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ARTICLE



Back to the future? Nordic total defence concepts

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ABSTRACT

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has forced the greatest a re-appraisal of European security since the end of the Cold War. In the Nordic region, this has led to preparations for great power armed conflict in the region after a long period of strategic neglect. All three of the Nordic states examined here, Finland, Sweden and Norway, have adopted so called total defence policies. Total defence combines the armed forces and civil society in a comprehensive whole of society approach to security intended to deter an attack by making a target state a very challenging prospect for an aggressor. Finland retained a total defence policy after the Cold War, but has had to re-examine its utility for the contemporary threat environment. For Norway and Sweden, total defence means significant challenges reviving Cold War era planning in a very different security and societal context. This study examines current Nordic security concepts through the critical, elements of total defence policies: national resilience and territorial defence. It also addresses the role that alliances and partnerships play in contemporary Nordic total defence planning. An important question is the extent to which these total defence concepts effectively address the perceived political and military threat from Russia.

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Introduction

The security situation in Europe has deteriorated since Russia's annexation of Crimea and proxy war in Eastern Ukraine in 2014. Territorial defence is back on the agenda as NATO and partner states in Europe confront a belligerent Russian Federation. In the Nordic region, Russia has conducted unannounced snap exercises, deployed new weapon systems, simulated air attacks and mounted disinformation campaigns to try to undermine governance and societal cohesion. In response, the small states of the area have increased defence spending and sought to improve their military and civil security. Nordic states have pursued closer defence ties with the United States (US) and non-NATO members Finland and Sweden have intensified defence cooperation with the alliance. Nevertheless, the countries of the region also recognize that collective defence cannot be guaranteed in all circumstances, especially as NATO lacks the force levels and

mobilisation speed to be confident of deterring possible Russian hostility in the Nordic Baltic region. (Boston *et al.* 2018)

Therefore, it is not surprising that, like the Baltic States, Nordic countries have revived total defence planning. Total defence is a whole of society approach to national security intended to deter a potential enemy by raising the cost of aggression and lowering the chances of its success. Total defence is not a new concept as it characterized the defence posture of some non-aligned states during the Cold War, notably Switzerland, Finland, Sweden and Yugoslavia. (Mendershausen 1980, p. 7–9). Outside of Europe, Israel and Singapore are also countries that currently maintain total defence policies. Total defence includes both military and civil defence preparations. In addition to the armed forces, it involves institutionalized collaboration between government ministries, civic organizations, the private sector, and the general public. As the current threat environment includes both military and non-military challenges and the lines between war and peace have become blurred, an integrated whole of society approach to security is even more important than during the Cold War.

Switzerland's strategic posture during the Cold War represents something of a benchmark total defence concept. (Brzia 2019, Stein 1990, p. 17–33) As a neutral state, Switzerland sought to deter invasion and occupation by Warsaw Pact forces by credible military and whole of society preparedness. Switzerland's aim was to create a situation where the country appeared "indigestible" to an aggressor. Preparations were made to conduct resistance operations in any occupied territory and destroy industrial, communications and transport networks that could be of use to an enemy. (Stringer 2017, p. 111) As well as extensive civil protection measures, the Swiss also maintained considerable conventional military forces into which territorial units and resistance organizations were integrated. (Stringer 2017, p. 111, 113)

The direct involvement of civil society distinguishes total defence from customary military deterrence and defence. The concept rests on robust physical and psychological foundations. "Resilience" and "territorial defence" are terms often used in conjunction with total defence in government strategy and policy papers. Infrastructure and societal resilience jointly constitute national resilience, a cornerstone of total defence. Resilience has been defined as "a society's ability to resist and recover easily and quickly from shocks and stresses, combining civilian, economic, commercial and military factors". (SACT 2017, p. 1) Territorial defence refers to the military dimension of total defence. It is normally characterized by a defensive military posture intended to deter by denial. Military measures involve large-scale mobilisation through conscription, preparations for both regular and irregular warfare, extensive civil defence preparedness and readiness for active and passive resistance measures in case of occupation.

This article examines contemporary national defence policies in the Nordic region and discusses the challenges of creating total defence in the current security and socio-economic environment. The main themes are national resilience and territorial defence, but the last section also addresses partner cooperation, which has not traditionally been a feature of total defence concepts. Russian strategic policy provides the context for this study. Analyst Dmitry Gorenburg argues that Russia's main strategic objectives in the Nordic region are to preserve the status quo and maintain current influence in the region. (Gorenburg 2019) Despite the increase in tensions, Norway and Finland, in particular,

continue to cooperate with Russia on a range of economic, environmental and border security issues. However, strategic stability cannot be assured. Russia has mounted information operations and made military threats against states in the area and the danger of armed conflict by miscalculation or spill over from war elsewhere in Europe cannot be discounted. This study will, therefore, attempt to assess the deterrent potential of Nordic total defence concepts.

Given the emphasis on total defence in the Baltic States, a valid approach might be to address defence in the whole of the Nordic Baltic region. However, the defence of the Baltic States has already been the subject of a significant number of studies because of the particular strategic vulnerability of these countries. (Thornton 2016, Wither 2018, Veebel 2018, Hooker 2019, Flanagan *et al.* 2019) Therefore the focus of this article is on the Nordic states of Finland, Norway and Sweden, which have not attracted the same degree of international scholarly attention. The Nordic states are strategically significant in their own right. Both Finland and Norway share borders with Russia. All three states under discussion could be drawn into a conflict between NATO and Russia in the Baltic region or the Arctic.

Although a Nordic state, Denmark is not included in the study. Denmark retains conscription, a common characteristic of total defence concepts, but territorial defence is less of a priority than for its more exposed Nordic and Baltic neighbours. The government's current defence focus is on improving conventional forces to contribute to NATO's collective defence efforts. Unlike other Nordic states, the Danish government does not describe its defence policy in total defence terms. (Danish Defence Agreement 2018) Although cooperation between the armed forces, police and the Danish Emergency Management Agency is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence, the term total defence is used to refer to peacetime civil protection and contingency planning rather than war. (Britz 2007, p. 10 and p.16)

Resilience

Since 2014, relations between the Russian Federation and Western states have deteriorated to a level not experienced since the height of the Cold War. As during this period, intensified competition takes the form of political warfare rather than direct military conflict. Traditional political warfare involved the employment of military, intelligence, diplomatic, economic and other means short of conventional war to achieve national objectives. However, the main focus of Russia's current approach to political warfare (aktivnye meropriyatiya/active measures) is covert digital information operations that seek to weaken trust in the values and utility of democracy, gain political influence, undermine social cohesion and shape the strategic environment in its favour. (Galeotti 2019, Cohen and Radin 2019, Polyakova and Boyer 2018, Levite and Shimshoni 2018, p. 98, Seely 2017)

NATO has stressed the need for national resilience both in the face of direct military threats and to address broader political warfare challenges in the so called "grey zone" between peace and war. The NATO summit in July 2016 pledged the alliance to "... work to ensure that our national and NATO military forces can at all times be adequately supported with civilian resources, including energy, transportation, and communications". (NATO, Press Release 2016) NATO has no doctrine for total

defence, but recognizes that the military will depend on civilian assets for technical and logistic support both prior to and during wartime. In 2016, NATO reported that 90% of its military transport was chartered or requisitioned from the private sector, over 50% of defence satellite communications were reliant on commercial enterprises and 75% of host nation support to NATO operations was sourced from local civilian infrastructure and services. (NATO, Resilience and Article 3 2016b) Dependence on cyber information and communications technology also creates significant challenges that did not exist during the Cold War. The Nordic states are no exception to these trends. The European Union (EU) has also sought to strengthen member state resilience particularly against Russian disinformation campaigns, but initiatives have been hindered by a lack of consensus among member states. (European Parliament 2018, Galeotti 2019)

NATO regards national resilience as an essential element of a credible deterrence and has identified seven baseline requirements: government continuity, the maintenance of energy resources, effective handling of uncontrolled population movements, continued food and water supplies, the ability to deal with mass casualties, a functioning telecommunications and cyber network and robust transportation systems. (NATO, Resilience and Article 3 2016b) These requirements represent significant challenges for member states and will require sustained political will and resources to achieve. Analyst Tim Prior has also argued that NATO will need broader cultural change to accept the need for strong cooperation with civilian organizations, including the private sector, to create a whole of society approach to security. (Prior 2018)

Although not NATO members, Finland and Sweden are credited with helping to shape resilience policy by sharing their national “best practices” with alliance members. (Roepke and Thankey 2019) Like other Western states, Nordic countries have been subject to Russian political warfare. Russian activities in the region have included coercive diplomacy and cyber-enabled disinformation campaigns to intimidate and shape government and public perceptions. (NATO STRATCOM COE 2018, Schmidt-Felzman 2017, Gorenburg 2019) Not surprisingly, Russia’s main objectives have been to deter Nordic military cooperation and undermine support for NATO and EU. However, as regards societal resilience, the Nordic states have advantages over some of their new NATO and EU partners. Nordic countries do not suffer from the weak governance, vulnerable institutions, large ethnic minorities, corruption and the low levels of public trust that make some European states more susceptible to political warfare. Arguably, Russian threats of dire consequences if Sweden and Finland were to formally join NATO have simply driven them towards closer cooperation with the alliance.

Finland is often held up as a model for contemporary total defence, (Deutsche Welle 2017) a status that the government recognizes, remarking that “The cooperation model for comprehensive security in Finland is internationally unique and respected”. (Finland Ministry of Defence, Security Committee 2017) After the Cold War, Finland’s defence forces underwent less downscaling and reform than those in Norway and Sweden., Finland never abandoned its comprehensive defence posture and it is therefore in better shape than its Nordic neighbours with respect to the mobilisation of the whole of society for total defence. For example, Finland continues to stockpile food, fuel, fodder and equipment for civil defence and according to official figures, provides 45,000 civil defence shelters to accommodate 3.6 million of its citizens. (Finland, Ministry of the Interior)

Finland's defence posture reflects its non-aligned status, geopolitical position and experience of wars of survival against the Soviet Union in the 1940s.

Finland's current total defence policy, normally referred to as "comprehensive national defence policy" (Finland Ministry of Defence, 2019) is managed by The Security Committee within the Ministry of Defence, which coordinates the defence activities of all government ministries. The committee describes comprehensive security as a "... preparedness cooperation model in which the vital functions of society are looked after through a joint effort between the authorities, the business community, organisations and citizens." (Finland, Ministry of Defence, Security Committee, 2018) The latest Security Strategy for Society reflects this and provides comprehensive guidelines on preparedness to safeguard vital societal functions. (Finland Government Resolution 2017, p. 5) The Government Defence Report also highlights the need for a legislative review to allow local civil authorities to carry out their security tasks in what is described as a changed security environment. (Finland, Government Defence Report 2017, p. 12) Much emphasis is placed on "psychological resilience" defined by the government as "... the ability of individuals, communities, society and the nation to withstand the pressures arising from crisis situations and to recover from their impacts". (Finland, Government Resolution 2017, p. 22.) Psychological resilience is viewed as a critical factor in the maintenance of the will of the people of Finland to defend their country. (Finland, Ministry of Defence, Guiding Principles)

Despite fears about the reliability of pro-Russian activists among its dual-national citizens, Finland claims to be especially resilient in the face of Russian information warfare due to the country's strong public education system, long history of dealing with Russia and its counter propaganda and disinformation strategy. (Standish 2017, Weinger 2018) Finland also hosts the EU/NATO- affiliated European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats. Although Finland's contemporary resilience in the face of direct Russian aggression has not been tested, according to a study by the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA) in 2018, a large majority of Finns believe that their country is well prepared for a military attack and are confident it would defend itself even if the outcome was uncertain. (Salonius-Pasternak 2018, p. 7). In a recent Finnish defence survey 84% of those polled answered the question "would you be ready to take part in national defence duties to the best of your ability?" in the affirmative. (Finland, Ministry of Defence, Finns' Opinion on Security Policy 2018, p. 11) In a Gallup Poll in 2015, 74% of Finns said they would fight for their country, which was the highest in Europe. Figures for other Nordic countries were as follows: Sweden 55%, Denmark 37%. Norway was not surveyed. (Gallup 2015)

Total defence is defined in Swedish law as "all activities preparing the society for war" and consists of both military and civil defence. (Sweden, Government Offices 2018) In contrast to Finland, Sweden abandoned its traditional whole of government and society preparations for defence after the Cold War. Policy changed in 2015, when the government tasked the Ministry of Defence and the Civil Contingencies Agency of the Ministry of Justice jointly to develop a total defence proposal. The resultant Defence Commission report in 2017 identified the formidable challenges involved in reinvigorating total defence in a society and economy that had changed considerably since the 1980s. (Sweden Defence Commission 2017) The commission did not underestimate the problems that Sweden would face in managing wartime conditions. It highlighted society's

dependence on electricity, information technology, communications, transportation, fuel and financial services and outlined the difficulties involved in providing wartime access to food, drinking water, energy and pharmaceuticals. Arguably, the only positive observation in the report was that Sweden already possessed the necessary laws and judicial regulations to mobilise civil society and resources to function in a state of war. (Sweden Defence Commission 2017, p. 3)

A government report in June 2018 outlined progress on re-building total defence since 2015, but acknowledged that “work to rebuild Swedish total defence will continue for many years, involving extensive challenges” (Sweden, Government Offices 2018). According to Marika Ericson, an analyst at the Swedish Defence University, the renewed commitment to total defence involves “starting all over again” in order to turn a peacetime emergency management establishment into one that would be ready for war. (personal communication, 24 May 2019) A study by the Swedish Defence Research Agency has also highlighted this challenge, arguing that the current reactive, event driven approach to crisis management would need to be replaced by strategic civil defence planning that could address the range of scenarios and circumstances involved in preparing for effective total defence. (Lindgren and Ödlund 2017, p. 100.)

The Defence Commission recognised that total defence “rests on the will of the population to defend the country, their commitment in peacetime, and resilience and resistance in war.” (Sweden Defence Commission 2017, p. 5) The Swedish government set up an enquiry into psychological defence against propaganda and disinformation and also distributed an information pamphlet to all households. This document explains the total defence concept and provides information on household emergency preparedness and the different warning systems. (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency 2018) Citizens were warned that they might have to manage without public institutions and infrastructure for seven days in the event of a serious crisis. The leaflet was necessary in part because of the profound changes in society’s relationship with defence and security since 1990, when in a “militarized” Sweden nearly every county hosted a military base and most men had experience of conscription. Rebuilding the necessary infrastructure and societal resilience for total defence remains a long term project for Sweden.

Norway’s latest total defence reference manual, jointly published by the Ministries of Defence and Justice and Public Security, provides the most comprehensive, publically available source of information on total defence available in any Nordic country. (Norway Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Justice 2018) The manual covers all manner of security threats from peacetime natural disasters to war and describes total defence as a concept “... intended to ensure the best possible utilization of society’s limited resources when it comes to prevention, contingency planning and consequence management across the entire spectrum of crises” (Norway Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Justice 2018, p. 15). After the Cold War, Norway’s armed forces were reorganized and downsized and total defence policy became focused on societal vulnerabilities and civil protection during peacetime emergencies. Since 2014, total defence planning has once again addressed both territorial defence and civil emergency preparedness and emphasised the importance of mutual support between the armed forces and the population. In 2016, a program was established to increase the resilience of critical societal functions in line with NATO’s “baseline requirements”. The target for completion is the end of 2020. (Norway Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Justice, 2018, p. 85)

The principle of extensive civilian support to the Norwegian Armed Forces in crisis and war is described as “the core of the total defence concept.” (Norway Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Justice, 2018, p. 31) This principle was tested during the major NATO Trident Juncture exercise in November 2018, which involved 50,000 troops from 31 nations and over 10,000 vehicles, ships and planes. The exercise included cooperation between the armed forces and the Directorate for Civil Protection to rehearse civil defence measures, assess preparedness and identify vulnerabilities. (Hallingstrop 2018) The provision of infrastructure and logistics management for participating countries at ports and airports and through heavy road and rail transport was a major initial test for the newly revived total defence concept. (SHAPE 2018) As a small state, Norway recognizes that its armed forces do not possess all the necessary resources to fight a war and will be dependent on services performed by civilian personnel, the public sector, business and industry. In 2017–2018, the Norwegian Defence Forces signed agreements with various public and private providers to facilitate logistic support and transportation. (Møller 2019, p. 250)

In 2018, the Directorate for Civil Protection also sent leaflets to all households with instructions on self-help measures citizens should take to prepare for the loss of essential services due to emergencies, including war. (Norwegian Directorate of Civil Protection 2018) Norway was not surveyed by the Gallup Poll referred to earlier. However, according to the latest annual opinion poll by the NGO “People and Defence”, 81% of Norwegians support a military defence in the event of attack, 79% want to retain conscription and 72% are willing to participate in defence to the extent that they are capable. (Norway, People and Defence 2018) Øistein Knudsen, Director General of Public Security, claims that Norway’s traditional whole of society approach to defence has produced a robust culture in which resilience is frequently assessed through civil emergency audits, realistic exercises and public reports. (personal communication, 29 August 2019) Nevertheless, according to Karsten Friis from the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Norway “tends to prioritise welfare over warfare” and is unlikely to meet the NATO Wales Summit target of 2% of GDP spending on defence by 2024. (Friis 2018p. 135)

Resilience in wartime requires strong psychological foundations to create a national will to resist an armed attack and a willingness to accept sacrifices. With this in mind, US Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) has sponsored a “resistance seminar series” for Nordic and Baltic countries since 2014. The seminars have assembled a multinational team of scholars and practitioners to plan for arguably the greatest challenge to national resilience, namely resistance to occupation by a foreign power. This has resulted in a Resistance Operating Concept (ROC) to assist government planning and help shape future policy. (Fiala and Stringer 2019) The ROC discusses a range of violent, non-violent and passive resistance measures to be undertaken by the population of an occupied state and the potential for support to resistance movements from US and other NATO Special Operations Forces (SOF). Resistance is framed by the ROC as “a national effort to regain sovereignty after an invasion and occupation by an aggressor nation. It is a whole-of-society effort encompassing a total resistance posture.” (Friberg 2019) It is not clear to what extent ROC initiatives are reflected in Nordic total defence planning. However, there are many similar themes. The ROC resistance seminars stress the need to build societal resilience prior to a crisis, integrate efforts across government

departments, establish a legal and policy framework for resistance activities and increase regional cooperation.

Countries with total defence strategies were never tested by war or occupation during the Cold War. However, total defence might have resulted in total war for societies drawn into existential struggles for their state's survival. Such wars would have caused massive military and civilian casualties and physical destruction. In a worst case scenario, current total defence concepts present similar risks and would require a level of resilience, commitment and sacrifice that would prove a significant challenge for any contemporary society. A Russian invasion and occupation of a Nordic country remains unlikely, but should it occur it is possible that populations resisting Russian occupation would be faced with brutal repression by state military and paramilitary forces. Civilians are invariably the main victims in irregular warfare and experience suggests that Russian forces may act without the constraints that nominally characterize Western military operations. Resistance in the Baltic States after World War II was ruthlessly crushed with mass deportations and enforced collectivization. (Bernotas 2012, p. 7) Russian forces inflicted grievous human rights abuses during operations in Chechnya. In urban areas, Russian tactics involved the employment of devastating and almost indiscriminate firepower. (Miakinkov 2011, p. 667 and p.669), In Syria, the Russian air force has demonstrated no apparent restraint in bombing civilian targets in urban areas held by rebel fighters. It may be significant that recent ROC thinking has emphasized non-violent societal resistance rather than guerrilla operations. (Friberg 2019)

Territorial defence

Not surprisingly, Finland has the most comprehensive plans for territorial defence. Land, sea and air defence is the shared responsibility of all the armed services, border guards and the civilian authorities. Although Finland's population is only 5.4 million, its current mobilisation strength is around 230,000. (Military Periscope 2019) Finland maintains a territorial defence posture that aims to defend the entire country. (Finland Ministry of Defence, Defence Policy) The Army is the core of the total defence concept and takes the bulk of the 26,000 conscripts trained annually. The emphasis on land defence is understandable given Finland's 800 mile border with the Russian Federation. All males between the ages of 18–60 are eligible for mobilisation and around 80% of Finnish men complete military service by the age of 30. (Finland, Conscription – a Finnish Choice) Military service takes place in the Finnish Defence Forces or the Finnish Border Guard. Conscripts serve full time for up to a year, depending on service branch or level of leadership training. This is followed by a reserve liability, training and mobilisation commitment. Reservists are usually assigned to units within their local geographical area for territorial defence. Finland's armed services and civilian authorities prepare for defence in depth. Exercises emphasize delay, stealth and deception. Finnish SOF and border guard rangers train to fight guerrilla war behind enemy lines in the event of an invasion. (Rehman 2016, Special Forces in Focus 2017)

Like other states in the region, Finland is seeking to improve its conventional forces, with an emphasis on land defence and, in particular, the deployment of rapid reaction units that would be essential to reinforce deterrence in a crisis. (Finland Government Defence Report 2017, pp. 21–22) Armoured and jaeger brigades are being re-equipped,

but the immediately available troops to counter a hybrid campaign or short notice invasion number only 15,300, including 10,300 conscripts, supplemented by the 2,700 active border guards. (Military Balance 2019, pp.103–104) Finland recognizes that the warning period in a military crisis has become shorter and the potential threshold for the use of force is lower. Although a recent study suggests that Russian forces are not currently equipped for a short notice mechanized conventional conflict in the Nordic Baltic area, (Harris and Kagan 2018, pp. 12–14) Finland has taken measures to accelerate the mobilisation process and improve combat readiness. (Finland Government Defence Report 2017, p. 5) These measures include a database update of available reservists (Jonsson and Engvall 2018) and legislative changes that allow the president to waive the previous advanced notice required for reservist exercises and grant authority for the armed forces to engage threats that were previously considered below the normal armed conflict threshold. (Mäkelä 2017) These developments are intended to increase the number of combat ready troops without full mobilisation and make hostile grey zone operations easier to counter.

Finland maintains relatively low levels of defence expenditure, mainly due to the extensive use of conscripts. Austerity driven budget cuts after 2010 led to a decrease in the number of military exercises, the curtailment or postponement of procurement programs and cuts in military staff and administration. Despite recent modest budget increases, Finland will still spend a smaller percentage of GDP on defence in 2020 than in 2006 when expenditure stood at 1.4%. (Defense News 2015, Finland, Ministry of Defence Press Releases 2019). In 2017 the government identified shortcomings in intelligence and surveillance, command and control, and logistical systems. The same report acknowledged that significant air, sea and land equipment would need replacement in the mid-2020s (Finland Government Defence Report 2017, p. 12). Therefore, spending rose in 2019 and is planned to increase to 1.7% of GDP by 2023. (Army Technology 2018, Military Balance (The) 2019, p. 103) Financial constraints have already forced a trade-off between longer term defence procurement and the short term need to increase readiness capabilities. Despite Finland's overall improved economic outlook, concurrent efforts to increase readiness and mobilised strength as well as acquire expensive new equipment will pose significant, arguably insurmountable, challenges for Finland's defence policy in the 2020s.

Conscription is the foundation of Finland's comprehensive national defence policy. However, Finland suffers from problems inherent to compulsory national service systems. The current process of increasing the wartime strength of regional troops from 230,000 to 280,000 for territorial defence will not address the problem of insufficient numbers of professional soldiers. (Szyjański 2017). Other than the rapid reaction units, the Army's brigade level units focus on training conscripts and are, therefore, not necessarily combat ready. The recent extension of conscript training for high readiness troops from 6 to 12 months may exacerbate the problem. (Mäkelä 2017) According to the open source military database, Military Periscope, there were reports of drop outs from military training, recruits with mental, physical and discipline problems, and significant exemptions from reservists' refresher training. Most of the examples cited date from before 2014, but as late as 2016 conscripts reportedly complained that their training did not adequately prepare them for combat. (Military Periscope 2019)

Finland's primary security policy objective remains to avoid becoming a party to a military conflict and it maintains a self-reliant and non-aligned defence policy. (Finland Government Defence Report 2017, p. 15) Nevertheless, given the current threat environment, increased cooperation with NATO, the EU and bilaterally with Sweden and the US has become an integral part of Finland's security planning.

The declared objective of Sweden's total defence policy is to deter an aggressor by signalling that an attack would be met by resolute resistance from both the armed forces and the civilian population. (Sweden Defence Commission 2017, p. 1–2) The Defence Commission (2017) report acknowledged that Sweden might have to face an armed conflict unaided and in the worst case would have to “resist serious disturbances in the functionality of society” for three months. (Sweden Defence Commission 2017, p. 2) Until the mid-1980s, Sweden maintained large defence forces with 100,000 active duty soldiers and a further 350,000 in local defence units and the Home Guard, backed up by powerful air and naval forces. (Carlqvist 2015, p. 2) In the decades after the Cold War, military policy was focused on expeditionary operations, the wartime strength of the army was reduced by 95%, the navy and air force by 70% and total defence planning was scrapped. (Salonius-Pasternak 2018, p. 3) Policy was reversed after 2014 and territorial defence once again became the priority task for the Swedish armed forces. A defence bill in 2015 aimed to strengthen war fighting capability, enhance bilateral defence cooperation and reactivate the total defence concept in order to supply the armed forces with critical logistical support. (Military Balance 2019, p. 79, Sweden, Government Offices 2018) However, a report submitted by the Defence Commission in May 2019, which focused on the war fighting elements of total defence, presented a very negative view of Swedish military capacity. (Sweden Defence Commission 2019) It assessed the operational capability of the Swedish armed forces as limited, despite efforts at rearmament since 2015. (Sweden Defence Commission 2019) The Commission recommended urgent improvements in organization, manning and equipment.

Budget increases will take Swedish defence spending from 1.12% of GDP in 2018 to 1.5% by 2025, with additional funding for civil defence, but it is questionable if there is the political will to meet the military aspirations of the Defence Commission. (Sweden Defence Commission 2019, p.10, Military Balance 2019, p. 82, Military Periscope 2018, p. 5) The commission acknowledged that international cooperation would form an essential element of total defence and concluded that Sweden should as far as possible develop joint operational planning with Finland and “to the fullest extent possible coordinate its planning with that of Norway, Denmark, the UK, the US and NATO.” (Sweden Defence Commission 2019, p. 9) As NATO will rely on Sweden in the event of regional collective defence operations, it has arguably become axiomatic that the alliance will come to Sweden's aid in a conflict. (Salonius-Pasternak 2018, p. 8)

The aforementioned leaflet sent to Swedish households reminded the population that everyone between the ages of 16 and 70 has a duty to contribute in the event of war and may be conscripted into the armed forces, civilian organizations controlled by the government or what is described as general national service. (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency 2018, p. 9) This reflects the long Swedish tradition of conscription and mass mobilisation. Since the 19th Century, Sweden has maintained independent volunteer defence organizations that recruit and train citizens for a range of civil and military defence duties. (GlobalSecurity.org 2011) Although conscription into the armed

services was suspended in 2010, it was reinstated in 2018, both due to the changed security situation and because volunteer service failed to meet the 4,000 annual recruitment target. (Sweden Government Offices 2016) Like Norway, conscription is now gender neutral, draftees serve up to 12 months and remain part of the reserve until the age of 47. However, those currently selected for service represent just 4% of the 90,000 Swedes who reach conscription age each year. (BBC News 2017) During the Cold War some 85% of men were enlisted and therefore it is not surprising that the Defence Commission has recommended that conscription numbers should double to 8,000 by 2024. (Sweden Defence Commission 2019, p. 7) The volunteer Home Guard has a key role in territorial defence and accounts for almost half of all armed forces personnel. Its 22,000 members are organized into 40 battalions and can be rapidly mobilised. (Swedish Armed Forces, Home Guard) Its main wartime tasks include the protection of military installations, surveillance and intelligence gathering. As it represents the sole military presence in many parts of the country, the Home Guard provides an important link between the population and the armed forces.

In 2019, the fully mobilised strength of Sweden's war-time military organizations was around 60,000 people. The Defence Commission has proposed a war-time organization of 90,000, including Home Guard and civilians, (Sweden Defence Commission 2019, p. 7) but this would still be far less than the numbers potentially available for mobilisation during the Cold War. The active military forces are being increased and re-equipped. But as the army can currently field just two mechanized brigades and the navy has only five corvettes, five submarines and four missile boats to guard Sweden's long coastline, the army and navy especially, remain too small for an effective defence of Sweden's territory. (Military Balance 2019, p. 81–82)

NATO and the US in particular are the cornerstones of Norway's security policy. The country's defence depends on external support and early allied reinforcements. (Norway, Ministry of Defence 2016, p. 4) Although Norway acknowledges its NATO Article 3 responsibility to maintain the capacity to resist armed attack, it seeks to avoid the risk of having to act independently in an armed conflict. As Norwegian analysts note "credible deterrence must be based on the involvement of allies simultaneously with Norwegian forces". (Norway, Ministry of Defence 2015, p. 61) The "Total Defence Concept" is secondary to this requirement.

The Norwegian active duty armed forces number 23,250 of which roughly a third are conscripts. There are 40,000 reservists in the Home Guard, which includes a Rapid Reaction Force of 3,000. (Military Balance (The) 2019, pp. 113–114) Like other Nordic states, conscription is enshrined in the constitution. Norwegian conscripts initially serve 12 months in the regular armed forces and six months in the Home Guard. Full time service is followed by periods of refresher training. (Military Periscope 2017) Home Guard troops provide infantry for territorial defence, assist the police, guard critical infrastructure and patrol Norway's border with Russia. Norway also recognizes that the reception, support and protection of incoming allied reinforcements during a crisis will be an essential role for the Home Guard. Although the Defence Act established conscription for all Norwegian citizens between the ages of 19 and 44, (Norway Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2018, p. 38) the draft system is highly selective. Only the most physically and psychologically suitable and motivated individuals are accepted for service, which, for example, was around 13% of the total eligible in

2012. (Kosnik 2017, pp. 461–462) As is the case in Finland, the continuous requirement to train conscripts has negatively affected land force combat readiness. (Norway Ministry of Defence 2017)

The Norwegian Long Term Defence Plan includes plans “to further develop the total defence concept”, but the main strategic priorities are intelligence and surveillance, strike capability, air defences, and air and maritime assets to deter Russian military adventurism in the High North. (Norway Ministry of Defence Long Term Defence Plan (adopted) 2016) Norway’s F35s armed with Joint Strike Missiles will provide its armed forces with an offensive standoff capability, which might enhance deterrence by threatening to inflict unacceptable punishment against an aggressor’s armed forces. (Bowers 2018, p. 5) During the Cold War, Norway had a territorial defence concept that required massive mobilisation of military and civilian manpower, infrastructure and resources. (Friis 2018, pp. 129 - 130) However, large scale territorial defence and guerrilla warfare are no longer considered options, not least because of the small size of the land forces. (Norway Ministry of Defence 2015, p. 66) The Army suffered the bulk of the military cuts after the Cold War and before 2014 expeditionary operations were prioritized over territorial defence. (Lindgren and Graeger 2017, p.96), The Norwegian Army was reduced from a Cold War total of thirteen brigades to just one and the size of the Home Guard was halved. The Army remains a lesser priority and a land power study in 2017 suggested that it would be unable to conduct more than a limited territorial defence. (Norway Ministry of Defence, Land Force Enquiry 2017, pp. 11/22) The study found that the armed forces suffered from low combat readiness, limited capacity, equipment shortfalls and a lack of reserves. The Home Guard, primarily organized, equipped and trained for guard and security duties, would have very limited combat power against a sophisticated opponent. Norway has gambled on hi-technology weapon systems and the rapid arrival of US reinforcements to provide deterrence or effective defence in the event of Russian aggression. This defence posture arguably leaves Norway vulnerable in hybrid or grey zone warfare situations too small to trigger outside assistance. Although Norway is strengthening Brigade North, its only combat brigade, it might struggle to resist a major attack in Finnmark before reinforcements arrive in theatre.

Jeva Brzia argues that the first requirement for small states resisting aggression is to mobilise as large a section of society as possible to offset the aggressor’s numerical advantage. (Brzia 2019, p.71 In the Swiss case, total defence was founded on a four-corps, 625,000 strong conventional military force which represented nearly 12% of the population when mobilised. (Fiala and Stringer 2019, Appendix D) In terms of military numbers, Finland is the only Nordic country that mobilises or plans to mobilise a substantial proportion of its population for the direct defence of the state. However, comprehensive territorial defence may not be the most cost effective way to employ limited military assets in the current threat environment. A recent international seminar held at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies (GCMC), for example, concluded that in the worst case scenario of a military conflict in the Nordic-Baltic region. Russia’s mostly likely course of action would be an operation by theatre-ready forces to seize a limited territorial objective, a so called “land grab”, to create a military fait accompli before NATO could fully mobilise. (GCMC 2019) The consensus of the seminar was that total defence concepts would be no deterrent against such a scenario. A recent study by the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI)

described Russian coercive diplomacy as the most likely future threat to Nordic states. In this situation, the role of Russia's armed forces would be to threaten and intimidate rather than take direct armed action. (Nyhamar, *Three Future Scenarios* 2019, p. 9) Here again, territorial defence capacity would have little relevance, although national resilience might help toughen the resolve of the government of a targeted country.

Partner cooperation

Traditionally total defence was premised on the possibility that a state would be left largely to fend for itself in the event of an attack. However, contemporary total defence concepts in the Nordic region stress the importance of assistance from allies and partners either to reinforce deterrence in a crisis or resist aggression should deterrence fail. This extends also to civil defence. The Swedish Defence Commission in 2017, for example suggested bilateral civil defence cooperation with Finland and Norway in addition to closer military relations. (Sweden, Defence Commission 2017, p. 6) Former Finnish diplomat, Pauli Järvenpää, has recommended that Nordic and Baltic states work together to review societal resilience and how it can be improved. (Järvenpää 2017, p. 14) A recent article by Jaokim Møller from the Norwegian Institute of Defence Studies recommended trilateral collaboration on total defence, including private sector involvement, as a means of improving overall regional defence cooperation. (Møller 2019, p. 251)

The Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFECO) provides the overarching structure for defence cooperation in the region. (NORDEFECOa) NORDEFECO provides a framework for cooperation to enhance territorial defence capabilities and bring potential economies to national defence policies. Its committees are chaired at ministerial level and the presidency rotates annually between the four major Nordic countries. Since 2014, NORDEFECO's main focus has shifted from defence economics to territorial and collective defence issues. Increased total defence cooperation and improved resilience against hybrid challenges are included as targets in NORDEFECO's Vision 2025, although no specifics are provided. (NORDEFECO, Vision 2025) The NORDEFECO Annual Report 2018 highlighted military cooperation projects that included simplified military movement across borders for training and exercises. (NORDEFECO 2018, p. 4 and pp. 8–9) However, the upbeat tone of the report belies the fact that most projects, including important cooperation on logistics, have not yet progressed beyond the consultation and study level. The military movement provisions, for example, currently remain limited to peacetime. (Saxi and Friis 2018, p. 2–3)

A study by the FIIA identified differing NATO affiliations as the main obstacle to deeper collaboration. (Isso-Markku *et al.* 2018, pp. 42–49, Saxi and Friis 2018, p. 2, Møller 2019) Strong bilateral ties between non-NATO member countries Finland and Sweden have therefore developed outside NORDEFECO's multilateral framework. Different planning priorities, military requirements, resource allocation, national defence industries and an absence of political trust at the state level have also traditionally hampered closer military cooperation. (Forsberg 2013, pp. 1178–1179) According to a study by NUPI, fear of either “abandonment” or “entrapment” also plays a role. States fear that facilities or capabilities might suddenly be unavailable in a crisis, while Sweden and Finland worry that they could lose their national freedom of action to stay out of a conflict in which they are not directly involved. (Saxi and Friis 2018) Finland, especially, also remains mindful

of the need to balance broader military cooperation with the desire to maintain good relations with Russia.

Tore Nyhamar provides a more optimistic view of Nordic security and defence cooperation in a recent report for the FFI. He argues that economic and demographic trends, as well as a similar threat perception, will inevitably drive greater military cooperation. (Nyhamar T. *A Future Nordic Alliance* 2019) During Exercise Trident Juncture 2018, Finnish troops operated as part of a Swedish Brigade, Danish helicopters supported the Norwegian Brigade, while NATO and partner forces from Finland and Sweden were able to use military bases and airfields in all the Nordic countries. (NORDEFCO 2019, p. 15) Exercise Northern Wind 2019 involved troops from Sweden, Finland and Norway with marines from the US and UK in what has been described as “the biggest showcase of interoperability and cooperation the region has seen”. (Mäkelä 2019)

It should be emphasised that Nordic defence cooperation is not viewed in the region as a security alternative, but rather as a supplement or complement to bilateral arrangements, cooperation with NATO and the EU and strong US support. (Saxi 2019, p. 662 and p. 677, Forsberg 2013, p. 1175) As discussed earlier, Norway and non-aligned, Finland and Sweden have included assistance from NATO and EU states as key elements in their total defence planning. Bilateral agreements with the US and the relationship between Finland and Sweden are especially significant. Sweden and Finland, in particular, have deepened their defence cooperation. A political memorandum of understanding signed in July 2018 forms the basis for cooperation during “peace, crisis and war.” (Sweden Ministry of Defence 2018, p. 3) The memorandum does not set limits on military cooperation, but falls short of any formal defence obligations. However, joint exercises are increasingly moving beyond crisis management scenarios to joint defence operations in wartime. (Szymański 2019, p. 4). A strong partnership with the US is also a key factor in Nordic defence planning. Since 2016, all Nordic states have signed new defence agreements with the US to reinforce extended deterrence by widening bilateral cooperation in areas such as training and exercises and partner capacity building. (Vaicekauskaitė 2018, Defence.Info 2018) Nordic states have sought to involve NATO, including major European partners such as the United Kingdom, Germany and Poland, in regional and national military exercises to test total defence. Norway held Trident Juncture in 2018. Sweden will host a large scale total defence exercise in 2020 and Finland plans similar manoeuvres for 2021. (Møller 2019, p. 250)

Conclusions

Traditionally total defence concepts sought to achieve deterrence by demonstrating that an attack would be unsuccessful or inflict unacceptable costs on an aggressor. As noted earlier, a target state aimed to be like a porcupine, indigestible to an enemy. However, in the Nordic region, only Finland currently prepares for comprehensive territorial defence similar to that of Switzerland’s posture during the Cold War. It is the only country that would have the capacity to mount sustained resistance once fully mobilised in the event of Russian military aggression. Sweden and Norway do not have the armed force levels to offer more than a limited defence of their territory without direct allied or partner support. Norway, in particular, appears to attach more deterrent value to hi-end

conventional forces than traditional territorial defence. However, Finland's long land border with Russia requires it to place a greater emphasis on territorial defence than Norway or Sweden. Even with a re-emphasis on total defence, the structure of the latter's armed forces will naturally reflect a greater emphasis on air and maritime operations in the High North and Baltic Sea respectively.

All of the countries surveyed retain conscription, but only Finland trains a significant proportion of its eligible population for combat operations. Unfortunately, reliance on conscripts in all three Nordic countries ties a significant proportion of active forces to training duties which potentially limits their overall combat readiness. In Finland's case, the state has impressive reserves of trained manpower for territorial defence but could be vulnerable in the event of a surprise attack or hybrid operations completed before full mobilisation could take place. Arguably, Finland also faces major challenges in both maintaining the combat readiness of its large reserves of manpower and simultaneously modernizing the equipment of all three services for high end conventional warfare.

However, a military operation against a NATO state or one of its non-aligned Nordic partners remains unlikely. A war in the Nordic region would pose considerable risks and costs for Russia. Despite the limitations noted above, Nordic states are making improvements in their conventional forces and reviving civil defence measures. Work continues to increase public awareness of the threat and ensure that civil society can support the armed forces in crisis management and war. Ever closer security cooperation with NATO and EU partners, makes it less likely that a Nordic state would have to face a major crisis involving Russia alone. The total defence measures in hand in the Nordic region are arguably enough to remove the temptation for Russia to gamble on military action in a crisis and so maintain deterrence, especially so long as Russia's foreign policy objectives in the North broadly continue to support the political status quo and existing regional economic cooperation with Russia, especially in the High North, can be maintained.

The greater current threat from Russia lies in the realm of political warfare, the so called grey zone activities that seek to exploit political and societal fault lines in Western states to gain influence through weakening trust in democratic governments and institutions. Nordic efforts to build national resilience have largely focused on civil society support for the armed forces in crisis and war, but the threat from Russian propaganda and disinformation has not been overlooked. As discussed earlier, the Nordic states are already resilient in these respects, but since 2014, all of the countries discussed here have sought to increase the preparedness of their societies to deal with the new threat environment. Deterrence through resilience is an essential part of total defence and initiatives to improve strategic communication, cyber and information security and infrastructure robustness also help to combat Russian influence operations in societies that are already resistant. Of course, efforts to build national resilience remain a work in progress and will require continued political will and public support to sustain in the longer term.

In summary, Nordic total defence concepts of the 21st Century are not a case of "back to the future". Finland never modified its "total" approach to security and, in the case of Norway and Sweden, current total defence preparations are not on the scale or urgency of their efforts during the Cold War. Despite measures to stand alone against aggression in extremis, all of the states anticipate, or even depend on, military assistance from allies or partners in the event of a major crisis. With possible exception of Finland, there are no

plans for genuinely mass mobilization to prepare for an armed attack and there appears little political appetite, or indeed perceived need, in Nordic states to ready institutions or societies for the privations and sacrifices required for a truly fundamental approach to total defence.

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Byline: The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the George C. Marshall Center, the government of the United States of America or the Federal Republic of Germany.

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