

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The military-strategic rationality of hybrid warfare: Everyday total defence under strategic non-peace in the case of Sweden

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Abstract

This article explores the emergence of new military-strategic rationalities in relation to conceptions of hybrid warfare in the grey zone through a case study of Sweden's reinstatement of total defence since 2015. Through a governmentality-inspired approach, I analyse what it means for the organisation of a new total defence when one of the main threats to be dealt with is daily antagonistic but highly ambiguous hybrid attacks. I illustrate how conceptions of an ambiguous strategic non-peace entails a move beyond war preparedness into urgent demands for an everyday active total defence that hinges on a 'martialisation' of civilian life. This in turn run the risk of challenging fundamental democratic principles and civil liberties. The analysis contributes to an increased understanding and uncovering of the politics made possible by a military-strategic rationality geared towards hybrid threats in the grey zone – which in the Swedish case has resulted in a historically specific version of total defence that builds on a highly diffused and rather extreme form of decentralised defence.

Keywords: governmentality; grey zone; hybrid warfare; military-strategic rationality; total defence

Introduction

After decades of disarmament, Sweden is currently in the process of rebuilding its military capabilities and re-establishing its Cold War strategy of total defence. The swift turn in Swedish defence policy was prompted by a forceful return to geopolitics in the wake of Russian aggression in Georgia and Ukraine, but we have in recent years also seen a growing interest in total defence as concept and strategy among European and North American states more broadly, for example, in relation to discourses on societal resilience;¹ the Covid-19 pandemic;² and not least as a strategy to address 'grey zone conflicts' and 'hybrid threats'.³

¹See, for example, Liudas Zdanavičius and Nortautas Statkus, 'Strengthening resilience of Lithuania in an era of great power competition: The case for total defence', *Journal on Baltic Security*, 6:2 (2020), pp. 47–67; Håkan Lunde Saxi, Bengt Sundelius, and Brett Swaney, 'Baltics left of bang: Nordic total defense and implications for the Baltic Sea region', *Strategic Forum*, 304 (2020), pp. 1–19; Stephen J. Flanagan, Jan Osburg, Anika Binnendijk, Marta Kepe, and Andrew Radin, 'Deterring Russian aggression in the Baltic states through resilience and resistance', RAND Research Report (2019).

²See, for example, Kevin Pollock and Riana Steen, 'Total defence resilience: Viable or not during COVID-19? A comparative study of Norway and the UK', *Risks, Hazards and Crisis in Public Policy*, 12 (2021), pp. 73–109; Antonio Missiroli and Michael Rühle, 'The pandemic and the military: EU and NATO between resilience and total defence', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 26:2 (2021), pp. 203–18.

³Sascha-Dominik Bachmann, 'Hybrid threats, cyber warfare and NATO's comprehensive approach for countering 21st century threats: Mapping the new frontier of global risk and security management', *Amicus Curiae*, 2011:88 (2011), pp. 24–7;

In Sweden, as in many other European states, the concepts of ‘hybrid warfare’ in the ‘grey zone’ have taken centre stage in both public and scholarly security discourses.⁴ While contested, these concepts are by now in widespread lay use and have become an established way of describing a broad set of diffuse threats and attacks involving both military and non-military means, such as cyberattacks, (dis-)information campaigns, propaganda, energy diplomacy, or subversive ‘little green men’ appearing in undescriptive uniforms. During the ongoing process of re-mobilising total defence, Sweden has consistently been represented as being under antagonistic hybrid attack on a daily basis – thus having to constantly deal with a ‘grey zone problematique’.⁵ Through a governmentality-inspired approach, I illustrate in this article how conceptions of constantly ongoing hybrid attacks in a strategic grey zone play into the organisation of a historically specific version of total defence in the case of Sweden.⁶ I argue that the articulation of an acute but ambiguous ongoing hybrid war entails a move beyond war preparedness into a rationale for an everyday total defence. This everyday total defence pivots on all citizens and all of civil society being vigilant of, knowledgeable of, and ready to actively defend against antagonist hybrid attacks, while fear and anxiety in the population at the same time must be kept in check. This amounts to a form of ‘martialisation’ of civilian life, understood here as a type of militarisation process whereby individuals are expected to embrace certain soldier ideals. This in turn challenges democratic principles and civil liberties. This article contributes to a critical scholarship primarily on hybrid warfare, but also to a small but growing literature on total defence. It does so by exploring the politics made possible as total defence is geared towards hybrid attacks in the grey zone, through a case study of Sweden.

The preoccupation with developing a total or whole-of-society approach involving both civil and military components in order to counter hybrid threats has been a broad trend in the wider European Union (EU) and NATO context. While the Swedish case is certainly unique in many respects, it represents a particularly revelatory context and illustration of how conceptions of hybrid warfare in the grey zone may play into emerging military-strategic rationalities more broadly.⁷ The empirical analysis draws on Nikolas Rose’s take on the Foucauldian concept of governmentality in terms of political rationalities, as involving a particular moral form, an epistemological character, and a specific style of reasoning, which I argue provide a highly useful analytical framework to also study military-strategic rationalities.⁸ Studying military-strategic rationalities in this way provides us with an analytical device that makes possible a finer-grained analysis of the empirical specificities of militarisation, and how it plays out at specific historical, cultural, and spatial moments.

After this introduction, the article is structured in five parts. I begin by briefly reviewing the contemporary literature and conceptual debate on hybrid war and grey zone conflicts, focusing specifically on the limited engagements by critical scholarship, and on how it connects to literatures on total defence. The next section specifies the theoretical and methodological approach, which draws on Nikolas Rose’s take on political rationalities.⁹ After this, the first part of the empirical

Ieva Berzina, ‘From “total” to “comprehensive” national defence: The development of the concept in Europe’, *Journal on Baltic Security*, 6:2 (2020), pp. 7–15; Mikael Weissmann, Niklas Nilsson, and Björn Palmertz, ‘Moving out of the blizzard: Towards a comprehensive approach to hybrid threats and hybrid warfare’, in Mikael Weissmann, Niklas Nilsson, Björn Palmertz, and Per Thunholm (eds), *Hybrid Warfare: Security and Asymmetric Conflict in International Relations* (London: I.B. Tauris, Bloomsbury Collections, 2021), pp. 263–72; Elisabeth Braw, ‘Countering aggression in the gray zone’, *PRISM*, 9:3 (2021), pp. 62–75.

⁴Jakub Eberle and Jan Daniel, *Politics of Hybrid Warfare: The Remaking of Security in Czechia after 2014* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), p. 4.

⁵Rather than using the concept of grey zone war or conflict, the term grey zone *problematique* (*gråzonsproblematik*) is consequently used in all Swedish public documents.

⁶For a discussion of different total defence logics, see Jan Angstrom and Kristin Ljungkvist, ‘Unpacking the varying strategic logics of total defence’, *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2023). DOI: [10.1080/01402390.2023.2260958](https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2023.2260958).

⁷The methodological considerations of the case study are further elaborated upon on in the section on method and material below.

⁸Nikolas Rose, ‘Governing “advanced” liberal democracies’, in Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta (eds), *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 144–62.

⁹See, in particular, Rose, ‘Governing “advanced” liberal democracies.’

analysis of total defence in Sweden follows, where the main features of the military-strategic rationality of the Cold War are described. In the second and main part of the analysis, I analyse the ongoing remobilisation of total defence and illustrate how emerging military-strategic rationalities and notions of grey zone problematique and hybrid threats are playing into the constitution of a historically specific version of total defence. In the final section, I summarise arguments and conclusions.

Hybrid warfare and grey zone conflicts in contemporary security discourses

Ever since Russia's annexation of Crimea and the proxy war that followed in Ukraine, the concepts of *hybrid* threats/war/warfare and *grey zone* war/conflicts have taken centre stage in Western security discourses.¹⁰ The notion of hybrid war grew out of US military thought and is most often associated with the work of Frank Hoffman.¹¹ Hoffman's work spurred a debate where the concept of hybrid warfare became a new way of grasping blurred lines between modes of war, violence, coercion, terrorism, and criminality in contemporary wars and conflicts.¹² The concept became especially hyped when NATO adopted it in 2014, after which academic interest skyrocketed.¹³ The extent to which these concepts have become ingrained in contemporary Western security imaginaries and defence discourses is further illustrated, for example, by NATO's and the EU's joint proclamation of hybrid threats as a priority for cooperation, where in 2017 a joint European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid COE) was established.¹⁴ Moreover, notions of hybrid threats and/or grey zone conflicts have been put forward as primary security challenges in security and defence strategies in for example the United Kingdom,¹⁵ Canada,¹⁶ Germany,¹⁷ and Australia.¹⁸

Notions of hybrid threats in the grey zone have been widely used by Western strategic thinkers to describe contemporary tactics pursued, primarily by Russia and China, but also by, for example, Iran and North Korea and non-state actors such as ISIS and Hezbollah.¹⁹ As mentioned above, these concepts are contested and lack a consensual definition but typically refer to a particular mode of waging war involving both kinetic and non-kinetic means; and hybrid threats are often described as involving various types of antagonistic but ambiguous political, economic, informational, or military actions (e.g. cyberattacks, disinformation, sabotage or subversive 'little green

¹⁰Oscar Jonsson, *The Russian Understanding of War: Blurring the Lines between War and Peace* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2019), p. 8.

¹¹Frank Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007).

¹²For a conceptual history, see Ofer Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare': Resurgence and Politicization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 11–30; see also Andrew Mumford and Pascal Carlucci, 'Hybrid warfare: The continuation of ambiguity by other means', *European Journal of International Security*, 8:2 (2023), pp. 192–206. DOI:10.1017/eis.2022.19.

¹³Chiara Libiseller, "'Hybrid warfare' as an academic fashion", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 46:4 (2023), pp. 858–80. DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2023.2177987.

¹⁴Axel Hagelstam, 'Cooperating to counter hybrid threats', *NATO Review* (23 November 2018), available at: {<https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2018/11/23/cooperating-to-counter-hybrid-threats/index.html>}.

¹⁵UK Ministry of Defence, 'Defence in a competitive age' (2021), available at: {https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974661/CP411_-_Defence_Command_Plan.pdf}.

¹⁶Canada Department of National Defence, 'Strong, secure, engaged: Canada's defence policy' (2017), available at: {<file:///C:/Users/iss18005/Downloads/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf>}.

¹⁷Federal Government of Germany, 'White Paper 2016: On German security policy and the future of the Bundeswehr' (2016), available at: {<https://www.bundeswehr.de/resource/blob/4800140/fe103a80d8576b2cd7a135a5a8a86dde/download-white-paper-2016-data.pdf>}.

¹⁸Australian Department of Defence, 'Defence strategic update' (2020), available at: {file:///C:/Users/iss18005/Downloads/2020_Defence_Strategic_Update.pdf}.

¹⁹See, for example, James J. Wirtz, 'Life in the "gray zone": Observations for contemporary strategists', *Defense & Security Analysis*, 33:2 (2017), pp. 106–14; Stacie L. Pettyjohn and Becca Wasser, *Competing in the Grey Zone: Russian Tactics and Western Responses* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019); Jonsson, *The Russian Understanding of War*; Geraint Hughes, 'War in the grey zone: Historical reflections and contemporary implications', *Survival*, 62:3 (2020), pp. 131–58.

men'). Moreover, hybrid tactics are typically described as intended to create confusion and ambiguity, and as employed in a way that does not allow for clear attribution or distinction between different forms of actors (e.g. state or non-state; soldiers or civilians) or between acts of organised crime, terrorism, or war. The grey zone concept is similarly used in relation to a wide variety of short-of-war strategies and is primarily seen as a strategic term, whereas hybrid war refers to a particular form of operation pursued *within* the grey zone.²⁰ Mumford and Carlucci suggest that hybrid warfare has become the preferred great-power mode of waging war due to the current strategic environment involving intensifying competition between Russia, China, and the United States: 'the yet uncompleted shift from unipolarity to great power competition could not generate a transparent and overt military confrontation, or simply an evolution of interventionism.'²¹ The pursuit of ambiguous hybrid warfare therefore becomes the strategic-political answer.

The concepts of hybrid war and grey zone conflicts have as mentioned garnered considerable attention among scholars in strategic and security studies, and also among experts, policymakers, and practitioners. Despite this, critical engagements are still fairly limited. Many scholars have certainly questioned the merits of the concepts of hybrid warfare/war/threats and grey zone conflicts in terms of, for example, their novelty and/or analytical or strategic value.²² Mark Galeotti has engaged critically with the concept and argued that the Western concept of hybrid war builds on a deep and problematic misunderstanding of Russian strategy.²³ Ofer Fridman has furthermore explored the political aspects of these concepts as they have taken centre stage in Russian and Western security discourses.²⁴ Fridman specifically explores the political forces that have shaped conceptual thinking on hybrid warfare and argues that the concept has become 'a tool in internal manoeuvring for finance, public opinion and political power in Russia and the West, as well as a means of intimidation in relations between the two'.²⁵

In terms of using critical theory more explicitly, a few notable contributions stands out, for example Maria Mälksoo's (2018) ontological security-situated analysis of the notion of hybrid warfare as it became a central concept in the NATO and EU context.²⁶ Somewhat akin to the argument about ambiguity as the essential feature of hybrid warfare put forward by Mumford and Carlucci,²⁷ Mälksoo argues that the hybrid warfare discourse exemplifies ontological insecurity as a phenomenon, while also pointing to its 'problematic prospect of compromising the already fuzzy distinction between politics and war – as according to the hybrid warfare paradigm, all politics becomes reduced to the potential build-up phase for a full-blown confrontation.'²⁸ Jakub Eberle and Jan Daniel build further on Mälksoo's argument by adding a view of hybrid warfare as a case of what they refer to as 'anxiety geopolitics'.²⁹ They argue that the anxiety-inducing discourse of hybrid warfare – stemming from a postmodern deterritorialised geopolitical imagination – is paradoxically made sense of through a traditional and familiar East/West geopolitical imaginary. In turn, they illustrate how this ends up reproducing insecurities and geopolitical anxieties. In a recent book, Eberle and Daniel offer what is probably one of the most in-depth studies on the performative, and

²⁰ Mumford and Carlucci, 'Hybrid warfare', p. 6.

²¹ Mumford and Carlucci, 'Hybrid warfare', p. 3.

²² See, for example, Robert Johnson, 'Hybrid war and its countermeasures: A critique of the literature', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 29:1 (2018), pp. 141–63; Donald Stoker and Craig Whiteside, 'Blurred lines: Gray-zone conflict and hybrid war: Two failures of American strategic thinking', *Naval War College Review*, 73:1 (2020), pp. 1–38.

²³ Mark Galeotti, *Russian Political War: Moving Beyond the Hybrid* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).

²⁴ Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare'*.

²⁵ Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare'*, p. 1.

²⁶ Maria Mälksoo, 'Countering hybrid warfare as ontological security management: The emerging practices of the EU and NATO', *European Security*, 27:3 (2018), pp. 374–92.

²⁷ Mumford and Carlucci, 'Hybrid warfare'.

²⁸ Mälksoo, 'Countering hybrid warfare', p. 286.

²⁹ Jakub Eberle and Jan Daniel, 'Anxiety geopolitics: Hybrid warfare, civilisational geopolitics, and the Janus-faced politics of anxiety', *Political Geography*, 92 (2022), p. 102502.

particularly the militarising, aspects of hybrid warfare as concept so far.³⁰ Through a case study on Czechia, they demonstrate how the concept of hybrid warfare within a Central and East European geopolitical context of liminality has amounted to a ‘warification’ of various social issues, ranging from same-sex marriage and migration to media literacy and social polarisation. The study at hand contributes further to this small but growing critical literature, by focusing, similarly to Eberle and Daniel, on the performative and militarising effects of hybrid warfare as a concept. While Eberle and Daniel contextualise their study in a distinct Central and East European geopolitical setting, the case study offered here instead investigates how discourses of hybrid war play out in relation to military-strategic rationalities of total defence.

Total defence as strategy against hybrid attacks

Since 2016, EU and NATO have jointly developed their ‘whole-of-society’ and resilience approaches for countering hybrid attacks.^{31,32} Ever since, the literature on hybrid warfare has increasingly tapped into a small but growing literature on total defence and other similar conceptualisations of comprehensive approaches focusing on coordinating military and civil protection of the population, critical infrastructure, and society at large. Studies on total defence have typically focused on questions such as governance, resilience, and civil–military coordination, rather than on total defence as strategy.³³ Still, there are a number of studies that are of particular relevance for the study at hand. Sebastian Larsson has, for example, traced the transformations of total defence in Sweden during the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s.³⁴ Larsson focuses on civil defence and on how a new cadre of security experts emerged within Swedish bureaucratic, political, and academic security realms, constructing, imposing, and negotiating into practice a new type of ‘societal security’ discourse related to non-military threats and risks such as, for example, terrorism. Larsson’s study thereby provides important empirical background to this study. Jana Wrangle is in certain respects picking up where Larsson ends by further analysing Swedish civil defence as notions such as hybrid warfare and grey zone conflicts entered into discourses of societal security, thus further blurring and entangling territorial and societal security logics.³⁵ Wrangle turns the analytical focus towards the practical consequences of entangled security logics as they are interpreted and put into practice at the bureaucratic level.³⁶ However, while Wrangle sees the emergence of concepts such as grey zone and hybrid war as an illustration of and as stemming from entangled territorial and societal security logics, I will in this study illustrate in more detail how such conceptions have in a much more profound way played into emerging military-strategic rationalities.

Both Larsson and Wrangle focus rather narrowly on civil defence, and a similar focus can also be found in Oscar Larsson’s study, where he looks into the coupling of crisis management and traditional security discourses as Sweden is in the process of re-establishing its total defence.³⁷ Larsson argues that the blurring of societal and state security discourses has increasingly tied

³⁰Eberle and Daniel, *Politics of Hybrid Warfare*.

³¹Mikael Wigell, Harri Mikkola, and Tapio Juntunen, ‘Best Practices in the whole-of-society approach in countering hybrid threats’, Study for the European Parliament, Policy Department for External Relations, May 2021, available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/653632/EXPO_STU\(2021\)653632_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/653632/EXPO_STU(2021)653632_EN.pdf).

³²NATO Parliamentary Assembly, ‘Resolution 466: Developing a whole-of-society, integrated approach to resilience for allied democracies’ (11 October 2021), available at: https://www.nato-pa.int/download-file?filename=/sites/default/files/2021-10/2021%20-%20NATO%20PA%20Resolution%20466%20-%20Resilience_0.pdf.

³³Jan Angstrom and Kristin Ljungkvist, ‘Unpacking the varying strategic logics of total defence’, *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2023). DOI: [10.1080/01402390.2023.2260958](https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2023.2260958).

³⁴Sebastian Larsson, ‘Swedish total defence and the emergence of societal security’, in Sebastian Larsson and Mark Rhinard (eds), *Nordic Societal Security, Convergence and Divergence* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), pp. 45–67.

³⁵Jana Wrangle, ‘Entangled security logics: From the decision-makers’ discourses to the decision-takers’ interpretations of civil defence’, *European Security*, 31:4 (2022), pp. 576–96.

³⁶Wrangle, ‘Entangled security logics’.

³⁷Oscar Larsson, ‘The connections between crisis and war preparedness in Sweden’, *Security Dialogue*, 52:4 (2021), pp. 306–24.

together practices of crisis management with war preparedness, and through a governmentality approach Larsson analyses how this in turn entails that citizens now have to accept responsibility for their own security. Larsson succinctly argues that ‘while war preparedness in previous eras was an exceptional aspect of human life and citizenship, the conceptions of security now evolving bind together societal and national security such that civil and war preparedness are merged into an ever-present dimension of everyday existence’.³⁸ By delving deeper into the constitutive and performative aspects of concepts such as hybrid war and grey zone conflicts, more specifically so in terms of how they play into military-strategic rationalities, I will in this study show how the citizen’s task and function in total defence goes beyond notions of war preparedness. Rather, citizens are now expected to actively participate in everyday defence against hybrid attacks, which in turn entails a potential volatility in the citizen’s role in total defence.

A recent study by Mathias Ericsson, Maja Svenbro, and Misse Wester has further critically explored the remobilisation of total defence in Sweden, also by primarily focusing on civil defence.³⁹ They analyse the gendered aspects of total defence as ‘happy object’ in terms of how through masculinist ideals of (military) protection it provide promises of a better future in times of uncertainty and thereby amounts to a militarisation of civil society. Although civil defence is yet again in focus, this study engages more directly with the ways in which total defence becomes mobilised in and through the dialogue between military and civil realms and put emphasis on the importance of examining ‘the discursive mobilization where militaristic rationale seeps into and changes the way civil society institutions think’.⁴⁰ In line with Ericsson et al., I argue that in order to fully grasp the politics made possible as total defence is being re-established, we need to pay much closer attention to the ways in which military and civil logics are at play dynamically. Yet in order to further unpack such dynamic interplay and its societal effects, I also suggest that a conceptualisation of militarisation of society in general terms becomes too generic. Indeed, the concept of militarisation has been criticised for being resorted to as a catch-all label for any type of influence the military may have on society.⁴¹ In order to explore in more empirical detail *how* various types of militaristic logics may affect society, we need to open up the discursive black box of specific military-strategic rationalities at play at specific historical, cultural, and spatial moments. For example, we can assume that the specificities of the societal effects of a militarisation following from a Cold War military-strategic rationality of nuclear war⁴² differ quite substantially from a militarisation that follows from a military-strategic rationality of hybrid warfare. The aim in this article is thus to contribute further to this critical scholarship through a theoretical focus on military-strategic thought, and on how conceptions of hybrid war and grey zone conflicts play into the constitution of a historically specific version of a total defence, and on its subsequent militarising effects. Therefore, and similarly to Oscar Larsson, I suggest that an analytical framework that draws on the Foucauldian concept of governmentality provides a fruitful avenue forward.

Governmentality and the study of military-strategic rationalities

In its broadest sense, governmentality studies can be seen as involving two general approaches.⁴³ First, governmentality can be seen as an analytical framework for studying intrinsic logics of governmental steering and particular ways or modes of governing. Such studies are according to Mitchell Dean ‘concerned with how thought operates within our organized ways of doing things,

³⁸Larsson, ‘The connections between crisis and war preparedness in Sweden’, p. 320.

³⁹Mathias Ericsson, Maja Svenbro, and Misse Wester, ‘Total defense as a happy object: Gendering mobilization of civil defense in Sweden’, *Critical Military Studies*, 9:4 (2022), pp. 497–512. DOI: [10.1080/23337486.2022.2156837](https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2022.2156837).

⁴⁰Ericsson, Svenbro, and Wester, ‘Total defense as happy object’, p. 10.

⁴¹Antoine Bousquet, Jairus Grove, and Nisha Shah, ‘Becoming war: Towards a martial empiricism’, *Security Dialogue*, 51:2–3 (2020), pp. 99–118 (p. 102).

⁴²For an excellent example of this, see Laura McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁴³Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage Publications, 1999), pp. 16–20.

our *regimes of practices*, and with its ambitions and effects.⁴⁴ Secondly, governmentality denotes a historically specific rationality of power and politics, which emerged in Western Europe in the early modern period and which takes the population as its primary target and object of government steering – a steering that takes place primarily through apparatuses of security.⁴⁵ In this article, I draw predominantly on the concept of governmentality understood as analytical framework, with the aim to uncover the intelligibility or logic of governing, and its effects. In other words, rather than taking a cue from governmentality in terms of a comprehensive theory of modernity (in a similar way to, say, Fordism or risk society), I do so more modestly as an analytical tool for interpreting and understanding a particular form and delimited case of governance – in this case a total defence – in terms of its rationalities, programmes, and techniques.⁴⁶

While there is a vast literature in International Relations (IR) and security studies that draws on Foucauldian notions of governmentality, this type of approach has been less common in analyses focusing more specifically on military strategy and military-strategic thought. There is certainly a larger literature that takes a governmentality approach to analysing war as an instrument of power in the modern liberal era, and on liberalism's relation to war as state practice. Michael Dillon and Julian Reid have, for example, called attention to how the biopolitics of global liberal governance has martial implications in terms of how modern liberal states prepare and organise themselves for deploying force and waging war.⁴⁷ In terms of zooming in on more specifically military-strategic rationalities, a few studies stand out – for example, Brian Massumi's seminal work on preemption as strategy and as a specific type of operative logic of power, defining the post 9/11 era,⁴⁸ as well as Andreas Vasilache's 'great power governmentality' reading of military-strategic rationalities and steering during the Obama administration.⁴⁹ Also, Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen's governmentality-inspired analysis of how the risk society has shaped new military-strategic rationalities represents an important contribution.⁵⁰ As pointed out by Julian Reid, military-strategic thought can be understood as situated at the very core of broader epistemic and systemic configurations of rationalities that make up modern governmentality,⁵¹ evinced, for example, in Foucault's own discussion of Clausewitz as the first to bring to light a new emerging relationship between war and modern power, as well as the birth of modern military-strategic thought.⁵²

However, and as indicated above, I take in this study a more modest and delineated approach to the study of military-strategic rationalities. I draw in particular on Nikolas Rose's take on governmentality understood as political rationalities, and I argue that by doing so we can open up new ways of understanding and analysing military-strategic thought, and its potential (militarising) societal effects. Political rationalities have according to Rose, first, a moral or normative dimension, which concerns 'the proper distribution of tasks between different authorities and the ideals

⁴⁴Dean, *Governmentality*, pp. 17–18.

⁴⁵Dean, *Governmentality*, pp. 19–20.

⁴⁶William Walters, *Governmentality: Critical Encounters* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 2.

⁴⁷Michael Dillon and Julian Reid, 'Global liberal governance: Biopolitics, security and war', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 30:1 (2001), pp. 41–66; Michael Dillon and Julian Reid, *The Liberal Way of War: Killing to Make Life Live* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009). See also, for example, Mark Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); Brad Evans, 'Foucault's legacy: Security, war and violence in the 21st century', *Security Dialogue*, 41:4 (2010), pp. 413–33.

⁴⁸Brian Massumi, *Ontopower: War, Powers and the State of Perception* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

⁴⁹Andreas Vasilache, 'Great power governmentality? Coincidence and parallelism in the new strategic guidance for the US Department of Defense', *Security Dialogue*, 45:6 (2014), pp. 582–600.

⁵⁰Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War: Terror, Technology and Strategy in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁵¹Julian Reid, 'Foucault on Clausewitz: Conceptualizing the relationship between war and power', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 28:1 (2003), pp. 1–28. See also, for example, Jörg Spieker, 'Foucault and Hobbes on politics, security, and war', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 36:3 (2011), pp. 187–99; Julian Reid, 'Life struggles: War, discipline, and biopolitics in the thought of Michel Foucault', *Social Text*, 86, 24:1 (2006), pp. 127–52.

⁵²Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), pp. 87–104 (p. 88); Reid, 'Foucault on Clausewitz', pp. 16–17.

or principles to which government should be addressed.⁵³ Translated into the context of military-strategic rationality in relation to total defence, the moral dimension is here operationalised as the proper distribution of tasks and roles of the civil and military sides of total defence, as well as in terms of the relationship between them. Second, political rationalities according to Rose involve an epistemological dimension. This dimension entails specific conceptions of the objects (e.g. the economy, welfare system, health care) as well as the subjects (i.e. citizens or individuals) to be governed.⁵⁴ In this study, the object to be governed is a total defence, and the epistemological dimension of interest here is first and foremost concerned with conceptions of the strategic context within which total defence is to function. In terms of the subjects – the citizens – the epistemological dimension of interest concerns the role, responsibilities, and duties of citizens *within* total defence. Third, political rationalities according to Rose involve a specific style of reasoning: ‘a set of “intellectual techniques” for rendering reality thinkable and practicable, and constituting domains that are amenable – or not amenable – to reformatory intervention.’⁵⁵ In this study, the domains of interest are the primary threat constructions towards which total defence is supposed to be geared, in terms of what and how the threats themselves are understood. In order to analyse the ways in which these domains are understood as amenable and managed through reformatory intervention, the analysis will also look into the main features of the organisational set-up of total defence (involving, for example, legal and institutional frameworks and principles, and governance arrangement). Together these aspects of political rationalities – moral, epistemological, and style of reasoning – serve as the analytical framework for studying emerging military-strategic rationalities in the case of Sweden and the re-mobilisation of total defence.

On method and material

The methodological approach of this study takes inspiration from the notion of ‘martial empiricism’ developed by Bousquet et al, and specifically so from the suggested investigation of overarching frames of intelligibility in processes of mobilising war.⁵⁶ The mobilisation process investigated concerns the re-establishment of Swedish total defence, and the frames of intelligibility concern how conceptions of hybrid warfare in the grey zone play into military-strategic rationalities. Although the Swedish case is unique in many respects, it represents a particularly revelatory case (one which also provides easy access to public documents).⁵⁷ The preoccupation with developing a whole-of-society approach strategy to counter hybrid threats has been a broad trend in the wider EU and NATO sphere. The Swedish total defence concept lies very close to, and has even represented, a model strategy for the approach developed by NATO and the EU.⁵⁸ The analysis of the Swedish case can therefore contribute to important insights and an increased understanding and uncovering of the politics made possible by a military-strategic rationality geared towards hybrid warfare more generally.

A common and valuable approach in this type of genealogically inspired research is to include a comparative component in the sense of illustrating a ‘before and after.’⁵⁹ The first empirical section therefore gives a historical background and an overview describing the main features dominating the military-strategic rationalities of total defence and its organisational set-up in Sweden during the post-war period, from its initial build-up until it was more or less dismantled after the end

⁵³Rose, ‘Governing “advanced” liberal democracies’, pp. 147–8.

⁵⁴Rose, ‘Governing “advanced” liberal democracies’, p. 148.

⁵⁵Rose, ‘Governing “advanced” liberal democracies’, p. 148.

⁵⁶Bousquet, Grove, and Shah, ‘Becoming war’, pp. 105–7.

⁵⁷Jörg Friedrichs and Friedrich Kratochwil, ‘On acting and knowing: How pragmatism can advance International Relations and methodology’, *International Organization*, 63:4 (2009), pp. 701–31.

⁵⁸Ieva Berzina, ‘From “total” to “comprehensive” national defence: The development of the concept in Europe’, *Journal on Baltic Security*, 6:2 (2020), pp. 1–9.

⁵⁹Stephen J. Collier and Andrew Lakoff, *The Government of Emergency: Vital Systems, Expertise, and the Politics of Security* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021), p. 6.

of the Cold War. The analytical emphasis is, however, on the second empirical part, covering the period 2015–22.

The empirical analysis draws on a mix of sources. The first section builds to a large part on secondary sources such as previous studies and accounts of Swedish security and defence policies during the post-war period. The following and main section of the analysis zooms in on Swedish defence discourse since 2015, when the government decided to reinstate total defence. This part builds on a deep reading of key public documents specifying the new Swedish total defence strategy and includes strategic doctrines, government documents, bills, reports, legal frameworks, and regulations outlining the total defence strategy and its functions; and public total defence planning documents such as actions plans. The selected governmental sources represent the key documents that during this time period have specified the terms and timeframe for rebuilding total defence, as well as its form, orientation, and organisational set-up. The selected documents include, for example, the strategic doctrines from 2016 and 2022. In 2016, the concept of *grey zone problematique* was established as central to describing the Swedish military-strategic context,⁶⁰ and hybrid warfare as one of the prime strategic challenges.⁶¹ Shortly after, the Swedish Defence Commission provided two key reports on the redevelopment of total defence, one in 2017 on civil defence, and one in 2019 on military defence. Together these reports provided a comprehensive assessment of the Swedish security situation and made suggestions for how total defence should be developed further. They also provided the foundation for the 2020 defence bill, and for the continued development and strengthening of total defence. Both reports as well as the resulting 2020 defence bill describe hybrid threats and the grey zone problematique as central to the Swedish strategic security situation. The 2020 defence bill includes a separate section devoted entirely to hybrid threats.⁶²

The analysis also includes some supplementary materials such as total defence exercise materials; data from public outreach campaigns and infomercials from government agencies; and official public statements/speeches. These materials especially serve to deepen the analysis of the style of reasoning, as they provide further codification of the appropriate dealings, intrinsic logic, and intelligibility of the military-strategic rationality. Dan Öberg has suggested that military exercise materials in particular provide a way to trace specific modalities of warfare, and he shows empirically how ‘military exercises do not merely represent an approach to future conflict’ but rather become ‘a model for the execution of warfare’.⁶³ Indeed, exercises are declared to be a central tool in current Swedish total defence planning and development.⁶⁴ All selected materials have been produced between the years of 2015 and 2022, where 2015 represents the start of the total defence re-building process.

It should be pointed out – and this is a well-known problem of discursive studies relying on textual and documentary materials – that this analytical approach is not able to capture the enacted doings of the Swedish total defence regime. The documentary and textual materials included in this study, while incomplete in terms of fully capturing total defence practices, do however provide a codification of their intrinsic logic and intelligibility.⁶⁵ The main aim of the empirical analysis that follows is thus to uncover central aspects of the emerging military-strategic rationality in Sweden, specifically so by focusing on how the conceptions of hybrid threats/attacks and the

⁶⁰Försvarsmakten, ‘Militärstrategisk doktrin: MSD 16’ (2016), p. 37, available at: <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/siteassets/4-om-myndigheten/dokumentfiler/doktriner/militarstrategisk-doktrin-2016-ny.pdf>.

⁶¹Försvarsmakten, ‘Militärstrategisk doktrin: MSD 16’, p. 53.

⁶²Regeringen, ‘Totalförsvaret 2021–2025. Prop. 2020/21:30’ (2020), pp. 61–3, available at: <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/proposition/2020/10/prop.-20202130/>.

⁶³Dan Öberg, ‘Exercising war: How tactical and operational modelling shape and reify military practice’, *Security Dialogue*, 51:2–3 (2020), pp. 137–54 (p. 142).

⁶⁴Försvarsberedningen, ‘Ds 2019:8 Värnkraft: Inriktningen av säkerhetspolitiken och utformningen av det militära försvaret 2021–2025’ (2019), p. 116, available at: <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/departementsserien-och-promemorior/2019/05/ds-20198/>.

⁶⁵Dean, *Governmentality*, p. 22.

grey zone problematique have played into this, and how this in turn plays into the planning and organisational set-up of the new total defence.

The Swedish case

Part I: The life and death of total defence in the post-war period

After the end of World War II, the notion of ‘total war’ became a central concept for understanding modern warfare, and it also came to constitute the very epistemological core of the understanding of Sweden’s strategic context. The prospect of total war demanded the establishment of a ‘total defence’, based on broad societal mobilisation.⁶⁶ World War II changed how war was generally perceived, due to the ways in which it indiscriminately affected all of society, and the way in which the enemy population and its willpower to resist and fight back had become targets of war. The idea that a total war would not only be waged against the armed forces, but also directly against the people, was consolidated in Sweden in the 1940s. The first comprehensive total defence doctrine came with the defence bill of 1942, after which a massive build-up of both the civil and military parts of total defence followed.

The epistemological dimension of the military-strategic rationality and the conception of the Swedish strategic context was during the entire Cold War period dominated by a territorial and geopolitical understanding, and the potentially escalating conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. Although the details of the specific threat constructions on which Swedish total defence was built would shift throughout the Cold War, the style of reasoning, i.e. the intrinsic logic and intelligibility of strategy, was continuously focused more or less completely on resisting a military invasion from the Soviet Union. Up until the 1960s, the threat of nuclear war dominated, but in the following years – due to what was described as a terror-balance between the superpowers – nuclear war was increasingly considered unlikely, and emphasis was put on the risk of a conventional attack coming from the East. As pointed out by Jonatan Stiglund, other potential threats were also on the agenda (e.g. local conflicts, global inequality, resource depletion), but these were understood as ‘directly or indirectly connected to ... the dynamic between the two major power blocs.’⁶⁷

A dominating feature in the style of reasoning was the assumption that the only way for a small state such as Sweden to be able to deter aggression from a super power such as the Soviet Union was to build a total defence collectively understood as a shared task of the entire Swedish society. A total defence therefore had to be based on a deeply rooted people’s defence and citizen army. Part of this intrinsic logic has been aptly described by Larsson, where the joint planning and institutionalised collaboration of military and civil defence soon became established as: ‘an *ideal model* for the *security of society* wherein military defence became intertwined with the civil population, everyday life, and virtually all functions of the public welfare apparatus.’⁶⁸ The *totality* of total defence – i.e. the combination of its military and civilian components – was constantly emphasised in Swedish total defence discourses, and a central idea was that an effective defence could only be reached if the various parts truly worked together.⁶⁹ In terms of the organisational set-up, the total defence legal framework that developed incrementally during the Cold War therefore required that all actors jointly coordinate total defence planning during peacetime, while the actual operative functions of total defence would only become activated if the government decide to put the country on a heightened state of alert in the face of an actual or imminent armed attack. By activating the total defence legal framework through such a decision, the government would gain considerable

⁶⁶Jan Willem Honig, ‘The idea of total war: From Clausewitz to Ludendorff’, *The Pacific War as Total War: 2011 International Forum on War History: Proceedings: 14 September 2011* (Tokyo: National Institute for Defence Studies, 2012), pp. 29–41.

⁶⁷Jonatan Stiglund, ‘Shifting dangers in the shape of threats and risks: The discourse of Swedish security policy, 1979–2020’, PhD diss., International Relations, Stockholm University (2021), p. 95.

⁶⁸Larsson, ‘Swedish total defence’, p. 47, emphasis in original.

⁶⁹Larsson, ‘Swedish total defence’, p. 47.

additional freedom to act and make various wartime decisions, such as, for example, taking control of private property needed for total defence, including buildings or means of transportation. Planning and coordination was, however, a mandatory peacetime activity, and from this it also followed that various government agencies and comprehensive war-planning agencies were institutionalised within all existing public agencies with the central goal of establishing a well-prepared and war-organised society.⁷⁰

A central feature in the moral dimension of total defence was a rather strict separation of tasks. Based on mandatory conscription of male citizens aged 18–47, the military side was solely responsible for the territorial defence of Sweden. At its peak, the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF) comprising army, navy, and air force, were capable of mobilising some 850,000 men, including about 110,000 home guard soldiers, and the Swedish Air Force was one of the largest in the world.⁷¹ The civilian part of total defence was comprised of three parts: economic defence, including storage and supply of, for example, fuel, grain, medicine, and weapons; psychological defence, which included counteraction of disinformation/propaganda, securing public information flows, and strengthening the will to defend; and civil defence, providing warning, evacuation, shelters, emergency services, health care, humanitarian aid such as provision of housing and supplies, and maintenance of critical social functions and infrastructure and protecting industries.⁷² The organisational set-up of most parts of total defence was during the Cold War centralised and controlled by the government. In terms of economic defence, storage was, for example, organised and controlled by the state, and the psychological defence included centrally controlled and institutionalised channels of communication from the government, via the media to the public, which at times was criticised for its overreach into the free media and publishing realm, causing censorship, and for bordering on a governmental propaganda agency.⁷³

At the same time, the citizen as subject played a highly central role in total defence. The Swedish Civil Defence Act from 1944 had established that all citizens share the responsibility for civil defence, and the law applied to all citizens between the ages of 15 and 65. Every household, and a great deal of private property such as tractors, trucks, or certain buildings, was assigned a specific role in Swedish total defence.⁷⁴ The civil defence system assigned around 230,000 citizens to various local and regional organisations, and an additional 65,000 citizens to factory defence organisations.⁷⁵ Around the same time, there were about 20 voluntary civil defence organisations engaging around 1 million Swedish citizens. Total defence thus became a popular movement and a highly integrated part of society where all citizens were expected to seek knowledge and show a dedication to the greater cause of defence. Indeed, in terms of the moral dimension of total defence, it is the direct involvement of civil society that typically distinguishes it from more traditional military-strategic rationalities. A central governmental principle was to foster enlightenment, education, and information (*folkbildning*). As described by Larsson, ‘the government sought to promote a “collective mindset” and “culture” of voluntary civilian participation in extensive war preparedness.’ However, while this may seem to imply that the roles and tasks of the civil and military sides of total defence were deeply intertwined, their respective tasks were, as mentioned above, clearly held separate. For the vast majority of the post-war period, the distribution of tasks between the civil and military sides did not overlap, either in terms of the moral dimension or in the organisational set-up.

⁷⁰ Wilhelm Agrell, *Alliansfrihet och atombomber: kontinuitet och förändring i den svenska försvarsdoktrinen 1945 till 1982* (Stockholm: Liber Förlag, 1985), pp. 60–1.

⁷¹ CTSS, ‘Förutsättningar för krisberedskap och totalförsvar i Sverige’, p. 58.

⁷² CTSS, ‘Förutsättningar för krisberedskap och totalförsvar i Sverige’, p. 34.

⁷³ Eino Tubin, *Förfäras Ej. 50 år med det psykologiska försvaret: En biografi om en svensk myndighet* (Stockholm: Styrelsen för Psykologiskt Försvar, 2003), p. 13, 19.

⁷⁴ Larsson, ‘Swedish total defence’, p. 47.

⁷⁵ William J. Stover, ‘National defense and citizen participation in Sweden: The citizen army in an open society. A report submitted to the American–Scandinavian Foundation 127 East 73 Rd Street New York, NY 10021’, *Peace Research*, 7:4 (1975), pp. 127–32 (pp. 130–1).

As the Cold War ended, the military-strategic rationality changed radically. Only a few years into the 1990s, its epistemological core had been drastically refounded on an assumption that there was no longer any imminent territorial threat to Sweden, and the SAF declared a 'strategic time-out' in order to rethink its tasks and structure.⁷⁶ The strategy of total defence subsequently came to lose its intelligibility altogether; neutrality soon became similarly understood as an irrelevant tool of state policy, and Sweden applied for membership in the European Community. For a number of years, from the mid-1990s well into the 2010s, the strategic context was understood in terms of a permanent state of peace in Europe.⁷⁷ In 2005, Supreme Commander at the time General Håkan Syrén declared that all military threats in the Baltic Sea region were completely gone.⁷⁸ Parallel to this radical epistemological change, the inherent style of reasoning in terms of threat constructions also changed drastically.⁷⁹ The 'broadened security agenda' – where security became associated not only with the territorial integrity of the nation-state, but also with non-military threats, risks, vulnerabilities of modern life, and the protection of infrastructure and critical functions in society – gained significant influence in Swedish security discourses during the second half of the 1990s. Swedish governments actively pushed for the broadened notion of security.⁸⁰ In the 1996 defence bill, the government stated that developments in the post-Cold War era meant that a broader view on security had become necessary.⁸¹ The broadened definition of security (involving, for example, natural disasters, organised crime, terrorism, pandemics, and climate change) was further established in the 1999 Committee of Defence report⁸² and continued to increase in importance at the same time as military threats were continuously toned down.⁸³ There was, in other words, a quite radical shift in the style of reasoning in the military-strategic rationality, from threat constructions based almost exclusively on conventional military threats during the Cold War to a domination of non-military threats.

During the two decades following the end of the Cold War, the wartime strength of the Swedish army was reduced by 95 per cent and the navy and air force by 70 per cent; 70 per cent of all military bases were closed.⁸⁴ What was left of the SAF was reoriented towards expeditionary use and international crisis management, and peacetime conscription was abandoned in 2010. Moreover, the civil defence system was dismantled and partly reorganised to fit into a new civilian crisis management system with a primary focus on non-military risks and vulnerabilities, and all total

⁷⁶ Robert Dalsjö, 'Sweden and its deterrence deficit: Quick to react, yet slow to act', in Nora Vanaga and Toms Rostoks (eds), *Deterring Russia in Europe: Defence Strategies for Neighbouring States* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), pp. 93–109 (p. 95); Sverker Göransson, 'Speech by the Supreme Commander Sverker Göransson, Lunds Akademiska Officerssällskap' (10 April 2012), p. 4, available at: https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/siteassets/3-organisation-forband/overbefallhavaren/tal-och-debattartiklar/tidigare-obs-tal-och-debattartiklar/20120410-planning-for-the-unknown_laos.pdf.

⁷⁷ Jacob Westberg, *Svenska säkerhetsstrategier: 1810–2014* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2015), p. 204.

⁷⁸ Håkan Syrén, 'Från nationellt till flernationellt försvar? Ett svenskt perspektiv', statement in Oslo, 29 October 2005 at the conference 'Feller sikkerhet i Norden: Fra splittelse til samarbeid?' Published in Krister Andren (ed.), *I backspejeln med Håkan Syrén som ÖB 2004–2009* (Stockholm: Forsvarsmakten, 2005), pp. 57–64 (p. 58).

⁷⁹ Jonatan Stiglund, 'Threats, risks, and the (re)turn to territorial security policies in Sweden', in Sebastian Larsson and Mark Rhinard (eds), *Nordic Societal Security Convergence and Divergence* (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 199–221.

⁸⁰ Wilhelm Agrell, *Det säkra landet? Svensk försvars- och säkerhetspolitik från ett kallt krig till ett annat* (Malmö: Gleerup, 2016), p. 199; Kjell Engelbrekt, 'Den nya säkerhetspolitiken och dess betingelser', in Kjell Engelbrekt and Jan Ångström (eds), *Svensk säkerhetspolitik i Europa och världen* (Stockholm: Nordsteds Juridik, 2010), pp. 9–35 (p. 12).

⁸¹ Sveriges Riksdag, 'Totalförsvar i förnyelse Proposition 1995/96:12' (1996), pp. 54–5, available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/proposition/totalforsvar-i-fornyelse_GJ0312.

⁸² Försvarsberedningen, 'Ds 1999:2 Förändrad omvärld – omdanat försvar' (1999), pp. 85–6, available at: <https://www.regeringen.se/49bb65/contentassets/0c0be9d013ff416187b4c441143250a3/forandrad-omvarld-omdanat-forsvar>.

⁸³ Nils Andrén, *Säkerhetspolitik: Analyser och tillämpningar* (Stockholm: Nordsteds Juridik, 2002), p. 51; Westberg, *Svenska säkerhetsstrategier*, p. 206.

⁸⁴ James Kenneth Wither, 'Back to the future? Nordic total defence concepts', *Defence Studies*, 20:1 (2020), pp. 61–81 (p. 70); Dalsjö, 'Sweden and its deterrence deficit', p. 95.

defence exercises and training activities were shut down.⁸⁵ While the total defence legal framework largely remained intact, the previous organisational set-up was further dismantled as the governmental agency responsible for coordinating civil defence was closed down, all building of new or maintaining of existing bomb shelters ended, evacuation plans were scrapped, and the system for early warning of air attacks was dismantled. The previously so central principle of joint total defence planning was scrapped entirely as, in 2001, civil and military defence were effectively detached by two separate bills. This separation meant that the basis for one coherent and coordinated process for total defence planning had been completely eliminated.⁸⁶ Moreover, the moral dimension of the military-strategic rationality also changed as military defence resources were increasingly made available for use in non-military crises management, which meant that the roles and tasks of the civil and military parts were now starting to overlap.⁸⁷

Part II: The resurrection of total defence

After the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Swedish military-strategic rationality yet again changed quite drastically. At first glance, it may seem like a return to a Cold War military-strategic rationality, since for example the epistemological dimension was yet again dominated by geopolitical concerns, great power politics, and territorial defence. The style of reasoning was similar to that during the Cold War, now defined by territorial threat constructions, and a massive increase in threat level posed by Russia was declared by the government in the 2015 defence bill.⁸⁸ As Robert Dalsjö has pointed out: 'It is now widely assumed in Sweden's strategic community that the risk of war has increased, and that Sweden would inevitably be drawn into any conflict between Russia and the West in the Baltic region.'⁸⁹ The 2019 Defence Commission report similarly put heavy focus on military threats, with Russia as the primary antagonist.⁹⁰ This was further reinforced in the 2020 defence bill, with its emphasis on antagonistic and military sources of threats to security, and it is stated that a major war in the Baltic Sea Region might even start with a (Russian) attack on Sweden.⁹¹ The Swedish government decided in late 2015 to re-establish total defence planning, and to enhance Swedish military capability. Conscription was reinstated in 2017, and for the first time since the end of the Cold War, military spending increased. After the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022, Sweden applied for NATO membership, and the government decided to increase the military budget further, from 1.3 per cent of GDP to 2 per cent, with additional funding for civil defence.⁹²

However, even though there was a clear epistemological return to a territorial and geopolitical understanding of the strategic context, as well as to a style of reasoning that yet again stressed military threat constructions, the emerging military-strategic rationality at large involves important differences from the Cold War. Even as military threat constructions were brought back in, the broadened notion of security was not abandoned, and as pointed out in several previous studies, the new total defence strategy and discourse instead became infused with *both* security

⁸⁵ Agrell, *Det säkra landet?*, pp. 199–200; Katarina Engberg, 'När totalförsvaret föll samman: Dokumentation och analys av tankegodset bakom nedmonteringen av det svenska totalförsvaret 1999–2005', *Kungliga Vetenskapsakademiens Handlingar och Tidskrift* (Bihäfte, 2020), pp. 7–63 (p. 10).

⁸⁶ Engberg, 'När totalförsvaret föll samman', pp. 9–10.

⁸⁷ Sveriges Riksdag, 'Totalförsvaret i förnyelse Proposition 1995/96:12' (1996), pp. 54–5, available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/proposition/totalforsvar-i-fornyelse_GJ0312.

⁸⁸ Regeringen, 'Försvarspolitisk inriktning: Sveriges försvar 2016–2020. Prop. 2014/15:109' (2015), p. 7, available at: <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/266e64ec3a254a6087e9e413806819/proposition-201415109-forsvarspolitisk-inriktning-sveriges-forsvar-2016-2020>.

⁸⁹ Dalsjö, 'Sweden and its deterrence deficit', pp. 97–8.

⁹⁰ Försvarsberedningen, 'Ds 2019:8 Värnkraft', pp. 22–34.

⁹¹ Regeringen, 'Totalförsvaret 2021–2025', p. 59.

⁹² Regeringskansliet, 'Försvarsanslaget ska öka till två procent av BNP' (2022), available at: <https://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2022/03/forsvarsanslaget-ska-oka-till-tva-procent-av-bnp/>.

logics.⁹³ In relation to this, I will in the following analysis illustrate more specifically how conceptions of grey zone and hybrid war have played into the emergence of a new military-strategic rationality.

A new style of reasoning? On hybrid threats and the grey zone problematique

Four central features in the style of reasoning concerning hybrid threat constructions stand out in the key documents from 2015 and onwards – antagonism, ambiguity, vulnerability, and urgency. While describing hybrid threats, the Defence Commission argues that the usage of subversive methods by state antagonists aims in particular to create and reinforce weaknesses and vulnerabilities in Swedish society.⁹⁴ The Defence Commission also declares that an armed attack against Sweden may be preceded by the attacker carrying out various and multiple covert hybrid attacks for a shorter or longer period of time. The antagonist's aim is, according to the Commission, to create grey zone problems that are difficult to assess and thereby create confusion and ambiguity; and difficult to manage, which creates vulnerabilities – all in all making Sweden an easier target.⁹⁵ The inherent logic within this style of reasoning has in particular come to the fore during military exercises. As the first exercise of its kind in over 30 years, the Total Defence Exercise 2020 (TFÖ 2020) began in 2019 and ran throughout 2020. The exercise was held under the joint command of SAF and Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) and involved a broad range of activities and actors, such as representatives from the parliamentary, regional, and local administrations, and various government and public institutions, as well as representatives from the private sector. An important part of the exercise involved scripted scenarios, and one of the scenarios was called 'Prolonged and escalating grey zone problematique'.⁹⁶ This scenario describes an escalating grey zone situation with significant impact on society, but where no visible military means of force are used (as of yet), nor has the government (yet) declared a state of heightened alert.⁹⁷

During a nine-month period, the described escalation involves increasing numbers of unexplained accidents; massive cyberattacks; physical sabotage and continuous disruptions of critical infrastructures; failing communication systems such as for payment, air and train traffic control, and mobile phones; extensive disinformation campaigns; advanced data breaches and corrupt data in governmental communication systems; massive increases in organised crime; disrupted national supply chains and lack of food and fuel. The scenario also describes how political polarisation in the country is deepening and frustration in the general population is on the rise; riots and looting increasingly occur in Swedish cities; and anxiety and fear is spreading.⁹⁸ A similar scenario based on the NATO hybrid scenario 'Road to Conflict' was used in 2022 in a command post exercise conducted at the SAF headquarters.⁹⁹ This scenario contains the same elements, but the timeframe is longer and spans an entire six-year period, thus with slower escalation.

In both scenarios, central scripted features involve ambiguousness, increasing confusion, and a situation described as inherently difficult to assess. The primary focus of these scenarios is on escalating antagonistic attacks that remain *under* the threshold of war, rather than on outright armed conflict. The stated purpose of the 2022 exercise was to train the 'ability to lead the planning, execution and follow-up of joint operations in a grey zone scenario that ranges from basic preparedness, mobilization and heightened state of alert, to a possible armed attack'.¹⁰⁰ Armed conflict is in other

⁹³ See, for example, Stiglund, 'Threats, risks, and the (re)turn to territorial security policies in Sweden'; Wrangé, 'Entangled security logics'.

⁹⁴ Försvarsberedningen, 'Ds 2017:66 Motståndskraft', p. 70.

⁹⁵ Försvarsberedningen, 'Ds 2019:8 Värnkraft', p. 114.

⁹⁶ FOI, 'Typfall 5: Ut dragen och eskalerande gråzonsproblematik'.

⁹⁷ FOI, 'Typfall 5: Ut dragen och eskalerande gråzonsproblematik', p. 3.

⁹⁸ FOI, 'Typfall 5: Ut dragen och eskalerande gråzonsproblematik'.

⁹⁹ Försvarsmakten, 'Ledningsövning 22 Utkast: Förutsättningar vid STARTEX (Road to Conflict)' (2022). On file with author.

¹⁰⁰ Försvarsmakten, 'Ledningsövning 22', p. 1.

words not the focus of the exercise, but rather training for and developing a total defence able to manage ambiguous and confusing escalating antagonist attacks that remain *under* the threshold of war.

Related to this is another dominating feature in the style of reasoning – urgency. It has been continuously argued that hybrid threats and attacks in the grey zone cannot be seen as a potential future problem – it is ongoing. For example, it is stated in the 2020 defence bill:

The government declares that hybrid threats are directed at Sweden already today. It cannot be ruled out that such threats may be part of an escalating process aimed at undermining the Swedish defence capability in the face of an armed attack, but they can also constitute the very core of a conflict.¹⁰¹

In 2019, the Swedish Security Service (police) together with the Intelligence and Security Service (military) similarly declared in a joint statement that hostile hybrid threats and attacks in the grey zone are now part of our everyday reality: ‘The actions of foreign states mean that Sweden is regularly, on a daily basis, exposed to attacks. ... The activities within the grey zone take place here and now and they are carried out by states that have both money, resources and time.’¹⁰²

The Defence Commission has also declared that Sweden is continuously exposed to various forms of antagonistic hybrid operations such as influence operations and cyberattacks.¹⁰³ In a public speech on 11 January 2022, whole-of-society approach stated that, even though Sweden is not in an outright territorial military conflict, it is important to realise that hybrid methods are a central and integral part of, for example, Russia’s and China’s security policy toolbox, and that: ‘Sweden and Swedish interests are attacked every day with means that harm our society, now and in the long run.’¹⁰⁴ There is thus an *urgency* defining the style of reasoning here, one which subsequently demands an immediate response.

Taken together, this style of reasoning sets hybrid threat constructions apart from the reasoning in relation to both conventional military threats and threats within the ‘broadened security agenda’, such as natural disasters, climate change, terrorism, or pandemics. While other threats may involve one or more of the features described (i.e. antagonism, ambiguity, vulnerability, or urgency), none of them – as opposed to hybrid threat constructions – involve all features at the same time (unless actually used as a means of hybrid attack). This in turn entails that hybrid threat constructions have different and specific implications for the emerging military-strategic rationality at large, not least in relation to the epistemological dimension and the understanding of the strategic context.

The epistemological dimension: A strategic context of non-peace

The central features in the style of reasoning in relation to hybrid threat constructions do not imply that Sweden as a nation is necessarily understood as facing an imminent prospect of having to take up arms, strictly speaking. Even though constant hybrid attacks are already being carried out against Sweden, it is assumed to be always uncertain and obscure whether or not the strategic context is one of conflict escalation or not, since the intensity of the ongoing attacks may in and of itself be the end goal of the antagonist. For example, in the strategic doctrine from 2022 it is explained that the intensity of the ongoing hybrid operations against Sweden may over time increase or decrease and include higher or lower degrees of direct physical activities and non-military and military means of force.¹⁰⁵ More specifically, it is stated that:

¹⁰¹ Regeringen, ‘Totalförsvaret 2021–2025’, p. 137.

¹⁰² Säpo 2019-07-01, available at: {<https://www.sakerhetspolisen.se/ovrigt/pressrum/aktuellt/aktuellt/2019-07-01-frammande-makt-agerar-i-grazon.html>}.

¹⁰³ Försvarsberedningen, ‘Ds 2019:8 Värnkraft’, p. 108.

¹⁰⁴ Micael Bydén, Public speech at Folk och Försvar Rikskonferens, 11 January 2022, available at: {<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1gQ5FDajKA>}.

¹⁰⁵ Försvarsmakten, ‘Militärstrategisk doktrin: MSD 22’ (2022), p. 30, available at: {<https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/siteassets/4-om-myndigheten/dokumentfiler/doktriner/msd-22.pdf>}.

The desired goal may be to enable or provide favourable conditions for escalation, or for an armed attack against Sweden or another state, including within the NATO cooperation. The strained situation may also be the highest level of conflict that the adversary seeks, in order to win other national strategic advantages.¹⁰⁶

In other words, since the situation may or may not be one of conflict escalation, a strategic non-peace must constantly be assumed. The Swedish Defence Research Institute (FOI) has, for example, described how the grey zone problematique may very well lead to open combat, but also how the grey zone may also represent: ‘a low-intensity condition that is considered the new normal, i.e. “Peace” = grey zone.’¹⁰⁷ This particular articulation illustrates a central feature in the epistemological dimension of the strategic context. What is described as the ‘new normal’ must be understood as a peace within quotation marks. The meaning of the ‘normal situation’ and the state of ‘peace’ in this strategic context is therefore quite different from what ‘peace’ meant during the Cold War. A useful point of comparison can be found in the Cold War concept of ‘twilight situation’ (*skymningsläge*), which was often used in Swedish security and defence discourses. While this concept certainly share similarities to that of ‘grey zone’, a ‘twilight situation’ only referred to a specific transitory situation between peace and war, and more importantly, it only referred to a limited period before an actual outbreak of war. The transition from peace to war, and the so-called twilight situation, was never seen as a ‘normal situation’, nor was it ever expected to last for more than a few days.¹⁰⁸ In current articulations of the ‘normal strategic situation’ in the grey zone, the state of ‘peace’ in which Sweden finds itself is instead in a permanent uncertain Schrödinger’s cat kind of situation – dead or alive, or both at the same time – and to open the box in order to reveal the actual state of affairs is not really possible. This epistemological dimension of the military-strategic rationality thus entails that the strategic context has morphed into a permanent state of an ambiguous but normalised non-peace.

As SAF published a new strategic doctrine in 2022, the concept of grey zone was even dropped altogether, since it was no longer seen as having any operational value. The strategic context that was conceptualised as the ‘grey zone problematique’ in the 2016 doctrine¹⁰⁹ (and described more or less in the exact same wording involving the same style of reasoning involving ambiguity, vulnerability, antagonism, and urgency) is in the new doctrine instead simply referred to as ‘normal strategic situation’.¹¹⁰ The 2022 strategic doctrine specifies three types of ‘typical’ strategic situations that the armed forces must be able to face: normal situation, security policy crisis, and armed attack. The normal strategic situation that SAF operates in on a day-to-day basis is described as:

The military threat normally consists of, among other things, territorial violations of varying intensity, primarily in the air and at sea. The threat also includes foreign intelligence activities such as reconnaissance and cyberespionage, sabotage including cyberattacks against both military and civilian systems as well as subversion and covert coordinated influence operations on various parts of society. Subversive activities can be conducted in the form of influence operations to undermine our values, disrupt and create uncertainty and suspicion, and undermine the will to defend. Activities by proxy are likely to happen and often linked to important national events.¹¹¹

In sum, the ‘new normal’ is understood as a permanently strained and inherently ambiguous strategic context where Sweden is under constant hybrid attack – i.e. a non-peace.

¹⁰⁶Försvarsmakten, ‘Militärstrategisk doktrin: MSD 22’, p. 31.

¹⁰⁷FOI, ‘Typfall 5: Utdragen och eskalerande gräzonspromatik’ (2018), p. 8, available at: [file:///C:/Users/issl18005/Downloads/FOIMEMO6338%20\(3\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/issl18005/Downloads/FOIMEMO6338%20(3).pdf).

¹⁰⁸FOI, ‘Civilt försvar i gråzon’ (2019), p. 8, available at: [file:///C:/Users/issl18005/Downloads/FOIR4769%20\(5\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/issl18005/Downloads/FOIR4769%20(5).pdf).

¹⁰⁹Försvarsmakten, ‘Militärstrategisk doktrin: MSD 16’, p. 37.

¹¹⁰Försvarsmakten, ‘Militärstrategisk doktrin: MSD 22’, p. 38.

¹¹¹Försvarsmakten, ‘Militärstrategisk doktrin: MSD 22’, p. 38.

Organizing an everyday total defence and its subsequent moral dimensions

In comparison to the Cold War, the strategic context defined by a permanent non-peace in turn implies a different style of reasoning concerning the organisational set-up of total defence, as well as differences in the moral dimension. In order to make ongoing and everyday hybrid attacks amenable to reformatory intervention through a re-established total defence, it has to be geared towards being able to actively function on an *everyday* basis.¹¹² This logic represents a fundamental difference from before. In the Cold War version, the organisational set-up of Swedish total defence meant that all operational functions would only be activated in case of an actual or imminent armed attack, and under the condition that the government decided to activate the total defence legal framework by setting the country on a heightened state of alert. During peacetime, total defence was all about planning, coordination, and war preparedness. As the rebuilding of total defence was initialised after 2015, the legal framework developed under the Cold War still remained the same, and this was considered increasingly problematic. In 2020, the SAF sent a request to the Swedish government to start investigating a renewal of the total defence legal framework, with the specific aim of adapting it to the new strategic context and customising it for the management of hybrid attacks.¹¹³ The request specifically demanded that:

The legal prerequisites for detecting, assessing and dealing with so-called hybrid and non-linear threats and attacks from foreign powers are reviewed with the aim of clarifying, modernizing and supplementing existing legislation and the mandate of responsible authorities.¹¹⁴

The 2020 defence bill similarly pinpointed the necessity of making total defence able to meet hybrid attacks under the threshold of war. It is, for example, pointed out that total defence not only able to plan and prepare for, but to actually deal with, the grey zone problematique and hybrid threats from foreign powers during ‘peacetime’, i.e. under normal legal conditions, is needed.¹¹⁵ In other words, the style of reasoning here means that a central organising principle inherent in the reinstated total defence is not only about war preparedness, but also about establishing an operative everyday active defence. In the 2020 defence bill, the government emphasises that the general societal capabilities to face hybrid attacks need to be strengthened and that there is a need for responsible authorities to include the perspective of hybrid threats to a larger degree in their planning.¹¹⁶ More specifically, it is pointed out that:

hybrid threats are largely, but not exclusively, directed at civilian society. Vulnerabilities in civilian structures must therefore be reduced, peacetime management of hybrid threats must be strengthened and a comprehensive perspective must characterize the management.¹¹⁷

This shows that the moral dimension of the military-strategic rationality entail important differences from the Cold War versions of total defence. The role and responsibility of civil defence during the Cold War involved preparations for, and non-military functions in case of, war.¹¹⁸ Its primary responsibility for maintenance of civil defence systems, and the preparations, coordination, and planning for an eventual armed attack never involved any responsibilities or functions of actively defending against antagonistic attacks during peacetime. Certainly, there are striking similarities to the Cold War military-strategic rationality when it comes to the style of reasoning

¹¹²Försvarsmakten, ‘Handlingskraft: Handlingsplan för att främja och utveckla en sammanhängande planering för totalförsvaret 2021–2025’ (2021), p. 11, available at: <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/siteassets/4-om-myndigheten/dokumentfiler/handlingskraft.pdf>.

¹¹³Försvarsmakten, ‘Hemställan om översyn av lagstiftning’ (2020–12-03). On file with author.

¹¹⁴Försvarsmakten, ‘Hemställan om översyn av lagstiftning’, p. 1.

¹¹⁵Regeringen, ‘Totalförsvaret 2021–2025’, pp. 137–8.

¹¹⁶Regeringen, ‘Totalförsvaret 2021–2025’, p. 138.

¹¹⁷Regeringen, ‘Totalförsvaret 2021–2025’, p. 137.

¹¹⁸Malena Britz, ‘Från civilförsvaret till (utrikes)politik?’, in Kjell Engelbrekt and Jan Ångström (eds), *Svensk säkerhetspolitik i Europa och världen* (Stockholm: Nordsteds Juridik, 2010), pp. 109–27 (p. 117).

concerning the operative function of psychological defence and the importance of the population's willingness to defend. A strong willingness to defend is currently understood in a very similar way to during the Cold War as a concrete remedy to the threat of an armed attack and as having an actual and important operational function in total defence as deterrence. However, during the Cold War, active civilian resistance or defence against attacks was only seen as required during a territorial occupation.¹¹⁹ In comparison, the moral dimension in the emerging military-strategic rationality is explicitly stated by the Defence Commission:

It is up to many different societal actors and in the end to the individual him/herself to identify and be prepared to act, but also to work together effectively to get a holistic perspective and jointly meet an aggressor who uses methods in the borderland between peace and war.¹²⁰

An inherent moral logic in the emerging military-strategic rationality is thus that the individual citizen play a central role in everyday Swedish total defence, when it comes to actively meeting and defending against hybrid attacks in the grey zone. Consequently, and as opposed to the moral dimension during the Cold War – where it was, for example, considered a governmental task to counter propaganda and false information, and to ensure that the population would receive correct information – this task function is now laid upon, and organisationally decentralised to, civilian life and to the private citizen. This morality can also be found articulated in infomercial campaigns produced by MSB, where for example a campaign from 2021 focuses on private individuals in everyday situations. In one of them, 'Rebecca' lies on the couch in her home scrolling on her phone, and while doing so she comes across fake news, but she very soon starts questioning it. The narrator voice subsequently thanks Rebecca for her important participation in standing up against antagonistic attempts at deception through false information, and thereby for strengthening Swedish freedom and sovereignty.¹²¹

In the emerging military-strategic rationality, the citizen's task and function in total defence goes beyond war preparedness and entails a 'martialisation', with demands for the active participation of citizens in defence against hybrid attacks. Akin to what Matthew Ford and Andrew Hoskins describe in *Radical War*, every private citizen with a smart phone has thus become transformed into an active participant in the war ecology¹²² – in this case in a hybrid war ecology – with inherent demands on citizens to be prepared to participate actively against hybrid attacks, even if only through everyday mundane activities such as scrolling on the phone.

This, in turn, entails that the population at large represents a highly central, but also potentially volatile, organisational component in total defence. As mentioned above, one of the central scripted features in the grey zone scenarios concerns increasing ambiguousness and confusion, inducing anxiety and fear among the population. In the scenarios, disconcertment, anxiety, and fear are spreading, and an explicitly stated direct effect of this is that it negatively affects the general willingness to defend.¹²³ The willingness to defend (*försvarsvilja*) is assumed to be intimately intertwined with social trust and trust in the government and public agencies – and this therefore necessitates that fear among the population is kept in check. This assumption is also articulated in the 2017 Defence Commission report, where it is stated that public trust in government is an important factor for ensuring the willingness to defend, and also for resisting influence operations.¹²⁴ In the aftermath of the TFÖ2020 exercise, SAF and MSB developed a joint action plan for

¹¹⁹ Björn Orward, *Motstånd under Ockupation* (Stockholm: Styrelsen för Psykologiskt Försvar, 1996), available at: <https://rib.msb.se/filer/pdf/7132.pdf>.

¹²⁰ Försvarsberedningen, 'Ds 2017:66 Motståndskraft', p. 67.

¹²¹ MSB, 'Rebecca stärker vår beredskap och värnar om Sveriges demokrati' (2021). Infomercial available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwKbCLcIwB4&list=PLnfjXIS5HryqWNRvf7glqOTZxWaSZOTVB&index=2>.

¹²² Matthew Ford and Andrew Hoskins, *Radical War: Data, Attention and Control in the 21st Century* (London: Hurst & Company, 2022).

¹²³ FOI, 'Typfall 5: Utdragen och eskalerande gräzonsproblematik', p. 6.

¹²⁴ Försvarsberedningen, 'Ds 2017:66 Motståndskraft', p. 45.

how to proceed in strengthening total defence, and one of six focus areas was to strengthen the general willingness to defend. In the action plan, it is stated that the one of the prime targets of hybrid attacks such as influence operations, cyberattacks, and sabotage is to break down social trust and the willingness to defend. Yet again, the individual citizen's own responsibility to both resist and mitigate such attacks is pointed out.¹²⁵ It is also pointed out that it is crucial that the population has knowledge of hybrid threats and will accept potential social disturbances caused by attacks, while also maintaining their trust in society and public institutions.¹²⁶

In these passages, the centrality of the population and its operational role in total defence is clearly articulated, while we can also discern its potential volatility. Since social trust and trust in public institutions, and thereby a strong willingness to defend, are seen as a concrete remedy to hybrid attacks, anxiety and fear among the population must be suppressed. This style of reasoning came to the fore during the Covid-19 pandemic, which was used as an opportunity to further practise civil-military coordination in the new total defence.¹²⁷ The Swedish Covid strategy – formulated by the government in 2020 – was summarised in six main aims, one of which was to alleviate the spread of fear and anxiety among the population.¹²⁸ During the crisis, domestic public critics of the Swedish Covid strategy were repeatedly accused of inducing fear among the population and therefore of jeopardising public trust in government and public institutions.¹²⁹ Several of those who publicly criticised the strategy were branded as a national security risk, or even as traitors spreading false propaganda.¹³⁰

In sum, the politics made possible by a military-strategic rationality geared towards hybrid threats and grey zone problematique in the case of Sweden is conditioned by the logic of strategic non-peace, which in turn demands a martialisation of civilian life, where the population is expected to embrace certain soldier ideals such as loyalty, vigilance, and to bravely defend against hybrid attacks. This in turn amounts to a highly diffused and rather extreme form of decentralised defence.

Concluding remarks on the emerging military-strategic rationality of hybrid warfare

By drawing on the concept of governmentality, and specifically on Nicolas Rose's take on political rationalities, I have in this article analysed the ways in which articulations of hybrid attacks in the grey zone have played into the emergence of a new military-strategic rationality in the case of Sweden. While we can assume that the specificities of how military-strategic rationalities of hybrid warfare play out in different domestic or organisational contexts will vary, the Swedish case does speak to broader European trends. Total defence has admittedly been a strategic choice of small states, but the preoccupation with developing a comprehensive all-of-society strategy to counter hybrid threats is a wider trend in the EU and NATO sphere. One of the most recent exemplifications of this strategic line of thought can for example be found in the concept of Multi Domain Operations (MDO), adopted as part of NATO's strategic concept in 2022.¹³¹ MDO adds to the traditional domains (air, land, and sea) the domains of space and cyberspace and stresses the need to not only coordinate across military services (as in the traditional concept of joint

¹²⁵Försvarsmakten, 'Handlingskraft', pp. 12, 23.

¹²⁶Försvarsmakten, 'Handlingskraft', p. 23.

¹²⁷For example, the military was called in during the Covid-19 crisis to support health services around the country, by, for example, setting up field hospitals and collecting tests for the Public Health Agency.

¹²⁸Erik Jönsson and Henrik Oscarsson, *Den svenska coronastrategin: SOM-undersökningen om coronaviruset 2021* (Göteborg: SOM-institutet and Göteborgs Universitet, 2021), p. 2.

¹²⁹Gina Gustavsson, *Du stolta, du fria: Om svenskarna, Sverigebildan och folkhälsopatriotismen* (Stockholm: Kaunitz-Olsson, 2021).

¹³⁰See, for example, Sveriges Radio, 'Dold Facebookgrupp försöker påverka svenska intressen utomlands' (2021), available at: <https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/dold-facebookgrupp-forsoker-paverka-svenska-intressen-utomlands>.

¹³¹NATO, 'NATO 2022 strategic concept' (2022), p. 3, available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf.

operations), but also the need for better coordination with non-military stakeholders and civilian authorities. The security environment facing the alliance is described in NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept, and it starts out by declaring: 'The Euro-Atlantic area is not at peace.'¹³² MDO is presented as the answer to this 'non-peace', and to the hybrid tactics pursued by Russia and other authoritarian actors – through the synchronisation of military capabilities with alliance members' various national ministries/departments and agencies, as well as other external stakeholders including academia and private industry. The stated goal for MDO is to align military and governmental policies in order to 'deliver a streamlined defence and deterrence system.'¹³³ The military-strategic rationality embedded here, as well as its potential militarising effects, certainly warrants further investigation. In the Swedish case, I have illustrated how the emerging military-strategic rationality defined by conceptions of an ambiguous strategic non-peace entails an urgent demand for an everyday total defence that goes beyond conceptions of war preparedness. From this, potentially problematic consequences for democracy may follow, as it comes close to what David Alexander has argued is the considerable risk for civil defence to become an instrument of state repression.¹³⁴ Alexander argues for example that:

Plans to manage civilian populations can turn into strategies for ensuring that protests are repressed or revolts are subdued, even when these are stimulated by a desire to defend or restore democratic rights. In short, civil defence can be subverted to protect the state against its people.¹³⁵

While the freedom to debate and criticise public policy is central in democratic societies, it may under the emerging military-strategic rationality of hybrid warfare under an ambiguous non-peace come to be understood as a threat to national security. As pointed out by Basham et al., we need to move beyond 'critique solely as a means through which to offer recommendations for the improvement of military policy' and provide deeper analysis 'about its character, representation, application, and effects.'¹³⁶ I have in this article shown that applying a governmentality-inspired approach provides a productive way of doing so, by opening up new ways of understanding and analysing the ways in which conceptions of grey zone and hybrid war unfold and play into contemporary military-strategic thought, as well as for analysing its potential operational and political effects.

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¹³²Ibid.

¹³³NATO, 'Multi-domain operations in NATO: Explained' (2023), available at: <https://www.act.nato.int/article/mdo-in-nato-explained/>.

¹³⁴David Alexander, 'From civil defence to civil protection – and back again', *Disaster Prevention and Management*, 11:3 (2002), pp. 209–13.

¹³⁵David Alexander, 'From civil defence to civil protection', p. 210.

¹³⁶Victoria M. Basham, Aaron Belkin, and Jess Gifkins, 'What is critical military studies?', *Critical Military Studies*, 1:1 (2015), pp. 1–2 (p. 1).