

# Creating commitment and capability for total defence

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**Building a resilient total defence requires both will and capability. Communicated threat scenarios need to be perceived as relevant, and trust in society and its institutions must be preserved in order to create a sufficient impetus to act. Information and requests coming from public authorities and municipalities need to be perceived as reasonable. Stressing the importance of general robustness in society and the benefits of this in peace, grey zone and war can increase the motivation of individuals, authorities and companies to contribute to the work on total defence.**

## **TOTAL DEFENCE CALLS FOR NEW PRIORITIES**

Strengthening the total defence calls for new priorities. Increased efforts in this area may mean that other things must be ignored. Companies are expected to participate in the planning process, which is not normally part of their core business. Citizens are expected to cope for a relatively long time in difficult conditions with only limited public support. Finally, the prioritisation of robust systems often conflicts with the efficiency aspirations that characterise modern society.

In order to create a commitment among organisations and individuals to set aside time and resources for preparations, the threat scenarios used need to be perceived as sufficiently relevant. However, that the threat scenarios are important and useful does not create sufficient conditions to create a willingness to act. What is also required is a belief that defence is meaningful and that what is to be protected is worth defending.

As the sociologist Ulrich Beck points out, for example, threat scenarios are things that are created. Threat scenarios may be challenged in terms of their content, how they are to be interpreted, their relevance and whose interests they reflect. The threat scenario described by the Swedish Defence Commission from this perspective can be seen as a jointly created scenario, anchored in democratic institutions. This does not prevent the scenario from being discussed and problematised in different ways; such a problematisation is part of a democratic society. However, discussions and debates can complicate the governance of the total defence.

## **IDENTIFYING THREAT SCENARIOS**

The end of the Cold War saw the rise of an expectation of peaceful coexistence in the region. The notion of a war in Sweden or in the wider region was not perceived as realistic. Society became used to calm and peaceful conditions, and vital societal systems were dimensioned accordingly.

An important challenge for the planning of the civilian part of total defence (civil defence) is therefore to describe what war, war-like conditions and grey zone threats mean, and to transmit these accounts, so-called narratives, to various societal actors and the public. Examples of such narratives are the five scenarios that FOI has produced on behalf of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB). The scenarios are intended for use by actors in society, such as governmental authorities, in the planning of civil defence. Another example is the Swedish Defence Commission's description of the security situation and its importance. A greater awareness of

the risks of psychological warfare, of the disruption of electoral processes, and of a perceived increased risk of armed conflicts in the wider region has also been fostered through reporting by governmental authorities and the media.

### INTERPRETING THREAT SCENARIOS

Threat scenarios can be interpreted in different ways. They may be challenged with regard to their relevance or weighed against other threats. As mentioned above, a threat in this context is something that is designed, and it is legitimate in a democratic society to insist on an interpretation that differs from those presented by the government and other actors.

One complication is that there is a risk that hostile actors will also question the accuracy and relevance of threat scenarios. Criticism of the threat scenario can be communicated directly or indirectly via organisations, individuals or fictitious accounts on social media. It will therefore be important for public authorities and municipalities that there is trust in society and its institutions, in order to be able to assert with credibility the legitimacy of the particular threat scenario that the authorities want to present.

### ACTING ACCORDING TO THREAT SCENARIOS – TO WANT AND BE ABLE TO

Even if there is an awareness of a threat scenario and it is interpreted as being relevant, it may inspire different types of behaviour. To act according to a threat scenario, in the way the state desires, requires a willingness to act, often referred to as the will to defend; and in addition, competence and resources.

The will to defend is not an unambiguous concept and can be interpreted in many different ways. At the future planning stage of total defence, it may mean that it is considered reasonable to prioritise defence instead of focusing efforts on achieving other non-defence policy objectives. During an ongoing conflict, it may mean the will not to surrender, to personally fight against an ongoing aggression, etc. By using the concept of the will to resist in a conflict, it is possible to distinguish between the will to defend before and during a conflict (see figure below).

For the individual, the will to defend may mean accepting making his/her own sacrifices in terms of time, money and/or convenience in order to build defence readiness. It may also involve citizens accepting restrictions on their own freedom in the

form of, for example, military service. For society as a whole, it may be a question of whether more resources should be allocated to total defence, possibly at the expense of resolving other societal problems, developing other social infrastructure, or reducing taxes.

|  | Before   | During   |
|--|--|--|
| <i>Activity</i>                          | Planning   | Management   |
| <i>Reality to relate to</i>              | Threat scenario<br>What might happen?  | Operating picture<br>What is happening?  |
| <i>Will to defend and will to resist</i> | Will to defend <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acceptance of prioritising preparedness measures</li> <li>• Participation in voluntary organisations</li> <li>• Build-up of own personal preparedness</li> </ul> | Will to resist <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to not surrender</li> <li>• Willingness to personally fight ongoing aggression</li> <li>• Willingness to participate in voluntary rescue and repair efforts</li> </ul> |

**Figure 1.** Conceptual figure illustrating similarities and differences between total defence before and during an attack. The figure is a policy sketch and there is not always a clearly defined boundary between 'before' and 'during', which is one of the challenges presented by attacks in the grey zone.

### THE PRIORITIES OF DIFFERENT ACTORS AFFECT THE WILL TO ACT

Public sector actors, such as governmental authorities, county councils and municipalities, work towards a wide range of societal objectives in their respective policy areas, where many issues are of equal importance. The regulations that govern these activities are vague in many cases, and their objectives are open to interpretation. This means that, to a large extent, the various actors have to weigh up themselves how resources should be prioritised.

This means that priorities in terms of societal objectives may differ between authorities, municipalities and regions, depending on which areas and which threats are considered the most important. This is understandable, since the conditions for action differ greatly. Perspectives on the relevance of the threat scenario may also differ depending on understanding of the outside world by individuals or groups of officials and other actors.

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One way the government and parliament might deal with this would be to prioritise more clearly between different societal objectives. So far, this has not been done to any great extent, and indeed it may not be possible. This applies in particular in the case of overall objectives that are often not sufficiently well-defined in order to be able to clearly determine whether and when they have been achieved. The prioritisation of such an objective could, in theory, lead to no action being taken to achieve other objectives, which would in all likelihood eventually be perceived as unreasonable. There will therefore need to be a continued compromise between different objectives.

The state can also give direction by means of targeted financial support, something that has been common in the crisis management system, but this support is generally insufficient to cover all needs. So the question of prioritising between different societal objectives is likely to largely concern the role of individual actors in the future as well. How important total defence is assessed to be in comparison with other activities in society, and what should be prioritised within the total defence, will likely differ between these different actors.

The business sector is an important actor in civil defence, although the main task of companies is to produce goods and services in order to generate profits for the owners; contributing to the public interest is not a key priority. Nevertheless, companies may have a self-interest in contributing to civil defence. For example, participation may strengthen a company's brand and thereby indirectly contribute positively to the financial result. Furthermore, companies consist of individuals, who can exert their influence on the business to take greater account of the interests of the total defence.

Even if there is a willingness in society to act, resources and skills are required for this. Financial resources and personnel will need to be allocated.

Employees who are needed in total defence will require training, and this will take time. Priorities will have to be defined and it will not be possible to implement these solely at central level.

### **IS A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF A THREAT SCENARIO POSSIBLE?**

There is a need for threat scenarios to be addressed in order to motivate actors to allocate time and resources to planning and action. A common operating picture is highlighted by many sources as being central to the efficient management of an ongoing event. There are also major advantages to an increased common consensus in cross-sectoral planning between different sectors, such as energy and transport. However, the question concerns what degree of consensus can be

reached between a broad set of actors with different interests and priorities. Having access to the same threat scenarios can be valuable, but it does not necessarily mean that actors share the same understanding of the threat scenario.

Even if it is possible to create narratives, such as FOI's scenarios, these need to be interpreted in the different contexts of the actors concerned. For example, it is not self-evident that the same scenario will be perceived to be best for planning in all sectors; in some cases, the scenario that

is most relevant may be war, in others the grey zone.

As mentioned above, the various sectors are fully occupied with contributing to different types of societal objectives, and it is in relation to this that their prioritisation of total defence must be understood. It will likely be difficult to reach full agreement on a common threat scenario. However, this does not mean that the work on building civil defence needs to come to a standstill.

### **A ROBUST SOCIETY FOR A BROAD SCALE OF THREATS**

One way of avoiding dependence on a general acceptance of a particular threat scenario, and also motivating work when acceptance is low, is to shift the

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focus to building a robust society that can be resilient according to a broad scale of threats. This may be a question of creating a food supply that is resistant to disruption, no matter the cause. It could also be a question of the capability to handle disinformation or cyberattacks, regardless of whether the perpetrator is a state actor or a group of activists. Most importantly, it may be necessary to work to maintain confidence in democratic institutions. These form the basis for all the measures that the state expects individuals, organisations, companies and authorities to perceive as legitimate.

Such a perspective in civil defence planning is likely to help different actors agree on the value of activities that make society more robust, without needing to embrace the same specific threat scenario. In this way, there would also be greater opportunities for building coalitions of stakeholders in order to implement measures. A concrete focus on robustness may also be advantageous with regard to the ambiguity of the grey zone threat, where it may be unclear whether events are the result of hostile attacks and, if so, what intentions the antagonists may have.

This does not mean that all aspects of civil defence can be dealt with in this way. There are several parts of civil defence that are not directly linked to the building of a general robustness. This applies to the support from society for the Swedish Armed Forces, for example.

## **BASIC PREREQUISITES FOR SUCCESS IN TOTAL DEFENCE**

Relevant threat scenarios and clear government direction are both needed to build civil defence. However, it is important to be aware that objectives and threat scenarios are emotively charged and that motivation and willingness to work from them are not foregone conclusions. Changing the perspectives of citizens, the business sector, authorities and other actors, so that total defence is given greater priority in their daily activities, is not achieved overnight. If synergies can be found between the requirements

of total defence and the other interests of different actors, it may strengthen the willingness to take total defence into account in their activities. For these attempts to bear fruit requires confidence in the institutions of society. For this reason, information and requests presented by the authorities must be perceived as reasonable by the population.