



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## Separation and immersion: the changing role of the armed forces in Northwestern liberal democracies

Vark, A. van

### Citation

Vark, A. van. (2025, October 17). *Separation and immersion: the changing role of the armed forces in Northwestern liberal democracies*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4270680>

Version: Publisher's Version

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**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).





# 6

**SWEDEN**

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on the findings of the Swedish case study. The first part of this chapter will describe the Swedish armed forces, its tasks and legal framework, the relations between military and society, the current state of civil-military relations and civil-military cooperation in Sweden (section 6.2). The next section (6.3) will focus on specific security challenges in the Swedish context. In section 6.4, recent changes in the domestic role of the Swedish armed forces and explanations for these changes will be explored. In the second part of this chapter, the future is examined: what policy options can be defined for a future domestic role of the armed forces (6.5)? The last part of this chapter will focus on the balance between separation and immersion and will include an analysis of the results of this chapter using civil-military relations theory.

## 6.2 THE SWEDISH ARMED FORCES

This section will describe the Swedish armed forces, its tasks, the legal framework for the domestic use of the armed forces, as well as civil-military relations and cooperation. In addition, it will describe the position of the Swedish armed forces in society. This will lay the foundation for future developments of the domestic role of the armed forces and civil-military relations.

The Swedish armed forces (Swedish armed forces, 2022) are subject to the Swedish parliament and government and are headed by the Supreme Commander. All Swedish government agencies, including the armed forces, receive their assignments from the government. Nevertheless, in Sweden, government ministers are not allowed to intervene in day-to-day operations of any government agency (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015).

The armed forces consist of the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and include the Home Guard and the National Security Forces as well. Certain capabilities, such as training, logistics and intelligence, are pooled.

The Home Guard consists of volunteers that serve a certain number of days per year.

Its main responsibility of the Home Guard is to protect, guard and monitor Swedish territory and provide support to society in times of crisis. In case of natural disasters, large-scale accidents, forest fires, etc., the Home Guard assists the police, rescue services and other authorities.

The defense budget has recently been substantially increased and will reach EUR 8.9 billion in 2025, along with an increase in personnel from approximately 60.000 in 2020 to 90.000 in 2025 (Ministry of Defence of Sweden, 2021).

## Tasks

The Swedish armed forces are tasked by the government. In the 'government bill for total defence 2021-2025', the goal for the military defense shall be to have the capability to:

1. Defend Sweden against armed attack.
2. Assert the territorial integrity of Sweden and safeguard sovereign rights and national interests in Sweden and outside Swedish territory in accordance with international law.
3. Promote our security and prevent and handle conflicts and wars by conducting operations in peacetime on our own territory and in the neighborhood, as well as participating in international peacekeeping operations.
4. Protect society and its functionality by assisting the rest of society, with existing capabilities and resources both in peacetime and in times of heightened alert. (Ministry of Defence of Sweden, 2021)

The fourth task is particularly relevant for this research. The government stresses that the armed forces need to cooperate and plan with other involved agencies on the effective use of resources in different situations. If possible, support for society should also be provided in the event of the risk of war, and during war. The government highlights the importance of the Home Guard and voluntary defense organizations in dealing with peacetime crises. In the same document, the government states that it 'does not see any need to perform any specific review of the Swedish Armed Forces' support for the civil society' (Ministry of Defence of Sweden, 2021).

## Legal framework

Support by the armed forces to civilian authorities is based on three specific laws. A law from 2002 (last amended in 2019) regulates support to the police, the security service, the coast guard, customs, other government agencies, municipalities, and regions (Förordning (2002:375) Om Försvarsmaktens Stöd till Civil Verksamhet, 2002). Based on this law, the armed forces may only provide support if they have suitable resources and the support does not seriously hinder regular operations. Armed forces personnel may not be used in situations where there is a risk that they may use coercion or violence against individuals. Furthermore, personnel need to be appropriately trained. Lastly, a unit that provides support based on this regulation must be under the command of a military commander.

In 2006, a new law made it possible for the armed forces to support the police in the fight against terrorism (Lag (2006:343) Om Försvarsmaktens Stöd till Polisen Vid Terrorismbekämpning, 2006). Under this law, support is only allowed if certain conditions have been fulfilled:

1. The support is needed to prevent or intervene against a terrorist crime or an attempt or preparation for such a crime.
2. The intervention requires special resources that the police or security service do not have.
3. The government has given its consent.

In case of urgency, the government does not have to consent beforehand but must be notified and can consent afterwards.

Within this law, the armed forces may only provide support if they have the required resources. The unit will perform under civilian control and only personnel with appropriate training and experience may participate in a support operation. The law also stipulates that the armed forces personnel involved will have the same powers as police personnel and have the authority to arrest people.

The only law that permits the armed forces to use force against civilians in the current context is the aforementioned law from 2006, which concerns support by the armed forces to the police in the fight against terrorism. The general law from 2002 and the specific law on helicopter support discussed below explicitly state that armed forces personnel may not be brought into a situation in which they run the risk of using force against individuals.

In 2017, an ordinance on the armed forces' support to the police with helicopter transport was instated (Förordning (2017:113) Om Försvarsmaktens Stöd till Polisen Med Helikoptertransporter, 2017). Based on this regulation, the armed forces can carry out helicopter transports at the request of the police. Section 3 of the ordinance specifically states that armed forces personnel may not be used in situations where there is a risk that they may use violence or coercion against individuals. The armed forces unit involved must be under the direct management of the requesting authority.

## **Military and society**

The Swedish total defense model has played an important role in civil-military relations since the Second World War. Therefore, this section begins with a short overview of developments in this model. Subsequently, it focuses on one specific aspect, namely conscription.

### ***Total defense***

Total defense meant a systematic securitization of more or less everything in Swedish society (S. Larsson, 2021). The Swedish model for total defense emerged during the Second World War when an expert commission concluded that the boundaries between the military and the civil domain had been erased and war had become total. This called for total defense, including both a military and a civil component (S. Larsson, 2021). The model consisted of four elements, namely military defense, economic defense (including storage and supply of key provisions), psychological defense (including countering disinformation), and civil defense (including shelters, evacuation planning, etc.). The whole population was in fact involved in preparing for the eventuality of a war. During the Cold War, Sweden had conscription for males and was able to mobilize up to 850.000 persons.

The total defense effort also included educating the societal elite from both the public and private sector in the organization and operation of total defense by means of a course of wargaming and networking lasting several weeks (S. Larsson, 2021).

Up until the 1980s, total defense was only focused on a possible external invasion. Starting mid-1980s, however, experts began to point at possible threats from within the country itself. In 1985, the Swedish Emergency Management Agency (ÖCB) was established as a coordinating agency for civil defense. As Larsson describes, it was this agency that started asking questions about other threats to society such as terrorism, mass migration, major attacks, and other threats in the 'grey area' between war and crime (S. Larsson, 2021).

However, it was not until the early 2000s that the threat of an invasion was no longer prioritized and priorities shifted to other crises such as asymmetrical attacks, major accidents, natural disasters, etc. (S. Larsson, 2021). These security problems were not necessarily in the domain of the armed forces (Stiglund, 2021). Consequently, this marked the beginning of a 'strategic timeout' for the traditional total defense model and a downsizing of the Swedish armed forces. The defense budget shrank from approximately 2% of GDP in 1990 to approximately 1% in 2010 and the conscript system was replaced by an all-volunteer force in the 2009 defense bill (Kronvall & Petersson, 2016). According to some authors, the downsizing of the defense forces to a point where they cannot conduct military operations independently is particularly risky for a non-aligned country like Sweden (Kronvall & Petersson, 2016). Since Sweden has recently joined NATO, this is no longer the case.

In this period, a new term entered the security discourse, namely 'societal security'. ÖCB was transformed into a new Swedish Emergency Management Agency called KBM. In

2003, KBM published a report on Sweden's preparedness against terrorism. This report contained some far-reaching proposals, including a hybridization of military and police organizations, but nothing much changed in practice (S. Larsson, 2021). In 2008, KBM merged with other agencies into the currently operational Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB).

In the 2010s, a new shift took place. With the changing geopolitical situation and the rising Russian threat, Sweden again began to increase its military capabilities. In December 2020, the total defense bill 2021-2025 was approved by the Riksdag. The goals of the total defense bill is to make sure Sweden can counter an armed attack. The starting point is that Sweden should be able to handle a security crisis in Europe, which causes disruptions to society, as well as war during part of this time, for at least six months. The most important elements of this bill are:

- A strengthening of both civil and military defense, including a substantial budget increase and increase in personnel for both the military (from 60.000 to 90.000) and civilian agencies such as the police (10.000 extra). For the police, the need for a 'reinforcement organization' will be investigated, consisting of, for example, recently retired police officers and/or people that have transferred to other careers.
- An increase in conscription volumes from 4.000 persons per year to 8.000 per year in 2025.
- A strengthening of cyber defense, including the establishment of a cyber security center.
- An expanded peacetime organization with new units throughout the country, for geographical, preparedness and training reasons and because it contributes to popular support for the armed forces.
- Total defense means support by civil defense to the armed forces, but also support from the armed forces to society. With respect to the latter, this bill sums up current legislation and states that no additional measures are necessary.
- The establishment of an agency for psychological defense.
- As part of civil defense, more attention will be paid to voluntary defense organizations, including extra budget. Individual citizens should be prepared to take care of themselves for a week and to help other citizens as far as possible.

The bill acknowledges the rise of hybrid / grey zone threats and states that further analysis is needed. It mentions that total defense resources will be designed so that they can also strengthen society's ability to prevent and handle severe emergencies affecting society. According to this bill, crisis preparedness and civil defense should reinforce one another (Ministry of Defence of Sweden, 2021).

### *Total defense 2.0: critical remarks*

The new total defense model has been criticized by different authors from a perspective of securitization. Stiglund states that the more comprehensive security model that had been formed 20 years before was not abandoned with the new total defense model, but rather that two security discourses now exist side by side (Stiglund, 2021). These security discourses correspond to two different security logics: a threat logic (old defense model) and a risk logic (new defense model). Risks do not have the same kind of immediacy as threats and instead of emergency measures rather require measures to manage them in the long run, pre-emptively (Stiglund, 2021).

In the words of Stiglund, *'new risks, old threats, as well as hybrid and in-between phenomena are now supposed to be handled by what can be referred to as a "total defense 2.0"; that is, a "holistic" apparatus covering a spectrum of dangers, antagonistic forces, and suspicious individuals, a system for targeting a multiplicity of both threats and risks – without conflating them into one and the same.'* (Stiglund, 2021, p. 216)

As a consequence, the term 'total', which used to refer to the mobilization of society for defense in case of a (threat of) war, now rather refers to how *'virtually all societal phenomena may be considered "dangerous" and therefore a potential "security matter"...*' (Stiglund, 2021, p. 217). According to Larsson, this means that societal and national security are connected in a way that civil and war preparedness are *'merged into an ever-present dimension of everyday existence'* (O. L. Larsson, 2021, p. 1). The brochure that MSB sent to every household in 2018, titled *If crisis or war comes*, illustrates this (Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, 2018). The brochure emphasizes the responsibility of the individual for both their own security and for that of society as a whole. According to Rådestad and Larsson, this responsabilization strategy was also a way to unburden public authorities and contribute to the robustness of society (Rådestad & Larsson, 2020). It highlights the moral dimension of civil preparedness and leads to state-citizen relationships being replaced by citizen-citizen relationships, making the state somehow less responsible for providing security (O. L. Larsson, 2021). Consequently, according to Larsson this new relationship undermines the social contract between the state and citizens, which induces fear and public anxiety.

### **Conscription**

An important factor influencing the role of the military in society is conscription. As mentioned, conscription in Sweden was abolished with the 2009 Defense bill. However, due to the deteriorating security situation and recruitment problems, in 2017 the Swed-

ish government decided to re-activate conscription on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018, starting with 4.000 conscripts per year (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017). The new conscription system is gender neutral. In 2021, the government decided with the total defense bill to increase conscription numbers to 8.000 persons per year in 2025 (Ministry of Defence of Sweden, 2021).

As also discussed in chapter 2, the absence of conscription can lead to a detachment between citizens and the military and therefore to a reduced influence of the military on society (Holmberg, 2015). Holmberg states that after the defense reform in the 1990s and 2000s, the Swedish armed forces have substantially less local presence in Sweden, leading to fewer possibilities for interaction between the armed forces and the public (Holmberg, 2015). However, times have changed since Holmberg's study was published and with the reinstatement of conscription and the decision to create new units throughout the country this will likely change.

### **Civil-military relations**

Based on the ideal types for civil-military relations defined in chapter 2, Sweden most resembles the preferred model for a democratic regime, in which the civil and the military domain are separated and there is civilian supremacy over the military.

In a study published in 2013, Hedlund analyzes civil-military relations in Sweden from 1984 until 2011 by specifically looking at civil-military control of the military officer rank system and the professional officer education system (Hedlund, 2013). The analysis is based on Huntington's and Janowitz's theories of objective and subjective civilian control over the military, as explained in chapter 2.

In general, Hedlund concludes that civil-military relations and the autonomy of the military vary depending on the perceived external threat level. When the external threat is perceived to be high, the functional imperative for military autonomy is higher. When the external threat is perceived to be low, the societal imperative to curtail professional autonomy of the military is higher. Hedlund shows that in the researched period from 1984 up until 2010, subjective civilian control over the military profession by the Swedish state was at its strongest. From 2010, with the transition to an all-volunteer force and because of the Swedish armed forces increasingly participating in international operations, steps were taken towards objective control. The Swedish armed forces needed to adapt to international military standards (a functional imperative in order to be interoperable with other nations' armed forces), which made for less room for national societal imperatives (Hedlund, 2013). Hedlund's study does not include recent years in which decisions have been taken to rebuild total defense. However, based on his study, this

functional imperative could lead to more objective civilian control and therefore, more military autonomy.

From a different perspective, Holmberg has studied processes of militarization and demilitarization in Sweden to analyze the influence of the military on politics and society in 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe. She concludes that since the end of the Cold War, the traditional 'exceptionalism' around the military has decreased, making it more like other government agencies. She points for example at a comment made by the Prime Minister in 2013 about the military being a particular interest group (särintresse) (Holmberg, 2015). The abandoning of total defense and conscription have reduced the possibilities for interaction between the military, politics, and society as well. However, this may change again with the rebuilding of total defense and the reinstatement of conscription.

### **Civil-military cooperation**

Since 2013, Sweden has had five military regions: Northern, Central, Western, Southern and Gotland (which was only established in 2019). Each region has a regional staff that is responsible for coordination of the military effort with civil authorities in case of national crisis situations and other support activities. In practice, the regional staff serves as a linking pin between military and civil authorities in the region.

## **6.3 SECURITY CHALLENGES AND THREATS**

In chapter 4, three security and stability related threats that undermine liberal democracy were defined, namely (1) the blurring of internal and external security and the rise of new security threats, (2) declining social cohesion and the rise of social unrest and parallel societies and (3) undermining of liberal democracy by the state.

This section shows how these threats manifest themselves in Sweden. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) publishes a biannual report, the National Risk and Capability Assessment, which identifies the most important threats and risks for Sweden and Swedish society. The 2021 report (Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, 2021) emphasizes four major challenges, starting with hostile threats, which include hybrid threats, the risk for cyber-attacks or terrorist attacks. A second challenge identified is climate change which is increasing the chances of serious natural disasters, thus putting pressure on preparedness. Climate change will also affect Sweden in an indirect way, through changing migration patterns and security policy tensions. Furthermore, society's dependence on technology increasingly makes it vulnerable, for example to cyber-attacks, influence operations, and failed technical systems. The third challenge

identified is the protection against major accidents, which needs to be strengthened. The fourth challenge concerns societal trust, which is eroding. The agency specifically points at lack of trust in authorities and at disinformation campaigns by foreign powers or violent extremists.

Early 2023, the Swedish security service, Säkerhetspolisen, published its yearly report in which it identifies the most pressing security threats for Sweden (Säkerhetspolisen, 2023). The report focuses on authoritarian states strengthening their positions. Russia is seen as the single biggest threat to Sweden and China and Iran pose a threat on the long-term. The organization points at the vulnerabilities following from rapid technological developments and the ongoing Swedish total defense build-up. The threat posed by foreign powers is changing and includes illegal intelligence activities, influence operations and cyber-attacks. Within Sweden, Säpo points at radicalization and an increased threat of assassination. Additionally, the spread of conspiracy theories and anti-government messages is increasing. This could undermine trust in society's institutions, political decision-making, and the state's legitimacy as a democratic system. Both violent extremists and foreign powers can exploit these vulnerabilities. Violent extremists are seen as infiltrating or influencing different parts of society, undermining trust in society in the long term.

The National Intelligence Centre of the Swedish Police Authority published a multi-agency report (together with 11 other public agencies) on organized crime in Sweden in 2021 (Swedish Police Authority, 2021). The report concludes that the most serious threats in organized crime are attacks on the welfare system and the evasion of taxes and charges, drugs crime and the serious violence resulting from it, and the parallel social structures that have emerged in vulnerable areas (60 identified in 2019). Open air drug trafficking is taking place in vulnerable areas, governed by criminal networks that aim to 'own' the location. There is a strong link between drug crime and the use of violence, and the report notes an increase in lethal violence in Sweden since 2013, mainly consisting of shootings and explosions in public places, especially in vulnerable areas. The report also notes that criminal actors in vulnerable areas put pressure on inhabitants not to report crimes, and also put pressure on representatives of government agencies. According to the Swedish Police Authority, local social arrangements, including alternative financial and judicial systems, have developed to varied degrees in vulnerable locations. Some criminal actors provide services in employment, housing, banking, protection, and security. These parallel social structures create a society within society beyond the control of the state. In that sense, according to the report, they challenge the Swedish democratic social order, the rule of law, and the state's monopoly on violence. As mentioned in chapter 4, Åberg writes about these vulnerable areas as

well and describes how deadly street violence is on the rise and organized crime, gang crimes and shootings are a growing problem (Åberg, 2019).

Several reports show that the Swedish population worries about organized crime. The Swedish Crime Survey 2022 shows that 80% of the Swedish population believes that the number of crimes in Sweden has increased over the past three years and 46% of the population have great concern about crime in society (Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå), 2022).

The SOM Institute, based at the University of Gothenburg, executes an annual nationwide survey. The latest edition published concerns Swedish trends 1986-2021. Respondents were asked what they worry about in security and democracy. The highest percentage, by far, (67%) is organized crime, followed by increased drug usage (58%), terrorism (49%), political extremism (47%), weakened democracy (35%) and finally, the situation in Russia (only 19% at the time) (SOM Institute, 2021). When asked about issues or societal problems in general, law and order rank first, before healthcare, integration, and the environment.

As for undermining of liberal democracy by the state, as shown in chapter 4, Sweden scores higher than Finland and the Netherlands in general, but the IDEA indicators show a sharp decline in fundamental rights, civil liberties, and absence of corruption. The decline in impartial administration and representative government in Sweden indicates that part of the population does not feel adequately represented or treated fairly, which could provide evidence for both horizontal and state undermining.

Recent research by IDEA focuses on the impact of COVID-19 measures on democracy and human rights. As in other countries, measures were taken in Sweden that impacted civil liberties. Examples are restrictions on gatherings, travel restrictions, the use of masks in public transportation, etc. However, no strict lockdown strategy was employed by the Swedish authorities. They mainly relied on voluntary social distancing guidelines. All in all, IDEA concludes that only minor violations of the Democratic Standards Index have taken place and classifies Sweden as low risk on the Pandemic Backsliding Index.

The reports discussed in this section show indications for the three security challenges identified in chapter 4. How do the respondents for this case-study evaluate these challenges? When asked about security threats, three categories stand out to Swedish respondents. One of them is the external threat posed by Russia, both in a traditional (military) way and as a hybrid threat, including cyber-attacks, the weaponization of migration, and disinformation campaigns. Respondents highlight the vulnerability of Swedish society. In the words of one respondent, *'I think that Swedish society, much like*

*other European states, has made itself vulnerable since it has started digitalizing many functions in society. Critical infrastructure can easily be attacked. This makes our society very fragile.'* (Respondent 68, academic)

The second category standing out for Swedish respondents is the threat posed by organized crime and the gang violence related to it: *'Well, I think there has been a naivety in Sweden when it comes to organized crime for many years. One of the biggest eyeopeners so far is Encrochat and Sky operations, giving us a lot of intelligence about serious organized crime, that has changed our estimates a lot, by a factor of 10. Also, historically, we have seen crimes from a sociological standpoint, that's the common historical view, but the way we see it now, we see crime more like actors, serious actors with serious capabilities. ... That opened a lot of people's eyes, that realized organized crime isn't just an effect of poverty or other social issues.'* (Respondent 55, civilian, executive organization) Another respondent takes it even a bit further: *I think what we have in the big towns and cities, they call them criminal groups, but I call them armed groups, because they are actually the same as I saw in the Central African Republic, they are entrepreneurs in crime.'* (Respondent 53, civilian, executive organization) As noted in the reports described above, the use of violence is a growing problem as well, with *'Gun violence that was so remote for me as a Swede 10-15 years ago is now present on an everyday basis.'* (Respondent 58, military)

The third category concerns declining social cohesion and the creation of parallel societies in some areas. Respondents attribute the weakening of society to *'changes in values, greater individualism, and polarization.'* (Respondent 64, academic) In the words of the same respondent, *'40 years ago we could afford this individualism, because we came from a very collectivist mode. ... But it turns out that values change over time, slowly, but they change.'*

Respondents also see the danger of parallel societies forming in different parts of the country, noting that *'a growing number of municipal areas are increasingly disconnected from mainstream society.'* (Respondent 61, military) Some respondents link these developments to immigration: *'... this becomes politically sensitive, the bulk of the ethnic Swedish society is still pretty calm. But Sweden is a country that has taken a huge amount of immigrants. Most of this has been very successful, these people are completely integrated, they have jobs, a future. But there is a significant minority that have not been integrated. And there one could say that Swedish society has a big problem. ... It has become so bad that even heavily reinforced police officers cannot enter certain areas any longer.'* (Respondent 70, academic) The consequence can be an undermining of liberal democracy. In the words of the same respondent, *'But a real problem that is emerging behind the scenes is corruption. I can take the case of a smaller community not far from where I live. A politician was approached by the head of a local clan, and he said I can offer you 2000 votes if we can*

*have a discussion about this and that. This kind of thing is really, really dangerous, because it's penetrating the system.'* (Respondent 70)

As this short overview shows, Swedish respondents recognize the undermining of liberal democracy by new security challenges, in particular the behavior of Russia and the rise of organized crime and the increasing violence that has been related to it. They recognize the horizontal undermining of liberal democracy by declining social cohesion as well, confirming the reports discussed in this section about vulnerable areas where parallel societies are being created.

## **6.4 RECENT CHANGES IN THE DOMESTIC ROLE: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS**

A major development influencing both the Swedish security sector and society as a whole is the reinstatement of total defense, including the reactivation of conscription, as explained in section 6.2. Planning for total defense was resumed in 2014, based on the legal frameworks that were still in place from the Cold War period. One respondent uses the metaphor of a shield to describe this system and regrets that Sweden abolished it, because it will take a lot of time to build it up again: *'I think of national defense as a combined shield, where the armed forces are the front part of the shield, and the rest of society are the back of the shield. And that's where Sweden is missing a lot. ... The tragedy of total defense is that it was so good, there wasn't anything like it anywhere in Europe. The system included all parts of society, the private sector, ordinary citizens. ... And then they just abolished it. Now they are trying to build it up again, but the institutional memory isn't there and of course it would need to be a bit different. And on top of that, in 30 years a whole generation has grown up that knows nothing about it.'* (Respondent 63, academic)

The importance of the total defense model lies in mobilizing all of society in their willingness to defend the country. As one respondent states, this should be the priority in the rebuilding of total defense: *'The will to defend is actually, if the people don't want to defend Sweden, it doesn't matter how good the defense forces are. We don't need to focus on the military guys. They want to defend Sweden. We should focus on the rest.'* (Respondent 51, civilian, national government)

As discussed in section 6.2, resilience is a key word, or in Swedish: motståndskraft, a combination of 'mot' (against), 'stånd' (to stand) and 'kraft' (force). One of the respondents explains, *'That's for me what psychological defense is really, it's to be able to...back in the Cold War it was really to resist in case of war. To be able to endure the struggle, the shortage of*

*food and electricity, to resist the enemy and never to give up. ... One element of this was to resist foreign propaganda. Foreign propaganda would tell us we have given up, we should just accept that we had lost, etc. We should be able to resist and withstand foreign propaganda. To me these are the elements we see today as well. We should be able to resist and identify foreign disinformation. And also, be able to have a very strong feeling that Sweden is worth protecting, Swedish democracy and freedom of expression is worth fighting for. So that's why we use the word motståndskraft.' (Respondent 57, civilian, executive organization)*

Based on the total defense bill described in section 6.2, in 2022 a new Psychological Defence Agency (Myndigheten för psykologiskt försvar, MPF) was created, mainly aimed at identifying, analyzing, and countering foreign influence operations and disinformation, for example taking place on social media (Braw, 2022). This agency defines psychological defense as 'the collective ability of society to resist foreign malign influence activities and other disinformation directed at Sweden' (Psychological Defence Agency, 2022). The agency works closely together with the intelligence community, government agencies, municipalities, and voluntary defense organizations (Visser, 2022). The agency works both in peace time and in war time. In war time, the agency has a specific task, which makes it cooperate closely with the armed forces: *'We have one additional task in war time, that is to be able to support the government in suggesting actions that could be taken to counter a foreign adversary. That's kind of an offensive action, like the military has to shoot back.'* (Respondent 57, civilian, executive organization)

Interestingly, the new Swedish government, that was instated in the Fall of 2022, decided to move both MPF and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Defence, under the coordination of a new Minister for Civil Defence. This was done in an effort to strengthen the civilian components of total defense, more specifically civilian defense and crisis preparedness (Kristersson, 2022).

As part of the reinstatement of total defense, the national defense courses that Sweden organized during the Cold War have been reintroduced as well. These courses are organized at different levels (middle management, senior management) and aim to bring people from different backgrounds (government, private sector, NGO's, etc.) together to learn about national security. During the Cold War, the courses covered total defense issues, but recently they have been expanded to include crisis management. The courses are taught by the National Defence University (which in Sweden is not part of the armed forces, but a separate agency under the Ministry of Education), commissioned by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB). The armed forces are involved as well.

Respondents are overwhelmingly positive about these courses, emphasizing their usefulness in both knowledge transfer on matters of national security and network building among the participants: *'I think that they are absolutely excellent. ... The relevance, importance and added value is immense. I don't have to convince you of course that there are so many situations that you can solve with a telephone call. Because you have the network, you can call each other.'* (Respondent 58, military) Respondents do emphasize that it takes time to build up a community again and to convince people of the changing threat environment: *'The problem seems to be more that the participants of these courses get no traction when they go back to their normal workplaces. They go to the course, and they learn all these aspects and then they come back to their normal places of work and say, we should do this, and people there say well, we don't have the time. The people of the workplaces are so immersed in normality, that they see no reason to care about total defense.'* (Respondent 64, academic)

Looking at other aspects of the domestic role of the armed forces, the domestic role of the armed forces is quite heavily regulated by the law, as has been discussed in section 6.2. While in the Netherlands the armed forces have three core tasks that are equally important, in Sweden the support of the armed forces to civil authorities gets last priority. As has also been discussed in section 6.2, two recent laws have slightly expanded the domestic role of the armed forces, which are now allowed to support the civil authorities with helicopters and can support the civil authorities in case of a terrorist attack.

When asked about recent changes in the domestic role of the armed forces, the respondents in this research emphasize that change is very slow, especially in the realm of police tasks: *'When it comes to the mandate for a combination of police and armed forces, I don't really see that changing now. The discussion comes up, and also the discussion about a hybrid force, but as we don't have the tradition of a hybrid force, it's also a question of where do we see the regular tasks for such a hybrid force?'* (Respondent 65, academic)

On the other hand, while a domestic role for the armed forces was unthinkable for a long time, things are slowly changing now. In the words of one respondent, *'Yes, I say step by step these restrictions are being softened up. ... We are moving in that direction, especially when it comes to terrorism, using military weapons, cyber, and also the grey zone that you cannot know in advance whether the green men are some kind of criminal groups, a terrorist group or a proxy for a foreign power. It tends to blur the lines.'* (Respondent 64, military)

Another respondent points out that cooperation between the armed forces and the police has deepened over the years: *'However, it has changed over the years. During my*

*service this has been developing to a closer cooperation, both when it comes to intelligence work, but also operational and tactical operations.’ (Respondent 71, academic)*

The reluctance to use the armed forces in a domestic context has consequences for the police as well. Some respondents point at a certain militarization of the police: *‘Yes, I’d say it is. Ten years ago, you didn’t see, before 9/11 the police was absolutely the old time policeman. Now they are very robust. They have military under armor, more or less the same gear as the military.’ (Respondent 59, military)* Some respondents, mainly those with a police background, worry about this development as it could blur the line between police work and military work: *‘The terminology that the police are starting to use, it includes terms like neutralizing, and the enemy, which is very specific to the aim and purpose limited to international humanitarian law. Using terms such as neutralizing and enemy is natural in that setting, but is very foreign to a policing context in which the task is to uphold individuals’ rights and everybody is equal before the law. So that kind of categorization of individuals is not...when you start to merge the vocabulary that is specific to an armed conflict in a policing context, it’s starting to move the borders towards those of armed conflict.’ (Respondent 67, academic)*

The fact that Sweden does not have a hybrid force, such as a gendarmerie, and at the same time is reluctant to use the military in a domestic context, has consequences for the police: *‘I think that in countries without a gendarmerie the police are used for a sort of catch all force. They have to deal with everything, from social problems to massively complex criminal organizations that are heavily weaponized.’ (Respondent 63, academic)* Another respondent points out that militarization of the police is a logical consequence of the Swedish reluctance to use the military for police tasks, stating that *‘if you can’t use the military for policing, then you will see a militarization of the police.’ (Respondent 64, academic)*

Some respondents do not see the militarization of the police as a bad thing: *‘At this point, and we have not reached the tipping point, I would prefer the police become more robust before I let the armed forces perform police tasks.’ (Respondent 58, military)*

How can the Swedish reluctance to use the armed forces in a domestic context be explained? Three factors stand out:

### **Factor 1: Ådalen 1931, a national trauma**

Virtually all respondents refer to an incident which took place in 1931 in Ådalen, in northern Sweden. Factory workers were on strike at the time and the companies involved hired strike-breakers. This led to demonstrations by the striking workers against

the strike-breakers. The police did not manage to get the situation under control. At the time, it was not possible to get police reinforcements from another county. Therefore, the County Administrative Board could only ask the military to support the police. On May 14<sup>th</sup>, this resulted in an incident in which 5 civilians (4 demonstrators and 1 bystander) were shot dead by the military troops.

Since that moment, the use of the military in a domestic context is a very sensitive matter in Sweden and it has been heavily regulated. More than 90 years later, this incident still has an impact on discussions about a possible domestic role for the military: *'but I'm not sure why this incident from so long ago in fact seems to be a national trauma. Whenever it is suggested that the military could have a larger role in society, everyone is like no, because Ådalen '31. Then it's like the end of discussion.'* (Respondent 68, academic)

Some respondents think this is slowly changing: *'I think it's still influential, but I do think it's losing its grip on the Swedish culture. ... it's very much related to one political party in Sweden, the social-democratic party. They have been dominating Swedish politics ... and that legacy has impact on how we see things today. So, I wouldn't say it's a major factor. It's declining with the voter support for the social-democrats, but it still lingers on. If you ask me, I would say most people wouldn't have a clue, but just automatically say, you know, Ådalen '31.'* (Respondent 58, military)

## Factor 2: Mixed attitudes

As we have seen in the Netherlands as well, both on the civilian and on the military side there are mixed attitudes about the domestic role of the armed forces. On the civilian side one respondent states, *'Culturally the Swedes are reluctant to let the military be part of our day-to-day business. ... I don't think the military should be seen on the streets.'* (Respondent 57, civilian, executive organization)

Respondents with a policing background talk about the different mindset of the military, that impacts their operation: *'For example, I was in Kosovo as a military police officer in 2002. ... We found an IED. As a police officer, it can be a military object, it can also be organized crime, it can be terrorism, it can be civilians that want to start something. As a police officer, I think about investigation, so I think about democratic principles of investigation. When I enter an area, I'm always careful about where I put my feet, I collect evidence, I look around, ask my questions in a certain order. The military that came just took it and went away, because it was an IED, it should be taken away.'* (Respondent 71, academic) Another example concerns searches: *'For example, when it comes to searches, the military type of search, kicking in doors and knocking things over, a forceful approach to search, is not generally how we in policing settings conduct searches.'* (Respondent 67, academic)

The same respondent questions the possibility for military personnel to make a shift to be able to operate in a policing context, if they are trained in a military context: *'If you bring a military aim and purpose into a policing setting, it becomes defeating the enemy. Forcing the enemy into submission. That is not an appropriate aim and goal in policing settings, where you have the task to ensure security by providing the right to all individuals. ... So, then all of a sudden you have to shift gears entirely, when as a military officer you are put in a policing context. ... And what does that take then. ... It does require a different skill set on an individual level. Does it require different tools? These are the questions we need to ask ourselves.'* (Respondent 67, academic)

Another respondent with a policing background explains how police work is different from the work of the military: *'Community policing is like family. We try to have that relationship with citizens. ... Without that it cannot function. ... When it comes to military, in general, they don't need to establish this relationship, like a family. ... You have an opponent, a combatant, and you should defeat it, no matter the relationship. ... You can talk to them, of course you do that, but you are trained to kill, to use that kind of violence. ... The police work on relationship building. The military doesn't need legitimacy in the people.'* (Respondent 71, academic)

Other respondents emphasize that competition between the police and the armed forces may play a role as well: *'The pandemic led to a lot of border controls and it was a heavy load for the police, especially with a crime wave at the same time. Then there were calls for the military to be used. In a couple of instances, the military was used to guard border crossings to Norway, but they could only observe and report. This is not just Ådalen '31, but it's also a turf battle. Police capacity has no surplus, but if you broach the subject of giving someone else responsibilities, then the turf instinct comes up.'* (Respondent 64, academic)

However, some respondents expect this might change due to the changing threat environment and due to the performance of the armed forces in many western liberal democracies during the COVID crisis, as a consequence of which people have started to view the armed forces in a different way.

On the military side, many respondents point out that the core task for the armed forces is to defend Sweden against an external attack and that a domestic role should not distract them from that task: *'We don't want to end up in a situation where we need to train the soldiers for social disturbances, police work. That's not the work for soldiers. ... The core task of the armed forces is fighting an enemy coming to Sweden.'* (Respondent 51, civilian, national government) Due to the changing threat environment, capacities are scarce: *'The military culture is, and that's probably an effect of all these years in overseas operations,*

*that there is this internal need or wish to support civilian society and making life simply better. But then again, when it comes to the deteriorating security situation, not only the last few weeks, but the last 5-10 years, we have to be very specific as to what spare capacity we do have.'* (Respondent 58, military)

Some respondents think that even though the main task for the armed forces is to defend Sweden against an armed attack, they could do more to support civil authorities: *'Our main task is not to support the police; our main task is to protect Sweden from external aggression. But my opinion is that we can help the police much more than we do. There is a balance of course, where we would lose valuable training time for conscripts if they were put into tasks like this. So, this should be done with professional soldiers. But you can't do it too much, because then they will lose their skills. So, it's a balance.'* (Respondent 59, military)

### **Factor 3: Legal limitations**

As explained in section 6.2, the domestic role of the armed forces is heavily regulated in the law and only possible in very specific circumstances. This is mostly the heritage of the Ådalen '31 incident. Some respondents consider the possibilities to be too limited: *'My feeling is that what we see in the organizations, in the military and the police, there's a lot of goodwill and understanding that the other side has a lot of capabilities and information, and they are willing to cooperate, but perhaps we have to hold back on it, because we simply don't have the legislation for it. That can be frustrating sometimes. We have a lot of initiatives and a lot of times we try to have cooperation, but we are limited by legislation very often.'* (Respondent 55, civilian, executive organization)

Apart from these specific legal limitations, respondents point at additional general legal limitations, following from the Swedish governance model. As explained in section 6.2, based on the Swedish constitution, government authorities are very independent from both each other and the government. This complicates cooperation between different authorities: *'One authority cannot tell another authority what to do, or to prioritize on behalf of another authority. Meaning that they have to keep this idea of everybody is doing what they are supposed to do, but we add a layer for cooperation. Cooperation is like the buzzword of all times and of course I see the rationale for it and for the principle of responsibility. But it also becomes the scapegoat for everything, like: this is my task and that is not my task, that's somebody else's task. What happens then? Nobody sees the whole picture or the whole Swedish perspective, rather than this is my sector, this is my authority.'* (Respondent 65, academic)

In addition, this kind of cooperating structure takes time to start to function. In the words of one respondent, *'The way we try to cope with it is like the Americans that have*

*acronyms like joint this and joint that. We create entities where authorities meet, sit at the table. No-one can decide over anyone else. In the beginning no-one wants to do anything. After a couple of years, people get to know each other and then it starts to work on a personal trust level.'* (Respondent 54, civilian, executive organization)

The fact that Sweden has two legal systems, for peacetime and for war, is limiting as well: *'Generally speaking, I think it's odd that we have chosen to have so separate starting points of how we handle peacetime crises and war. ... And I think what we have now is not a very good solution, since that ... we have to be clearly in war or danger of war in order to use the total defense system. Before, when we had only the total defense system, the idea was that in planning for the absolute worst that can happen, war, you also create a capability to handle peacetime crises. But now instead you have to decide which one of the two systems you are using. Peacetime means that governmental frameworks are exactly the same. The system is built on that you don't have a minister taking decisions on their own, in their area of responsibility. Instead, you have decision-making in consensus between at least 5 ministers. This is something which is not of help in crises and emergencies.'* (Respondent 65, academic)

## 6.5 POLICY OPTIONS FOR A CHANGING DOMESTIC ROLE

As shown thus far, Sweden has been quite reluctant to use the armed forces in a domestic context. Legal limitations, mixed attitudes on both the military and civil sides and the national trauma of Ådalen play an important role here. Does this have an impact on future policy options as well? What policy options do Swedish experts from both the military and civil side see for a future domestic role of the armed forces? These options will be explored in this section. In the appendix to this chapter, the policy options are summarized in table 6.1.

### Conscription

As explained in section 6.2, Sweden has reactivated conscription, starting with small numbers and growing towards 8.000 men and women in 2025. Depending on the security situation, these numbers could rise further in the future. Most respondents say this would foster social cohesion in the country, which is in line with findings from the literature as described in chapter 2. As one military respondent states, *'I am very much of the view that it is very beneficial to cohesion, because it installs a sense of participation and responsibility in a sizable number of young people. And so, I think at least it's a net loss for cohesion in society not to have conscription. Since we have restarted conscription, although on a much lower level of intake, I really have the feeling and get some reports that*

*it does serve the same purpose as it did, at least for those who are lucky enough to serve.'* (Respondent 61, military)

A few respondents are not so sure about the effect of conscription on social cohesion, pointing at the limited amount of research, the small number of participants and the fact that until recently, conscription was only for men. As one civilian respondent explains, *'I have never really understood how this is supposed to work if it's only for men. Today it's gender-neutral, but if we accept only 5000 every year, that's very few.'* (Respondent 57, civilian, executive organization)

Some respondents suggest creating a form of social conscription: *'They could serve with the police for example as well, hospitals, that could make a huge difference. At the moment, and this is something I feel very strongly about, teenagers are not asked to do anything for society. Then you don't feel committed, you just float on the surface that society provides, without considering what it takes to run a society and that everyone has a responsibility to contribute to society. If you have to serve for a year, care for the elderly, or a hospital, or the municipal parks department, then you will look at society very differently, I think.'* (Respondent 63, academic)

Some propose taking it a step further and see a role for schools to get involved as well: *'I think you have to integrate it in the school curricula again. It shouldn't be a big deal. You can have representatives from the armed forces and civil agencies come to schools and do presentations. There are some initiatives in some schools here and there, but it's not part of the curriculum.'* (Respondent 66, academic)

As discussed in section 6.3, Sweden has a problem with parallel societies and the creation of no-go areas. When asked about a role for conscription in countering these, not everyone is positive, pointing out that *'You cannot just send everyone to disciplinary schools.'* (Respondent 68, academic) Doing so could even be a risk: *'If you send someone with a troublesome background and you train them it could even be a risk if they go back to their no-go zone with skills in tactics and weapons use.'* (Respondent 68, academic)

On the other hand, conscription could be helpful in integrating new migrants into Swedish society: *'If you are a migrant in the defense forces and you do a good job, you have a really good chance to get recognized, respected, have a career in the defense forces or be accepted by society. So, it can have a very important educational function.'* (Respondent 70, academic)

## Police tasks

Sweden has been very reluctant to use the armed forces in police tasks. As explained in section 6.2, a few legal exceptions have been made, including the use of helicopters in support of police operations and the support to the police in case of a terrorist incident. In such a case, support must be approved by the government, for which there is a high threshold.

Do Swedish experts see any development in this area? Most respondents are very reluctant when asked about using the armed forces for police tasks. This is the most visible in public order management, where most respondents clearly state that *'In Sweden, when it comes to public protests, I don't think we would ever have the military assist the police in that. That's the biggest no-go for the Swedish military.'* (Respondent 55, civilian, executive organization) This is of course related to the risk of using violence against the population, as happened in Ådalen: *'We should never ever be in a situation where the armed forces would be obliged to use force against its own population.'* (Respondent 62, politician)

The one exception where the armed forces are allowed to use force is in case of a terrorist attack. As discussed in section 6.2, the use of the armed forces in such an event is clearly defined in the law. The units used must be trained specifically in police use of force and be under police command. There is no joint unit, as there is for example in the Netherlands.

There is some ongoing debate about expanding the law on support in case of terrorism to include the fight against organized crime: *'...the conservative opposition party ... have in their election program that organized crime should be labeled as terrorism, so that all kinds of laws and powers, that are only kept for incidents of terrorism, could be also applied in case of organized crime.'* (Respondent 64, academic)

Some respondents from the military see possibilities in this area: *'... it needs to be discussed, because we have many capabilities that could be used in the fight against organized crime.'* (Respondent 58, military)

Other respondents, mainly from the civilian side, are more reluctant, claiming that this is not what society needs in the fight against organized crime: *'I would say that I have a lot of respect for the armed forces. They have capabilities in different levels of applying violence, and that's not what we need. The capabilities of the armed forces are not what the civil society in crime fighting needs.'*

## Intelligence

Some respondents believe that increased collaboration on intelligence-related matters between military and civilian actors is necessary: *'I think that in this non-linear environment, we have to have a common situational awareness, and there I think the armed forces could be very helpful and relevant.'* (Respondent 52, civilian, national government) Another respondent concurs, explaining that *'What is so challenging today is that threats are not binary. A group can be linked to a hostile state, even though it looks like a criminal group. And that's where Sweden, along with many other countries, needs much closer cooperation between police investigative work and intelligence work. Considering that other countries take advantage of our vulnerabilities, we need to remove the hurdles so that the police and the armed forces can work closer together.'* (Respondent 63, academic)

As we have seen in the Netherlands, some respondents point at the capabilities of the armed forces in identifying networks behind the concrete cases that the police work on: *'What we do, as police, we take the small fishes. It's like when you're in front of an aquarium. With the police we see the small fishes and are enthusiastic about them. But we're not capable to step back to see the big fish.'* (Respondent 53, civilian, executive organization)

The main limiting factor for this policy option, similar to other options, is in the law: *'Generally, the military by law cannot look inside Swedish borders. ... We don't want military intelligence looking at Swedish citizens.'* (Respondent 51, civilian, national government)

## Crisis management

Crisis management seems to be the least controversial area in which to use the armed forces although the prime responsibility lies with the civilian agency MSB. The armed forces support civilian authorities for example in the event of flooding, forest fires, logistics, etc. Although the armed forces support to the civilian authorities during the COVID-19 pandemic was limited (the armed forces built two field hospitals that were never used and supported civilian authorities in different areas in testing for the virus), according to some respondents the pandemic did trigger a different way of thinking about the armed forces: *'I think, in a sense, COVID was a bit of a milestone, because everywhere in Europe governments had to call on the armed forces to help. ... And I think many people realized that this is a fantastic asset that we have, and they stopped thinking about the armed forces as only a tool of war, but more as a tool to use during societal crises, and as we discussed earlier, organized crime is becoming an extremely acute concern in Sweden.'* (Respondent 63, academic)

## Cyber threats

Most respondents recognize that the armed forces have a role to play in the cyber area, claiming that *'The reason why cyber is also a job for the military is you can argue that cyber-attacks could be existential threats against Sweden.'* (Respondent 61, military)

Steps have been taken in Sweden to create more cooperation and coordination in dealing with cyber threats. A national cyber security center was established recently, but functions mainly as a hub, with no-one in the lead. In the words of one respondent, *'On the cyber area, we have been a few steps behind other European countries. ... we haven't decided on the political level which agency should be in the lead. ... Someone should have the national responsibility for cyber security.'* (Respondent 55, civilian, executive organization)

Another respondent agrees: *'Still this center is not an organization, not an agency. It's a co-operative working group. ... You must have some crisis management organization, national security council in the prime minister's office. ... There is a lack of coordination. The most important thing is to create a national security council to look at the cyber thing, develop a national strategy.'* (Respondent 69, academic)

In the area of cyber security, Sweden has been experimenting with cyber conscripts: *'... you can do your military service as a cyber soldier. We'll see how that works out. The thing is, the kind of capabilities you need in that kind of unit, those skills take a lot longer than a year to teach. The idea is that you start these people off and then let them go back into society to develop their skills and then keep them on as reservists.'* (Respondent 55, civilian, executive organization)

Some suggest taking this initiative further by creating a cyber-Home Guard, as will be discussed in the next section.

## Hybrid forces

Apart from a domestic role for the armed forces, the creation of a hybrid force in between the armed forces and the civilian police could be an option. Some respondents see possibilities to use the existing Home Guard for certain domestic tasks, for example in border control and cyber security: *'That's actually the same thing as the Home Guard in Norway is doing right now. They are acting unarmed and under the leadership of the police, in checking people that cross the border into Norway. ... Since the Home Guard has an auxiliary function, I think it would be good, because it could alleviate some of the challenges of the police right now, patrolling the border.'* (Respondent 62, politician)

The Home Guard could focus on cyber security as well: *'We already have a national cyber security center and different agencies responsible for different aspects of cyber security are working together. ... The link that is still missing is how do we connect to enterprises, to the civilian sector. ... I'm thinking of a cyber-Home Guard, from the individual level up to covering state agencies and enterprises. Completely new forms of cooperation and collaboration that we need to discover. I think this is a driver for closer cooperation between military and civilian sectors.'* (Respondent 58, military)

During the Cold War, as part of the total defense system, Sweden had an organization called 'Beredskapspolisén', a sort of special readiness police consisting mainly of former conscripts who had undergone basic police training and could be called up in particular situations to supplement the regular police. It was used to guard embassies during the Gulf war, but other than that was not used much and was eventually dissolved in 2012. According to some respondents, this mainly had to do with cost effectiveness and with turf battles: *'They were hated. Police bureaucracy tried and ultimately succeeded in killing them off.'* (Respondent 64, academic)

Recently, a Swedish MP proposed to reintroduce this Beredskapspolisén (TV4, 2021), stating that *'They could for example ... control borders, assist in riot control, assist in border controls in case of refugees. ... Some of them can be especially equipped to handle large cases of grey zone attacks.'* (Respondent 62, politician)

A few years ago, a Swedish professor proposed the establishment of a gendarmerie of between 1.500 and 2.000 employees to deal with threats following from the blurring of internal and external security, such as cross-border organized crime. As explained in chapter 2, gendarmeries can quickly shift between small-scale, more regular police duties, to large-scale operations that protect national security. They would be especially useful in the grey zone between internal and external security. In the words of Hasselblad,

*The thought of Swedish internal troops probably makes many associate it with Spain under Franco and all kinds of ghosts from European history. But there is hardly any sane person in Germany who regards the Bundespolizei, or in France the gendarmerie, as a threat to democracy. The threat to democracy lies in a liberal democracy that does not dare to create the resources required to ensure the integrity of the people's government and the security of the population in a time of new threats (Hasselblad, 2017).*

However, this proposal has not sparked a political debate. Based on this case study, this can probably be explained by the Swedish preference to keep agencies separated in general and because of the heritage of Ådalen.

## **Public opinion**

Having discussed the ideas of experts in the Swedish security domain about the domestic role of the armed forces, it is interesting to look at public opinion as well. Public opinion seems in fact to be positive about a domestic role for the armed forces. In a study from 2005 (note that this study was done before the threat picture changed again in the 2010s), both military and civilian students were asked about threats for Sweden and considered organized crime, drug trafficking and cyber threats to be the most important threats. 88% of the military students and 76% of the civilian students approved of the military dealing with domestic disorder. About half of both groups approved of the military combating drug trafficking. And 48% of military students and 29% of the civilian students supported the involvement of the military in the control of mass migration (Weibull, 2005).

The SOM Institute at the University of Gothenburg regularly performs public opinion research in Sweden. In a 2021 trend report, the Swedish public was asked about how important certain tasks are for the Swedish armed forces. For the first time, the public was asked about support to the police in operations against serious crime. 54% of the respondents considered this a very important task and 24% a fairly important task, with 14% considering it not very important or not important at all and 8% without an opinion (Berndtsson et al., 2021). There was also high support for the armed forces being tasked with defending Sweden's border against foreign threats, protecting central social functions against terrorist attacks, and assisting the civil authorities in crisis situations in Sweden. Support for tasks carried out in other countries (for example, peacekeeping operations or operations to depose leaders in dictatorships) had much less support. The report received some news coverage (Sveriges Radio, 2021; Ydén, 2021).

## **Conclusion**

Based on the above analysis of policy options, it can be concluded that respondents see some possibilities to expand the domestic role of the armed forces. The main argument focuses on realizing that the current security situation is more complex than is presumed in the law. There are legal frameworks for peacetime (including peacetime crises) and for war, but not for the in-between scenarios. The Swedish authorities are predisposed not to let civil and military affairs blur. This raises the question of what to do when this blurring takes place anyway. As one respondent formulates it, *'In Sweden by legislation it's peace, and then there's war, and there's a legally defined tipping point on*

*the one hand. On the other hand, we know that the span of conflict is travelling towards the grey zone.'* (Respondent 54, civilian, executive organization)

This problem has been recognized by the police. *'The director of the police authority has written a letter to the government asking them to widen that law, in order for us to cooperate in grey zone and hybrid threats, the twilight zone between when a crisis starts, and you realize there's a state actor behind it. And they realized you have a grey zone area between where the police authority's mandate and capabilities stop, and the military's mandate and capabilities start. And they want to fill that grey zone.'* (Respondent 55, civilian, executive organization)

On the other hand, respondents are quite reluctant to mix mandates: *'No, you shouldn't have a mix of green and blue, that's the Swedish approach. ... never blend, because of issues of legitimacy, trust, training and mindset and all that.'* (Respondent 71, academic)

One respondent emphasizes the need to train together, but also to make it crystal clear to participants from both the civil and military domains what are the differences in aims and purposes between the two: *'I mean, I think given the reality we live in now, with grey zone security issues, if we are capable of understanding the different nature of various roles, if that is part of the training, then...because we may end up in a situation where we are in between. We may be approaching the legal context of an armed conflict but not be there entirely. In those kinds of situations, a grey zone kind of setting, training together for those kind of purposes is essential. But I think it's absolutely essential that we understand the differences in aims and purposes.'* (Respondent 67, academic)

When used in a domestic setting, the armed forces should, according to the respondents, always be under civilian command: *'Not necessarily that the military should go in and conduct operations on their own. It should be under the jurisdiction of the police or supporting the police authorities. That could be supporting them in whatever tasks or missions, so that they could get their own assets out of that area and use them elsewhere.'* (Respondent 59, military)

A clear line is the use of force against civilians: *'We should never ever be in a situation where the armed forces would be obliged to use force against its own population.'* (Respondent 62, politician) For some respondents, this means the armed forces can never work too closely together with the police, *'because then they might end up in a situation where they may need to use force.'* (Respondent 65, academic)

## 6.6 IMPACT ON CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

As shown in this chapter, in terms of civil-military relations, Sweden prefers the model of separation, in which the military and civil domain are separated and there is civilian supremacy over the military. As discussed, the armed forces have a very limited domestic role in Sweden, which can be explained by legal limitations, the trauma of Ådalen '31 and mixed attitudes on both the civilian and the military sides. At the same time, respondents presented several policy options for a larger and/or different domestic role for the armed forces, and there were some proposals for the creation of a hybrid force in between the police and the armed forces.

In terms of civil-military relations, this means there are signs of immersion. These signs and the trends will be described in the following section, focusing on four domains: society, public administration and strategy, law, and performance.

### Immersion in society

The distance between the armed forces and society is one of the explanations for the slowly changing domestic role of the armed forces in the Netherlands. Even though Sweden suspended conscription for a decade as well, the distance between the armed forces and society seems to be smaller than in the Netherlands. One respondent explains, *'No, the Swedish armed forces have always been an integrated part of society. That goes back to the old conscription system. It's always been very close to the society. That was probably a problem with an all-voluntary force. Because then there was a tendency that it's separating itself from the public and becoming something on its own. The politicians didn't like it, so that's a reason they reintroduced conscription. The other reason was of course recruitment.'* (Respondent 51, civilian, national government)

Still, the amount of immersion was larger during the Cold War, and distance between the armed forces and society has grown since then, which is recognized by most respondents: *'I'm not saying that the defense forces are alienated. Not at all. They are a normal phenomenon in society. But there is not the same intimate presence and connection.'* (Respondent 70, academic)

With the growing conscription numbers and other measures from the total defense bill, such as the creation of new units throughout the country, the immersion of the armed forces in society will most likely grow.

## Immersion in public administration and government strategy

Although the total defense model should in theory lead to coordination between the different agencies involved in security, including the armed forces, and an integrated strategy, previous sections have shown that the independence of Swedish government agencies from both the government and each other is a limiting factor. According to the respondents and the literature, cooperation depends on hubs and working groups and usually only develops over time, when the different players get to know each other. The national defense courses that have been reinstated recently could facilitate this. Some respondents argue for a larger coordinating role of the Prime Minister's Office or the establishment of a national security council: *'So, there is a lack of coordination. The most important thing is to create a national security council to look at the cyber thing, develop a national strategy. We don't have anyone with that oversight.'* (Respondent 69, academic)

Looking at recent developments, the new Swedish government has announced the creation of a national security council, led by the prime minister, and a new national security strategy. The first national security advisor has been appointed to lead the operational work of the national security council (Kristersson, 2022). The national security advisor has a background in both the armed forces and the foreign service, and before accepting this new position was Director General of the Swedish Psychological Defence Agency (Prime Minister's Office, 2022).

## Immersion in performance

This form of immersion has to do with the concrete policy options defined in section 6.5. As discussed, experts see most possibilities in cyber capabilities and intelligence and are most reluctant when it comes to police tasks. Some respondents do expect developments in the fight against organized crime, for example, by expanding the current law on support in case of terrorist attacks.

This research shows that the Swedish authorities are reluctant to integrate capabilities in joint units. However, many respondents recognize that this makes it more difficult to tackle grey zone threats. A first example where a joint unit may be an option is in the area of cyber threats. In the recent total defense bill, the government has recognized that this topic deserves further analysis. Respondents expect developments to be slow: *'In that context, I think what may happen in Sweden is that the armed forces are called in under appropriate legislation on an ad hoc basis. It will grow gradually on that basis.'* (Respondent 63, academic)

The same reluctance in Sweden can be found when it comes to the establishment of hybrid forces, such as a gendarmerie or the re-establishment of the Beredskapspolisén. Some proposals have been made, but no concrete decisions have been taken so far.

### Immersion in the law

An important legal challenge for the future will be how to integrate the two separate systems in Sweden: the emergency management system for peacetime crises and the total defense system for war. In the words of one respondent, *'By creating these separate tracks for peacetime crisis and war, you also build in automatically a gap that can be abused by a structured enemy, but also create a problem for ourselves to handle a situation clearly, because you can always doubt what is what and in what system should I be and how many differences are there. The authorities then have to decide what system to use when.'* (Respondent 65, academic)

Another respondent would prefer broader legislative possibilities, in which the armed forces would be able to support the police below the threshold of war as well: *'There is this legislation threshold that has to be reached before the armed forces can act. The threshold between peace and war. I would see an advantage if the armed forces were able to support the police below this threshold as well. The construct of CT<sup>17</sup> support is quite well defined. The police is responsible. The armed forces will provide their resources. They have the same protection, the same tools. It works quite well. I would say if we could expand that so that the armed forces could work beneath that threshold, it would serve Sweden well.'* (Respondent 54, civilian, executive authority)

Small steps could already be helpful in improving cooperation between the armed forces and the police, for example in the level of decision-making: *'I would say a slight change the level of decision-making. That may be heritage from Ådalen '31, that the government needs to decide that the armed forces can support the police in CT. You could lower that a couple of floors, so that it would be easier.'* (Respondent 54, civilian, executive authority)

Another concrete example of widening legal possibilities would be to expand the terrorism law to include other crimes, but respondents do not expect any major developments: *'What I do think you will see is a discussion about the terrorism law, to see if you can somehow widen the catalogue of crimes where this kind of support could be used. ... I wouldn't be surprised if they do widen it, but I think it will be still kept like certain criminal acts with a very clear procedure around it.'* (Respondent 65, academic)

## 6.7 ANALYSIS

Both in the literature and in the interviews with Swedish respondents, there is evidence for the undermining of liberal democracy by the rise of new security threats and by declining social cohesion. Particularly noteworthy are the growing threats posed by the Russian (hybrid) threat, organized crime, and gang violence. Regarding the gang violence problem, authors and respondents point at the creation of parallel societies or even no-go areas in some parts of certain Swedish cities. Furthermore, social cohesion is declining, as is also evidenced by the IDEA data on Sweden that was presented in chapter 4. For the Swedish population, organized crime is also a major concern. Lastly, like in the Dutch case study, the respondents do not point at the undermining of liberal democracy by the state, but the discussion of policy options below shows the awareness of this risk.

The reconstruction of total defense, which has been ongoing since 2014, is one of the most significant recent developments in the armed services' domestic role. This includes the creation of a new Psychological Defence Agency (with a focus on countering disinformation and foreign influence operations) and the reshaping of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (which is responsible for crisis management). The new government installed in the Fall of 2022 moved both agencies to the Ministry of Defense, which may be considered a form of militarization. The national defense courses from the Cold War era have been reinstalled as well.

In line with this focus on total defense against the external (Russian) threat and combined with the Swedish model of separate agencies, legal limitations, and the reluctance to use the armed forces in the domestic security context, the extent of constabularization has been limited, but respondents do point at some militarization of the police. Additionally, there have been some developments in involving the armed forces in the fight against terrorism. The impact of the Ådalen incident from 1931 (in which civilians were shot by the armed forces supporting the police) still lingers and especially civilian respondents cast doubt on the military's capacity to function in a law enforcement capacity. At the same time, respondents from the military emphasize their focus on the defense of the country against external threats. However, in line with the literature discussed in chapter 4, respondents from both sides recognize the rise of grey zone threats, which suggests that closer cooperation between the armed forces and the police is necessary, for example in intelligence matters and cyber threats.

Looking at future policy options, there is some support for the use of conscription to foster social cohesion and the integration of migrants in society. Although there is

evidence in the academic literature for a link between conscription and social cohesion (see chapter 2), about half of the Swedish respondents are reluctant to acknowledge this link. Respondents are reluctant about using the armed forces in police tasks, although the fight against organized crime is mentioned by some as an area that could profit from military support. Hybrid forces remain controversial in Sweden. It is interesting to note that public opinion research indicates a misalignment between the general public and the military and political elite, with the public seemingly rather supportive of the armed forces playing a part in the fight against organized crime.

As for the separation versus immersion dichotomy, the Swedish position differs per dimension. When looking at tasks and legal possibilities, Sweden is on the separation side of the dichotomy, with some small exceptions and developments taking place. As for society and public administration, developments are clearly moving towards a larger visibility and footprint of the armed forces. Evidence for this may be found in the rising numbers of conscripts, the efforts made to expand military presence across the nation, the transfer of two civilian agencies to the Ministry of Defense, and the establishment of a national security advisor and strategy.

Looking at the changes in the separation-immersion dichotomy in Sweden after the Cold War, evidently the developments differ from the developments discussed in chapter 5 in the Dutch case. Sweden came from a total defense background, where the position of the armed forces in society and government was stronger. Although the country has known a 'strategic time-out', during which the external threat posed by Russia was deemed small or absent, this period has only lasted for about 10 years, leaving the total defense structures largely intact. The visibility of the armed forces in society shrank in this period and arrangements such as the national defense courses were abolished but were not a thing of the distant past as it was in the Netherlands.

Both the Swedish military and the political elite have been reluctant in expanding the domestic role of the armed forces. The population, however, would support a larger role, especially in the fight against organized crime. Consequently, though small steps have been taken to enlarge the domestic role of the armed forces, the interplay between military, political elite and the population has not caused alignment (to use Schiff's theory) on a significant change in this domestic role. The Swedish system of separate agencies, combined with the Ådalen trauma, has undoubtedly played an important role in this regard. Because of the separate agencies, the Swedish armed forces have not developed policing capabilities during stability operations like the Dutch armed forces have. In addition, the strategic time-out period most likely was too short to cause meaningful change. The growing Russian threat, however, has fostered alignment between

the military, political elite and the population for strengthening the armed forces and increasing its visibility, leading to more immersion in Sweden anyway. The redesigned Swedish conscription system is popular among Swedish youth. In a significant move, the new Swedish government has decided to transfer two civilian agencies to the Ministry of Defense as well.

Looking at the issue of civilian control, Sweden is an interesting case study as well. On the one hand, respondents talk about civilian control in explaining why the domestic role of the armed forces should be small. On the other hand, as part of the effort to rebuild total defense, the government has transferred two civilian agencies (MSB – the Swedish civil contingencies agency and MPF – the Psychological Defense Agency) from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Defense. Although the agencies are placed under the new minister for Civil Defense, and not the regular minister of Defense, this is still an interesting move in a country which is reluctant to allow hybridization.

As discussed earlier in this chapter based on the work of Hedlund and Holmberg, the 'exceptionalism' around the Swedish armed forces has decreased since the end of the Cold War, indicating that Sweden has followed the line of Brooks, who argues for a normalization of the role of the military instead of treating it as an exceptional actor (Brooks, 2019). At the same time, related to the declining external threat, subjective control has become stronger. With the rebuilding of total defense, the pendula could again move in the opposite direction, towards more objective control and more professional autonomy for the military. This is in line with Desch's theory (Desch, 1998), while at the same time there are indications for the mediating link of militarization, as has been argued by Levy and Kuehn (Kuehn & Levy, 2021a, 2021b). It is worth mentioning the new Swedish National Security Council, that in Sweden only consists of ministers (unlike the Netherlands and also Finland, as will be discussed in the next chapter), which could be seen as an effort towards 'pragmatic civilian control' (Travis) or what Schiff calls 'targeted partnership', especially as the new National Security Advisor has a background in the armed forces.

**APPENDIX: TABLE 6.1: POLICY OPTIONS FOR A CHANGING DOMESTIC ROLE OF THE ARMED FORCES**

| Domain            | What                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Why                                                                                                                                  | Why not                                                                                                                                                                                            | Preconditions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Civic education   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conscription reactivated with growing numbers</li> <li>Social conscription</li> <li>Involve high schools</li> <li>National Defense Courses</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External threat</li> <li>Foster social cohesion</li> <li>Integration of migrants</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Armed forces cannot discipline everyone</li> <li>Risky to train young people with a difficult background in the use of weapons</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social cohesion argument only works with large numbers and when gender neutral</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Police tasks      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of helicopters in support of police operations</li> <li>Supporting the police in case of terrorism</li> <li>Debate about organized crime</li> </ul>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Armed forces can provide specific capabilities in exceptional situations</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk of using violence against the population</li> <li>Armed forces capabilities not good for crime fighting</li> <li>Reluctance to mix mandates</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support must be approved by government</li> <li>Support should not hinder regular operations</li> <li>Never in public order management</li> <li>Training in police use of force</li> <li>Under police command</li> <li>Only when the intervention requires special resources the police do not have</li> </ul> |
| Cyber domain      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cooperation and coordination</li> <li>Cyber conscripts</li> <li>Cyber reservists</li> </ul>                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cyber threats can be an existential threat</li> </ul>                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legal obstacles, for example in sharing information</li> </ul>                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legal aspects must be dealt with</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Crisis management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support civilian authorities in case of crises and disasters</li> </ul>                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uncontroversial, appreciated role</li> </ul>                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Never in the lead</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Intelligence      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cooperation between military and civilian actors</li> </ul>                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create common situational awareness</li> <li>Identifying the networks behind cases</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legal obstacles</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legal aspects must be dealt with</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Hybrid forces     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand Home Guard tasks to e.g. border control and cyber security</li> <li>Re-establishment 'Beredskapsspolisen'</li> <li>Creation of a gendarmerie not a serious option (yet)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grey-zone threats</li> <li>Augment the police when needed</li> </ul>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preference for a separation of agencies</li> </ul>                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legal aspects must be dealt with</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |