

Sweden's total defence – global trends and new challenges

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Sweden's defence and security policy is facing major challenges over the next five to ten years. The improved security situation that came about after the end of the Cold War has come to an end. While the world's social and economic development remains positive, there are trends indicating greater instability and uncertainty both globally and in Sweden's immediate neighbourhood. This negative global development places greater demands on Sweden's military and civil defences. Sweden's new total defence needs to adapt if it is to be able to handle new challenges in a changing world.

THE GLOBAL SECURITY SITUATION HAS DETERIORATED

Tensions have increased in the Baltic Sea region following Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and ongoing aggression against Ukraine. The United Kingdom's process of withdrawal from the EU and the Trump administration's security policy have contributed to the unpredictability of developments in security policy both in Europe and elsewhere. The situation in the Middle East and North Africa, on the southern fringes of the EU, remains unstable and is affecting European policies and cohesion.

There are also growing tensions in Asia, a region that has an increasingly important part to play in the global economy and security. Increased tensions and conflicts outside Europe involving countries such as the US, China and Russia are affecting multilateral organisations like the EU, NATO and the UN. The repercussions of these are felt in Sweden and its immediate neighbourhood, too. China's military

rearmament and desire for greater political influence both regionally and globally have security policy implications for Sweden as well.

THE RULES-BASED WORLD ORDER, DEMOCRACY AND GLOBALISATION ARE FACING CHALLENGES

The gradual shift in the balance of political power from the West to Asia has brought with it major challenges to international rules and standards. The dominant role of the US in the international system that was established after the Second World War and reinforced after the end of the Cold War is undergoing a process of change. There is growing uncertainty about the global role of the US, its support for the rules-based world order and its continued commitment to European security. At the same time, emerging regional and global powers and non-state actors are attempting to challenge international standards and undermine the Western-led, rules-based world order. Great powers are once again trying to establish spheres of influence, while established multilateral institutions are becoming weaker.

At the same time, democracy has been weakening over the last decade, with declining respect for civil rights and the rule of law. This trend is apparent in the vast majority of regions around the world, including Europe, resulting in increased risks to security. One source of concern is the fact that several of the biggest states in the world, including Russia and China, are becoming increasingly authoritarian. In a number of countries, democracy is being challenged by populist forces that are critical of globalisation and multilateral organisations. Although international trade remains

extensive, there is a clear trend towards isolationism and the restoration of national sovereignty over political and economic decisions.

As a small state dependent on exports, Sweden benefits from international trade, a democratic environment, strong multilateral institutions and a rules-based order. These values are under threat from economic isolationism, authoritarian regimes, the undermining of international law by some states and further weakening of the current world order.

These developments, particularly in Sweden's immediate neighbourhood, are making more stringent demands of the total defence. Sweden is largely dependent on effective, open and free markets for its imports of food and strategic raw materials. The challenges facing international trade mean that the total defence needs to increase its level of preparedness, enabling it to cope with situations in which Swedish energy and food supplies are under threat.

THE NATURE OF CONFLICTS IS CHANGING

The impact of hybrid warfare, as it is known, in the grey zone between peace and war represents a growing challenge. As a result, some states are using non-military force – information warfare, cyberattacks and economic pressure, for example – to influence politics, policies and societies of other countries. Open military conflicts may potentially be supplemented by attacks on civilian infrastructure and decision-makers, for example, or by distributing misinformation. Cyberspace is an increasingly important arena for conflicts. This means that influence operations – for instance – can be executed from farther away than ever before and identification of aggressors is a difficult task, making deterrence and countermeasures more of a problematic issue.

Technological development and digitalisation have brought about many advantages but resulted in new vulnerabilities as well. State and non-state actors have acquired new ways of influencing societies without needing to resort to traditional military force. This

is why preparedness among all authorities and a reinforced total defence are becoming increasingly important.

THE MORE PROMINENT ROLE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Russia's rhetoric and the modernisation of its nuclear arsenal are causing major uncertainty in Sweden's immediate neighbourhood. There has been an increase in the risk of nuclear weapons being used in the immediate neighbourhood. Hence, total defence needs to relate to a world in which the significance of nuclear weapons is becoming increasingly prominent.

Western powers have begun modernising their nuclear arsenals. It is not clear whether Russia and the US will reach consensus and renew existing agreements on arms control. China, India and Pakistan are also continuing to develop and expand their nuclear arsenals. The conflicts relating to the nuclear programmes of Iran and North Korea remain unresolved. There is also a risk of nuclear weapon technology and weapons of mass destruction of other types spreading to more states, but also to non-state actors.

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GROWING IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON SECURITY POLICY

An increase in global average temperature has many consequences: increased sea levels, extreme weather, impact on agriculture, fires, water shortages, flooding and migration. There are potential risks of instability and conflict for resources due to climate change, in combination with weak institutional capacity in vulnerable states.

The consequences of climate change on security will be significant, particularly in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia. Climate change is also affecting Sweden's immediate neighbourhood. Deglaciation in the Arctic is opening up new offshore transport routes and facilitating new recovery of energy and minerals. However, this development is also reinforcing rivalries and conflicts of interest between states in and around the Arctic, in particular between

China, the US and Russia. Climate change is also impacting Sweden directly. There is a greater risk of fires, for instance, which places demands on the crisis management system.

MAJOR IMPLICATIONS DUE TO RAPID TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Rapid advancements are taking place in fields such as information technology, artificial intelligence and robotics, which may have major economic and military implications and lead to a shift in the global balance of power. Improved accessibility and distribution of new technology means that states and non-state actors are able to access civilian and military technology that was previously exclusive to the West. China, for example, has a long-term plan to become a world leader in the field of artificial intelligence.

New technologies are providing more opportunities for states to operate in the grey zone between war and peace without having to cross the threshold of armed attack. Given this fact, it is important for Sweden to monitor technological developments closely and ensure that its total defence is updated regularly so that new threats and challenges can be handled.

WORLD MILITARY EXPENDITURE ON THE INCREASE

Global military expenditure is currently at its highest level since the end of the Cold War. This is mainly due to the massive increase in military expenditure in China, Russia, India and Saudi Arabia over the past decade. The percentage of global military expenditure by democratic and Western states – particularly countries in Western Europe – has declined over the same period. States such as China and India are likely to continue increasing their percentage of total global military expenditure. At present, the military expenditure of the US corresponds to just over a third of the total expenditure of the world.

Military expenditure in Europe is once more on the increase due to the behaviour of Russia. Although the US has increased its military presence in Europe, there is now greater awareness among European states of the need to take more responsibility for European defence and security.

The ratio of Sweden's military expenditure to GDP has been falling since the end of the Cold War and is currently equivalent to one per cent of its GDP.

There is currently a need to reinforce both the civil and military defence postures if the targets outlined in the 2015 Defence Act are to be met.

SWEDEN FACES IMPORTANT SECURITY POLICY DECISIONS

The development of Sweden's total defence is once again of renewed relevance due to the deteriorating security situation in the world. The planning of a new total defence is influenced by the development of Sweden's relations with the EU and NATO and how these organisations adapt to the new global dynamics. The organisation of total defence is also affected by Sweden's cooperation within the Nordic region and with the Baltic States, as well as its cooperation with strategically important countries such as the US and the United Kingdom.

While the old total defence was primarily organised to confront and deal with military armed attacks, the modern total defence must be prepared to face a significantly broader threat scenario in which attackers cannot always be identified. The total defence needs greater resilience, adaptability and capacity if it is to be able to cope with the challenges presented by technological development and the changing security political dynamics.

To summarise: as a globalised state, Sweden must prepare for a more uncertain world and develop its capability to defend Swedish territory, safeguard the security of society and protect its democracy from hostile external influences. These challenges place important demands on Sweden's total defence concept.

