

# The Baltic Sea Region: Hard and Soft Security Reconsidered

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LATVIAN INSTITUTE OF  
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## The Baltic Sea Region: Hard and Soft Security Reconsidered

The Baltic Sea region has experienced profound alterations since the Cold War, and the region's course of evolution is likely to continue as such. The book "The Baltic Sea Region: Hard and Soft Security Reconsidered" provides a collection of opinions that assess the current situation both in the military as well as non-military fields, with a particular focus on the aftermath of the 2016 NATO Warsaw summit and the state of the play of the regional infrastructure interconnections. The book is the result of successful collaboration between the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, the Public Diplomacy Division of NATO, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

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# Societal Security: An Emerging Field of Scholarship Underpinning Practices in the Baltic Sea Region

Bengt Sundelius

Throughout Europe, including in Sweden, serious rethinking about security is underway. In the Brussels focused networks, novel ideas are being presented and debated in a common search for better tools to deal with the more varied security challenges of the future. Traditional fears are combined with revised notions of the consequences of living with Risk Society. In the holistic approach to security that Sweden pursues, procedures for war-like scenarios and peace time emergencies merge, internal and external security are interlocked, and the ambitions of enhancing state security and providing citizen safety become blurred.

There has been a paradigmatic shift in Europe from the national defence systems of the Cold War to the evolving notion of embedded societal security with resilience as a core concept. States have developed novel practices for dealing with security challenges from abroad, at home and not least those that relate to different flows that transcend national borders. The latter domain becomes a primary playing field for the pursuit of embedded societal security, where building resilience in the face of various contingencies has become a key concern.

In addition, antagonistic elements by states and other actors have resurfaced with full force also in Europe. The post-Cold War order has not turned into a Kantian eternal peace of inter-state harmony. Rather the adversarial component of international networks, information flows, dependencies and potential vulnerabilities have been accentuated during recent years. Societal security is pursued in a political atmosphere of adversarial interdependence, where also the use of force plays a part.

Several types of security challenges will be faced simultaneously in the near future by European nations. Our abilities to meet them in effective and legitimate ways will be severely tested.

In traditional national security thinking, threats are actor-based and the classical threat is an armed attack by another state. This scenario constituted the essence of the East-West military confrontation. It is part of the mission of NATO and all states plan and prepare for this classical form. The 1990s was a tragic decade of armed conflict among European national entities. As recently as in August 2008 and again since the spring of 2014, this deadly contingency has resurfaced in the close vicinity of the Baltic Sea Region. Europe may be whole and free, but it is not yet secure from armed attacks.

If one drops the notion of the state as the only antagonist, one can focus on another actor- focused threat; an armed attack by “another”. September 11 was an example of an armed attack by “another”. In Madrid, London, Oslo, Paris and Brussels we have since then witnessed horrible examples of this deadly threat category. Over the last fifteen years this actor-based threat has been the most urgent for many European security planners.

What are the most proper instruments to cope with that kind of challenge? Are the instruments that were developed to deal with an armed attack by another state, also the most appropriate to deal with an armed attack by “another something”? Should such violent threats be framed as legitimate national defence concerns, as an area for criminal investigations and police authority, or as the evolving internal-external hybrid of embedded societal security? The choice of problem frame will have consequences for the appropriate legalities and the instruments chosen to deal with this type of violent attack. This framing issue is evolving and different governments have adopted distinct national doctrines. Also the EU Commission has been active in this formative work.

A third, actor-focused threat is an attack by another state. Here the notion that all threats are armed is dropped. Classical coercive instruments for threatening other parties are economic, financial or energy blackmail. One can draw on transnational networks and

dependencies in trade, finance, energy, and so forth to manipulate other countries. During the 1970s and again during recent years the so called oil and gas weapon has been noted among security analysts. These types of non-military threats to national independence and even survival are very likely to stay with us in the future as well.

Under the label of Hybrid Warfare, several coercive methods including armed force are combined for the purpose of coercing another nation to submit to illegitimate demands. Information operations and efforts to manipulate open communication flows are part of this coercive portfolio. Reliance on the internet and on social media opens up for vast opportunities for clandestine attacks by other states. Full spectrum conflicts have become all too prevalent in contemporary Europe. This is the novelty of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

The fourth of the actor-focused threats is an attack by “Another”. Neither states nor armed force are in focus for this highly consequential type of threat. How can one know initially who or what controls an antagonistic cyber operation? Is it directed by another state, by a terrorist network, by a criminal syndicate, or by the individual hacker? How do you know for sure, when you have to respond to such an attack under uncertainty and severe time pressure? Cyber security has rapidly become a main concern for national –or more appropriately – for embedded societal security.

There is among civil emergency experts and security planners a notable slide away from a primary focus on the security of the territory, a concern with keeping the geographical parameters intact in some fashion. The concern is now also with the security of critical functions of society. It is not the territory that is at stake, but it is the ability of the government and civil society to function, critical infrastructures to be maintained, the democratic ability to govern, to manifest certain basic values. Regardless of retaining full territorial control, there may be antagonistic forces undermining the functionality of society and the ability to govern. This paradigmatic widening from a territorial fixation to a societal security and resilience focus influences the thinking within the EU and NATO.

European governments increasingly deal with the security issues related to the critical functions of society and the requirements of

governance. With the possibility of antagonists striking vulnerable infrastructures, the real time character of these threats stand out. It is important not to build new vulnerabilities into infrastructures or into the fabrics of societies. Vulnerabilities can open up functional access points, channels of penetration for attacks by “another”, whatever that other may be.

The technological complexities of modern society open for high-risk, tight couplings across sectors and across national borders. Infrastructure interconnectedness has become part of our daily lives as society depends on reliable systems for energy supply, robust communications and functioning IT-networks. These spheres of activity are mutually dependent on each other. A breakdown in one system may give immediate effects in another. For example without electricity there will be no IT-function and problems with telephone services. Similarly, with a breakdown of an IT-network, electricity supplies may be interrupted. The combination possibilities of system flaws and targeted interventions are enormous with such interconnectedness among systems-of-systems.

Naturally, antagonists wishing to inflict harm upon a society have interests in finding the critical points, where various infrastructures connect. A major task in planning for societal security and for resilience is to transform potential vulnerabilities linked to this technological complexity into high reliability systems. This is an open-ended process involving many societal sectors and numerous government agencies. It cannot be accomplished without the active participation of those that actually own and operate most of these infrastructure networks, i.e. the private sector. Much work in the region is now devoted to bringing businesses into the planning for a resilient societal security system. This is a very difficult task as it must build on a whole-of-society approach rather than on the more familiar whole-of-government approach to national security.

Public expectations of government performance remain high in the face of a wide spectrum of threats to state security and to individual safety. At the same time, the available resources under the direct command of public authority to meet such threats have been redefined and often



reduced in scope and magnitude. This national deficiency has not yet been compensated for by enhanced multinational capacities. In spite of a general awareness of the importance of pooling resources internationally, when confronting trans-boundary threats, only modest added value in terms of tangible resources is yet generated from such cooperation.

Statements of solidarity have been combined with ad hoc arrangements for mutual assistance, when large-scale disruptions of societies have occurred. Today we witness the massive flows of migrants across borders. Recently we experienced the effects of flows of capital and infections. The consequences of the more frequent disruptions of transnational cyber flows are becoming increasingly evident. The governing structures for handling the multiple threats to embedded societal security are still primarily national in focus.

In order to meet these challenges together it is important to be inter-operative in technology and in communications across borders. But, we should also think about interoperability in terms of shared knowledge and of a common problem definition as a basis for joint efforts. It is important to build knowledge about societal security and resilience in all countries, as an analytical underpinning for the implementation of the security strategies by nations and by the EU. New requirements are levied on think-tanks to develop such knowledge in partnership with policy agencies and operatives. One needs knowledge about varied security threats and about relevant strategies and tools that is both based on scientific research and on practical experiences.

## POLICY NEEDS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Societal security research has a solid foothold in some parts of Europe. It is less developed in others. Its academic branch can be traced to a sub-tradition of security studies that has sought to widen the concept of security to encompass non-state actors and non-state references. The so called Copenhagen School of Security Studies developed in the 1990s around prominent scholars, such as Barry Buzan and Ole Waever. Innovative academic work carried through to the next generation of scholars thanks to their intellectual leadership and mentorship.

The concept of societal security, and with a core of resilience, has developed as a guide for the policy developments for emergency management in many European nations. The emphasis has been placed on the functionality of society and on the values that lay the foundation for European societies rather than on the traditional emphasis on territorial concerns. Where it appears in policy circles it plays in a range of attempts to advance political priorities in the face of a new threat landscape, including threats to food and water supply, health, pollution and climate change, religion, culture and, last but not least, terrorism. The emergency management agencies of the Nordic countries, the Netherlands, and the UK Civil Contingencies Secretariat have built their policy doctrines and practices around this approach although using slightly different terminologies. In the United States, somewhat similar practices are conducted under the headings of Homeland Security and Community Resilience.

On the European Union level the societal security concept has taken hold. Several of the DGs of the European Commission work in line with this approach, such as DG ECHO, DG HOME, DG SANCHO and the Joint Research Center (JRC). There is a growing understanding in these DGs that the evolving policy doctrines and practices need to be underpinned by research based knowledge. The academic study of how the institutions of the EU are engaged in questions of societal security and crisis management has developed alongside these developments at the policy level.

The European Parliament has shown an interest in the direction of the EU security research program and in particular pointed to the importance of including the societal and ethical dimensions. Another parliamentary body, the Nordic Council, has for many years pushed these governments in the direction of giving more prominence to societal security concerns and has emphasized the importance of research in this field. This political interest was one factor behind the establishment of a Nordic research program on societal security in 2013 by the joint Nordic research council, Nordforsk, located in Oslo.

With funding from the EU FP7 program, SOURCE, the Societal Security Network, was launched in 2014 as a virtual center for research

support and coordination on societal security. It is a consortium of twelve partners across Europe. This platform will begin to integrate better the various research groups in this field that so far have worked in fairly isolation.

The last decade has brought fundamental changes in our research-based knowledge and experience-based understandings of security and insecurity. We know that we are confronted by a new landscape of security threats, new security actors, and new security technologies. The traditional roles of the state and state institutions are rapidly evolving both at the international and national levels making for a new complexity of multi-level security governance. Familiar legal and normative principles are being challenged by new expectations. These changes operate at all levels and across various domains of society.

The traditional goals of ensuring territorial integrity and national sovereignty are already complemented with securing critical functions of society. These are linked by shared transnational interdependencies that must not be transformed into asymmetrical vulnerability traps. Examples are the deliberate denial of critical metals or components or simply interruptions in access due to various types of disasters or interferences.

A range of institutions and professions have been traditionally responsible for ensuring the security of the state, of society and of individuals. However, the changing security reality, changing expectations and quickly evolving technological approaches to ensuring security put into question the traditional premises and practices of security institutions, professions, and the networks that connect them. New understandings are needed on how we can bring key institutions and professions, not least in the public sphere, more in line with the emerging security challenges of this century.

One analytical and operational challenge arising from the new security landscape is the growing intermixing of traditionally separate sectors of society through privatisation, outsourcing and just-in-time supply chains. New knowledge and expertise is needed on the mechanisms of interaction between widely different actors and subjects through processes of networking, collaboration, and information-

sharing. At first regard, all of these processes tend to indicate a move from formal to informal, network based governance. Yet research is needed in order to better understand the interplay of domestic, regional and global institutions in the face of informal governance that often lies beyond public visibility and democratic accountability. This includes, in particular, the increasingly trans-boundary character of governance, not only in a geographical sense, but in a conceptual sense as well. Where the legitimacy of security measures has been traditionally grounded in formal state connections, the soft and informal legitimacy that increasingly supports contemporary security measures is not yet fully understood.

The resilience of societies is generally assumed to be a public good. Considerable social science research is underway on the features of risk, organizational adaptability and the components of societal and community resilience. Important new knowledge is being generated through this established research. However critical reflection on the assumptions at the core of what we understand as “resilience” will likely reveal some surprising results. The assumption that increased societal resilience will take place without secondary effects needs further examination. In-depth studies are needed of the adaptability of law and legal systems, and of the capacity of existing institutions to address new risks and to foster resilience, just as critical investigations are needed of institutional designs for resilience and enhanced security. The ideal of an optimally resilient society also changes the premises for crisis management bodies and the high stakes decision-making and coordination they carry out under extreme information pressures. Security related investments in societal and community resilience need to be underpinned by social science scholarship.

## THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION

The Baltic Sea Region is again whole and free but it is not yet safe and secure for the inhabitants of this region. More work in unison is needed in order for us to be able to declare our region fully safe and completely secure. Sweden, through the Civil Contingencies Agency, coordinates the

Policy Area Secure of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. In this policy area, many regional cooperation activities covering several years aim to reduce existing societal vulnerabilities, build common capacities and foster a culture that enhances our shared safety and resilience. Increased resilience often goes hand in hand with innovation, new capabilities, skills and technologies and thus creates more growth. By 2030 the entire region should be as safe and secure as many of our local communities already are.

Today most major risk scenarios in the Baltic Sea Region involve critical flows of different kinds. These flows reach across national borders, across sectors and across levels of authority. There are flows of energy, essential goods, finances, information and people. These are beneficial flows across boundaries that we want to protect and to develop. They contribute to prosperity and wellbeing. But we also note undesirable flows across our borders, like viruses-both human and digital-extreme weather conditions, illegal and hazardous substances, narcotics, criminality and violence. Such flows harm the open, competitive markets and business activities of the region.

Sweden is active together with other nations of the region to examine these flows and to identify how we can strengthen the beneficial flows and limit the harmful flows across the region. The interoperability of civil protection and law enforcement authorities need to be further strengthened and we should develop more synergies in their daily practices. This is a multidimensional task with a foundation in science and technology but with great obstacles in organizational rigidities, professional legacies and closed mindsets. Trust needs to be built across national, sectoral and professional boundaries. Emergency management professionals that train, exercise and learn together may develop shared understandings of the major challenges to safety and security and can build an enhanced capacity to meet these challenges together. Preparedness well ahead of the acute emergency, whatever its origin, is the best way to limit the costly consequences of various disasters that may inflict harm on our societies and on our populations.

The strategic objective of PA Secure is to build a common culture of societal security. This is a long-term and complex task that demands strong

engagement and ownership from all stakeholder actors. For this reason, PA Secure launched in 2014 the Baltic Leadership Program for future high-level policy makers. The purpose of the Baltic Leadership Program is to equip the participants with the tools and perspectives needed to manage cross-border collaborations between diverse organizations in an intercultural context. In order to have an impact and drive change, the leaders of tomorrow need to be better prepared and better connected than ever before. The aim is to learn from the experiences of all the countries involved, gain new and lasting networks and to strengthen Baltic Sea Region co-operation in civil protection and law enforcement. The program helps create personal networks to pave the way for an ability to resolve national and transnational emergencies together in situations when this capacity really matters.

## RESILIENCE IS SHARED AND SHOULD BE PROJECTED FORWARD

Societal security and resilience became an important agenda item of the June 2016 European Council and of the July 2016 NATO Summit. At both meetings there were significant discussions of potential NATO-EU cooperation in the field of resilience. At the NATO Warsaw Summit allies agreed to a set of baseline requirements for resilience and made national pledges to meet those requirements. Finland and Sweden are also part of this collective reform work as they have formed Enhanced Opportunity Partnerships with NATO. The entire Baltic Sea Region is now engaged in a joint effort to enhance societal security through strengthening societal resilience.

These are positive developments that should be encouraged and supported by publics and parliaments. But they should be understood only as first steps toward a more effective and comprehensive resilience agenda. State-by-state approaches to resilience are important, but insufficient. Resilience must be shared, and it must be projected forward.

Resilience begins at home and is foremost a task for national governments. Yet in an age of potentially catastrophic terrorism, networked threats and disruptive hybrid attacks, no nation is home

alone. Few critical infrastructures that sustain the societal functions of an individual country are limited today to the national borders of that country. This means that traditional notions of territorial security must be supplemented with actions to address flow security – protecting critical links that bind societies to one another. Governments accustomed to protecting their territories must also learn to focus on protecting their connectedness. This requires greater attention to shared resilience. None of the seven baseline requirements for resilience established within NATO by the Warsaw Summit can be met without attention to shared resilience.

NATO and EU members also share a keen interest in projecting resilience forward, since robust efforts by one country may mean little if neighboring systems are weak. NATO allies and EU member states have a vested interest in sharing approaches and projecting operational resilience procedures forward to key neighbors such as Ukraine, Georgia, Moldavia, and Belarus.

Forward resilience should also include a temporal dimension through better performance with regard to early warning and foresight analysis. Only with improved coordination of the required forward looking capacities among member states, the NATO Secretariat and relevant EU institutions, one may avoid recurrent failures of imagination and surprise. Effective and legitimate resilience should over time encompass a spectrum that embraces national, shared and forward strategies.

## CONCLUSIONS: THE AGENDA AHEAD

PA Secure is the instrument of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region to advance the work on societal security and resilience in and around this region. Together we shall launch activities and programs that serve to strengthen our shared societal security through a whole-of-society approach. We shall learn how to meet and recover together from antagonistic threats and natural or man-made disasters. We shall invest hard to reduce local as well as transnational vulnerabilities. Our commitments to build trans-boundary capacities must be effective and enduring. We should promote a holistic framing in our preferred practices

and in the research and educational programs that are needed to underpin these reforms.

Safety and security is a required baseline for achieving economic growth, prosperity and wellbeing for many people in our region. The steadfast achievements in the Policy Area Secure therefore have major consequences also for other policy areas and for the overarching objectives of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The sight is set on 2030 in this important work of direct benefit to society, to business and to our people.



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