

Defence policy direction

for cooperation with countries in the
Indo-Pacific region



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Foreword

Security in the Euro-Atlantic region is becoming increasingly linked to security in the Indo-Pacific region. When authoritarian states and non-state actors question international norms and agreements by making threats or using military force, the rules-based world order is challenged. This affects Sweden, as its security is ultimately based on states respecting international law, including the rules of the UN Charter.

Defence cooperation with Indo-Pacific partner countries is becoming increasingly important in order to jointly face challenges, maintain stability, defend the rules-based world order and secure trade flows. In the current security situation, defence cooperation is a key part of Sweden's bilateral and multilateral relations.

This defence policy direction describes the Government's ambition to develop its defence engagement and cooperation with partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region. Swedish defence policy interests are an important starting point, as are the conditions in which increased cooperation can occur. Three focus areas relating to practical implementation of the strategy will be considered: defence relations, military presence and cooperation on defence materiel, innovation and technology.



Pål Jonson
Minister for Defence
Sweden

The Indo-Pacific region and Sweden's defence policy

The Indo-Pacific region, the broad and densely populated area that ranges from the east coast of Africa via the Indian Ocean and the archipelagos of South-East Asia to the Pacific Island Countries, has become critical from a central defence policy and military perspective in recent years.

This regional development is increasingly characterised by the dynamic between China and the United States. The strategic rivalry between the two countries, China's increasing authoritarianism and cooperation with Russia, and the United States' resource prioritisation between Europe and the Indo-Pacific region, are all factors that affect defence and security in the Euro-Atlantic region and, thus, Sweden.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has affected countries outside Europe, and Sweden would be negatively affected by conflicts in the Indo-Pacific region. Security in the Indo-Pacific region is becoming increasingly linked to security in Europe. It has therefore become more important to develop defence relations with partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

It is important for Sweden's total defence and the Swedish Armed Forces to continue to secure access to technology, raw materials, capital and knowledge. Increased defence and defence materiel cooperation with high-tech partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region could improve Sweden's ability to enhance its national defence capability. This will help secure access to new, cutting-edge defence technology and increase Sweden's competitiveness in the area of defence materiel.



Defence interests and conditions

The defence policy direction for Sweden's relations with partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region must be based on and coincide with Sweden's defence interests. Defence cooperation with countries in the region complements Sweden's overall security and foreign policies.

Interests

A number of defence interests and needs are key in the ambition to increase defence-related cooperation with partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

Sweden's security and defence are based on respect for international law, including the rules of the UN Charter. It is in Sweden's interests to, when necessary, provide military capability to counteract actors seeking to undermine the rules-based world order and violate international rules and norms by force of arms.

War and conflict and authoritarian states' attempts to undermine the rules-based world order by force of arms in the Indo-Pacific region may have negative consequences for the defence of Sweden and Europe. It is in Sweden's defence interests to contribute to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

It is also in Sweden's defence interests to understand the United States' resource prioritisation as regards the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions.



Enhanced cooperation with high-tech countries in the Indo-Pacific region could help improve the pace and quality of defence materiel and defence innovation development. Sweden's defence industry base may also benefit. This would in turn create conditions for increased access to cutting-edge technology in Sweden.

Sweden's goal is to promote these interests when needs and resources allow. Individual initiatives, issues and processes vis-à-vis countries in the region will be tailored to the specific context, and priorities will be determined from a broad defence and security policy perspective.

Conditions

Intensified defence cooperation to strengthen peace, security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region must be based on coinciding defence policy objectives, benefit common defence interests and occur within jointly prioritised defence areas. It is therefore crucial to consider the interests of allies and partner countries when developing relations. Sweden enjoys good relations with most countries in the Indo-Pacific region and also upholds cooperation with the Association of South-East Asian Nations as a key cooperation format.

National initiatives will be very important in order to develop defence cooperation with partner countries in the region. This can be supplemented with Swedish contributions to the EU's defence-related activities within and for regional security. A united, solidarity-based and coordinated defence policy within the framework of the EU and NATO is an important starting point. Within both NATO and the EU, Sweden will pursue increased defence cooperation with partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region and seek to help implement concrete total defence activities there.

The EU has taken concrete measures to promote security activities linked to an open, rules-based regional security order. These include Coordinated Maritime Presences in the North-Western Indian Ocean, support for security-oriented capacity-building with partner countries throughout the entire region, the participation of the European Union Naval Force Operation (EUNAVFOR) in exercises with several countries and an enhanced security partnership with South Korea and Japan.

NATO does not have any explicit defence commitments in the Indo-Pacific region. However, NATO has clearly indicated the connection between defence-related challenges in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions. Challenges within defence domains not tied to any specific location, such as computers, space, hybrid influence operations and economic security, are already or have the potential to develop into threats. NATO therefore attaches particular importance to strengthening ties with Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

Focus areas for defence cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region

Intensifying defence cooperation with partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region will require time and resources, and there are also more immediate needs in Sweden's neighbourhood. The main focus must therefore lie on finding solutions that are based on and complement existing activities.

Concrete measures to strengthen defence cooperation in the region fall within three focus areas: defence relations, military presence, and cooperation on defence materiel, innovation and technology.



Focus area 1 – defence relations



Defence relations are created through both dialogue and by Sweden actively taking part in relevant defence forums and ensuring that defence attachés are present.

Bilateral defence and security dialogues form the basis of deeper and broader relations with partner countries. The Ministry of Defence will work to expand and intensify defence relations with prioritised partner countries in the region.

Active participation in regional forums helps increase understanding of and interest in Sweden's engagement in the Indo-Pacific region.

An example is the Shangri-La Dialogue, where defence ministers from several countries in the Indo-Pacific region, North America and

Europe gather. Sweden will work to be active and visible in this and similar regional forums.

Ensuring the presence of defence attachés in prioritised countries in the region is an effective way to intensify defence relations, as is actively supporting Swedish defence industry export initiatives in the region. This is based on active Swedish participation in relevant defence and defence industry forums.

Recognising opportunities and finding common beneficial cooperation requires knowledge. Sweden will therefore prioritise the understanding of defence and security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region and strengthen both the Government Offices' and public authorities' analytical skills in these areas.

Focus area 2 – military presence

Being present in the region is crucial for cooperation opportunities. Military presence can lead to peacekeeping, increase stability, help to jointly achieve maritime security, protect important maritime transports and deter aggression. It can also contribute to increased preparedness when managing security-threatening activities by non-state actors and when tackling serious incidents and catastrophes. Contributions to military presence will be considered when beneficial to regional security, Swedish defence

interests and Swedish Armed Forces activities.

Sweden already participates in the EU's marine initiatives in the North-Western Indian Ocean and the waters around the Horn of Africa, EUNAVFOR Atalanta and Aspides. The Swedish Government will continue to monitor the maritime security situation and evaluate contributions for future efforts and regional initiatives for maritime security in the region.



By assigning liaison officers to staff in the region, Sweden can gather information on maritime status reports, better understand the operative environment, challenges and threats to maritime safety and strengthen military relations with individual partner countries. Sweden intends to reassess its participation in relevant military staff in the region.

Taking part in regional defence exercises and operations for maritime security provides meaningful experience and a better understanding of how security-building and stabilising military operations are conducted in the region. Sweden will continue to monitor regional exercises and, when resources and defence interests are available, consider taking part in

defence exercises and other capacity-building activities in the region.

Bilateral collaboration to develop specific military operational concepts may be valuable to Sweden's national defence capacity development. This can include concepts linked to sea, air, logistics and space.

Training and exchange of experience can benefit both Sweden and partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region. This creates a common understanding of strategic culture, defence concepts, capacity development and operative methods, such as threat analyses. Where relevant, Sweden will consider taking part in military exercises in the region.





Focus area 3 – cooperation on defence materiel, innovation and technology

Sweden's strategic direction for defence innovation indicates that it is one of the most innovative countries in the world, but international cooperation with trusted partner countries is a prerequisite for successful defence innovation.

Countries and alliances with which Sweden has or may develop trusting relations offer greater opportunities to jointly enhance defence innovation efforts. Cooperation with Indo-Pacific partner countries will benefit Sweden's defence capability, research environments, defence industry base and defence relations. This complements the measures taken in the EU to strengthen defence industry synergies and reduce vulnerabilities in supply chains for defence benefits.

Sweden already cooperates with several countries in the Indo-Pacific region on exports and imports of

defence materiel and components. Public authorities and businesses in Sweden also carry out activities related to research, system development and system integration projects and development cooperation with countries in the region.

Several of the world's most prominent high-tech countries are located and work in the Indo-Pacific region. These include Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Australia and the United States, with which Sweden has good and trusting relations. In light of the rapid civilian and military technology developments and experience of the war in Ukraine, Indo-Pacific actors are increasingly carrying out defence innovation activities with the aim of improving capacity development in the short and long term.

Interest in cooperating with Sweden has grown in recent years. Sweden



will continue to work for defence materiel cooperation in the region when it is in the country's defence interests and will increase capacity development in the short or long term. An example is the deep, strong and advanced maritime cooperation with Australia, Japan and Singapore, which is confidence-building, demonstrates Sweden's defence industrial capacity and has supported capacity development in partner countries. Defence materiel cooperation with these countries also increases Sweden's capability as elements of the maritime operation environment – the sea bed and complex undersea topography – are very similar to the Baltic Sea.

Access to and control of cutting-edge technology with dual-use products are defence tools and goals for Sweden and countries in the Indo-Pacific region. Cooperating on cutting-edge technology is therefore a cornerstone when building relations with partner countries in the region.

Increasing cooperation on defence technology and innovation with high-tech countries provides an opportunity to optimally supply materiel to military defence in order to face future capability requirements.

Conclusion

Maintaining and, where possible, strengthening and intensifying defence cooperation with partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region are long-term commitments that will require time and resources. This defence policy direction presents concrete proposals and measures that the Government intends to implement. This document considers the issue from a security and geopolitical perspective, identifies thematic focus areas and states overall priorities for how cooperation can be developed.

Through increased cooperation, Sweden and Swedish actors can further national defence capabilities and security while also contributing to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

Since the Government is now launching, and prioritising, enhanced cooperation with partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region, the conditions for collaborating internationally and strengthening the transatlantic link are good. EU and NATO activities are an important part of developing and promoting Sweden's defence relations with countries in the Indo-Pacific region. At the same time, a number of measures can be implemented nationally and by individual actors in Sweden to develop and promote the ambitions outlined in this document.





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