No fast track towards civil defence

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The network of actors who today constitute the Swedish crisis management system and civil defence can be referred to simply as the Swedish preparedness system. This system is about to embark upon a lengthy development towards a new civil defence that makes up one of the two parts of the Swedish total defence concept. The task of rebuilding the total defence will be taken on in collaboration with the Swedish Armed Forces. However, there are signs that the civil defence development process is at risk of being affected by a number of difficulties.

The historical context of the peacetime crisis management system

The new civil defence has strong ties to the existing peacetime crisis management system, which was created in the early 2000s in the wake of a Swedish Government Official Report called 'the Vulnerability and Security Study' (*Sårbarhets- och säkerhetsutredningen*). This report marked the end of the historical civil defence, which had been based on a Cold War context, and introduced a crisis management system for peacetime purposes. Aside from the current crisis management system and the legacy of the old civil defence, a new civil defence needs to take a number of conditions into account. Examples include:

Pluralism. The contemporary authority landscape is pluralistic, including a growing number of specialised authorities. Furthermore, many societal functions that traditionally operated within the public domain are now run by the private sector . Private ownership has in turn become more complex, since some companies that perform vital societal functions have foreign owners and are governed by principles that are not necessarily aligned with the interests of the Swedish preparedness system.

Technological development and emergence of vulnerabilities. Today, our modern society relies increasingly on critical technical and socio-technical systems. This is a favourable order of things during peacetime, but also constitutes potential vulnerabilities should society be subjected to intense pressure. One could argue that these vulnerabilities are greater for the part of the population residing in cities, as opposed to those in the countryside, who are somewhat less dependent on (or have no access whatsoever to some of) the different kinds of services that society offers.

Grey zone and hybrid warfare. So-called hybrid warfare brings with it new ways to influence Sweden. This makes the challenges of a grey zone threat more relevant than ever. The grey zone threat concerns deniable attacks at levels below open armed conflict, in situations where there is neither peace nor discord. Regardless, this problem represents a number of new and old aspects that a total defence needs to take into account when it comes to capabilities, alongside those needed for conventional warfare.

Giving direction to governance

Actor pluralism lends complexity to activities such as governance, development of concrete capabilities, financing and follow-up measures. A possible solution includes tailoring actor-customised governance models in order for civil defence to gain input from the various actors in the preparedness system, such as

municipalities, county administrative boards, county councils and central authorities. There is great demand for well thought-out governance efforts by the state – efforts which are associated with some complexity, as the preparedness issue is cross-sectoral and concerns several parts of society, while it rarely represents a core issue among actors who are obligated to participate.

In the context of governance, one can argue that the preparedness system is hampered by deficiency in the input parameters which preparedness actors need in order to be able to plan and develop civil defence. The governance directives regarding which parameters actors should take into account concerning scenarios of conventional warfare or grey zone threats are at best abstract and at worst ambiguous. It would be complicated for a single preparedness officer, for instance at a municipality or a central authority, to discern which capabilities his/her organisation is to bring to the table and how these are to interact with the rest of the preparedness system, based on the governance directives provided today.

The Swedish government's most recent Defence Bill that was passed in 2015, the total defence doctrine issued by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) and the Swedish Armed Forces, and the cross-party Swedish Defence Commission's report 'Resilience' (*Motståndskraft*), all provide some indications of which capabilities are to be included in civil defence. However, there is a lack of a systematic and exhaustive approach defining which actors are expected to do what, and how the different aspects of civil defence are to be linked together in concrete terms. The preparedness system also lacks a hierarchy of objectives which could be used to specify the three main objectives of civil defence: to safeguard the civilian population, to ensure societal basic functionality, and to support the Swedish Armed Forces. These three formulated objectives could be broken down into a number of desired capabilities, which can be taken on by the actors in the preparedness system in the

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form of concrete activities. This breakdown was, to an extent, carried out within the former civil defence during the 1990s.

AVOIDING ANALYSIS TRAPS AND SUB-OPTIMAL RESPONSIBILITY STRUCTURES INHERITED FROM THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Some difficulties remain in the legacy of the peacetime crisis management system created in the early 2000s. First, the system is characterised by some ambiguity regarding which actor is responsible for what and which role each actor is to fill. This ambiguity is manifested in part in the so-called preparedness 'cross-sectoral cooperation forums' and their relationship to the so-called 'sector responsibility' mechanism. These forums aim to promote collaboration among authorities, for example in the areas of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons (CBRN) or technical infrastructure. A focus on collaboration within the forums has rather become an objective in its own right rather than focusing on planning and coordination efforts aimed at achieving concrete capabilities.

Preparedness actors have recently started to recognise that the crisis management system's sector responsibility, i.e. the responsibility structure that is expected to guarantee the central authorities' participation in preparedness efforts, is in many respects too vague to have any real effect. A formal sector responsibility probably needs to be clarified for the cross-sectoral cooperation forums to function properly. Nevertheless, there has been some improvement in the energy and transport sectors, though the road to a functioning sector responsibility mechanism will be long and tedious. In this respect, it can be added that sector responsibility is a means, rather than an end – which is why preparedness objectives initially need to be formulated on a sector level.

Furthermore, the sectoral responsibility mechanism will have to be customised depending on

which sector is concerned, as each individual sector system is characterised by its own conditions and actors.

Second, the crisis management system places a disproportionately large focus on risk analysis, which, in many cases, involves analysing risks and vulnerabilities already identified, while working out solutions and measures is deprioritised. Some actors have been wholly or partially caught in this analysis trap, which is why it will be important in future for the state to request and disseminate smart preparedness solutions and measures, rather than updated risk and vulnerability data.

The government considers that civil defence should be based on crisis management, which is a sound approach to managing society's limited resources. Concurrently, it is important that the development of civil defence avoids reproducing the shortcomings of the crisis management system. One should also bear in mind that an evolving civil defence system can help the Swedish crisis management system to improve, in terms of capabilities.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL DEFENCE

All in all, the difficulties described above present a risk that a new civil defence may evolve in an unnecessarily chaotic and arbitrary manner. Such a development may cause separate actors to plan in separate directions, which might result in poor prospects for the system as a whole to work towards a common objective. This also complicates the potential for the actors to work together in a coordinated way, for instance in efforts aimed at creating interoperability between capabilities. A development of this kind involves a risk of wasting or misdirecting resources and development efforts being carried out in the wrong order, which may exert unnecessary stress on the motivation and drive of the personnel.

Considering the ambiguity in the current governance of the civil defence development process, preparedness actors such as authorities and municipalities are presented with a difficult task in determining their respective roles and core activities. In turn, the vagueness of governance might cause actors to focus on developing what could be called 'support capabilities' – for instance, conducting exercises,

hierarchies of command and information security. With the exception of protecting information, which is vital in order to even start planning processes, the civil defence development could benefit from establishing a bottom-up perspective which places greater focus on actors' core capabilities – which comprise the very reason for the actors to participate in civil defence in the first place.

In conclusion, a few proposals are presented below, with the ambition of supporting the ongoing discussion about what contributes to the development of an appropriate civil defence.

Conduct development activities in the right order. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) is currently assigned to develop a so-called set of starting points to support planning efforts among civil defence actors. These starting points should provide the basis for the formulation of capability-related objectives regarding both the traditional armed conflict and the grey zone ends of the threat spectrum. Efforts on formulating capability objectives should be carried out in consultation with actors in the civil defence system, in particular the so-called sector-responsible authorities. Furthermore, we need to determine which actors should contribute with which capabilities and how these can be translated into concrete activities. This needs to be supported by governance, financing, and necessary changes in legislation.

Bring threat spectrum professionals together with capability development professionals. FOI's predecessor, the National Defence Research Institute (FOA), had already stated in the 1990s that professionals who work to create capabilities among civil defence actors need to be brought together with professionals who understand the antagonistic threat, in order to facilitate an apt capability development process. The reason for this is that knowledge of threats and knowledge of the activities of specific organisations is rarely found in the mind of one and the same person.

Imbue the civil defence development process with a capability balance. Efforts towards a well-thought-out development of civil defence need to aim at creating a balance between different capabilities.

This needs to be done in two contexts. The first is represented by an internal capability balance within the civil defence: we need a certain amount of qualities and quantities of capabilities in the civil defence system. For instance, civil defence does not only need a working war-time hospital preparedness, but also a robustness in the power and telecommunications sectors. The second context represents a balance within the total defence system - between civil and military capabilities. A strong military deterrence is desirable, but should be weighed against a corresponding civil defence threshold. A weak civil defence deterrence is undesirable, as it might invite a potential aggressor to ignore conventional means and strike from within the grey zone spectrum.

Avoid allowing time constraints to limit the development. A proper civil defence comprises a comprehensive societal project that will take time to implement. A long-term development plan should be drawn up and resources allocated only when there is an assessment of what should be achieved and how different activities could be linked together.

Remember that we still need a crisis management system. Consideration should be given to how potential civil defence capabilities can also be used for the benefit of managing peacetime crisis situations. This could affect how certain capabilities are designed in the first place in order to allow a dual use practice. In addition, lessons should be learned from our soon to be twenty-year-old crisis management system regarding which aspects have worked well, and which aspects have underperformed. Finally, it is important to confront the occasional misconception that we must make a hard trade-off between a civil defence and a peacetime crisis management system: in terms of capabilities, I would argue that the latter can benefit greatly from investments in the former.

Study the interfaces between the sectoral responsibility and geographical area responsibility. The crisis management system suffers from ambiguity in the interconnection between the actors responsible for geographical areas (e.g. municipalities, county administrative boards) and those responsible for the different so-called sectors (e.g. with responsibility for electricity, food or financial systems). In this respect, the 'civilian commanders' of the Cold War civil defence represented an important function. The commanders acted as contact interfaces, on the one hand between the civil defence system and its military counterpart, and on the other between the geographical area actors the sectoral/central authorities. Is a corresponding interface desirable in a contemporary context, and should it be restored?

Ultimately, a lot depends on how the national political level, the government offices and the Swedish Contingencies Agency (MSB) decide to mount a comprehensive approach. In what place do we want to find ourselves in five years, and what kind of civil defence is desirable? Once a comprehensive set of capability objectives is established, it is high time to compile a strategic governance package to enable civil defence actors to develop the right capabilities. The recently announced and initiated Swedish Government Official Investigations are instrumental in laying the groundwork for these governance efforts.