with access to resources, expertise, and collaborative frameworks that can support the development of neomedieval security cooperation in the Black Sea region. Through NATO's Partnership for Peace program and EU-funded initiatives, Romania can facilitate capacity-building efforts, promote information-sharing mechanisms, and strengthen cooperation on a wide range of security issues, from border security to cybersecurity. This collaborative approach enhances Romania's ability to address shared security challenges and promote stability in the Black Sea. Additionally, Romania's commitment to democratic values and the rule of law strengthens its credibility and

legitimacy as a regional leader in promoting security cooperation and stability in the Black Sea. By upholding democratic norms and principles, Romania fosters trust and cooperation among Black Sea littoral states, laying the groundwork for enhanced security cooperation and resilience-building efforts. Its adherence to democratic governance also enhances Romania's standing within NATO and the EU, further bolstering its influence in shaping regional security dynamics.

Identifying key lessons learned and best practices for regional security cooperation from a neo medievalist point of view entails recognizing the effectiveness of decentralized governance, networked diplomacy, and adaptive responses to complex security challenges. One key lesson is the importance of inclusivity and collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including states, subnational entities, civil society organizations, and international partners. By fostering dialogue, cooperation, and trust-building measures, neo medievalist approaches promote a sense of collective ownership and responsibility for regional security, enhancing resilience and effectiveness in addressing shared threats.

Another lesson learned is the value of flexibility and adaptability in responding to evolving security dynamics. Neo medievalist frameworks prioritize agility and innovation in governance structures, enabling swift responses to emerging threats and challenges. By embracing a dynamic and responsive approach to security cooperation, states can effectively navigate complex security environments and mitigate risks more effectively. This adaptability is crucial in ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of regional security initiatives over time. Furthermore, neo medievalist approaches highlight the interconnectedness of security challenges and the importance of addressing multifaceted threats through holistic and integrated responses. By integrating military deterrence measures with civil protection capabilities, states can enhance their resilience and readiness to address various security challenges, from conventional military threats to non-traditional security risks such as cyberattacks and natural disasters. This comprehensive approach promotes stability and security in the face of diverse and interconnected threats.

Of course, Romania's strong relations with the United States and Poland contribute significantly to providing a high level of security for Europe within the context of intraregional cooperation. As a NATO member, Romania benefits from strategic partnerships with key allies, including the United States and Poland, which bolster its defense capabilities and deterrence posture. Through joint exercises, information-sharing

mechanisms, and defense cooperation agreements, Romania enhances interoperability and coordination with its allies, contributing to a more cohesive and effective security architecture in Europe. On the other hand, Romania's strategic location on the eastern flank of NATO positions it as a crucial bulwark against potential security threats emanating from the Black Sea region. By strengthening its defense capabilities and cooperation with the United States and Poland, Romania enhances its capacity to deter potential adversaries and promote stability in Eastern Europe. This collaborative approach underscores the importance of intra-regional cooperation in addressing shared security challenges and advancing collective defense objectives within the broader framework of NATO and European security cooperation.

Additionally, Romania's participation in joint initiatives and multilateral forums, such as the Bucharest Nine (B9) and the Three Seas Initiative, provides opportunities for enhanced cooperation and coordination with its regional partners, including Poland. Through these platforms, Romania fosters dialogue, strengthens cooperation in the security field, and promotes resilience-building efforts in areas such as energy security, cybersecurity, and infrastructure development. This intraregional cooperation contributes to a more integrated and cohesive security architecture in Central and Eastern Europe, bolstering stability and security across the continent.

Conclusion

The Baltic region has made significant strides in enhancing security and civil protection through regional cooperation frameworks like NORDEFECO. By bringing together states, subnational entities, transnational organizations, and private sector stakeholders, NORDEFECO has fostered a collaborative approach to security governance that has strengthened the resilience and effectiveness of security measures in the region. Through joint exercises, information-sharing mechanisms, and capacity-building initiatives, NORDEFECO has contributed to a more cohesive and integrated security architecture in the Baltic states, promoting stability and cooperation in the face of diverse security challenges. The success of NORDEFECO underscores the importance of inclusive and adaptive approaches to security cooperation in addressing the complex and interconnected nature of modern security threats. By involving diverse stakeholders, including subnational entities, transnational organizations, and private sector actors, NORDEFECO has developed more

comprehensive, responsive, and innovative security measures that address the multifaceted nature of security challenges in the Baltic region. This inclusive approach has promoted a shared responsibility and cooperation culture, fostering greater resilience and readiness to respond to emerging security risks.

However, despite progress, challenges remain in ensuring the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of regional security cooperation in the Baltic region. Continued geopolitical tensions, evolving security threats, and resource constraints pose ongoing challenges to security governance efforts. Additionally, the need to adapt to emerging security challenges, such as cyber threats, hybrid warfare tactics, and disinformation campaigns, requires constant vigilance and innovation on the part of regional cooperation frameworks like NORDEFECO.

Moving forward, Baltic states need to strengthen further and institutionalize regional cooperation mechanisms to address these challenges effectively. This includes enhancing information-sharing mechanisms, interoperability among defense forces, and coordination of civil protection efforts. Moreover, fostering greater trust and cooperation among regional actors, including Russia, is crucial for promoting stability and security in the Baltic region. Diplomatic engagement and confidence-building measures can be critical in reducing tensions and mitigating the risk of conflict.

Building upon the successes of regional cooperation frameworks like NORDEFECO in the Baltic Sea region, there is a compelling case for advocating for a neo medievalist form of cooperation in the Black Sea region. The Black Sea has emerged as a strategic hotspot characterized by geopolitical competition, security tensions, and diverse security challenges. In this context, neo medievalist principles offer valuable insights and strategies for enhancing regional security governance and promoting collective action among the Black Sea littoral states.

Firstly, a neo medievalist approach to cooperation in the Black Sea region would prioritize inclusivity and collaboration among diverse stakeholders. By involving subnational entities, transnational organizations, and private sector stakeholders in security governance, neo medievalist frameworks can foster a sense of collective ownership and responsibility for regional security. This inclusive approach ensures that security efforts are tailored to local needs and realities, enhancing their effectiveness and resilience.

Secondly, neo medievalist cooperation in the Black Sea region would embrace flexibility and adaptability in responding to evolving security dynamics. A wide range of security challenges characterizes the Black Sea, including territorial disputes, hybrid warfare tactics, and transnational organized crime. Neo medievalist frameworks can provide adaptive governance structures that address these challenges through innovative and collaborative responses.

Moreover, neo medievalist cooperation in the Black Sea region would leverage diverse stakeholders' expertise, resources, and perspectives to develop comprehensive and holistic security measures. By partnering with transnational organizations, such as NATO, the EU, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), neo medievalist frameworks can access broader capabilities and resources to address shared security challenges. Similarly, collaboration with private sector entities can facilitate technology transfer, innovation, and capacity-building efforts, enhancing the resilience and effectiveness of security measures in the region.

Furthermore, neo medievalist cooperation in the Black Sea region would promote dialogue, cooperation, and trust-building measures among littoral states, contributing to stability and security in one of the world's most strategically important regions. By fostering a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility, neo medievalist frameworks can mitigate the risk of conflict and promote peaceful conflict resolution. This collaborative approach is essential for building regional solidarity and resilience in the face of diverse and interconnected security threats.

In conclusion, advocating for a neo medievalist form of cooperation in the Black Sea region offers a promising path forward for enhancing regional security governance and promoting collective action among littoral states. By prioritizing inclusivity, flexibility, and collaboration, neo medievalist frameworks can address the Black Sea region's complex and evolving security challenges, ultimately contributing to stability, security, and prosperity in the region and beyond.

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