



SWEDEN'S SECURITY

THE LONG WAY TOWARDS TOTAL DEFENCE

Justyna Gotkowska

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MAIN POINTS

- Since 2008, the Swedish security and defence establishment has become increasingly concerned about the security of the country and the Nordic-Baltic region. Russia's repeated violations of international law, the unravelling of the European security architecture, the dismantling of the arms control regime and rising tensions between the US and Europe have contributed to this rising insecurity. Russia's 2014 intervention in Ukraine was a reason for a thorough redefinition of Swedish security policy, although this process had already begun after the 2008 Russian-Georgian war. Between 2015 and 2020, territorial defence was made a priority, which was reflected in changes to the Swedish Armed Forces and the stepping up of military cooperation with NATO, the US, and Finland. The security strategy for 2021-2025 outlines the further transformation of the Swedish Armed Forces and of Sweden's defence policy.
- Nevertheless, Sweden's security and defence policy has not been a priority for the government up to now. The threats and challenges stemming from Russia and the need to strengthen the military and civil defence have been discussed primarily by the expert community and a few concerned politicians, but not so much by the public. For the minority second-term cabinet of the Social Democrats and the Green Party, rising insecurity in the Nordic-Baltic region remains one of many challenges. In the government's view, these also include climate change, problems with integration of migrants and social segregation in Sweden, globalisation that has a negative impact on the competitiveness of the domestic economy, growing economic inequalities and social polarisation, gang-related activities, and finally problems concerning housing policy. Consequently, defence spending has so far been maintained at about 1% of GDP. It is only in the coming five years that a significant increase can be expected.

- There is no doubt that Sweden will be involved in military crises and conflicts in the Nordic-Baltic region between NATO and Russia. In such scenarios, a military attack by Russia would be aimed at: increasing the room for manoeuvre for Russian military operations in the region; preventing NATO from using Sweden's territory; and thwarting Swedish military assistance to its neighbours – mainly Finland and Norway. The priorities of Sweden's security and defence policy currently include: defending its own territory and preventing Russia from seizing it during a war; cooperating with Norway and Finland to defend the northern regions of the Scandinavian Peninsula; ensuring the security of supplies to Sweden; and securing the deployment of NATO forces to the Baltic Sea region within a collective defence operation of the Baltic states that would also imply some kind of cooperation from Sweden.
- Already in 2016–2020, the priority to enhance national defence guided the development of the Swedish Armed Forces as well as Swedish security and defence policy. Stockholm then focused on gradually strengthening the operational readiness of its military and on improving wartime mobilisation, though without providing enough funding. The government also reintroduced defence planning, partial conscription and returned to large-scale national defence exercises. In security policy, it began to rely on an ever tighter network of military cooperation. In addition, it significantly strengthened cooperation with NATO, the United States and Finland. Sweden also began to reinstate the total defence concept.
- In its security strategy for 2021–2025, the Swedish government envisages a further strengthening of its military capabilities. This time it is reflected in plans to increase defence spending, which is set to reach around 1.5% of GDP in 2025. It should not be forgotten, however, that after two decades of reforms and underfunding, the Swedish Armed Forces, despite their relatively modern arms and military equipment, have deficiencies that make it impossible to effectively

resist a conventional attack. This is related to significantly reduced logistics and command capabilities and insufficient personnel strength, as was highlighted by the parliamentary Defence Commission in its 2019 report.

- The new strategy reflects the changes that have taken place in Swedish thinking about security and defence policy and those regarding cooperation with partners. NATO membership is still not considered a viable option – it does not have sufficient public and political support. However, Sweden is becoming a quasi-ally of NATO and the US without an official status. It is also deepening its informal military alliance with Finland. Moreover, it defines itself as a “giver and receiver” of military and civilian aid. In the years ahead, the Swedish government wants to develop a real capacity for giving and receiving military support in times of peace, crisis and war. It will therefore seek to coordinate or develop joint operational planning with Finland, Norway, the US and NATO.
- Sweden is also in the process of recreating its civil defence. It is formulating strategies in various areas, defining problems, designating coordinating institutions, imposing additional responsibilities on central, regional and local entities, and exploring the possibility of cooperation between the private and public sectors. The starting point for total defence planning is a scenario of at least a three-month crisis in Europe, including Sweden, which also involves limited military attacks. During this time, Sweden’s society and economy need to adapt to a different way of functioning, and the Swedish Armed Forces will depend on cooperation with civilian entities.

INTRODUCTION

In the event of an armed conflict, due to its location at the junction of NATO's northern and eastern flanks, Sweden's territory and airspace will become important for NATO's and Russia's military operations in the Nordic-Baltic region. Since 2008, therefore, Swedish security policy has drawn keen interest from the countries of the Nordic and Baltic states, NATO, and both the US and Russia. The allied member states have been hoping to see Sweden join NATO, while Russia has sought to convince Sweden's government and society that it would be better to abandon integration with the trans-Atlantic security structures.

Stockholm, confronted with the increasingly aggressive policy of the Kremlin, has faced a major challenge in the last decade: how to pursue the security and defence policy of a non-aligned country with limited military capabilities? For a country that is part of the West, but not NATO, would the option of returning to its Cold War neutrality be viable? Or would it be possible for Sweden to become a member of the Alliance?

Stockholm has found its own answer to the security dilemmas – this is currently neither neutrality nor accession to NATO. Sweden is weaving an ever tighter network of military cooperation with the Alliance, the US, its Nordic neighbours and others to complement the limited defence capabilities of the Swedish Armed Forces, and restoring the ability of its society and economy to function in times of crisis and war. While this is admittedly not an optimal answer, it is nonetheless satisfactory given the domestic political circumstances.

Given the circumstances outlined above, the minority government of the Social Democrats and the Green Party should have invested more vigorously in the Swedish Armed Forces and increased their personnel in the past few years. The recent decision to significantly increase defence spending by 2025 was only possible because of pressure from

the conservative-liberal opposition, whose support was necessary to secure adoption of the new security strategy in parliament.

Sweden's biggest challenge for 2021–2025 is to move to a more advanced stage of military cooperation in the Nordic-Baltic region and to create a viable basis for wartime cooperation. The challenge will also be to introduce a well-functioning system of civil defence and civil-military cooperation as part of the total defence concept. The Swedish experience in endeavouring to do this may prove useful for other countries of the Baltic Sea region.

I. A SMALL COUNTRY IN AN INCREASINGLY INSECURE REGION

Sweden has come a long way in its perception of security threats and challenges in the last three decades. Until the end of the Cold War, it was a country with extensive armed forces, a civil defence system integrated with military planning within the total defence concept, and an arms industry that largely met domestic needs. This was required due to Sweden's neutrality and its position between two hostile blocs: NATO and the Warsaw Pact. After the end of the Cold War, the integration of Central European countries into the EU and NATO, and Sweden's accession to the European Union, changed the Swedish perception of the regional security environment. Since the late 1990s Stockholm has adapted to the new security paradigm while taking advantage of the "peace dividend". It drastically reduced its defence budget, downsized its armed forces, focused on challenges, such as international terrorism, and consequently on active participation in crisis management operations abroad. During this strategic pause, traditional military threats ceased to exist for Sweden. Stockholm also abandoned neutrality in favour of non-alignment, or staying out of military alliances in peacetime while retaining the option to take sides in a time of war.

Since 2008, however, Stockholm has become increasingly aware that military crises and conflicts in the Nordic-Baltic region may emerge and affect Sweden directly or indirectly. The Russian-Georgian war, the modernisation of the Russian Armed Forces and the increased Russian military activity in the Arctic and the Baltic Sea region have prompted a return to thinking in terms of traditional military threats. In the security strategy for 2010–2014, adopted in 2009, the conservative-liberal government's priorities included not only participating in international crisis management operations, but also ensuring the country's territorial integrity and sovereignty. In spite of this, it took the Russian military intervention in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea to provide a strong impetus for fundamental changes in Sweden's security policy

and armed forces. The security strategy for 2016–2020, adopted in 2015 by the Social Democratic-Green government, established a clear territorial defence priority. Aggressive and provocative Russian actions against Sweden in 2013–2014 contributed to this turnaround. They ranged from simulated attacks against Swedish military infrastructure during Russian Air Force exercises, airspace violations, and underwater operations in Sweden’s territorial waters (most likely intelligence-gathering activities).

Stockholm’s concerns about its security and defence have increased in recent years. Russia and China challenging the international law, US-European tensions during Donald Trump’s presidency and the unravelling of the European security architecture with a gradual dismantling of the arms control regime have all contributed to this. According to the security strategy for 2021–2025, adopted in 2020, the situation in the region continues to deteriorate. On the one hand, Sweden is wary of having its sovereignty curtailed by possible US or European deals with Russia, in the form of creating informal buffer zones with separate security regimes for the Baltic Sea region. On the other hand, it no longer harbours any doubts that it will be involved in military conflicts in its neighbourhood. Should they arise, the Swedish government does not rule out an armed attack against Sweden itself. Russia would aim to expand its military activities in the Baltic Sea region by using Swedish territory (e.g. Gotland); Moscow would also seek to prevent NATO from using Swedish territory (e.g. Gotland) in conducting its military operations or press Sweden to refrain from providing military assistance to its neighbours – mainly Norway and Finland.

Sweden is concerned about erosion of the international order, based on functioning regimes and international organisations. It sees itself in the security architecture as a small country, and a non-aligned one, which is dependent on a stable regional and global environment. Despite its vast territory, Sweden has a population of 10.3 million, smaller than the Czech Republic (10.7 million) and Belgium (11.5 million). Its GDP of 474 billion

euros in 2019 was on the level of Belgium's.¹ In turn, the Swedish Armed Forces, with 15,000 professional soldiers and conscripts excluding the Home Guard, are only 2,000 larger in number than the Lithuanian army in peacetime. Although they largely use modern equipment, their small size limits their ability to defend the country. At the same time, Sweden has an active diplomacy, well-established soft power, a relatively large defence industry (to some extent a legacy of the Cold War), and it is home to companies with global reach in many sectors, which increases its potential compared to similar countries in terms of population and GDP.

Despite the increasingly pessimistic assessment of the threats and challenges, security and defence policy has not been a priority for Stefan Löfven's government so far. Growing insecurity in the Nordic-Baltic region has remained one of many problems for the minority coalition in power since 2014. It was at the bottom of the list of challenges mentioned in the deal reached with opposition parties in 2019, which enabled the coalition to remain in power for another term. Those also included climate change, problems with integration of migrants and social segregation, globalisation impairing the competitiveness of the Swedish economy, rising economic inequalities and polarisation of the society, gang activity, and finally problems in housing policy.² The place of security and defence policy among the priorities of current and previous governments has until now been well reflected in Swedish military expenditure,

¹ Poland's GDP in the analysed year was €532 billion. '[Gross domestic product at market prices](#)', Eurostat. Population data, see '[Population projections](#)', Eurostat, ec.europa.eu/eurostat.

² The priorities of the Social Democratic-Green minority cabinet are contained in an agreement between the ruling Social Democrats and the Green Party on the one side and two factions of the conservative-liberal opposition (the Centre Party and the Liberals) on the other. This so-called January agreement, struck in January 2019 after the general election, allowed for cooperation in the above mentioned areas and made it possible for the minority coalition to remain in power. *Utkast till sakpolitisk överenskommelse mellan Socialdemokraterna, Centerpartiet, Liberalerna och Miljöpartiet de gröna*, Socialdemokraterna, 11 January 2019, www.socialdemokraterna.se.

which has remained at around 1% of GDP in recent years. Not until 2021–2025 will the defence budget see a significant increase. The decision to boost defence spending was, however, only possible thanks to pressure from the conservative-liberal opposition. Its support was necessary for the Swedish parliament to adopt a new security strategy.

II. A DENSE NETWORK OF MILITARY COOPERATION

In light of the adverse changes in the security environment over the past decade, Stockholm has faced a major challenge: how to conduct the security and defence policy of a country that does not belong to NATO and which possesses limited military capabilities and a relatively modest defence budget.

In 2008, non-aligned Sweden, faced with the Russian-Georgian war, was unprepared to defend itself against a conventional armed attack. The then conservative-liberal government understood that Sweden was dependent on outside help. Due to a lack of political and social consensus on joining NATO, membership in the alliance was not a viable solution to Sweden's dilemmas. After the 2008 financial crisis, there was also no desire to increase defence spending. The government therefore included the so-called declaration of solidarity in its security strategy for 2010–2014. Sweden unilaterally declared that it would not remain passive in the event of a disaster or armed aggression against an EU or Nordic country (i.e. Norway and Iceland), and that it expected them to reciprocate this stance. The declaration was followed up with a strengthening of military cooperation with its Nordic neighbours and NATO. The Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFKO) with Norway, Finland and Denmark, in place since 2009, was supposed to lead to more efficient defence spending and greater interoperability, which has been achieved only in part. Sweden, expecting “solidarity” from the Alliance, also increased its participation in NATO exercises and operations. In 2012, NATO's Secretary General undermined this narrative, stating that the Alliance was not responsible for the security of countries which were not its members.³

The Russian-Ukrainian war uprooted the calculations of Sweden, the other Nordic countries and NATO. On the one hand, the government

³ J. Gotkowska, ‘Swedish security in crisis’, OSW, 13 February 2013, www.osw.waw.pl.

in Stockholm, composed of the Social Democrats and the Green Party after the 2014 elections, began to intensively strengthen cooperation with NATO. The latter, for its part, recognised that deepening cooperation with Sweden, despite its non-membership, was necessary to ensure the defence of the Baltic states and the security of the entire region. On the other hand, the Swedish Ministry of Defence began to invest in strengthening bilateral military relations, primarily with the US and Finland. This strategy of intensifying bilateral, trilateral and multi-lateral military cooperation was called the “Hultqvist doctrine” (after the Social Democratic minister of defence).⁴

Since 2014, Sweden has therefore been tightening its relationship with NATO, which it considers the main organisation that ensures European security.⁵ In 2014, Stockholm signed a Host Nation Support Agreement with the Alliance, ratified two years later, making it possible for NATO forces to use Swedish territory, airspace and waters with the Swedish government’s consent. Stockholm has also changed its attitude and expanded its involvement in military exercises involving NATO and its member states in the Baltic Sea region, including the Baltic states. In 2018, some 2,200 Swedish soldiers took part in NATO’s largest military drills in recent years in Norway – the Trident Juncture, in which the NATO Response Force practiced a collective defence operation on its northern flank. NATO countries, in turn, have stepped up their participation in Swedish national exercises, including the largest defence manoeuvres since the 1990s in 2017 (codename ‘Aurora’). There, for the first time, the Swedish military tested hosting the forces of NATO member states, securing their movement from western Sweden to the east and south of the country, and integrating their military support.

⁴ B. Kunz, *Sweden’s NATO Workaround. Swedish security and defense policy against the backdrop of Russian revisionism*, *Focus stratégique*, no. 64, IFRI, Paris 2015, www.ifri.org.

⁵ J. Gotkowska, P. Szymański, *Between co-operation and membership. Sweden and Finland’s relations with NATO*, OSW, Warsaw 2017, www.osw.waw.pl.

At the same time, Sweden began to intensify military cooperation with the United States, which became one of the priorities of the Swedish Armed Forces for 2016–2020, regardless of the negative perception of the Trump administration by the Social Democratic-Green government. In 2016, a US-Swedish Statement of Intent was signed that aimed to increase military capabilities and interoperability through training and exercises, and also provide cooperation on armaments. All the branches of the US Armed Forces began to participate in Swedish military exercises, with the largest numbers to date in Aurora 17 (1,300 troops). NATO's, Nordic and national exercises in the Nordic-Baltic region also became platforms for expanding cooperation and interoperability with the US. The desire to tighten bilateral cooperation was confirmed by an agreement concluded in 2018 for the purchase of the Patriot medium-range air defence system. The same year, Sweden and Finland signed a trilateral agreement with the United States on deepening military cooperation to increase synergies in both Swedish-US and Finnish-US cooperation.⁶

After 2014, it also became a priority for the Swedish Ministry of Defence to enhance defence collaboration with Finland.⁷ The two countries are currently engaged in the most far-reaching military cooperation among the Nordic countries. Not only their close geographical location, but above all their non-aligned status and the need to find a recipe for improving their security have become the binding force behind their enhanced cooperation, as Denmark and Norway, formerly involved in NORDEFECO, prioritised strengthening relations within NATO after 2014. Sweden and Finland therefore signed an *Action Plan for deepened defence cooperation* as early as 2014, with more agreements coming in the following years. They agreed to establish a Swedish-Finnish naval task group (which became operational in 2017), increase the number of joint

⁶ J. Gotkowska, P. Szymański, 'Pro-American non-alignment. Sweden and Finland develop closer military co-operation with the United States', *OSW Commentary*, no. 205, 31 March 2016, www.osw.waw.pl.

⁷ P. Szymański, 'The northern tandem. The Swedish-Finnish defence cooperation', *OSW Commentary*, no. 298, 20 March 2019, www.osw.waw.pl.

exercises of land forces and develop the concept of a combined brigade, and increase the interoperability of their air forces. The two countries make full use of their ability to share air and naval bases and of the facilitated access to their territories through NORDEFECO's arrangements. In their 2018 bilateral agreement on defence cooperation, they agreed to develop it towards coordinated operational planning and joint operations during peace, crisis and war, albeit without formal alliance commitments. In September 2020, the Swedish Parliament passed legislation granting the government greater rights with regard to providing military assistance to Finland in the event of violations of Finnish territory and with regard to accepting military assistance from Helsinki in analogous situations concerning Sweden. This also includes an armed attack, although in this case it requires prior approval from the Riksdag.

In recent years Sweden has also been expanding its military cooperation network beyond NATO, the US, and its Nordic neighbours. It has developed cooperation with the United Kingdom, appreciating its commitment to the Baltic Sea region and its ability to rapidly deploy major forces in the Nordic-Baltic theatre. In 2017, it joined the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF). Stockholm has also recognised France's engagement in developing European security policy and it decided to join the French-led European Intervention Initiative (EI²) and to send its special forces to the French operation Takuba in the Sahel in 2020. Among the (less important) partner countries, Sweden also recognises the Baltic states and has participated in military exercises on their territories, Poland (coordination of the Anaconda and Aurora exercises), Germany (participation in the Framework Nation Concept) and Canada, which is the framework nation of the NATO battlegroup in Latvia and has interests in the Arctic.

Sweden's security strategy for 2021–2025 goes a step further in devising cooperation with neighbours and priority partners. The government wants to strengthen joint operational planning with Finland.

Moreover, it will strive to coordinate operational planning with Norway, Denmark, the UK, the US and NATO – not only for times of peace, but also crisis and war. Sweden wants to develop concrete military planning for worst-case scenarios. In the case of Finland, Stockholm has declared that – in addition to the existing cooperation between the air forces and navies – selected Swedish ground units are to be ready to operate in Finland in times of crisis or war, if both countries consider it appropriate. With regard to Norway, Sweden considers it important to coordinate operational planning in the northern regions of the Scandinavian Peninsula. A Norwegian-Swedish-Finnish agreement on enhanced operational cooperation in this area was already signed in September 2020.⁸ Cooperation with Norway is also important for another reason – military transports and support from the US or the UK to Sweden and to the Baltic Sea region will pass through the ports of Trondheim and Narvik and the Oslo region. Stockholm also wants to expand cooperation in times of crisis and war and coordinate operational planning with Denmark. The priority areas are the protection of transport routes and security of supplies. The Swedish government will also seek to align operational planning with the US as much as possible. Defence planning is also expected to be coordinated with NATO, although due to Sweden’s non-membership in the Alliance, this may encounter political and formal problems. To a certain extent, these problems may be resolved through closer cooperation of Sweden and Finland with NATO member Norway (and in the future – although the strategy does not mention it – perhaps with Poland and the Baltic states).

Despite Sweden’s increasingly close relationship with NATO, Stockholm should not be expected to join the Alliance in the coming years. A motion by four conservative-liberal opposition parties, which was approved in the Riksdag in December 2020, that the possibility of NATO membership

⁸ The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Finland, the Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of Norway, the Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of Sweden, ‘[Statement of Intent on Enhanced Operational Cooperation](#)’, Regeringskansliet, 23 September 2020, www.regeringen.se.

(the so-called *Natooption*) should not be excluded from Sweden's security strategy will not have any immediate consequences in the short term.⁹ Despite intensifying cooperation with NATO in recent years, the ruling Social Democrats (and the Green Party) have ruled out membership in the Alliance. The adopted motion is not binding for the government. There is also not enough public support in Sweden for joining NATO. Opinion polls confirm the division that has existed since 2014: 32% of citizens are against it, 29% are in favour and 39% have no opinion.¹⁰ Without a change in the position of the Social Democrats and an increase in public support, Sweden's membership in NATO will not be possible.

⁹ It was adopted with the support of the Sweden Democrats, a far-right party which is generally opposed to accession to NATO, but at the same time believes that Sweden should not exclude this option from its security strategy, just as Finland. *Säkerhetspolitisk inriktning - Totalförsvaret 2021-2025. Sammansatta utrikes- och försvarsutskottets betänkande 2020/21:UFöU4*, Sveriges Riksdag, 15 December 2020, www.riksdagen.se.

¹⁰ J. Martinsson, U. Andersson (eds.), *Svenska Trender 1986-2019*, SOM-Institutet, 2020, www.som.gu.se.

III. LIMITED NATIONAL DEFENCE CAPABILITIES

The changes in Sweden's security policy over the past decade have been accompanied by a transformation of its armed forces. In the late 1990s, Sweden drastically reduced the size of its military and its defence expenditure and abandoned defence planning in order to focus on UN, EU and NATO crisis management operations.

In 2008, the Swedish Armed Forces were unprepared to defend the country. The operational component was significantly reduced – from over 50,000 soldiers in the late 1990s to about 15,000 in 2009.¹¹ While the security strategy for 2010–2014 stated that the military was supposed to carry out national defence tasks on a par with participation in crisis management operations (and it again obliged the armed forces to introduce defence planning), the earlier reform plans were not significantly revised. Decisions were made to professionalise the military and abandon conscription. The changes introduced as a direct result of the Russian-Georgian war mainly involved providing reserve units with more arms and military equipment. No significant increase in the defence budget was envisaged either. Until 2013, it oscillated between SEK 40–42 billion (about US\$5 billion). Consequently, the armed forces struggled with insufficient personnel and shortages of arms and military equipment. In 2012, the then chief of the defence staff publicly stated that Sweden would be able to defend itself for one week in the event of a limited military attack, and even this would only be possible from 2019 at the earliest, if all branches of the armed forces were fully operational following the implementation of the reform.¹²

It took the Russian-Ukrainian war to bring about major transformation of the Swedish military. The security strategy for 2016–2020 changed

¹¹ About 22,000 soldiers of the Home Guard, corresponding to Poland's Territorial Defence Forces, should be added to this number.

¹² J. Gotkowska, *Sitting on the fence. Swedish defence policy and the Baltic Sea region*, OSW, Warsaw 2013, p. 22, www.osw.waw.pl.

the priorities for its development – the defence of the country became the primary goal. The government began to gradually increase defence spending with the largest surge in 2019, but it still hovered around 1% of GDP, which hampered development and modernisation. In view of these limitations, increasing the wartime operational readiness of all mobilised units of the armed forces was recognised as key, which was to be achieved through planning and mobilisation exercises, as well as combat readiness drills of the individual branches and units. Since 2018, there has been a return to partial conscription – about 4,000 call-ups (men and women) a year. The defence of the strategically located Gotland was strengthened, with the establishment of a combat group on the island, while the number of military exercises in the region was increased. The Swedish Army was to be able to command and control two brigades simultaneously. Emphasis was placed on rapid mobilisation exercises for part-time and reserve soldiers since half of Sweden’s wartime land forces consist of reserve units. The Swedish Air Force was also directed to adjust its structure and increase its operational readiness in time of peace, crisis and war. It was also expected to implement a dispersed basing concept, including the use of sections of national highways for take-offs and landings. Strengthening anti-submarine warfare capabilities became a priority for the Swedish Navy. The first major test of the introduced changes was the 2017 Aurora exercise.¹³

An audit of the military transformation implemented since 2015 was part of the report on the future of security policy and the armed forces issued in 2019 by the Defence Commission.¹⁴ It openly pointed out numerous shortcomings that prevented the military from repelling a conventional

¹³ J. Gotkowska, ‘Aurora: Sweden’s response to Zapad?’, OSW, 20 September 2017, www.osw.waw.pl.

¹⁴ The Defence Commission is a forum for consultation between the government and representatives of the political parties in the parliament. The report was prepared as part of the process of developing the security strategy for 2021–2025. *Värnkraft – Inriktningen af säkerhets politiken och utformningen av de militära försvaret 2021–2025*, Regeringskansliet, Försvarsdepartementet, Försvarsberedningen, 14 May 2019, www.regeringen.se.

armed attack. Significantly reduced logistics and command and control capabilities, alongside the insufficient size of the military, were cited as primary reasons. According to the report, the armed forces have not achieved all of the goals set out by the 2015 strategy, and there are still significant limitations to conducting regular military operations for the defence of Sweden. Therefore, the security strategy for 2021–2025, adopted in 2020, sets the same goal as the one from 2015 – an enhanced ability of the mobilised forces to operate in wartime. Due to the lengthy processes of acquiring arms and military equipment and new personnel, the goals of the 2020 strategy will only be achievable around 2030.

Between 2021 and 2025, the Swedish Army is expected to consist of two mechanised brigades, with the formation of a third one underway, and create a reduced motorised brigade in the Stockholm region, and also reinforce a mechanised battalion on Gotland. The new units will be established in the central and northern parts of the country. It is envisaged that the Army will restore the division level command by forming a divisional headquarters, a command battalion and two division-level artillery battalions, upgrade heavy equipment including tanks and infantry vehicles, and also purchase additional artillery systems and put into service the Patriot medium-range air defence system. The Home Guard will be strengthened by obtaining new matériel – vehicles, sensors and night combat equipment. The Navy will boost its capabilities by increasing the number of submarines from four to five (by ordering two new vessels and additionally upgrading an older-type one) and by modernising five Visby-class corvettes, and acquiring two new corvettes after 2025. An additional amphibious battalion is to be established in the Gothenburg region. The Air Force is set to continue the reform and modernisation initiated in 2015, with the introduction into service of 60 JAS 39E aircraft to be organised in six squadrons, together with the existing JAS 39C/D and further implementation of the dispersed basing concept. The wartime strength of the Swedish Armed Forces should increase from about 60,000 to 90,000 troops. The number of conscripts is also set to gradually rise, from around 4,000 to 8,000 a year by 2025.

A new development is the significant increase announced in the defence budget for the period 2021–2025. It is set to rise by SEK 5 billion a year in 2021–2023 and by SEK 6 billion a year in 2024–2025. If implemented, Sweden will increase its military expenditure to around 1.5% of GDP in 2025. It will be the most significant increase since the late 1990s.¹⁵

Table. Sweden’s military spending from 2008 to 2019

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
% GDP	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.1
SEK (bn)	39.7	38.7	42.4	41.0	42.3	42.5	44.9	45.4	46.4	47.3	49.8	55.9
USD (bn)*	4.9	4.8	5.2	4.9	5.0	5.1	5.4	5.4	5.5	5.5	5.7	6.3

* 2018 constant prices.

Source: SIPRI [Military Expenditure Database](https://www.sipri.org/databases/military-expenditure), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, www.sipri.org.

¹⁵ *Regeringens proposition 2020/21:30, Totalförsvaret 2021–2025*, Regeringskansliet, Försvarsdepartementet, 14 October 2020, www.regeringen.se.

IV. (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF CIVIL DEFENCE

After the annexation of Crimea by Russia, Sweden not only started to recalibrate its security policy and the armed forces to the needs of its territorial defence, it also started to reactivate the civil defence model, under the realisation that both civil society and the economy must function in times of crisis or war. Sweden is thus coming back to the total defence concept, integrating military and civil defence planning. Total defence was operative in Sweden during the Cold War, but after it ended, the civil component was essentially dismantled, and the military component reformed. Therefore, Sweden is rethinking the civil defence concept from the ground up. It is a difficult task that requires time, comprehensive planning, changes in the law, proper goal-setting, imposing additional responsibilities on entities at the central, regional and local levels, collaboration between the private and state sectors, cooperation between the civilian sector and the armed forces, additional personnel and financial resources. Sweden is currently in the process of developing a structured approach to this issue.

The Swedish government decided as early as 2015 that it was necessary to return to a civil defence that was integrated with military defence planning. The security strategy for 2016–2020 featured an extensive chapter on civil defence. What was striking, however, was its rather vague wording. At the time, the strategy highlighted three areas: coordination and planning in civil defence; civilian support for the armed forces; psychological defence, understood as communicating to the Swedish public and countering disinformation and propaganda in times of peace, crisis, or war. A central role in coordinating activities within these three areas was then assigned to the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB). Civil-military cooperation started to be exercised during the 2017 Aurora national defence drills.

The Swedish government tasked the Defence Commission with addressing the issue of civil defence more comprehensively. In 2017, a separate

report on the subject was published,¹⁶ listing key areas in civil and total defence: organisation and management of total defence, psychological defence, electronic communications and cyber security, personnel, voluntary defence organisations, economy and total defence, protection of the civilian population, law enforcement and security, energy, food and drinking water supply, transport, financial preparedness, healthcare, research and development, and international cooperation. The report was another step in developing a comprehensive total defence concept. It heavily influenced the security strategy for 2021–2025, entitled *Total Defence*, which for the first time devotes as much space to civil defence as to security and defence policy. Even though the new security strategy does not provide a clear answer as to what form the Swedish civil defence model should take, it does set out the next steps in its development. The starting point for planning and preparations is a scenario of at least a three-month crisis in Europe, including Sweden, which also involves hostile military actions against the country and has a negative impact on the functioning of the state, society and economy.

The government is gradually identifying the main actors in civil defence. It has appointed a commission to come up with a structure for the responsibility, management and coordination of civil defence at central, regional and local level. By March 2021, the commission should submit a report that will be the basis for a governmental decision to introduce appropriate management in this area. In turn, a government agency will be established in 2022 to develop and coordinate activities in the field of psychological defence. The government will also create a system of cooperation in the security of supply preparedness between the state and the private sector, including the production, storage and transport of medicines and medical materials, as well as food. It has also announced that a special agency for monitoring and evaluation of total defence

¹⁶ *Motståndskraft. Inriktningen av totalförsvaret och utformningen av det civila försvaret 2021–2025*, Försvarsberedningen, Försvarsdepartementet, 20 December 2017, www.regeringen.se.

efforts will be established by January 2023. Additional funding for civil defence is also planned for 2021–2025.¹⁷

Sweden is also beginning to define the goals and tasks in specific areas of civil defence, such as internal security and law enforcement, protection of civilians, healthcare, food and drinking water supply, the payment system, transport, energy supply, and electronic communications and postal services. In the area of internal security and law enforcement, 10,000 more officers are set to boost the police force by 2024, partly down to the increased need to protect critical facilities and counter hybrid threats. Another step under consideration is recalling retired/former officers to strengthen the police in times of emergency. Possible legal changes regarding border protection in case of a conflict have been announced. With regard to counterintelligence, the Swedish government wants to introduce mechanisms to prevent takeovers of economic assets important to national security. As civilian protection was almost completely abandoned after the end of the Cold War, shelters and an early warning system are to be reintroduced, mainly in militarily important regions. In healthcare, the aim is to introduce a joint civil and military planning and information exchange system for times of crisis and war. Hospitals will be tasked with increasing their capacities between 2021 and 2025. A central storage system for medicines and medical supplies, which has been largely decentralised until now, is to be created and stocks at the regional and central level are to be built up.

Another important issue is securing the food and drinking water supply. The Swedish government is considering increasing the amount of strategic food storage, engaging in dialogue with the business sector on security of supply preparedness and increasing the share of domestic food producers in the Swedish market. As for drinking water, municipalities will be responsible for identifying its alternative sources.

¹⁷ The government has announced it will provide SEK 0.1 billion in 2021, 0.15 billion in 2022, 0.25 billion in 2023, 0.3 billion in 2024 and 0.38 billion in 2025 for this purpose.

The payment system is also the subject of government analysis. Electronic payments were supposed to almost completely supplant cash in Sweden, something which has largely been accomplished. Guaranteeing access to cash, introducing alternative means of payment, or providing some form of credit by the state in times of emergency is now under consideration. The electricity network also needs to be better prepared for operating in times of crisis by expanding existing infrastructure and creating contingency plans. The same applies to heating systems and the fuel supply. Greater resilience is also needed in electronic communications. Further conceptual work is needed in all these areas.

Given the need to boost the personnel in different public sectors in times of crisis and war, the Swedish government is also considering introducing compulsory civil service, similar to military conscription. It also recognises the need to engage voluntary defence organisations, for example to protect the civilian population, in the healthcare, or to ensure security of supplies. The responsibility of individual citizens is regarded as equally important. Providing they do not need special assistance, they should be able to function for a week in the event of a serious crisis, relying only on their own supplies.

The strategy for 2021–2025 also pays special attention to cyber security in the total defence system. The Swedish Armed Forces have already been developing offensive and defensive capabilities in this area for several years, in cooperation with the National Defence Radio Establishment (FRA) and the Swedish Security Service (Säpo). Cyber and information security will also be strengthened in the years ahead by other entities in the Swedish total defence system, together with the involvement of the military. In 2020, the government established a cyber security centre within which different agencies are to coordinate their activities, including the Swedish Armed Forces, the National Defence Radio Establishment (FRA), the Civil Contingency Agency (MSB), the Police and the Security Service, and the Postal and Telecom Authority (PTS).

In addition, emphasis is placed on the need to raise cybersecurity awareness among the public.

Sweden has been testing the functionality of the current civil and military defences and drawing the lessons needed to optimise it. Civil defence exercises (Totalförsvarsövning 2020) were held throughout 2020 (even though limited by the COVID-19 pandemic).¹⁸ They were supposed to be additionally synchronised with the largest national defence military exercise after 2017, Aurora 2020, but that was cancelled due to the pandemic.

JUSTYNA GOTKOWSKA

¹⁸ 'Totalförsvarsövning 2020', Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, www.msb.se.