

Societal Security and Total Defense: The Swedish Way

By Bengt Sundelius and Jan Eldeblad

Sweden has recovered from several severe security challenges over the past two decades. In 2004 more than 500 Swedish citizens died in the Boxing Day tsunami in Southeast Asia. During the suddenly escalating Lebanon conflict of 2006, more than 8,000 citizens were hastily, but successfully, evacuated out of harm's way. Days before Christmas 2010, the first suicide bomber in the Nordic region, luckily prematurely, exploded his bomb near a crowded shopping street in the city center of Stockholm. Sweden's neighbor Norway experienced a terrible mass murder in July 2011 undertaken by a solo terrorist. In April 2017, terror struck with deadly force in the shopping area of the city center of Stockholm. Dramatic forest fires rampaged in the summers of 2014 and 2018. In the fall of 2015, a massive flow of migrants poured into the country, with major immediate effects and long-term consequences for Swedish society. Most recently, the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, which began in March 2020, became a stress test of endurance and societal resilience for the Swedish population. Compared with the other Nordic states Sweden has suffered much higher rates of infections, and it has seen more than 14,000 deaths, putting into question the Swedish strategy for managing this public health disaster.

The close neighborhood of the Baltic Sea region has experienced fundamental security changes since 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and intruded into eastern Ukraine. Like those of the other nations in the region, Swedish political leaders have responded to this development by placing greater emphasis on defense and security issues, taking measures including significant additions to the defense budget. Total defense planning was reintroduced in 2015, and the conscript system, now for both men and women, was reactivated in 2017. In addition to continuing concerns about new terror attacks, political debate has focused on Russian behavior and on the potential damage of so-called hybrid attacks on Swedish society, including cyber activities and social media campaigns. Further heavy investments in national defense have been made in light of the Russian attack on Ukraine in February 2022. The rearmament of the total defense forces has also been accelerated, to reach higher levels more quickly than previously planned.

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The Swedish security context appears to be entering a troubling period, with the Baltic Sea region living without peace, but not in full-scale war, either, despite the close-by war in Ukraine. The gray zone between peace and war could be characterized as a state of adversarial interdependencies across the boundaries of Europe. Novel tools must be developed to safeguard the nation against acts of ill will and to promote, both at home and abroad, those values and interests that are dear to the people of Sweden. Joining the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) is one such tool. This significant step deviates from a 200-year tradition of staying outside of military alliances. A wide consensus across party lines now exists on the necessity of joining this Western defense alliance.

Considering the recent experiences of other democracies, special care was taken to safeguard the election process of September 9, 2018. Public awareness campaigns and various training programs were launched for local election officials and for party staffs. No visible manipulations of this election process were found, but the national result was ambiguous. It took four months of party negotiations before a new government was formed in January 2019. This political stalemate, which is unusual for Swedish consensus-style politics, has generated public dismay and considerable uncertainty about the future direction of Sweden's parliamentary democracy. Then, in the spring of 2020, the pandemic struck and placed the nation in a seemingly endless state of emergency alert, while partisan politics was placed on hold for a period.

Also, 2021 became a year of political turbulence, with changes of government and a new Social Democrat prime minister elected in November. After the national election in September 2022, that government resigned, and a non-socialist coalition government was elected, with the prime minister from the conservative Moderate Party. The new government pledged to continue strengthening the

revived total defense system and to conclude the country's application for membership in NATO.

One fundamental element of good governance is the ability to manage everyday accidents and emergencies while building the capacity to prevent, manage, and recover from complex disasters including attacks by a foreign state or individuals. The Swedish risk and threat panorama has widened considerably over the past decade, making this leadership task even more difficult. The multipartisan Defense Commission filed its report, *Resilience*,¹ in December 2017 and presented several recommendations to strengthen the national defense and security capacities in response to the wider threat assessment and less hospitable regional setting. These recommendations informed the direction for the reform program for total defense now under way. Parliament passed a major total defense funding bill in December 2020.² This funding decision covers the period 2021 through 2025 and almost doubles the budget for national defense by the end of this period. The increased Swedish funding will reach the NATO goal of 2 percent of gross domestic product in 2026.

Societal Security

The concept of societal security is a pillar of the Swedish approach to the protection of the nation. This is an acknowledgement that the challenges of the 21st century are not merely about the integrity of territory but primarily about safeguarding the critical functions of society, protecting people, and upholding fundamental values in the face of many types of threats and risks. The threat from an armed attack by a state with the intent to capture and hold Swedish territory is low today, but it cannot be ruled out, given recent Russian actions toward Ukraine. Massive loss of life, damage to the socioeconomic system, and impairment of the capacity for rules-based democratic governance can be caused by failing critical societal functions as well. Antagonistic activities below the threshold of

armed attacks can very likely generate such havoc. Societal security suggests an all-hazard approach; many harmful consequences are similar regardless of whether their precipitating events are caused by ill-will, nature, or accident.

In Sweden the government and the parliament have identified three components as the baseline official objectives for societal security:³

- Protect the population
- Secure the functionality of society
- Maintain fundamental values, such as democracy, the rule of law, and individual rights.

If life and property cannot be safeguarded in a society, then it is not a society where people can lead productive lives. If a society's government cannot uphold key values, it is a society where no one will want to live. Similarly, if the government cannot sustain its critical functions, people will not have confidence in their leaders, and in the long run an unstable polity will emerge. It is an obligation of good governance to prepare for the unthinkable and to allocate the necessary resources to minimize the impact on people and society from catastrophic events, such as antagonistic attacks, man-made accidents, or natural disasters. Much harm can be inflicted short of armed attacks.

Sweden published its national security strategy in 2017.⁴ In this government document several national interests were identified as guidelines for the continued formulation of security policy. The Swedish national security interests are given as

- to ensure the safety, security, and health of the population
- to ensure the functionality of societal critical functions
- to uphold fundamental values, such as democracy, rule of law, and individual rights
- to under all circumstances defend Swedish

freedom, security, and national sovereignty

- to promote stability and security in the nearby region
- to promote cooperation, solidarity, and integration in the European Union (EU)
- to promote a rules-based multilateral world order.

In early 2018 and 2019, preliminary implementation reports were presented to indicate how well the many policy objectives of the wide-ranging strategy had been met. A revised security strategy is expected in 2023; it should reflect the recent increasingly conflictual regional context. The new government has established a national security council and appointed a national security advisor reporting directly to the prime minister.⁵

Society and all its stakeholders, including individuals, government entities, private corporations, and nongovernmental organizations, are challenged by an evolving security context. Sweden has embarked on a course to create tools that can facilitate a whole-of-society approach for societal security. This concept indicates a more inclusive approach than the more generally advocated whole-of-government approach, which is considered too narrow in scope. The effort toward enhancing societal security can be effective only to the extent that partners or stakeholders outside the sphere of national government become engaged and contribute. Most important, individuals must be mobilized in a more direct manner than is presumed in a whole-of-government approach.

Another building block that underpins the whole-of-society approach is the concept of resilience. Resilience, usually described as a capacity to “withstand,” or to “bounce back” from a disturbance, can be applied to citizens, organizations, technological systems, and societies as a whole.⁶ It includes proactive mitigation, as well as speedy response and recovery, and relies on the ability of a

range of interdependent stakeholders to share information and take coordinated action. An element of prevention could be considered part of resilience; for example, foreign states, terrorists, and organized crime could be influenced to choose an alternative target if a nation is perceived to have a high degree of societal resilience. This is the logic behind Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty and the current NATO work on seven baseline requirements for enhanced resilience among member and partner countries.

The concept of resilience is widely used by academics and includes several components in human, societal, organizational, political, and transnational contexts. One working definition of resilience is “the capacity of a social system (e.g., an organization, city, or society) to proactively adapt to and recover from disturbances that are perceived within the system to fall outside the range of normal and expected disturbances.”⁷ The rapid rise in use of the term among practitioners may be driven by several factors. One driver is a better understanding of the nature of the security landscape, where uncertainty and complexity are key features. Another is tight national budgets that make it impossible to allocate huge sums of money to prevent certain scenarios or force governments to substantially minimize risk across all possible hazards.

Resilience is about shared risks but also about shared costs. In a situation where governments must manage a growing spectrum of harmful events with shrinking budgets, the issue of “cost transfer” has become critical. Doing more with less may be less of a challenge if more stakeholders are contributing to the effort. Ultimately, shared efforts will benefit all stakeholders in society. However, there should also be an element of doing things smarter with fewer resources. It is helpful to examine and learn from the ways different nations have handled the difficulty of finding less costly but still effective measures to enhance societal security. Within NATO, there is an active debate on this complex issue.

The Engine That Drives Enhanced Societal Security

In Sweden there is broad political support for a whole-of-society approach and agreement on the virtues of resilience. This consensus around future defense and security matters was manifest in the December 2017 report of the multiparty Defense Commission. This document on total defense needs covered a wide variety of areas, such as command and coordination, psychological defense, information assurance, cyber security, personnel needs, volunteer associations, business engagements, population protection, law and order issues, supplies of essential goods and services, transportation, financial preparedness, public health issues, research and development, and international cooperation arrangements. In May 2019 another detailed report⁸ was published, covering the many needs of the military defense through 2021. Appropriate parliamentary measures were passed in December 2020 to fund these costly reforms. Further investments were made in 2022 to speed up work to strengthen Swedish total defense.

Present arrangements for societal security rest on a legacy over at least the past few decades. A key reform⁹ was the creation of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) in 2009, with the aim of building resilience across sectors and levels of government, at levels reaching from the individual to society as a whole. The new agency was created by replacing the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, Swedish Emergency Management Agency, and National Board of Psychological Defense. It was the result of Government Bill 2007/08:92, “Stronger emergency preparedness—for safety’s sake.”¹⁰ The goal was to give coordinated support to society in the area of civil contingency management, enhancing emergency management capability at home and abroad by harnessing efficiency and effectiveness synergies.

An additional organizational innovation was a new crisis coordination secretariat, initially placed



Flower memorial for terrorist attack. Image by: Paul Arps. April 14, 2017

in the Office of the Prime Minister, to serve the needs of the Swedish central government. After the 2014 change of government, this office was moved to the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs, but it was returned in late 2021 to the Office of the Prime Minister. It is responsible for developing, coordinating, and following up crisis management measures in the government offices and for any preparations needed, such as training and exercises. Its head can issue guidelines that each ministry should follow in its crisis management work. In an acute event, the secretariat has the mandate to initiate a quick response and to coordinate and support the response effort within government offices. The secretariat staffs the strategic coordination group, which consists of state secretaries (deputy ministers),

who are on call to convene whenever a serious incident may require urgent top-level decisionmaking. This secretariat has over the years been engaged in many national emergencies that required the involvement of members of the cabinet and the Prime Minister. One example is the deadly April 2017 terror incident not far from its office building. Another is the deadly and extended COVID-19 pandemic.

The trigger for the earlier institutional reforms to strengthen the national emergency apparatus was the tsunami of late 2004. Although the geographical location was far from Swedish territory, the dramatic loss of more than 500 Swedish lives in a matter of hours made clear that future challenges to societal security required a more nimble system.

A government commission examined the response and recovery efforts and made recommendations for sweeping reforms. This devastating experience resembled recent experiences of the United States, where reports by the 9/11 Commission noted a failure of imagination and the reports investigating the response to Hurricane Katrina highlighted a failure of initiative.¹¹

The mandate of MSB is a concrete expression of a widened policy field for crisis and civil defense management, integrating the multi-sectoral, the internal and external, and the risks and threats, as well as the different management phases: before, during, and after. It is both an engine and a champion, designed to create and facilitate a whole-of-society approach with diverse and sometimes unevenly motivated stakeholders.

The hardest obstacles to overcome for a whole-of-society approach to societal security are conceivably the deeply rooted mental gaps that tend to separate distinct professions with different training and backgrounds. Such gaps complicate close cooperation and smooth coordination, thus reducing effectiveness. This problem was clearly documented in the final report¹² of the Corona Commission of February 2022, which evaluated the difficult coordination processes across many stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mental gaps exist between most professional turfs, as exemplified by the following dyads:

- security and safety professionals
- civil and military professionals
- civilians and civil authorities
- public authorities and the private sector
- public domain and volunteer associations
- higher and lower levels of authority.

Among the key factors contributing to the gaps between these categories are that each has over time created its own terminology, ways of organizing,

and procurements of sector-specific technological solutions. Perhaps most important, they have established idiosyncratic training and career systems that foster sectoral approaches. Thus far, such systems have been better at accommodating inter-blocking stovepipes than inter-locking networks. But all these actor categories have in common that it will be necessary for them to cooperate and coordinate before, during, and after an event to achieve the best results for society.

MSB was not given the authority to command other stakeholders before or during emergencies, as the supreme commander of the armed forces can do in a war situation. Given the wide scope of relevant activities and the fact that public, private, and local actors are all involved in most contemporary emergencies, a legal authority to command the rest would most likely not yield the hoped-for societal effects. Instead, MSB has been mandated to lead through proactive coordination measures, such as knowledge enhancement, support, training, exercises, regulation, supervision, information sharing, and building durable networks across sectors and levels of authority. Also, some funding is available to help create incentives for others to take this enterprise seriously in between emergency events. Having control over around 1 billion Swedish krona (€100 million) in grant awards each year gives the agency some leverage—and other agencies clear incentives to follow its lead in the emergency management field.

Much of the recent national coordination work has focused on rebuilding the previously well-developed civil-military relationship in preparation for a reactivated total defense effort. In Swedish terminology, total defense is the combined efforts of the military services, relevant civilian agencies, and various societal actors, including businesses, in the face of an armed aggression from abroad. During the Cold War era, this total defense machinery was well resourced and continuously trained and exercised and could rely on obligatory military service

for all young men. This investment in deterrence based on military might and societal resilience was dismantled around the turn of the 21st century as eternal peace seemed to have reached the Baltic Sea region. However, since 2015 total defense planning, including the necessary investments, has returned to the forefront of political concern.

In this changed security context, the question has been raised again about having a civil or societal supreme commander who could more clearly match the military counterpart. Sweden does not have a state of emergency act, short of a wartime situation, where a central authority such as MSB could take command. Currently, the two sets of interrelated national defense systems are a bit lopsided and tend to move forward at different speeds. A question might be raised about on whose terms civil-military coordination is pursued; the military machine can overwhelm the more fragmented civilian resources and their less well-disciplined personnel.

Surprisingly, civil-civil coordination may be one of the most complex working areas in this field. A main reason for this is that the roles and responsibilities in the civilian sphere are often less than clear-cut, sometimes overlapping. As threats and risks evolve, rules and routines may be missing or become outdated. Jurisdictional lines can be viewed as complementary or as competing. Some resistance to being coordinated by another can be expected; interactions for the purpose of modifying behaviors can be highly sensitive among proud professionals. A case in point: civil-civil public-sector coordination did not come easily in the face of the COVID-19 public health disaster.

There is a difference of approaches to the information needs of colleagues between safety and security professionals. Security officials are used to working with closed information systems to manage classified or sensitive materials, which they see little need to share outside a trusted few. Safety officials, on the other hand, are accustomed to using open

information and tend to see a need for wide distribution of information that may affect lives or property. They sense an obligation to share rather than having a reflex to limit distribution. As the regional security environment is becoming more antagonistic, it is necessary to foster greater mutual understanding between the corps of security and safety professionals to ensure their ability to connect the dots in real time.

Recently, a greater emphasis is again being placed on the need-to-know criterion, as the antagonistic aspects of emergency management and total defense are returning to the workplace. Many professionals steeped in the logic of an obligation to share for maximum effectiveness must retool their information-handling routines. Similarly, there is some urgency about building more secure communication links, having secure meeting rooms, and enforcing the proper handling of classified documents. Increasingly, public servants at many government agencies will be assigned special tasks in war situations, as they used to have during the Cold War. Training is required for officials with backgrounds in the safety profession to be able to perform sensitive, defense-related tasks.

The Operations Department of MSB has over time built a set of action-oriented coordination venues—face-to-face, video-link, or by phone—to form a common operational awareness as a basis for agreed-upon timely deployments of resources. Meetings are held weekly by routine, more often when special operations are called for. This national system for shared sense-making of consequential events and for a concerted emergency response has been tested many times. In each case, novel elements have been added to the MSB toolbox; learning by doing has been a guiding principle in these operations. As an example: during the devastating forest fires of the summer of 2018 Sweden hosted a large EU civil protection assistance operation and improved its capacity for host nation support.

The Operations Department has been on

alert status since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. MSB is responsible for dealing with the societal effects of this crisis, not for handling the health issue itself. Societal functions, the economy, the logistics of critical supplies, coordination among many stakeholders, and coherent communications to uphold the morale of the population are all part of its brief. The COVID-19 pandemic experiences have served as a stress test for MSB leadership and for the adaptability of the operations machinery.

This national emergency response and consequence management system form the foundation of Sweden's capacity to prepare for and respond to antagonistic situations, such as terrorist actions, interferences short of armed attack by a foreign state, and the beginnings of an armed conflict with a hostile adversary.

Influence campaigns directed at Swedish democratic institutions, election systems, and political parties must be confronted. A handbook for countering influence campaigns to be used by communicators has been widely distributed and applied. Awareness-raising and training sessions were conducted for local election officials in preparation for the 2018 and 2022 parliamentary and local elections. The experiences from this Swedish investment in democratic resilience have been shared with other parties, including with relevant U.S. agencies, such as the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency of the Department of Homeland Security.

Public-Private Partnerships

Society cannot reach effective security solutions without engaging the private sector through public-private partnerships (PPP). The private sector is critical, because it operates or owns most of the critical infrastructure in many nations. There was a rich tradition of PPP in Sweden during the Cold War. At the time, cooperation and coordination were smooth; it was mutually understood that if total war led to a Soviet invasion there would be no more free enterprise. After

that threat vanished in 1991, much was lost in terms of incentive for continuing this close relationship through networking and nurturing trust. In addition, business practices and corporate ownerships changed drastically over the decades. Today, privatization has progressed greatly in Sweden, as it has in other free market economies. Most companies have, or are part of, global supply chains that operate with just-in-time deliveries. These practices, however efficient, may not be the most resilient and may be vulnerable to manipulation by adversaries. Currently, the PPP tradition of the Cold War in Sweden can be labeled as “lessons lost,” in sharp contrast to the situation in neighboring Finland, where many Cold War capacities and practices were retained. The focus in Sweden now is on rebuilding these relationships as vital elements of total defense planning. The total defense reforms from 2021 include the creation of additional initiatives for collaborations with and among business leaders. This work will take considerable time before any notable effects on the defense capacity will be visible.

In Sweden, advances in forging trusted relationships with key industry stakeholders have been uneven outside the defense area. In some sectors lost ground has been recaptured and progress has been made, for example, the well-functioning cooperation between the major players (public and private) in the financial sector. In the information assurance and cyber security areas, well-established working partnerships exist. There is also a forum for information exchange on the security of critical SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) systems, which includes key operators of critical infrastructure. Those and other examples constitute “islands of excellence” from which lessons can be drawn. MSB seeks to extend the web of resilience to other sectors, not least civil defense. It is recognized that much can be learned in this regard from current Finnish practices.

Fostering a trusted environment for information sharing in normal times creates a stronger

basis for common action when the extraordinary strikes. But in addition to trust, PPP requires practical frameworks for more concrete cooperation. Roles and responsibilities must be clarified (joint training can provide a useful tool), and issues such as financial (and other) incentives, market distortions, and liabilities must be addressed. Those are all difficult questions, and there appears to be no universal recipe for success. Sweden is far from alone in struggling with these urgent issues. A useful step would be a more systematic international exchange of information about practices that have been tested in different contexts.

The Role of the Individual

Making the individual a central component of societal security and resilience is critical. Without individual preparedness it is quite difficult to achieve a whole-of-society approach with a strong core of resilience. Ordinary people are often those affected most directly by a crisis and are often present on site before first responders or other officials; they should be viewed as assets. Furthermore, new social media technologies in the hands of citizens could be utilized by government agencies to receive and transmit information in a more timely manner. Earlier and better information is a driver of more effective operational decisionmaking.

The Swedish government has recently emphasized the responsibility of the individual to be prepared. MSB's task and challenge is to analyze what, more precisely, is included in this responsibility. Which services can individuals expect from the authorities on a local, regional, or national level to meet their needs before, during, and after a crisis or an armed conflict? How quickly can they expect them? How should cost-sharing be balanced among individuals, insurance providers, infrastructure owners and operators, and tax-funded government bodies at different levels?

The emphasis in the current Swedish

approach to total defense is on societal resilience. Communicating the necessity of resilience is an implicit acknowledgement that not all threats and risks can be prevented. Establishing a risk-free society is not possible nor in fact even desirable. The foundation of a resilient society is having prepared individuals, families, and communities. Therefore, motivating citizens to make reasonable investments in self-preparedness is a major public leadership goal. Such motivation resembles the classic defense will of the population, which has been measured regularly since the early 1950s. In earlier years, that will was stimulated by the obligatory military service for all young men, by the weekend activities of the Home Guard, and through government-funded public outreach activities of the volunteer association People and Defense (*folk och försvar*).

MSB has developed several tools and channels to inform individuals of the benefits of being conscious of and prepared for the risks and threats to society. One such tool is an easy-to-read leaflet on how to prepare for emergencies, crises, and war situations. This publication, "If Crisis or War Comes,"¹³ was sent to all Swedish households in 2018 and builds on a tradition from the Cold War era. Among its many recommendations is the suggestion that all households should keep a week's worth of water, food, and other essential supplies on hand for use in an emergency. In early 2022, there was a heavy public demand for downloading this leaflet as Swedes noted the horrible developments in Ukraine. The text is available in several languages, to reach as many households in Sweden as possible. Strategies for communication and public education should differentiate depending on the target group. Over 17 percent of the Swedish population is foreign-born, and many are young following the heavy migration influx of 2015. Reaching this population mix requires communication in many languages, as well as insights into various cultures and religions.

A new agency for psychological defense was



Home Guard exercise in southern part of Sweden, Skåne. Image by: Joel Thungren/Swedish Armed Forces.

launched in 2022. This institution traces its functions to the Cold War years when the task of building the will to defend was an important part of the total defense effort. The Swedish Psychological Defence Agency will, in addition, focus on tasks related to adversaries' social media campaigns, fund research, and help build public understanding of the need to defend democracy as well as independence.

A highly useful tool for determining the knowledge and resource needs and for practicing a whole-of-society approach is exercises. MSB leads the planning and the execution of exercises as well as vital evaluation processes. A major exercise conducted in 2011¹⁴ involved thousands of participants in different organizations at the local, regional, and national levels. It featured a nuclear accident scenario requiring close coordination and cooperation between many societal stakeholders. The exercise took place just a month before the real nuclear accident in Fukushima, Japan, and did sensitize the participants to the inherent challenges posed by

real-world disasters.

Increasingly used in such exercises are social media, which are becoming more important for rapidly collecting information for situational awareness. Social media are also tools for sense-making, for explaining the nature of a situation, and for specifying what actions the government is taking and not taking. Government agencies need to take advantage of the new generation of increasingly sophisticated information technologies. In the 2011 Swedish exercise, the primary decisionmakers at the national level were overwhelmed by the impact of the pressures from the new social media, just as happened later in the rapidly evolving Japanese disaster.

MSB holds the position of the Swedish crisis response and emergency team with responsibilities for information assurance and cyber security. This field has become even more important for societal security during recent years, and this segment of MSB is growing accordingly. Cooperation with counterparts in other governments, not least in the

Nordic and Baltic regions, is well established. Sector-focused and national exercises with cyber themes have been conducted regularly, often with the participation of the private sector.

In addition, the central government offices, the politically appointed cabinet members and their deputies, and parts of the parliament conduct exercises regularly to prepare for various risk and threat contingencies. This work is driven by the Secretariat for Crisis Coordination, often with support from experts at the Swedish Defense University.

The first national exercise with a focus on civil defense (that is, in a war-like scenario) for decades was conducted in 2018. Sweden planned to hold a major total defense exercise¹⁵ involving numerous civilian and military stakeholders, including the armed forces, in 2020. The working processes to plan and prepare for this major national-level exercise generated numerous questions about mandates, resources, and procedures. The issues raised in these questions were documented for their potential to provide insights for improving civil-military relations and engaging relevant actors in the defense-planning effort. Host nation support issues and setting priorities with limited resources were also part of this total defense exercise. Unfortunately, the exercise had to be largely postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Only a few segments of the exercise were carried out in early 2020—for example, a very timely scenario-based exercise with the members of the Swedish Parliament. A full-scale total defense exercise, *Aurora*, will be conducted in 2023.¹⁶

MSB is involved with the entire spectrum of threats and risks to society, including national defense. By law, government entities have been required since 2006 to produce and submit risk and vulnerability analyses. The 290 autonomous Swedish municipalities are also required to comply. The purpose of this bottom-up risk mapping is to guide investments and to allow MSB and other

relevant departments to make informed decisions about scarce resources to build capacity and smart resilience. Over the years an increasingly sophisticated work process has developed to assess societal vulnerabilities and to point out limited capacities to meet such risks and threats. MSB provides the government and, indirectly, the EU Commission with a nationally aggregated risk and capability assessment.

The relationship between risk, threat, and basic societal values needs to be examined. Studying perceptions and social constructions of risk and threats is an important addition to traditional methods of analyzing these phenomena. Methods for constructing national or regional risk maps with clear indications of consequences, including economic and social costs, are being developed. Comparative studies of national methodologies and profiles are needed. The EU Commission has initiated a process, and many governments have put together such risk maps. These need to be problematized, compared, and more firmly grounded in research.

There is a danger of equating an all-hazards approach with saving scarce resources, because the same capabilities can be used for several types of events. It must be recognized that an all-hazards-plus approach is necessary; certain antagonistic scenarios demand unique prevention, response, and recovery capabilities. For example, an event involving weapons of mass destruction requires specialized prevention efforts and previous stockpiling of resources for response and recovery efforts. This all-hazards-plus approach is different from the counterterrorism-plus strategy used in the early years in the homeland security arena in the United States. The immense investment in counterterrorism measures secured resources that were then also used for other types of threats, where different solutions might have been more cost effective. Resources should be allocated for early-warning, response, and recovery efforts across the contingency spectrum.

The Fighting Machine That Defends the Nation

During the Cold War, Sweden had a well-developed, well-practiced total defense system. It was supported by strong pillars, two of which were the conscription of young men, who received solid military training, and the provision of wartime-designated personnel and equipment to key organizations. The system was welded together, and key actors were well acquainted with each other. The system nurtured trust and a spirit of mutual reinforcement and aid. The various organizations supported each other by building enabling conditions in peacetime for cooperation when under armed attack. Preparations were the lubricant—knowing what the others do and what I can do—so that together the-whole-of-society approach generated a higher effect. The concept was built on, among other things, the foundations:

- joint exercises
- joint plans
- systemwide cooperation
- nurturing trust.

After the collapse of Soviet Union, and thus also the incentive to maintain such a comprehensive and expensive total defense system, it was dismantled with great determination. The “eternal peace” logic now applied, and collaborations were quickly built according to the just-in-time principle, which was efficient and economical. Few believed then that one neighboring state could not be trusted: Russia. The 2008 invasion of Georgia did not wake Europe from its slumber, nor did the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. It was not really until February 2022 that Europe understood the true scope of Russia’s actions and intentions. Sweden quickly realized that it needed to shake off the pandemic dust and prepare, fast.

One cornerstone of the old total defense concept was the will to defend, which included popular

support for preparedness for crises and war. Along with conscription, regiments and flotillas stationed all over the country helped maintain that public support. In light of the dismantling of the Swedish defense and a change to using the armed forces as a tool in international security policy, affiliation with the armed forces declined, significantly affecting the recruitment of both officers and full-time employed soldiers. Now that Sweden has reinstated conscription, popular support is not as clear, and the educational conditions across the country are not there either. However, Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine has created a massive onslaught of applications to the voluntary movement, posing a challenge for the limited number of personnel currently running that program.

After a slow national awakening, the growth of the armed forces began with broad political agreement. The total defense bill for the period 2015 to 2020 set the tone for increased preparedness and adaptation. However, the result was limited. Many wise observations and analyses were made, but the system had difficulty moving forward with implementation. Problems occurred in areas such as planning, placement of people in positions, supply of necessities, and exercises, but also in deficits of basic knowledge of what applies during high readiness.

Conscript training, which had been dormant since 2010, was revived in 2017–2018; now Swedish youth are being evaluated and tested again, through the Swedish Defense Conscription and Assessment Agency. About 13,000 people, mainly those born in 1999, were tested and then required to complete military service. There were modest volumes at the beginning, roughly 3,000 in 2018; thereafter there has been an increase of 500 to 1,000 people per year. In 2021 the agency evaluated and tested 19,800 people. Of these, 38 percent were women and 62 percent were men. For basic training that began in 2021, a total of 5,800 conscripts (of whom 22 percent were women and 78 percent were men) were enrolled in

the armed forces' 5,000 slots. In 2021, the Swedish Defense Conscription and Assessment Agency sent muster documents to 104,000 conscripts born in 2003. The intention is to increase the volume of recruits going forward, up to around 16,000 by 2030, as new regiments and flotillas are established.

In addition to the extensive personnel growth, an additional focus for the coming period is materiel growth. Redundancy-increasing measures in the forms of both the acquisition of ammunition and spare parts and the purchase of new equipment and weapon systems are planned. During the 2021–2025 period, a roughly 40 percent increase in appropriations for military defense over the 2020 level must take place. The authorization framework for materiel orders is increased by 30.9 billion Swedish krona for the 2021–2025 period.

Some important areas for growth and modernization are for each branch of defense according to the following extract of acquisition and modification, respectively:

Air Force

- development and procurement of JAS 39E
- upgrade of JAS 39 C/D
- procurement of tactical transport aircraft and helicopters
- procurement of naval target robots and hunting robots.

Navy

- procurement of surface combat ships, Blekinge-class submarines, and combat boats
- modification of corvettes and battleships
- procurement of a new light torpedo system.

Army

- procurement of Archer, a vehicle-borne grenade launcher system
- procurement of medium-range anti-aircraft and airborne anti-aircraft
- procurement of armored all-terrain vehicles and track wagons
- renovation of Combat Vehicle 90 and Tank 122
- procurement of anti-tank weapons and firearms.

It is clear from Ukrainian requests for Swedish military equipment that Swedish equipment is very well suited for war against Russia. The carried anti-tank weapon has had a good effect, and the Archer system has been requested, presumably for situations in which artillery duels demand speed and precision. Swedish winter equipment, developed to be able to operate in the subarctic environment, is also now in demand in Ukraine. Composite weapon systems, easily mobile, effective, and with high effectiveness/low cost, have been the main request among Swedish equipment.

Several new regiments and flotillas have been established to enable not only increased unit production but also increased visibility and presence in certain strategically important areas. The biggest change and impact for the Swedish armed forces will, obviously, be NATO membership. Although Sweden has a long tradition of cooperation with the alliance in various operations and exercises, membership will be a game changer.

Sweden and NATO

Previous security policy solutions no longer hold; war in Sweden's immediate area cannot be ruled out. There is no time for public awareness drives or a national referendum like that undertaken when Sweden entered the EU, in 1995. Instead, it is time for Sweden's government to show political leadership

in haste. This was a challenge for the sitting Social Democratic government, which was basically opposed to NATO membership, together with its supporting parties on the left. The Swedish Social Democratic Party had to do a 180-degree turn and, with Finland, execute a much faster decision-making process. In the spring of 2022 Sweden initiated its NATO membership application in record speed. What was unacceptable on February 20 became inevitable on May 14.

NATO clearly states three core tasks in its new strategic concept:¹⁷

- deterrence and defense
- crisis prevention and management
- cooperative security.

The Swedish and Finnish entry into NATO will significantly expand NATO's borders and territory, including its direct border with Russia. It will stabilize the Baltic Sea region in the long run and will have a deterrent effect on potential plotters of armed attack against Sweden. Swedish territory and the Baltic Sea are important areas for NATO's defense of Finland and the Baltic states. The changing of the Baltic Sea's security policy conditions will mean that Russia will have an extremely limited ability to operate—but it will also mean changed tasks for other countries around the sea. For Sweden it may mean more support in bringing forward reinforcements to the Baltics but also other transports across the Baltic Sea.

Of course, a confined Russian fleet could mean that other systems replace an operational Russian naval and air force in the Baltic Sea; for example, ground-based systems can also fire nuclear weapons. This development and a changing Russian strategy are important to follow closely. But it is equally important to see how Western countries will act in the Baltic Sea area. For example, Germany's ongoing rearmament and involvement in the region are important, as are the activities of the Baltic States

and Poland.

Operationally, support for the Baltics is difficult; the countries have quite limited military capability. Here, Swedish and Finnish membership in NATO will create strategic depth. The Nordic dimension thus becomes important, along with collaboration with the United States and the United Kingdom—for example, the Joint Expeditionary Force.

From a coordination perspective, a joint air defense and NATO's Integrated Air and Missile Defense are important. Finland and Estonia are now buying land-based naval targeting robots that cover the Gulf of Finland well. Poland already has such robots, and Sweden is acquiring them. In addition, the Poles are acquiring high-mobility artillery rocket systems, which can reach important targets in this area. All of this means that the Russian navy will not be able to operate from its Kaliningrad oblast.

Sweden's strategic geographical location will be valuable for basing of NATO troops and advance storage of strategic resources, transport, and infrastructure. It also offers the possibility of grouping allied command capabilities.

Sweden's national defense planning needs to be revised and synchronized with NATO planning. This move will, in turn, affect civil defense planning in Sweden and the other Nordic countries. Coordinated exercise activities, both military and civilian, must be intensified. NATO's seven baseline requirements must be operationalized and constitute input values for exercises and evaluating activities.

Sweden should also contribute to rapid response units, such as Air Policing, the planned Allied Reaction Force, the Standing NATO Maritime Group, and the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group, as well as provide ground units for the Enhanced Forward Presence on its eastern border. Participation should be coordinated with the other Nordic countries, and management

should also be offered. When these contributions, commitments, and new conditions are in place, the Nordics will and should be seen as a common joint operation area.

The saying “Whoever controls Gotland controls the Baltic Sea” is still valid. Therefore, securing Gotland remains a key national responsibility for Sweden, whereas the Finnish demilitarized archipelago of Åland, close to Stockholm, is a dark horse.

In summary, the need for reinforcements and development in the military sphere of Swedish total defense centers on its

- capability for air defense and integrated air and robotic defense
- ability to provide host nation support
- integration of management systems
- capability for operations in a winter environment and marine operations in shallow waters.

In discussions on revising Sweden’s total defense concept, proposals have been made to appoint a civilian commander in chief responsible for civil defense, an equivalent to the supreme commander for the military. At the same time the implementation of a new command and control system, mainly for the civil defense, is under way. This development should enable synergies with other constructive activities,¹⁸ so that crisis preparedness in all sectors is used as the engine to strengthen trans-border solutions. The power of these activities can be used regionally, such as in the northern parts of the Nordic area, where the northern territories of Sweden, Finland, and Norway can find common resilience measures. Through these developments and enhanced preparatory cooperation deterrence can also be strengthened in specific geographical regions (including northern parts of the Nordic countries as well as the southern parts). Because geographical conditions vary considerably between the Nordic regions and distances are great, resilience is fundamental for regional survival.

Another key component in the Swedish total defense concept is building and maintaining trust. Here, education and training at all levels play a significant role as a trust-building engine; in particular, joint senior and capstone strategic leadership programs serve as excellent platforms.

Flow Security

A central element of the security context of the 21st century is flow security. Globalization has transformed the ways people, corporations, and societies organize and function. Technological developments have been transformational for economies and ways of doing business. Societies are tightly interconnected by flows of information, energy, computer signals, viruses, people, and goods. For society to be prosperous, it is important to enable safe, secure, and efficient critical flows. If critical functions, such as transportation, energy, health care systems, agriculture, communications, and financial systems are debilitated, it can have consequences for all in society and on several continents simultaneously. Thus, the traditional and still highly relevant goals of ensuring territorial integrity and national sovereignty must be complemented with that of securing critical functions in society. These are linked by shared transnational or even global interdependencies that must not be transformed into vulnerability traps. Examples include the deliberate denial of critical metals, components, or medicines, and interruptions in access due to various types of disasters or antagonistic interventions.

Globalized flows are not always beneficial and desirable. The flows of narcotics, weapons, trafficked persons, cyber intrusions, and computer viruses are examples of the dark side of globalization, which requires more focused attention. Those working outside the law are more apt to take advantage of these flows than government regulators or political decisionmakers. Criminal justice agencies, such as the national police and security

police, customs, the unit fighting economic crimes, and other operational units under the Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs must work even more diligently to keep up with the steady offensives of illicit trans-border activities. These negative aspects of the largely beneficial global flows can undermine societal security and erode democratic institutions and practices. Multilateral legal frameworks or regimes need to be upgraded to keep up with the rapidly evolving networks of both positive and negative flows across national borders.

Certain flow enablers are highly critical for societal survival, such as electric grids, shipping lanes, harbors, and air transport systems. A primary enabler at the center of most globalized transactions is the cyber backbone that involves continental cables and central nodes. The cyber infrastructure links nations, companies, and citizens around the world and helps channel information and goods more efficiently, but it also generates vulnerabilities. If the global or regional digital infrastructure is ruptured, it will have grave consequences for financial systems and for the command of critical infrastructure control systems in many industries.

The institutional design of government, however, is slow to adapt to this changing context for security. There is a historical legacy that separates agencies and departments operating in both the domestic and the international spheres. Failing to address jurisdictional, organizational, and mental barriers to national and international organizational cooperation will be at our peril. Organized crime and terrorists, for example, maneuver in the trans-border sphere, challenging outdated jurisdictional structures. Exploring new ways to cooperate in cyber space on planning, information exchange, training, and response is critical for the future. The flow-based security sphere can be characterized by the convergence of the domestic and international (security) arenas. Individual nations' strategies are interdependent; consequences in one country can

have their origins far from its territorial borders. The merging of the international and domestic settings into an "inter-mestic" operational sphere will require individual and institutional rethinking to break mental, legal, and organizational stovepipes.

Globalization fueled by rapid technological developments has given rise to trans-boundary threats that may overwhelm national prevention, protection, response, and recovery systems. These threats cannot be dealt with in a one-by-one manner. Isolation is not a solution for Sweden; a successful response requires a networked approach. The unconventional and trans-national nature of crises demands a multilateral and coordinated approach among international partners—which entails the capacity to quickly combine and allocate resources, to share expertise and information, to manage disaster logistics, and to synchronize crisis decision-making. A critical task is being able to discover and diagnose a rapidly unfolding consequential incident quickly and accurately. The processes to achieve such shared sense-making under difficult circumstances must begin long before the need becomes imminent. It is imperative to create tools to overcome the present status of vulnerability surpluses in combination with capacity deficits in order to foresee and meet novel trans-boundary threats.

Resilience must be not only shared across boundaries but also projected forward. European concern over the West African Ebola epidemic was an early case in point. Likewise, Nordic concerns over the security resilience of its eastern neighbors are easily understood. Shared vulnerabilities and capacity limits are best met with joint and proactive measures. Such efforts can be made through, for example, exercises. Host nation support measures are also important to enable the effective use of assistance from others. Sweden has a long tradition of assisting other nations across the globe. In recent years it has also experienced the need to seek assistance from others in emergency situations.

One such example was the major EU civil protection assistance mission in response to massive forest fires in the summer of 2018. European solidarity was evident in this dramatic and highly visible field practice.

Both defense planning deliberations and concrete steps are under way to enable adequate host nation support even in more dramatic and antagonistic scenarios. Sweden and Finland have close military defense collaboration that includes working together in both ordinary times and conflict phases. In addition, a joint declaration by the two ministers of interior was signed in February 2021, pledging similar bilateral civil-sector collaboration for emergency management and crises, and mutual assistance in armed conflicts. Considerable work is conducted on issues related to Article 3 on societal resilience and on upgrading capacities for NATO's seven baseline requirements.

Euro-Atlantic Partnering Toward Alliance Membership

The Euro-Atlantic strategic setting of entangled interdependencies, where critical functions and nodes rely on the actions of others, creates the necessity for a well-functioning Nordic-Baltic partnership with North America. The groups' shared interest was recognized decades ago and has been manifested since the 1990s in the Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe (E-PINE), through which the political directors of the foreign ministries of the Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8) meet twice yearly with their counterpart in the U.S. State Department. Frequent, informal, thematic policy workshops with academics have been held in conjunction with these meetings to enable a flow of creative inputs into the more formal setting of high-level government talks.

Future trans-boundary crisis and total defense management in the E-PINE domain should not risk becoming "a failure of coordination." It is imperative for the transatlantic partnership to

secure in advance an ability to act effectively and legitimately, in concert, within this domain. The Swedish government often takes notes of this vital element of national security, with the defense and security links within the NB8 and to the United States especially highlighted by officials. The Swedish embassy in Washington, D.C., includes not only several military attachés but also a defense counselor from the Ministry of Defense and a seconded official from MSB.

Several overlapping partnerships exist to mutually reinforce the security links with the United States. Sweden and Finland have bilateral arrangements with NATO, directly with the U.S. government, and with each other. In addition, a triparty defense policy letter of intent was concluded in 2018 between the United States, Finland, and Sweden.¹⁹ Exercises are conducted together on a regular basis, and U.S. troops and equipment are often visible in these nations and their surrounding waters and skies. Applications by both nations to join NATO as soon as possible are being processed; as of this writing, those applications have been ratified by 28 national parliaments.

Once Sweden is a member of the alliance, hundreds of Swedish officials and officers will be expected to actively engage in its work, including manning headquarters and other NATO institutions and working groups. As was the case when Sweden joined the EU in 1995, considerable pressures will be placed on the government and various agencies to live up to the expectations of active membership. A learning process will be necessary before the alliance perspective settles in and becomes an integral part of the evolving Swedish total defense system. This adjustment in outlook may require a generational shift before the NATO perspective becomes the new norm.

A science and technology agreement has existed between Sweden and the United States since 2007 through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

In Sweden, this partnership is administrated by MSB on behalf of the government. Joint activities and projects on societal security, cyber security, information campaigns, and civil defense are covered under this bilateral partnership.

Although it is not necessary for the same institutional and strategic doctrine to be embraced on both sides of the Atlantic, it is important that efforts be, at a minimum, mutually reinforcing. It is also necessary to view homeland security, or societal security, as a whole-of-nation activity rather than as the policy domain of a specific department, ministry, agency, or directorate. Threats and remedies, both domestic and international, can best be seen as the responsibility of numerous stakeholders located in several distinct legal jurisdictions.

Flow security is a shared concern that cuts across many sectors and stakeholder interests. Novel tools to meet hybrid challenges must be developed together and in a holistic fashion. This is a relatively immature policy area, lacking a developed professional corps to manage its wide field of cross-sector and multilevel issues. The private sector must also be engaged in this work. How can a shared approach allow effective uses of security assets and at the same time balance such core values as privacy and civil liberties?

To further foster a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities for cooperation across the Nordic–Baltic–North American space, a common strategic executive-training curriculum for senior leaders could be developed. Transatlantic workshops in the societal security area are needed. Education and training to cope with the unexpected and consequential are obligatory for career advancements in the military sphere; why not also for leaders in public service and for relevant business executives? Various NATO training programs have accumulated considerable experience and could inspire similar investments in strategic leadership for an all-hazards-plus approach to security.

The educational task is to turn shared values and preferences regarding societal security and total defense into action-oriented plans. Concepts must be operationalized and transformed into concrete activities with deadlines and measurable effects. Academics and think tanks should be well placed to contribute ideas and expertise to such knowledge-based, capacity-enhancing work. These tasks, among others, can be supported by the Swedish Defense University and many other organizations ready to contribute, together with partners in the E-PINE space. **PRISM**

Notes

¹ *Motståndskraft: Inriktningen av totalförsvaret och utformningen av det civila försvaret, 2021–2025* [Resilience: The orientation of total defense and the design of civil defense 2021–2025], Report Ds 2017:66 (Stockholm: Swedish Government Offices, 2017)

² *Totalförsvaret 2021–2025* [Total defense 2021–2015], TF 2021-2025, 2020/2021: FÖU4, Swedish Parliament, December 17, 2020, available at <https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/arende/betankande/totalforsvaret-2021-2025_H801F%C3%B6U4> English summary, “The Swedish Defence Commission’s White Book on Sweden’s Security Policy and the Development of the Military Defence 2021–2025,” available at <<https://www.regeringen.se/4ada4a/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/forsvarsberedningen/slutrapport-14-maj/defence-commissions-white-book-english-summary.pdf>>.

³ See “The Swedish Defence Commission’s White Book on Sweden’s Security Policy.”

⁴ *Nationell säkerhetsstrategi* [National security strategy] (Stockholm: Swedish Government Offices, 2017), available at <<https://www.regeringen.se/48db21/globalassets/regeringen/block/aktualitetsblock/statsradsberedningen/nationell-sakerhetsstrategi.pdf>> 5 *Regeringsförklaring* [Government declaration] (Stockholm: Swedish Government Offices, 2022), available at <<https://www.regeringen.se/4a99d4/contentassets/d6ad6308cc984aa1903d9a542ce1421c/regeringsforklaringen-2022.pdf>>.

⁶ For an excellent in-depth study of the concept of resilience and its applications in the security field see *Designing Resilience: Preparing for Extreme Events*, ed. Louise K. Comfort, Arjen Boin, and Chris C. Demchak (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).

⁷Ibid., 9.

⁸Totalförsvaret 2021–2025.

⁹Stärkt krisberedskap—för säkerhets skull [Strengthened crisis preparedness—just in case], proposal from the Swedish Ministry of Justice, Prop. 2007/08:92, updated April 2, 2015, available at <<http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/10393/a/101151>> 10 Stärkt krisberedskap—för säkerhets skull.

¹¹*The 9/11 Commission Report* (Washington, DC: National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 2004), available at <<http://www.9-11-commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>>; *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2006), available at <<https://biotech.law.lsu.edu/katrina/govdocs/katrina-lessons-learned.pdf>>; and *A Failure of Initiative: Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation and Response to Hurricane Katrina* (Washington, DC: U.S. House of Representatives, 2006), available at .

¹²*Slutbetänkande SOU 2022:10* [Final report 2022:10] (Stockholm: Corona Commission, 2022), available at <<https://coronakommissionen.com/publikationer/slutbetankande-sou-2022-10/>>.

¹³“Om krisen eller kriget kommer” [If crisis or war comes], Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2018, available at <<https://www.msb.se/en/rad-till-privatpersoner/the-brochure-if-crisis-or-war-comes/>>.

¹⁴*Utvärdering: Samö-Kkö 2011* [Evaluation: Samö-Kkö 2011] (Stockholm: Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2011), available at <https://www.msb.se/RibData/Filer/pdf/26065.pdf>.

¹⁵“Totalförsvarsövning 2020” [Total defense exercise 2020], Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency and Swedish Armed Forces, available at <<https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/sv/var-verksamhet/ovningar/avslutade-ovningar/totalforsvarsovning-2020/>>.

¹⁶“Over 26,000 soldater deltar i vårens storövning Aurora 23” [Over 26,000 soldiers are participating in spring’s major exercise Aurora 23], Swedish Defense Forces, available at <<https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/sv/aktuellt/2022/10/over-26-000-deltar-i-varens-storovning-aurora-23/>>.

¹⁷*NATO 2022 Strategic Concept* (Brussels: North Atlantic Treaty Alliance, 2022), available at <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>.

¹⁸The Hanaholmen Initiative is a cross-sector bilateral crisis preparedness program that aims to strengthen civil defense in Sweden and Finland and promotes cooperation between the countries in preparing for and the handling of civil crises. The initiative is carried out in collaboration with the Swedish Defence University and the Security Committee in Finland, with support from the Swedish-Finnish Cultural Foundation as well as the countries’ governments. See <<https://www.hanaholmen.fi/en/culturalcentre/the-hanaholmen-initiative/>>.

¹⁹Försvarsgarantier mellan Sverige och USA [Defense guarantees between Sweden and the United States], Interpellation to Council of State No. 2018/19:1, Swedish Parliament, available at <<https://data.riksdagen.se/fil/EB10F337-F94F-4B22-8186-321754106E4A>>