The connections between crisis and war preparedness in Sweden

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Abstract

Contemporary liberal and democratic states have ‘securitized’ a growing number of issues by advancing the notion of societal security. This is coupled with a proactive stance and the conception of building societal resilience in order to withstand future crises and disturbances. The preemptive logic of contemporary security and crisis management calls for a new type of resilient neoliberal subject who is willing to accept uncertainty and shoulder greater individual responsibility for her own security. This article offers a genealogical analysis of this development in Sweden since the end of the Cold War, highlighting the role now assigned to citizens within social and national security planning. I argue that seeking a return to a more traditional notion of ‘total defence’ blurs the previously important war/peace and crisis/security distinctions. 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. The analysis also reveals that the responsibilization of individuals introduces a moral dimension into security and generates new forms of citizen–citizen relations. These extricate the sovereign powers of the state and the liberalist social contract between the state and its citizens.

Keywords

Civil preparedness, governmentality, resilience, social and national security, solidarity, war preparedness

Introduction

Security has historically been regarded as the core competence of the state, whereby sovereign power, hierarchical structures and command and control have had the survival of the state itself as their primary objective (Wilson and Bakker, 2016; Rådestad and Larsson, 2018). A broader understanding of security became more widely accepted after the end of the Cold War, particularly among Western countries. This new conception of security includes the entire spectrum of threats and disturbances that modern societies face, including terrorist attacks, financial crises, natural disasters and the increased vulnerability and fragility of technology-dependent modern societies...
that can lead to disruptions in communications (Lentzos and Rose, 2009; Huysmans, 2008; Aradau et al., 2008; Baker and Ludwig, 2016; Adey and Anderson, 2012). This type of approach to the spectrum of threats and dangers brings together both security and crisis management such that the wellbeing of states, societies, populations and individuals are increasingly ‘securitized’ (Chandler, 2013; Brassett and Vaughan-Williams, 2015; Brassett et al., 2013).

This coupling of crisis management and traditional security threats produces important changes in the power triangle discussed by Michel Foucault, which consists of sovereignty, discipline and governmental powers, with the latter having ‘population as its main target and apparatuses of security as its essential mechanism’ (Foucault, 2007: 107–108). This article examines how these changes, discussed below, have resulted from the new approaches to security that are emerging.

A substantial element of security governance now concerns the perceived need for preparedness to face crises that have yet to occur (Adey and Anderson, 2012; Lakoff, 2007). This has given rise to programmes for ‘building societal resilience’ that include imagining threats, crises and disturbances so that proactive measures can be implemented to minimize the consequences of future events (Collier and Lakoff, 2008, 2015; Adey et al., 2015; Brassett and Vaughan-Williams, 2015). A close connection between the discourse of societal resilience and neoliberal governmentality arguably follows from the anticipatory logic of security governance.

Neoliberal governmentality operates above all upon individuals and scholars have previously remarked that a ‘resilient subject’ embodies neoliberal subjectivity insofar as this type of subject accepts the living conditions of insecurity. This subject is produced through the process of responsibilization, a strategic effort on the part of the state to persuade individuals to shoulder greater responsibility for their own security (Joseph, 2013: 38; Bergström, 2016, 2017; Chandler, 2014; Davoudi, 2016; Brassett and Vaughan-Williams, 2015, Rådestad and Larsson, 2018). This is evident in the case of Sweden, which aims to return to a more traditional understanding of state security and ‘total defence’ following a 2015 political decision in parliament (Larsson, 2019; Rådestad and Larsson, 2018). I argue that this ‘return’ is better understood as the employment of new security strategies that couple crisis management with traditional state security. This substantially blurs the historical boundaries between peace and war, perpetuating a condition of crisis/war preparedness for both society and individuals that goes well beyond the accepted notion of civil defence during the Cold War.

This article thus aims to investigate: 1) the specific role that citizens are ascribed in peace/war and crisis/war preparedness in Sweden, and 2) how a corresponding new citizen ideal has been framed and justified.

**Background to the case of Sweden**

Sweden is a strong state with an extensive welfare system that has been developed to care for and protect the population. It thus seems to comprise an unlikely case for developing a neoliberal approach to societal security and promoting greater individual responsibility for security in an age of resilience. Nevertheless, the process of responsibilization and the merging of societal and national security has continued uninterrupted despite a number of changes in government.

Sweden’s adoption of a broader understanding of security in the early 1990s redirected both attention and resources from a more traditional understanding of national defence to a focus on societal and civil security and a new conception of total defence. While society, the population and the business community had previously been viewed as obligated to contribute resources to the armed forces for the purpose of defending the country from external attack, the emphasis instead came to be placed upon support for societal security. In addition, the armed forces were reduced and transformed to being mission oriented rather than defence oriented (Larsson, 2019: 6; Larsson,
2015). Sebastian Larsson has shown that how individuals would act when necessary was a major concern during the Cold War for the authorities, who distributed a number of informational pamphlets to the population to ensure their readiness. Although the message of preparedness was substantially limited at that time to the unlikely event of war, the concept of total defence as a response to the notion of total war nevertheless merged military and civil preparedness in an effective manner (Larsson, 2019: 86). Marie Cronqvist has argued in a similar vein that the Cold War connection of civil and military preparedness comprised a key element in the notion of a strong social democratic society (folkhemmet), with a perceived existential threat to the nation fostering social and economic solidarity across classes (Cronqvist, 2012).

While today’s stated aim of returning to total defence builds upon these historical images and national memories, the new message is that both society and individuals need to prepare for future crises as well as war. It is noteworthy that the new informational pamphlet that the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) distributed to all 4.8 million households in Sweden in 2018 was entitled If Crisis or War Comes (MSB, 2018a).

The present study seeks to show how the new relations between societal and state security blur the distinction between peace and war and connect societal resilience with war/crisis preparedness. The emerging security apparatus for managing peace/war preparedness is arguably more ‘totalizing’ than previous forms of total defence insofar as the actions – and inactions – of individuals are now regarded as impacting individual, societal and state security, even in the immediate absence of war and crises.

Societal security and resilience

Security has historically been regarded as the central competence of the state, in which sovereign power, hierarchical structures and command and control comprise the key governance instruments for security management (Wilson and Bakker, 2016; Rådestad and Larsson, 2018). The accepted view is that when the sovereign state became problematic with the birth of the autonomous individual, the conception of a social contract between the state and individual citizens replaced the hierarchical arrangements of feudal society. Mark Neocleous has argued, however, that liberalism constitutes a line of thought that is in fact devoted to security rather than liberty, and his alternative interpretation undercuts the notion that the liberal state and its institutions are intended to safeguard the liberty of citizens. This casts a new light on the excessive securitization of societal life in liberal democratic states today (Neocleous, 2007). One could thus argue, for example, that the notion of the social contract itself, together with the idea of a freedom/security transaction, facilitates the creeping securitization of ever more issues and problems (see also Balzacq, 2005). Its underlying logic would then serve to sustain the government of societal security and resilience in a way that renders critique and resistance futile (Brassett and Vaughan-Williams, 2015; Chandler, 2013; Bourbeau, 2013; Brassett et al., 2013).

Michel Foucault’s discussions of power and governance in liberal states further explore the connection between liberalism and its orientation towards security. Foucault noted in his lectures at the Collège de France that ‘the general economy of power in our societies is becoming a domain of security . . . a society of security’ (Foucault, 2007: 10–11), with the sovereign and political-judicial notions of power sustaining the compartmentalization of security and freedom. As such, they need to be supplemented by another type of power matrix that theorizes how liberal states engage in caring for and managing the population while nevertheless optimizing the productive individual freedom that supports industrial behaviour and market exchange. If the power of sovereignty comprises the power to take life, then Foucault’s novel notion of biopower may be understood as conceptualizing a technology that focuses on the population as a biological unit that consists of living
beings, reflecting the state’s newfound concern with ‘making live and letting die’ (Foucault, 2004: 247; Foucault, 1990: 142–143).

A biopolitical concern for the wellbeing of the population provides a basis for welfare reforms as well as various programmes and interventions that connect sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower in the management of the state and the population (Foucault, 2008; Dean, 2013). The combination of liberalism and biopolitics thereby forms a specific style and type of security governmentality and governance regime. More precisely, it comprises an:

ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument. (Foucault, 2007: 108; see also Foucault, 2008: 186)

However, the state’s orientation towards security makes possible a mix of interventionist and non-interventionist modes of governance that violates the ethos of liberalism (Dillon and Neal, 2015; Schmitt, 2005; Dean, 2013). A new form of more advanced liberalism (Brady, 2014), frequently referred to as neoliberalism, took shape after the end of World War II. Contrary to the common misconception that it comprises a reinvention of classic liberalism and laissez-faire, the ordo-version of neoliberalism encourages extensive intervention by the state precisely in order to *produce* the societal and economical processes and subjects necessary to sustain the capitalist system, with the latter being regarded as the ultimate guarantor of freedom (Hayek, 2014; Foucault, 2008: 322f).

A neoliberal approach to contemporary security and crisis management would consequently generate new instruments and strategies for governing that utilize individual attitudes and behaviour to promote both national and societal security (Bergström, 2016, 2017; Chandler, 2013, 2014; Davoudi, 2016; Joseph, 2013; Evans and Reid, 2013). This marks a convergence of crisis and security management that addresses the full spectrum of threats, disturbances, and contingencies facing modern societies (Lentzos and Rose, 2009; Huysmans, 2008; Aradau et al., 2008; Baker and Ludwig, 2016; Adey and Anderson, 2012; Dillon and Reid, 2001).

Furthermore, the securitization of a growing range of threats becomes *coupled* with a more preemptive approach towards crises and risks. Societal security is thereby translated into civil contingency planning and preparation for future events, which emphasizes *building* societal resilience to ‘proactively adapt to and recover from disturbances’ (Comfort et al., 2010: 9). Insofar as a population consisting of self-reliant and capable citizens who do not need the support of state authorities during crises *contributes* to societal resilience, it is desirable for such citizens to comprise a type of subject that possesses the qualities needed for this purpose (Lentzos and Rose, 2009; Collier and Lakoff, 2008; Chandler, 2013; Reid and Chandler, 2016: 28). This gives rise to interventionism with the aim of transforming individual citizens into ‘resilient’ neoliberal subjects (Bergström, 2016, 2017; Chandler, 2014; Reid and Chandler, 2016; Davoudi, 2016).

The consequences of societal security, resilience and neoliberal security mechanisms, along with the connections between them, need to be further contextualized so that we can apprehend the lack of resistance they induce and the associated social technologies (Krüger, 2018; Hill and Larner, 2017). Vaughan Higgins and Wendy Larner argue in this respect that instead of theorizing a monolithic understanding of neoliberal rule, it is increasingly important ‘to grasp the geographical and temporal unevenness of the processes involved’ (Higgins and Larner, 2017: 2). Briefly stated, we must recognize:

how heterogeneous elements may come together in ways that have neoliberal effects and the challenges and contestations that limit the possibilities of coherence in neoliberal programs and forms of rules. (Higgins and Larner, 2017: 2)
In order to make sense of the current patchwork of security logics in Sweden, it is thus fruitful to return to Foucault’s power triangle and examine how sovereign power facilitates other forms of power. In this respect:

we should not see things as the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a society of discipline, and then of a society of discipline by a society, say, of government. In fact, we have a triangle: sovereignty, discipline, and governmental management, which has population as its main target and apparatuses of security as its essential mechanism. (Foucault, 2007: 107–108)

It is important to note that these different modes of power have different objects and subjects. While the aim of sovereignty is to extend the power of the prince and the territorial space of the state, discipline focuses on the individual body while governmentality is aimed at the population in general (Lemke, 2019: 192). Fournier argues that sovereignty must then be regarded as facilitating ongoing modes of subjection within the state that constitute the basis for new modes of governance, even as it forms the back-drop for the enactment of exceptional measures when liberal order and security are threatened (Fournier, 2008). However, the changes in Sweden regarding security appear to have collapsed the distinction between war and peace and redefined exceptional measures as ‘civil preparedness’, which has come to be regarded as a panacea for security concerns. My position is that this leads to the emergence of moral obligations between citizens, which obscures the role of the sovereign state in the process.

For example, to the extent that the management of societal security becomes a private rather than a social or political responsibility, fundamentally relying upon the willingness and capacity of the individual to take action in order to endure societal crises and disturbances, it introduces a moral dimension into security mechanisms as a means for disciplining the individual and compelling her to undertake the behaviour desired (Lemke, 2019). Liberal versions of governmentality regulate social relations ‘through morality’, not only by means of law (Lemke, 2019: 205). Morality as a central element of individual responsibility plays a key role in the liberal strategy of governing behaviour in that it affords ‘a principle of objectivation as well as the standard of judgement: everyone is responsible for his or her own life’ (Ewald, 1986, in Lemke, 2019: 205). This makes it possible to control an individual’s behaviour by means of social scrutiny rather than judicial and legal regulation, such as when preparing for a crisis becomes visible to family, friends and the community who can then judge the individual in question. This stigmatizes those who do not prepare for crises as lazy or incapable, whereby they become a social liability since they are reliant upon others.

The Swedish case that I examine in this article casts light on how the moralization of security becomes a specific liberal strategy in security/crisis management. Following the development of the security discourse in Sweden from the mid-1990s to 2018 reveals not only the shift in responsibility for societal security from the state to the individual, but also its extension to more traditional security concerns.

Method and material

An analysis concerned with problem and/or subject descriptions – which in this case are descriptions of the characteristics and responsibilities of citizens in respect to crises and war – can fruitfully utilize Carol Bacchi’s unique approach to policy analysis that she terms ‘What’s the Problem Represented to be?’ This method, which is based upon the premise that policy approaches contain implicit representations of what a problem is considered to be, provides a framework for examining security programmes as specific forms of governmentality (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:...
28–29). Subject descriptions are particularly interesting in that they prescribe, either explicitly or implicitly, a desired ideal – the good citizen – towards which subjects should be directed. Specific notions of a subject’s qualities and capabilities, or the lack thereof, thus provide a foundation for the creation and governing of good citizens on the part of public authorities (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016; Schneider and Ingram, 1993).

An acknowledged difficulty with documentary policy analysis is that it primarily captures descriptions of both problems and subjects in relation to the ideas and perceptions of the governor without taking into consideration the fact that such discursive descriptions do not necessarily comprise the basis for the actual measures undertaken during efforts at governing (Garland, 1997; Walters, 2012: 14). The analysis presented in this article is thus not able to capture forms of resistance or the ‘effectiveness’ of resilience and personal responsibility.

The methods employed in the present study, which addresses the development of crisis management in Sweden from 1995 to 2018, include qualitative text analysis, media analysis and interviews. Interviews are an important source of information if we are apprehensive concerning the rational aspect of governmentality. Interviewing people who work with various informational campaigns and forms of communication directed towards citizens makes it possible to acquire a more nuanced understanding of the thoughts and ideas behind these activities. I conducted eight interviews with employees of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) in order to obtain insights concerning the strategic design of the techniques that were employed, with the respondents being selected in light of their experience working with relevant policy issues at the MSB. While the interviews serve to complement other forms of data, a sufficient level of theoretical and empirical saturation was nevertheless attained.

Although I primarily examine written texts and spoken words in the media analyses rather than images, certain dramatizations must be regarded as important since there are reasons to suspect that they produce a significant effect upon listeners and viewers as an element of strategic media communications (Kuckartz, 2014; Boréus and Bergström, 2017: 7). The documents I have inspected are principally public documents from state actors, mainly the government, MSB and KBM (Krisberedskapsmyndigheten, or Crisis Preparedness Agency), the MSB’s immediate agency predecessor. I have also analysed departmental series, reports, instructions and governmental regulatory letters to public authorities, along with the annual reports and evaluations of specific campaigns and measures undertaken that comprise the main attempt to influence and steer citizens in a specific direction. Large documents were electronically scanned for the words ‘individuals’, ‘citizens’, ‘information’ and ‘private individuals’, followed by a close reading of the relevant sections. The material also includes YouTube videos and podcasts produced by the MSB, relevant sections of which have been analysed in their entirety. The material analysed made it possible to conduct a chronological and unfolding genealogy of the time period in question that contextualized the production of the ideal of preparedness emergent in Sweden.

From state to societal security: The need to ascribe a new role to citizens

Sweden held a traditional view of state security until the end of the Cold War. Although civil defence and war preparedness among the population had been elements of total defence during that period, both were specifically related to war (Larsson, 2019). The substantial reforms undertaken in the middle of the 1990s shifted the focus from military to civil defence, and these provide our starting point for gaining an understanding of how discourses of resilience and individual responsibility emerged in relation to societal security (Larsson, 2015). We should note that there were no
significant disruptions to the accepted agenda concerning the need to promote resilience and greater responsibility on the part of individuals for their own security and that of society, regardless of the changes in political and governmental leadership that occurred.

A public inquiry was launched in 1993 by a coalition of conservative and liberal parties that was aimed at a careful examination of how the Swedish state should develop a broader conception of its security and crisis management. The concluding report, *A More Secure Society* [Ett säkrare samhälle] (SOU, 1995), introduced a holistic view covering both peace and war situations when it was published in 1995:

The investigation regards it as natural that the state authorities, as a next step in this development, formulate a new vision, a holistic view of the responsibilities and powers of civilian bodies in the area of security and protection in peace and war. Such a holistic view is based on the fact that society is prepared to intervene in all types of sudden strains, of which war is the most serious. Authorities and other bodies that utilize their resources to undertake measures for preparedness shall do so throughout the entire peace-war scale of threat. (SOU, 1995: 19)

The social democratic government that had been installed in 1994 received the final report and presented a bill to parliament later the same year that highlighted the importance of a broader interpretation of the concept of security, emphasizing that non-military threats must be ascribed greater significance in overall defence and crisis management planning (Sveriges Riksdag, 2005).

The same government put forward a bill the following year entitled *Preparedness against Severe Pressures on Society in Peacetime* [Beredskapen mot svåra påfrestningar på samhället i fred]. This emphasized the importance of being aware of all possible types of hardships in order to take measures to counteract and contain risks and disruptions to society as a whole (Regeringskansliet, 1998). Increased awareness, strengthened civil preparedness and intensified cooperation were regarded as the leading elements in efforts to manage peacetime disruptions. This illustrates how the notion of civil preparedness, which had previously been associated with the threat of war, was incorporated into the new conception of societal security. It is noteworthy that this new way of thinking highlights individual preparedness:

The level of knowledge in respect to these issues is probably not sufficient for most people in Swedish society. It is therefore important to significantly increase ambitions in this area [in order to] strengthen society’s capacity regarding severe stress in both peacetime and war. (Regeringskansliet, 1998: 12)

The next large public inquiry concerning crisis management, *Security in a New Time* [Säkerhet i en ny tid], was published in 2001. It found that companies, organizations and individuals lacked the necessary knowledge, preparedness and will to cooperate on questions of crisis management (SOU, 2001: 74, 77). This investigation presented the first strong formulation concerning the responsibilities of individual citizens in this regard:

All citizens thus have a responsibility to undertake certain essential measures at their own expense in order to protect themselves against the consequences of serious crises situations. Extreme events with a low probability but very serious and far-reaching consequences are difficult to manage in a rational way for any actors other than the state. (SOU, 2001: 91)

In 2002, the new social democratic minority government put forward the bill *Society’s Security and Preparedness* [Samhällets säkerhet och beredskap], which entailed the formation of the KBM. The bill also noted that the ability of individuals to handle crises can be a significant factor in unburdening public authorities (Regeringskansliet, 2002).
A number of major events subsequently occurred that led to a major political debate in Sweden concerning the country’s crisis management capability. Two such events stand out as particularly significant, namely, the South-East Asian tsunami in 2004, when the Swedish authorities hesitated in their response even though many tourists from the country had lost their lives, and Cyclone Gudrun in 2005, which caused great devastation and revealed substantial shortcomings in the Swedish state’s ability to handle large-scale natural disasters. The Defence Committee’s 2006 report, *A Strategy for Sweden’s Security* [En strategi för Sveriges säkerhet], emphasized the need for stronger leadership during emergency situations, noting that individuals possess only a limited ability to manage and withstand various types of crises:

The emphasis in this security strategy falls on the security of society, that is, on the events and conditions that damage society’s functionality and survival, which private individuals are unable to fully manage by themselves. (Forsvarsdepartementet, 2006: 15)

The Committee nevertheless highlighted the abilities and responsibilities of individuals in respect to the crisis management system:

Public authorities have a responsibility to clarify, optimize, and organize [crisis management] in the best way possible. At the same time, individuals and companies must keep themselves informed about relevant risks and threats as well as the demands that involves. (Forsvarsdepartementet, 2006: 15–16)

One problem that arose, which was addressed in a bill put forward in 2006 by the social democratic government, is that public authorities must communicate risks and responsibilities to citizens and other actors more effectively:

Public authorities have the responsibility to analyze and evaluate risks and vulnerabilities and convey their results to private individuals. Providing a picture of potential risks gives individuals and other actors the possibility to take protective measures on their own. (Regeringskansliet, 2006: 73)

It was during this period that individual responsibility received greater emphasis, with the problem coming to be presented as the fact that individuals rely too heavily upon the resources and abilities of the state to manage large-scale crises. Individuals should instead improve their own mental and material preparedness for crisis situations insofar as the public authorities have only limited resources available for this purpose. It is paradoxical that large-scale events were put forward as the reason for why individuals should accept responsibility for their own security.

The government believes that the experiences of managing the tsunami in Asia and Cyclone Gudrun in southern Sweden point to the need to further clarify the responsibilities and roles that public authorities and private individuals have in respect to meeting and managing crises. (Regeringskansliet, 2006: 52)

A new majority government consisting of conservative and liberal parties took office in the fall of 2006. They identified the lack of principles capable of clearly indicating whether individuals or public authorities and the state bore primary responsibility to be a central problem.

Well-functioning crisis preparedness requires awareness of personal responsibility as well as knowledge at all levels of how to act quickly and effectively in the event of a crisis. Individuals form the basis upon which crisis management in society resides. . . . For various reasons, the individual has come to rely too greatly upon ‘the public’. (Regeringskansliet, 2008: 42)
This view of the need for individuals to accept greater responsibility should not be regarded as a radical change in policy, since it closely accords with the views of the previous government. It rather further accentuates an already accepted position, which is evident in a written statement to the parliament the following year:

Although the public has extensive responsibility for the functionality of society, a prerequisite for security is that individuals are prepared, informed, and able to act in order to meet their needs, especially at an initial stage. This means that individuals are responsible for their own readiness and security. (Justitiedepartementet, 2009: 8–9)

The next major bill concerning crisis management, the Law on Explosive Precursors and Report on the Development of Crisis Preparedness [Lag om sprängämnesprekursorer och redovisning av krisberedskapens utveckling], was presented to parliament in 2014 by a minority government consisting of conservative and liberal parties. It included remarks about the Swedish crisis management system in general, once again emphasizing the central role individuals play in this regard:

With people at the center of crisis preparedness work, it is clear that defending the health and security of private individuals and the population are to be prioritized. The work on crisis preparedness is based upon people’s risk awareness, responsibility, willingness, and ability to manage their own security. In order to continue developing the abilities of individuals, the government has taken the initiative in informational efforts that will be implemented by MSB concerning how individuals can be involved in crisis preparedness and create security for both themselves and others. (Regeringskansliet, 2014: 15)

The bill states the following concerning the division of responsibility:

The balance between public and individual responsibility resides upon the basic view that the individual bears primary responsibility for protecting his or her own life and property. Only when the individual is no longer able to do so can there be a commitment or obligation on the part of the public to intervene. (Regeringskansliet, 2014: 29, emphasis added)

This very clearly indicates that individual citizens bear primary responsibility for protecting their life and property, and that the unwillingness of individuals to shoulder this responsibility is a key problem for state authorities. In order to remedy this state of affairs, the government maintains that:

informational efforts aimed at strengthening the capabilities of individuals should be undertaken through collaboration involving the relevant actors. Municipalities, county councils, public authorities, religious communities, trade associations, volunteer organizations, schools, and companies should be engaged in various activities tailored to target groups. (Regeringskansliet, 2014: 29f)

This would make it possible for the authorities to assist individuals who lack certain capabilities to care for themselves. Individual preparedness is also framed in terms of solidarity:

With good preparedness among individuals, society will be able during the initial phase of a serious event or crisis to focus on efforts to rescue those who lack the conditions necessary to provide for their own security and are in need. (Regeringskansliet, 2014: 29f)

This gradual change in responsibility, together with the notion of solidarity with fellow citizens, activated the moral dimension of security insofar as it provided a standard for judging individuals
in relation to their contributions to societal security (Lemke, 2019; Larsson, 2015: 17). It also affected the ways in which public authorities engage with individuals. For example, one respondent remarked that the MSB now operates upon the premise that the ‘individual is a means for unburdening the system’ (Respondent 2), while another described the role of the public authorities as ‘complementary to individual responsibility during crises’ (Respondent 4).

Sweden became aware in 2014 of the changes that had taken place in its geopolitical situation through Russia’s perceived aggression against Ukraine, and the focus consequently shifted to Sweden’s military capabilities and a more traditional focus on state security. The government tasked both the MSB and the armed forces with preparing a cohesive proposal for how Sweden could rebuild its total defence (Regeringen, 2015). The MSB stated in their 2016 report that civil defence in wartime resides upon the crisis preparations that have been carried out in peacetime.

Sweden should be able to prevent situations that give rise to elevated readiness whenever possible, but also be capable of dealing with them when they do occur. This demands that society as a whole have an inherent robustness, endurance, power of resistance, and an ability to manage complex events, that is, be resilient. (MSB, 2016)

Collaboration and the ability to handle uncertainty are highlighted as significant characteristics of individuals as well:

It falls upon many different social actors, and ultimately private individuals, to identify and have a readiness to act, but also to cooperate effectively in order to gain a holistic perspective and together meet an attacker who utilizes methods in the borderland between peace and war. . . . This comprises a credible total defence that integrates peacetime crisis preparedness with a qualitative trait that works both preventively and with restraint against an attacker. (MSB, 2016: 67)

This serves to reveal how the new logic of societal security is intertwined with a more traditional understanding of state security. The previous conception of total defence, which involved distinct notions of war and peace and limited individual preparedness to specific situations, has given way to a conception in which the boundaries between war/peace and crisis/security have become baseless because of the vulnerability inherent in modern existence and the emergence of new methods of grey-area warfare. The currently accepted broader concept of security, coupled with a more uncertain geopolitical situation, has increased the need for us to protect ourselves against both internal and external threats. To the extent that crises and external threats come to play prominent roles in society, the need for capable and crisis-aware individuals, who can unburden the public authorities and the state in both peace and wartime situations, is amplified.

We will now address efforts to activate the corresponding type of subjectivity through strategic informational campaigns.

**Producing the responsible and solidary subject**

In light of the responsibility placed upon individuals for enhancing society’s capacity to manage protracted crises and security challenges, it is important to examine how the authorities intend to promote this issue.

In 2014, the coalition government of conservative and liberal parties directed the MSB to develop informational campaigns aimed at disseminating the message that individuals must accept greater responsibility during crises. The MSB reported later in the same year that they had initiated a number of different avenues of communication for this purpose, referring in particular to the
website ‘DinSäkerhet.se’ and to social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. They also noted the production of informational films and a podcast that were distributed using these means (MSB, 2014a).

The new social democratic government that came to power in the fall of 2014 did not change the existing understanding of this issue. They further emphasized the importance of informational campaigns and instructed MSB in February 2017 to ensure the national distribution of the message of individual responsibility for crisis preparedness by means of a pamphlet that would be sent to every household in the country (Regeringen, 2017). This comprised the basis of efforts on the part of the Swedish authorities to steer private individuals towards shouldering increased responsibility during societal crises. Analysing this new pamphlet as well as other strategic communications will help in gaining an understanding of how public authorities have promoted resilience and individual responsibility.

Your Security – a webpage

Your Security [DinSäkerhet.se] is a website operated by the MSB concerning ‘dangers and security that is directed to you as a private person’ (DinSäkerhet.se, 2018c). It contains, for example, tips on ‘how you can take care of yourself without such important social functions as water, heating, electricity, and transport for a shorter period of time’ (DinSäkerhet.se, 2018a). The idea is that a pedagogically designed and inspiring website can ‘make you aware of risks so that you can make good decisions’ (DinSäkerhet.se, 2018b).

The language used is clear and in line with the goal of increasing citizen awareness about the risks and crises that can affect both individuals and society as a whole. The overall message highlights the importance of personal responsibility. Important information is provided under headings such as ‘Prepare for Crisis’, ‘If There Is War’ and ‘In Case of Accident and Attack’ (DinSäkerhet.se, 2018c). A special tab dealing with ‘Crisis and War’ provides a further 19 links to more specific information and checklists. The following suggestion, for instance, is presented under the heading ‘Your Readiness’:

Plan to be able to take care of yourself without the help of society for at least several days. Since help from the community will go first to those who need it the most, most people must be prepared to take care of themselves for a certain period of time. We refer to this as home preparedness. If you are prepared, you may help everyone around you, even the country as a whole, to cope better with a serious stress.

(DinSäkerhet.se, 2018b)

This signifies the importance of individual responsibility, not only for your own security, but also for that of society as a whole, indicating the solidarity involved in being able to care for yourself and assist others as well. This highlights the moral dimension of civil preparedness that connects individuals with each other and with society, but not with the state.

The MSB’s YouTube channel

The MSB has its own YouTube channel where it presents instructional videos informing private individuals about how to prevent, manage and learn from accidents and crises. The playlist at DinSäkerhet.se includes 82 such videos, some of which are aimed at children (YouTube, 2018b). Swedish celebrity Heidi Andersson, eleven-time world arm-wrestling champion, displays the basic elements of individual home preparedness in four of them. The central message is clear – if there is a power outage or some other type of crisis, it is the individual who is to arrange clean water, food, heating and the means needed to take part in socially important communication (YouTube, 2018a, 2018b). The speaker states that:
When everyday life is suddenly turned upside-down, it is easy to become worried and afraid. That is why it is so important to be prepared before anything happens. Pack the crisis box and be sure to really cooperate when something happens. (YouTube, 2018a, 3:26)

The individual clearly bears the main responsibility for being prepared and well-informed so that they can deal with societal crises (YouTube, 2018b). This corresponds with the views shared by the MSB officials that I interviewed. (Respondent 2, Respondent 4)

**The podcast ‘If a Crisis Comes’**

The MSB produced 13 instalments between 2014 and 2018 in the podcast series *If a Crisis Comes* [Om krisen kommer]. A podcast, which comprises a series of sound or video recordings on a given theme, may be regarded as a modern form of radio broadcasting. The instalment’s in the MSB series, which are between 12 and 39 minutes in length, address a variety of topics associated with crisis management, the related necessary knowledge and individuals. These include home preparedness, being ready to act in crisis situations, shelter, information and food supply during prolonged crises or war (MSB, 2018d).

This type of media is particularly interesting because of the theatrical effects produced by sound, music and the feel of a radio documentary in which experts and apparently ‘ordinary citizens’ are interviewed on topics related to useful knowledge and the need to be prepared. In the first instalment, *Your Home Preparedness* [Din hemberedskap], a Swedish woman who was in New York when Hurricane Sandy paralysed a large part of the city was interviewed. The main topic discussed was the sense of vulnerability that arose when the community lost electrical power. The information in these podcasts imitates that presented in ordinary news media, but also includes rhetorical questions from a ‘reporter’ – ‘Isn’t home preparedness a bit exaggerated?’ – that are posed to a person who in fact is a ‘prepper’ living off-grid. This serves to frame a high level of preparedness as if it were a matter of common sense (MSB, 2018d, episode 1, 35:25, aired 2014).

The overall impression given by this podcast series is that its suggestive and dramatic elements make it appear similar to a neutral documentary instead of curated information provided by public authorities. Swedish citizens are referred to in the episodes that deal with accidents and crises as naive, spoiled, uninformed and overly, but falsely, secure. This is a far cry from the image of optimal citizens who are prepared, focused, capable and cooperative (MSB, 2014b, episode 2). Failure to prepare for disasters is coupled with social shame, and individuals who are less than well prepared are portrayed as a liability for society as a whole.

The originator of the podcast was one of the respondents, who stated that it was in fact intended to be reminiscent of radio documentaries, adding that dramatizations can play an important role in conveying the message of personal responsibility. The respondent further remarked that ‘it may even be good for people to become scared and worried since they might then begin thinking more concretely about how they can prepare themselves’ (Respondent 1). This indicates that the podcast series is indeed part of a strategic effort to transform individuals into being less reliant upon public authorities and the state in accordance with a logic that regards the creation of resilient subjects as a clearly desirable goal.

**Crisis Preparedness Week**

‘Crisis Preparedness Week’ is an annual campaign the primary aim of which is to increase knowledge about how people can be affected by social crises and prepare themselves for elevated readiness. The MSB states that:
Well-informed and engaged residents are an important asset in a social crisis. An annual Crisis Preparedness Week will therefore be held in association with municipalities, volunteer organizations, and county administrative boards. (MSB, 2018c)

The MSB develops the themes, produces campaign materials and provides instructions to the various municipalities for this purpose. The ambition is that the campaign will grow from year to year and engage larger segments of society. The first Crisis Preparedness Week was held 8–14 May 2017, and the MSB’s annual report stated that approximately 70% of Swedish municipalities participated in some form (see MSB, 2017a, 2017b). Those involved organized a large number of activities in order to report to their local residents concerning threats, risks and preparedness. It is noteworthy that one respondent observed that the actual aim of the MSB’s recommendations was to make people understand that they have to plan for and manage the initial stages of a crisis by themselves since they will not receive immediate help from the authorities (Respondent 2). Crisis Preparedness Week 2018 was held 28 May–3 June. The campaign material clearly describes the need for citizens to be aware of social crises and their far-reaching consequences:

The more people realize that 1) the unexpected can affect them and those close to them and 2) most people will have to cope for themselves for a certain time during a severe strain on society, then the more they will want to prepare themselves for dealing with the unexpected, thereby contributing to our common security and preparedness. (MSB, 2018e)

The MSB distributed the pamphlet *If Crisis or War Comes* [Om krisen eller kriget kommer] (MSB, 2018e), which was intended to resemble those distributed during the Cold War, to all Swedish households in connection with Crisis Preparedness Week 2018. The phrase ‘crisis or war’, which brings together societal and national security, effectively expands the notion of civil preparedness beyond war situations.

**The pamphlet ‘If Crisis or War Comes’**

The MSB distributed *If Crisis or War Comes* – the result of over a year’s concerted work with communication managers and reference groups – to all 4.8 million households in Sweden. The pamphlet itself and the manner in which it was distributed may be regarded as unprecedented in the current era, and it became international news covered by such well-known media as *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*. The stated purpose of the pamphlet from the government’s perspective was ‘to help increase people’s knowledge about how to prepare themselves for various crises, elevated readiness, and, in the final extreme, war’ (Regeringen, 2017). The title was especially chosen because of its association with the earlier pamphlet *If War Comes* [Om kriget kommer], which had been distributed to Swedish households and summarized in telephone directories (MSB, 2018b). *If War Comes* was first published in 1943, with subsequent revisions appearing in 1952, 1961, 1983 and 1987. The government used pictures, information about laws and regulations and inspiring text about defence and patriotism in the effort to convince the population to act appropriately in the event of war. It is interesting to note that Sweden, which has not been at war for over 200 years, in 2018 finds it necessary to ensure that all of its citizens are prepared for crisis and war by stockpiling water, food and other necessities in order to care for their own security.

Cronqvist’s discussion of the earlier pamphlets shows that there was a specific civil defence culture, comprising a particular way of thinking, when people lived under the doomsday threat of obliteration during the Cold War (Cronqvist, 2012; see also Larsson, 2019). The use of language in the 2018 pamphlet is similar to that in the earlier ones, with the important difference that the new
pamphlet expands war preparedness to cover other forms of crisis situations as well. The closing sections encourage citizens to educate themselves, to become more engaged and to do so in the spirit of solidarity (MSB, 2018a).

The introduction to the pamphlet states that:

One of our most important assets when something threatens us is our willingness to help each other. If you are prepared, you will help the country as a whole deal better with a difficult hardship. (MSB, 2018a)

Christina Andersson, who was responsible for the pamphlet’s design on the MSB homepage, remarks that:

Even if [the pamphlet] may be regarded as alarming, it deals with socially important information that reflects the times in which we are living. The distribution of the pamphlet is of concern to everyone living in Sweden so that you, and those near and dear to you, will be able to manage as well as possible if something happens to us. We want to show you that you can influence your own security and preparedness. (Andersson, 2018)

The conflation of crisis and war was noted by MSB officials who worked on the pamphlet:

The issue of civil defence was suddenly to be addressed in planning the campaigns, which was not something that we had previously taken into consideration. . . . [W]artime readiness [folkJörarkring] is a concept that I’ve never used regarding peacetime crises. All of a sudden we had to dust off the terminology of heightened readiness and war. (Respondent 3)

However, we should not understand *If Crisis or War Comes* as marking a return to the Cold War era. It and the other texts analysed above instead indicate a step into the future, namely, an explicit attempt to advance new security strategies that provides the basis for a more totalizing security regime than the Cold War conception of total defence. This consists of the development of neoliberal subjects who are willing to engage in the production of security on the individual, societal and state levels. Although doing so relies upon their voluntary actions, it nevertheless invokes solidarity and a moral responsibility on the part of individuals to actively contribute. This genealogy of Swedish crisis and security management since the mid-1990s thus provides a clearer understanding of how a new conception of total defence ultimately brings together elements of societal security, resilience and neoliberal governmentality. In doing this, the new citizen ideal of ‘readiness’ and living with fear becomes the normal way of life as the war/peace and crisis/security boundaries are dissolved.

**Conclusion**

The analysis presented in this article has revealed a specific genealogy that has unfolded in Sweden that substantially links together societal and national security strategies during a period in which a return to total defence is high on the political agenda. After the end of the Cold War, Sweden quickly replaced its focus on national security and the threat of war with a focus on societal security and disruptions to modern society. This made possible a discursive shift towards normalizing security measures into routine practices that generated a proactive stance whereby individual responsibility was regarded as decisive for resolving societal security issues. A new ideal of capable and prepared citizens thus came to be viewed as an essential element in building societal resilience.
This process of responsibilization entailed a realignment in the power triangle between sovereignty, discipline and governmental powers. The resulting new security approach and accompanying new image of an ideal citizen gave rise to a moral dimension of security that resides upon and operates by means of voluntary actions, even though it is framed as constituted through solidarity with one’s fellow citizens. State–citizen relationships are thereby replaced by citizen–citizen relationships. This makes possible a variety of social mechanisms – including those of social control – that involve individuals, families and communities and substantially remove the state from the security equation. Presenting solidarity as a key element of neoliberal governance strategies is noteworthy insofar as it initially appears to contradict the neoliberal foundations of resilience (compare Joseph, 2013; Bergström, 2017). However, this in fact further displaces the role of the state as a security provider, thus undermining the social contract between the state and citizens even in situations of crisis and war preparedness.

Of great interest is what has emerged as Sweden seeks to return to a more traditional understanding of national and sovereign security, namely, a notion of total defence based upon new interpretations of the geopolitical environment. A key finding of this article is that this has not disrupted the approaches to security, including the new role of the citizen in building resilience, that appeared consequent to the adoption of a broader conception of societal security after the end of the Cold War. On the contrary, the total defence agenda today incorporates the elements of societal security, resilience and neoliberal governmentality that replaced the state–citizen relationship with citizen–citizen relations and dissolved the important war/peace and crisis/security distinctions. Furthermore, 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.

The present study was designed as a genealogy in the effort to analyse the emergent understanding of how the Swedish state has sought to resolve the perceived problem of citizen dependency by explicitly promoting individual responsibility during crises as well as war. This chronological approach reveals the continuity present in the process of responsibilization regardless of the changes that have taken place in governments and ruling party coalitions, including both social democratic and conservative/liberal regimes. I believe that this can be explained by the logic inherent in building resilience, particularly the common sense approach to security as ‘better safe than sorry’. There is simply no adequate understanding today of the forms of power activated when states push citizens to be prepared for unlikely social disruptions. It would thus appear to be the case that neither liberal nor social democratic states are capable either of resisting the excessive securitization of the state, society and the individual, or of grasping how this breaks the social contract and the state–citizen relationship, which induces fear and public anxiety (see Neocleous, 2007).

I will conclude with a caveat concerning the arguments and findings presented in this article – the genealogy is case specific, regardless of the value of our empirical findings and theoretical discussions. Consequently, there is a continued need for further case studies addressing how resilience is incorporated into contemporary security and crisis management approaches. We need to explore, for example, how this issue has developed in such comparable ‘liberal’ countries as Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark and Finland. Comparative studies and the analysis of additional cases may reveal the connections between contemporary crisis and security management and specific historical events and experiences, thus helping us grasp the variety of security discourses and social mechanisms of resilience.
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**Referencing interviews**


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