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Responsibilising Total Defence: Interrogating Resistance, Resilience, and Agency in Finland, Sweden, and Lithuania

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Abstract: Abstract: Russia's war against Ukraine has reignited discussions on resistance and total defence, influencing policy discourses and shaping national security documents. Nordic and Baltic countries, in response, have re-centred resistance in their national defence doctrines. This article critically examines the portrayal of total defence, resistance, and the role of society in these documents, highlighting the implicit assumptions of societal and individual agency. Despite presenting national populations as constructive agents essential for resilience and resistance, the analysis reveals a more nuanced reality. From Finland, to Sweden, to Lithuania, populations are positioned, whether through planning documents or political rhetoric, as indispensable defenders of their nations, with predetermined roles and expectations. This article argues that such dynamics, particularly the responsibilisation of individual actions in wartime, obscure the illiberal foundations of sovereignty inherent in the defence strategies of numerous liberal democracies.

Keywords: Resistance, resilience, responsibilisation, total defence, sovereignty

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1. Introduction

Resistance and resilience, intertwined concepts, have become a dominant paradigm in a broad range of security doctrines and national approaches to defence. In the military context, resistance entails the ability to withstand a direct attack from an aggressor, not solely relying on armed forces but also encompassing societal strength (Lilja, 2022). Resilience, despite the ambiguity in its definition, is perceived to as the foundation of resistance, represented as the ability to endure stress and trauma at both the individual and societal level (Keck and Sakdapolrak, 2013). Through a return to this baseline after an initial shock via resilience, individuals and society can effectively resist a potential aggressor. This configuration underscores the need for profound synergies between the state and society, assigning responsibilities to individuals as both citizens and potential defenders of the state.

Originating from Cold War-era doctrines like total defence and civilian protection, the fusion of resistance and resilience emerged as a strategy binding government and society in state defence, with the potential to deter potential aggressors. Rather than aiming for the complete defeat of an enemy, this method sought to induce second thoughts in potential invaders by highlighting the perceived costs of engaging an entire population, exemplifying a quintessential deterrence by denial approach (Wilner and Wenger, 2020). Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Austria, Taiwan, and others adopted the most comprehensive forms of total defence, characterised by national conscription, territorial defence, and societal and individual collaboration to safeguard state sovereignty. While the strategic logic behind the employment of total defence differed in each case, overall approaches remained the same (Angstrom and Ljungkvist, 2023).

Following the end of the Cold War, these countries repurposed total defence primarily for disaster or crisis relief, contributing to resilience-building, with a predominant emphasis on addressing natural or humanitarian disasters. Post-9/11, efforts in total defence and resilience-building also considered terrorism as a secondary concern, yet the consensus established post-1991 largely endured. Until

the Russo-Ukrainian war, this persisted as the operational approach for most of these states, upholding a doctrinal principle centered on humanitarian-oriented total defence.

Following the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, total defence underwent a recalibration, with a renewed emphasis placed on fostering resistance against potential invasions through total defence (Shelest, 2022; Wilk, 2022). This adjustment once again mandated the adoption of a comprehensive, all-of-society approach towards a potential military conflict. This seismic geopolitical change prompted Finland and Sweden, previously staunch advocates of neutrality in foreign policy and military matters, to align themselves with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Simultaneously, the Baltic states, in response to atrocities committed against civilians by Russian soldiers in Bucha and Izyum, advocated for more robust allied contingents within their borders. Recognizing that the Article 5 collective defence provision in the NATO Charter might not suffice to prevent such atrocities alone, they emphasised the need for deterrence by denial, advocating for a 'modern forward defence posture in the Baltic States' (Kallas *et al.*, 2022). This aspiration found at least symbolic fulfilment when NATO member states, in Madrid, agreed to expand the enhanced Forward Presence units from a battalion to a brigade size (NATO, 2022).

Finland and Sweden stand out as relevant cases for total defence analysis, not only as new or potential NATO members but also due to the conceptual origins of total defence in the aftermath of the Winter War (Finland) or its practical implementation during the Cold War (Sweden) (Wither, 2020). Consequently, both nations share a deep historical legacy, relying on resistance as the fundamental element of national total defence and independence. Conversely, Lithuania is chosen for its current dedication to integrating total defence into its national defence strategy, drawing parallels with the historical legacy of the Forest Brothers. Although not explicitly guided by state policy at the time, the Forest Brothers still serve as an archetype for total defence through resistance, at least in popular memory (Davoliūtė, 2015). At the same time, all three countries share a border with Russia and have been targeted for occupation during Russian military exercises (Kofman, 2021a, 2021b; Zdanavičius and Czekaj, 2015).

Despite the expanded collective defence profile of NATO, concerns persist. Finland's full integration into NATO's command structure is pending, Sweden's accession remains contingent on Hungary, and the commitments made in Vilnius are yet to materialise beyond verbal assurances. Simultaneously, Polish and German defence ministries project a 3- to 5-year window for NATO to prepare for a potential confrontation with Russia on its eastern flank (Alipour and Michalopoulos, 2023; ERR News, 2023). This suggests that deterrence by denial has not been operationalised, prompting states to currently prioritise strengthening deterrence by punishment. This involves a reevaluation of total defence, specifically considering the prospect of a confrontation with Russia.

However, the planning and implementation of total defence inherently carries assumptions about the dynamics between the state and society, along with the roles and responsibilities assigned to individuals during times of crisis or war. Within total defence, resistance assumes that societies as a whole would necessarily fight against an aggressor, while resilience relies on populations to independently inform themselves as to what their responsibilities, tasks, and necessary actions would be during a time of crisis or war (Zdanavičius and Statkus, 2020). Additionally, the state assumes that the populations would act accordingly in both cases, and both defence and deterrence strategies are predicated on such assumptions.

Consequently, the objective of article is to interrogate the extant approaches to total defence in Finland, Sweden, and Lithuania in the aftermath of the Russo-Ukrainian war. This will be accomplished through exploration of the following two research questions, problematizing the prevailing discourses on resistance and total defence. First, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, what assumptions do policymakers in Finland, Sweden, and Lithuania hold regarding the agency of the population in a potential crisis scenario? Second, how are these assumptions about the agency of the population in a potential invasion integrated into the broader logic of neoliberal governance, and what challenges emerge as a result?

To address these questions, this study employs a comparative case analysis, examining the existing legal provisions, national security doctrines, and official

statements released by Finland, Sweden, and Lithuania following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The emphasis is on elucidating the role, responsibilities, and implicit agencies attributed to the respective national populations outside beyond mere crisis management. Through a post-structuralist analytical approach, the study aims to deconstruct assumptions about these roles, responsibilities, and implicit agencies, while scrutinizing the interplay between state sovereignty and neoliberal governance. What kinds of agencies emerge, are negated, or are impacted by the new circumstances surrounding a potential conflict with Russia?

The article is organised as follows. The second section delves into the interconnection of resistance, responsibilisation, and subjectification within the framework of neoliberal governance. The third section will concentrate on wartime as a potential state of exception and the role of sovereignty in this paradigm. The fourth section will empirically examine and analyse, in the case of each country, the assumptions made in legal provisions, planning documents, and by policymakers concerning the roles, responsibilities, and implicit agencies of national populations. Ultimately, the article will conclude by comparing the commonalities in these constructions, accentuating the socio-political implications of such conceptualizations.

2. Resistance, Responsibilisation, and Subjectification

The concept of responsibilisation, rooted in a Foucauldian understanding, involves the transfer of duties, tasks, and responsibilities from the sovereign government to individuals within a society (Foucault, 2008). In the context of neoliberal governance, that is, 'decentralization, privatization, and individualism' linked to the 'the processes of building responsible populations', the responsibilised individual willingly undertakes these tasks without external compulsion from the state, seeing these responsibilities or duties as his or her own in relation to broader society (Phillips and Ilcan, 2004, pp. 394). This paradigm of responsibilisation has been analysed and critiqued in various domains of socio-political life: health, markets, education, societal morality, welfare, as well as crisis management and civil protection (Rådestad and Larsson, 2020). This article conceptualises Sweden, Finland, and Lithuania as exemplars of the broader Western paradigm of neoliberal governance. This paradigm is characterised not by explicit neoliberal economic

policies, but by an emphasis on individual autonomy, operational efficiency, and the utilisation of behavioural incentives to enhance societal welfare.

While related to crisis management and civil protection, wartime national defence stands out as an area where the examination of responsibilisation has not received as much of a significant emphasis. The scant attention given to the analysis of responsibilisation in the realm of wartime national defence can be attributed to its inherent conflict with the notion of responsibility-taking, i.e., that the individual agent 'can place him/herself outside the objectification produced by 'domination' and can 'imagine' alternatives' (Rebughini, 2018, p. 4). This stems from the fact that the dynamics of responsibilisation operate through two interconnected constructs: an appeal to freedom, leveraging autonomy, and a threat to personal control, framing certain practices or outcomes as potential constraints on this autonomy (Pyysiäinen, Halpin, and Guilfoyle, 2017). These approaches synergise in shaping the neoliberal subject who willingly engages in practices of self-care and responsibilisation.

However, in the wartime context of national resistance (and not in the Foucauldian understanding of resistance as an internal opposition to power (Foucault, 1990)), the established paradigm of responsibilisation undergoes a profound disruption. When taken to their logical conclusions, as individuals are assumed by planners and security experts to be 'misinformed, badly educated and highly emotional' (Sjöberg, 1999, p. 5), both the appeal to freedom and the threat to personal control could have unintended consequences, potentially culminating in the obliteration of the state due to the subject's refusal to defend it or to question the means or necessity of defending it. In this altered scenario, the previously responsibilised subject is no longer subject to the market logics of neoliberal governance and lacks the autonomy to choose. Instead, they find themselves compelled, by necessity, to align with the state and its interests. Legally, this refusal to comply results in the subject potentially being branded as a traitor, often carrying legal consequences or imprisonment. This

coercive element starkly contrasts with the inherent voluntariness typically associated with the logics of responsibilisation or neoliberal governance.

The concept of subjectification helps in bridging this apparent contradiction. Subjectification is a polysemic process referring either to the central role of 'the subject as a center of experience' or 'political subjugation as a mode of having power exercised over oneself' (Nale and Lawlor, 2014, p. 496). The present study treats this polysemy as a synonymy, wherein the subject as the centre of experience has power exercised over it. While power is understood in the Foucauldian sense, not as something that a subject has but something that a subject is in relation to, the subject still wields the agency to shape other subjectivities in this broader web of relationality. To this point, Heller outlines that in the Foucauldian reading of the intentionality of subjectification, 'transformations in social institutions are usually intentionally produced in response to consciously-recognised, if only imperfectly understood, economic and political needs' (Heller, 1996, p. 81). However, these needs are better understood as economic and political demands, including the political demand for the preservation of the political community through defence.

For Butler, consequently, it is exactly this process of subjectification that allows for the emergence of agency, that is, the freedom to choose and act from a certain interpellated subject position (Butler, 1997). This subject position is whence these individual and collective responsibilities and tasks emerge vis-à-vis power relations and political demands. However, this subject position, through its initial fixation in relation to power, can only allow the subject to either affirm or subvert those expectations ascribed to him or her within the broader socio-political paradigm. This also includes the paradigm of neoliberal governance, which situates the subject in a position of freedom and autonomy of action.

In the neoliberal context, this freedom acts as the main strategy of power, as 'only a free subject can be creative, self-responsible and innovative', shaping the conditions for resilience, and 'neoliberal subjectification does not operate by subjugating subjects but by creating incentives to become free and even resistant' (Rose and Miller, 1992; Schubert, 2021). This freedom and resistance can even potentially take its role in the shape of dissent, barring the fact that such dissent does not threaten the survival of the political community. By shaping the realm of acceptable conduct in relation to these political demands, neoliberal governance

limits the options of action for the neoliberal subject through incentives for specific conduct, those that would nonetheless allow an autonomy of choice for the subject.

In the context of total defence, this procedure is clear-cut. The delegation of defence responsibilities in neoliberal governance follows a straightforward rationale – the belief that only the neoliberal political community ensures freedom, while all others pose a threat to such freedom. This equivalence establishes strict conditions, prompting the subject to acknowledge its responsibility to be free and align itself with the neoliberal political order. Consequently, the subject is at liberty to act within parameters that either enhance freedom or safeguard against potential threats to personal control. Now, considering the state of war, how do decision-making processes during this exceptional state of crisis impact this paradigm?

3. The State of War as a State of Exception

The state of war deviates from the typical norms of neoliberal governance. In such a paradigm, the dynamics of appeals to freedom or threats to autonomy are made coeval, as the state of war is treated as an existential threat to the coherence and even survival of the political community. Carl Schmitt views war as fundamental to the formation of a political community, serving as the basis of any solidarity of a people in opposition to external threats, thereby laying the groundwork for a juridical, normative political order from which normal political relations and processes can emerge through the functional state (Schmitt, 2008, p. 45). In this context of the functional state, the sovereign determines who is included or excluded in this political community. This distinction between inclusion and exclusion – friend and enemy – is situated as the foundation of the political order in which "all law is 'situational law'", hinging on its enforcement or denial by the sovereign (Schmitt, 2005, p. 13). This dynamic presents a paradox for the situation of total defence, as it entails a state of exception that still operates within prescribed juridical provisions.

During these states of exception, the figure of the sovereign becomes the most prominent compared to the normal functioning of politics and the legal system. Schmitt defines this sovereign as 'he who decides on the exception', an individual

agent empowered to suspend the extant juridical order by unilaterally declaring the *Ausnahmezustand*, that is, the state of exception (Schmitt, 2005, p. 5). In practical terms, Schmitt identifies the head of the executive as the primary candidate for the potential sovereign, which was the *Reichspräsident* in Schmitt's case of Weimar Germany (Schmitt, 2014) and would be the presidents in the Finnish and Lithuanian cases and the prime minister in the Swedish one.

A distinction is made regarding the nature of the executive's decision-making authority, determining whether its exercise qualifies as truly sovereign. The executive's capacity to make decisions is viewed as inherently dictatorial, as it bypasses the deliberative processes integral to a democratic system of governance. However, Schmitt's examination of this conceptualization of dictatorship is somewhat neutral, presenting it as a decisional model to be liberated from normative considerations.

The first type of this decisional power in this consideration comes in the form of the sovereign dictatorship. The sovereign dictatorship truly allows the sovereign to decide on actions outside of the proscribed juridical order. These actions, although outside of the law, become law through their enforcement, which allows the sovereign to straddle the position of being outside of the law but part of it. The decisions of the sovereign dictator, therefore, are self-legitimizing, as the actions themselves create an emergent juridical order and consequently reshape the political community and its norms (Schmitt, 2014). This type of decisional power tends to fall outside of the aegis of democratic or neoliberal governance, as it represents a negation of its internal logics and principles by removing the possibility of deliberation and negotiation. As such, the consideration of a neoliberal paradigm of total defence under the assumptions of a sovereign dictatorship would be incoherent.

On the other hand, the second type, known as the commissarial dictatorship, involves a slight variation of this scenario. The commissarial dictatorship, illustrated by the traditional Roman practice of the Senate appointing a dictator for a limited duration during crises or wartime to command the armies outside the bounds of the law, allows for the temporary suspension of the normal legal order to protect and uphold it. However, unlike the generative aspects associated with sovereign dictatorship, the commissarial dictatorship aims solely to preserve the state

throughout the crisis or wartime period, maintaining the legal order and political community in the same form as before the exceptional situation arose. In this sense, the commissarial model reflects a reluctance to engage in dictatorial behaviour and anticipates its own legal provisions, making it more suitable for total defence as a politically accountable demand within a liberal democracy.

Schmitt further argued that liberal democracies are poorly equipped to handle such extreme situations of exceptionality, as the deliberative process inherent in democracy would allow 'the organizations of individual freedom [to be] used like knives by anti-individualistic forces to cut up the leviathan and divide his flesh among them' (Schmitt, 2008, p. 74). Liberalism, in this view, rejects the Schmittian concept of sovereignty through the necessity of debate and discussion in order to reach collective decisions, thus eliminating the role of the sovereign and substituting it with a mechanistic constitutionalism and the supposed rule of law (Schmitt, 2005). The paradigm of neoliberal governance takes this notion even further, universalizing the logic of mechanistic constitutionalism and socio-economic calculations to all interpersonal relations, thereby rendering the fundamental binary of inclusion and exclusion as the basis of the political community an impossibility, as all individuals are given equal treatment. This represents an inversion of the logic of *bellum omnium contra omnes*, replaced by the logic of the socio-economic maximization of all against all. In such a paradigm, total defence – or even its consideration – holds no place, as the egoistic self-preservation of total war in the state of nature is replaced by egoistic self-care.

Schmitt sublimates this self-preservation instinct inherent in the Hobbesian social contract, which underpins the establishment the political community through the relinquishing of individual freedom to a sovereign by linking it to the self-preservation of the state. In this regard, Schmitt states, 'the state suspends the law in the exception on the basis of its right of self-preservation' (Schmitt, 2005, p. 10). In the state of war, the self-preservation of the state is the paramount strategic goal, which surpasses the maintenance of the juridical order, as the existence of the political community is predicated upon the existence of the state. However, Schmitt acknowledges the 'need to find a modern legitimation for politics' that requires a

reference at least the 'constituent power' provided by the society or the people, that is, the political community (Herrero, 2023). Such a reading of Schmitt positions him in a nuanced stance, more of a proponent of an illiberal mass democracy than a pure sovereign dictatorship (McCormick, 1997). Nonetheless, resistance in such a paradigm would at best play a mediating role, as governments in exile – while legally representing the state – lack sovereignty over the state's territory and the ability to legitimise a delineation of the political community. Consequently, they have limited control or coordination over the resistance activities within their societies from afar, lacking the decisional power characteristic of the sovereign and the means to enforce those decisions, thus necessitating a strategy to guard against such a possibility arising.

In a Schmittian interpretation, the roles of total defence, resistance, and resilience are inherently complex and even paradoxical, as their current expressions and formalizations rely on both the simultaneous self-preservation of the state and the maintenance of the deliberative and inclusive aspects of neoliberal democracy through constitutional mechanisms. The neoliberal state must therefore maintain its decision-making authority during wartime while also aligning itself with societal will and values. Additionally, by articulating these values, it equates the preservation of the state with the preservation of societal and prescribed values. In light of this, what strategies of power emerge to navigate these tensions?

4. Case Studies

The task at hand is to examine how Finland, Sweden, and Lithuania negotiate the delicate balance between upholding neoliberal governance as the foundation of their political systems and exercising sovereign decision-making authority in times of exceptional crisis, particularly in the context of the possibility of war. It is crucial to emphasise that none of these countries are currently at war; rather, their governments have acknowledged the potential for conflict as a distinct possibility. Therefore, the following discussions will explore the discursive inclusion and positioning of individuals and populations within an already defined hypothetical normative and legal framework during a state of crisis.

4.1 Finland

Finland epitomises the practice of total defence through its strategy of comprehensive security, known as *kokonaisturvallisuus*. This concept is articulated in Section 127 of the Finnish constitution, which establishes the 'national defence obligation'. Within this section, it is clearly outlined that 'Every Finnish citizen is obligated to participate or assist in national defence, as provided by an Act', and only a 'right to exemption, on grounds of conscience, from participation in military national defence' is granted. Civilian or organizational participation in national defence is still assumed in this context, and refusal to contribute in any form is not permitted. This obligation is paired with the Defence Forces' adjacent responsibility 'to guarantee the living conditions of the population, fundamental rights and freedoms and to safeguard the freedom of action of the government and the legal order of society' (Puolustusvoimat, 2024).

Additionally, the subsequent section of the constitution delineates the position of the potential executive decision-maker during the state of exception, who would be the President of the Republic of Finland serving as the commander-in-chief of the Defence Forces. However, the President has the option to 'relinquish this task to another Finnish citizen' if proposed by the government (Ministry of Justice, 2018, p. 25).

The articulation of the current state of this comprehensive defence is characterised by a specific logic of complacency, or at least an assumption that it operates effectively in its present form. In this regard, President Niinistö portrayed the current practice of comprehensive defence as potentially exemplary, suggesting that 'Finland's example may actually be a goal worth striving for many others' (Niinistö, 2024). This assertion presumes that regular training and communication ensures that 'everybody knows what to do — the political decision-making, what do the banks do, the church does, industry does, what is media's role', which, according to Janne Kuusela, Director-General for Defence Policy at the Finnish Defence

Ministry, translates into the ability to 'turn this society into crisis mode if needs be' (Milne, 2022).

The assumptions persist regarding how individuals would necessarily demonstrate resilience. Societal resilience in the face of crisis or war is framed as being founded on individuals, who 'are becoming increasingly important security actors through their own choices and work, and as members of their families and local communities. The knowledge and skills possessed by individuals as well as their security-oriented attitude form the basis for a resilient society' (Turvallisuukomitea, 2024). Their potential actions are already assumed to align with the strategy of comprehensive defence and thus do not require any explicit guidance or incentivizing. Furthermore, the 'citizens' will to defend their country's independence as well as in the determination to maintain the livelihood and security of the population in all situations' is presumed to form the basis of Finland's societal psychological resilience, and these attitudes are equally presented as a premise to the overall strategy (Turvallisuuskomitea, 2017).

4.2 Sweden

The current Swedish total defence plan, as outlined in Totalförsvaret 2021–2025, continues to serve as the foundational document for framing total defence, despite being formulated and implemented prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This plan offers a comprehensive definition of total defence, encompassing various aspects:

> Total defence consists of such activities as are necessary to prepare Sweden for war. During the highest state of alert, total defence consists of all society's activities that must then be carried out. Our security, freedom, independence and freedom of action shall be safeguarded. Total defence includes military activities (military defence) and civilian activities (civil defence). The *Riksdag*, the Government, public authorities including county administrative boards, municipalities and regions, industry and NGOs, as well as individuals, are all part of, and are expected to contribute to, total defence (Government Offices of Sweden - Ministry of Defence, 2020).

In this definition of total defence, the political imperative of preserving of societal values – such as security, freedom, independence, and autonomy treated as coeval – acts as the center of gravity around which all other necessary elements are positioned. These elements are considered prerequisites, positioned outside the realm of deliberation, and delineating the boundaries of acceptable conduct. By already being integrated into this paradigm and accompanied with specific expectations, society and its constituent members are assumed to engage in the activities of total defence, as total defence is framed as 'not just defending [the] country's borders and [Swedish] territory: [Swedes] are also defending all of the values that form the basis for [Swedish] society', which includes the protection and defence of 'human rights, freedom of speech, and democracy' (Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, 2023). While individuals are afforded the opportunity to participate in a non-combat role, refusal to fulfil these obligations carries a penalty of up to four years in prison (Krisinformation, 2024b). The message conveyed to the population emphasises that if Swedish society suffers a crisis or is faced with the potentiality of war, it 'need[s] to come together, to draw on [its] inner strengths, and to stand up for one another and the values [it] want to protect' (Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, 2024a).

The implementation of total defence is only activated during a legally defined highest state of alert, and this type of situation requires a declaration that would shift the paradigm of normality to that of total defence. However, the *Totalförsvaret 2021–2025* plan does not mention the role of a potential executive decision-maker, such as the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence, or the Minister of Total Defence, for example. Instead, all decision-making authority is attributed to the *Riksdag* as a representative legislative body that speaks on behalf of society, representing society's political demands for self-preservation in the face of potential invasion and occupation. This highest state of alert, that is, the risk of war or the state of war, during which 'all societal activities must then support the total defence', is vernacularly framed in the informational documents aimed toward the population as the period during 'when society isn't working as normal' (Krisinformation, 2024; Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, 2024b).

Subsequent statements from these potential decision-makers nonetheless emerged after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, further reinforcing some of these abstract logics and assumptions of total defence in a more concrete fashion It was recognised that 'Ukraine has demonstrated the critical necessity of the population's resilience and will to defend their nation' (Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, 2023). Consequently, the Ukrainian case was viewed as an affirmation of Sweden's chosen approach, requiring only increased strategic messaging and reinforcement to a receptive population. Despite slight variations in rhetorical presentation from Prime Minister Kristersson, Minister Jonson, Minister Bohlin, and other governmental institutions, all adhere to the same line of strategic messaging, reinforcing the centrality of the population, understood as society within the paradigm of total defence, and drawing lessons from the Russian invasion of Ukraine to be applied to Sweden's own circumstances (Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, 2024a).

One perspective emerging from institutional interlocutors is that the pre-invasion understanding of total defence is inadequate, particularly concerning the integration of civil society. The Swedish Defence Commission emphasised that 'the civilian component of the total defence must rapidly increase its capability', and a 'sense of urgency must permeate all parts of the Swedish society and the further development of Sweden's total defence in the years to come' as 'building resilience throughout society increases Sweden's security in an increasingly difficult security situation' (Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, 2022, 2023). According to this perspective, the threat of a potential conflict is not seen to be adequately perceived by society, even with the possibility of Sweden's accession to NATO. A more accurate perception would lead to a more comprehensive and robust total defence, allowing the population to assume its presumed role in total defence planning, which would take into consideration the adoption of a 'a historic total defence resolution' later in 2024 (Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, 2024a).

A recurring theme is the constant stress that total defence encompasses not only the defence of the state but also a defence of the political, normative, and moral values essential for a free society to function and exist in the first place. Prime Minister Kristersson highlighted that 'We must ultimately be prepared to defend our country, our people, our democracy, our freedom and our way of life by force of arms' (Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, 2024a). He additionally underscored

this point, asserting that 'Ultimately, it is about defending Sweden, our values, and our way of life – with weapons in hand and our lives on the line. Citizenship is not a travel document' (Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, 2024b).

By stressing the citizenship dimension – both in terms of lack of information about these expectations and responsibilities and discursively linking it to values, implicitly framed as liberal in nature – this articulation of total defence implies a discussion of who exactly constitutes a member of society. This has led to a tense discussion on the topic of citizenship, more specifically how citizenship or membership in Swedish society entails not only rights and freedoms, but also responsibilities to uphold the extent sociopolitical order.

These statements are accompanied with new discourses regarding the willingness to support societal values in alignment with neoliberal governance. A primary consideration for Swedish total defence is that the 'total defence service requirement applies even if you are not a Swedish citizen' (Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, 2024b). This means that every member of the society, including migrants, residents, and asylum seekers living within Sweden, is therefore expected to fulfil their proscribed total defence duties as stipulated and articulated by the state.

To this point, Johan Pehrson, the Minister for Employment and Integration, has proposed that the rights, obligations, and values, including 'knowledge about total defence duties and NATO', be included in the mandatory civic orientation Sweden Course aimed at all new residents and arrivals (Runblom, 2024). If a new migrant were to arrive and refuse participation in this civic orientation course, they might consequently be denied social benefits. In this way, rational economic calculus intrinsic to neoliberal assumptions incentivises further learning about these responsibilities, with the assumption that increased awareness will lead to their practice in the event of potential crisis.

4.3 Lithuania

Lithuania constitutionally positions total defence as the basis of its sovereignty and of its defence policy. Articles 2, 3, and 139 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania situate the role of the population and the individual vis-à-vis national defence. In Article 2, it is stated that 'sovereignty shall be vested in the People', while Article 3 expands upon the basis of this popular sovereignty, directly stipulating:

> No one may limit or restrict the sovereignty of the People or make claims to the sovereign powers of the People. The People and each citizen shall have the right to oppose anyone who encroaches on the independence, territorial integrity, or constitutional order of the State of Lithuania by force (Seimas, 2003).

The re-articulation and situating of sovereignty to the population effectively grants the individual citizen the right to resist any occupying force or any actor that might weaken or potentially destroy the Lithuania's independence and legal order. This includes the president or any members of the government. These provisions were primarily included to avoid the mistakes of the past, such as when President Antonas Smetona fled Lithuania over the Liepona after acceding to the Soviet ultimatum for occupation in 1940. In practice, these constitutional mechanisms delegate decisional authority down to the level of the individual concerning the defence of the political community. No deliberation is needed at the individual level, allowing each member of the political community to make a personal decision regarding resistance.

Article 139 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania further equates this right with a duty, stating, 'the defence of the state of Lithuania from foreign armed attack shall be the right and duty of every citizen of the Republic of Lithuania' and all 'citizens of the Republic of Lithuania are obliged to serve in the national defence service or to perform alternative service in the manner established by law' (*Ibid.*). While in a slightly different context – an invasion by foreign armed forces – the implications are more radical. As a responsibility instead of a mere right, this obligation manifests itself as service to the state that circumscribes the conditions

set by conscription to allow all members of society to participate in national defence. In this way, national defence is effectively transformed into total defence.

Reaching this point of a state of war involves overcoming obstacles to declaring the state of exception that would trigger the population's participation in total defence. To declare a potential state of war, the executive decisional power of the president is curtailed by the existing constitutional legal provisions, which consistently require the approval of the *Seimas* firstly to declare such a state and secondly to define roles for the population within it. While this could theoretically lead to the granting of extraordinary powers to the executive, it also serves as a safeguard against a weak president relinquishing state sovereignty without resistance, influenced by past experiences of Soviet occupation.

These guiding constitutional principles have served as the foundation for Lithuanian total defence since the country regained its independence in 1991. It is underlined further in the Law on the Basics of National Security, which similarly lays the foundation of national security primarily on 'the citizens of the Republic of Lithuania, their associations and organisations', paired only secondarily with 'institutions established by the State for that purpose' (Seimas, 1996). However, the current implementation and messaging of total defence towards the population, as outlined by the Ministry of National Defence's strategic provisions, articulate the expectations and responsibilities of the citizen for total defence. The defence of Lithuania is portrayed as 'impossible without citizens who are determined to resist the aggressor in every possible way' (Strategic provisions, 2023). Accordingly, it is expected that 'citizens defend the state with weapons and take part in unarmed civil resistance', supported by a 'wide range of military training opportunities' and 'ways and possibilities of unarmed civil resistance' (*Ibid.*). While individual autonomy of action is still allowed within such a paradigm, meaning that citizens are not required to engage in violence in defence of the state, all actions taken by individuals must nonetheless preserve the political community during the exceptional state of war.

This understanding has manifested itself in many forms in the discourses of the policymakers and decision-makers. A primary approach articulated has been to

establish the rules of conduct before a state of war occurs. For instance, President Gitanas Nausėda stressed that 'the principle of total defence must be enshrined not only in the National Total Defence Plan but also in peacetime preparations for mobilisation tasks and the organisation of civil resistance' (lrt.lt, 2022). This articulation generally aligns with the consensus that the delineation between war and peace has become more blurred in the state of so-called grey zone conflict or non-linear warfare (Schnaufer, 2017). Consequently, the state of war is not something that would be declared, activating an exceptional juridical and political regime, but rather a substratal and foundational condition in which society would be embedded and all sociopolitical relations would occur.

The goal, then, of Lithuanian total defence, as articulated by Lithuanian Chief National Security Advisor Kęstutis Budrys, is to ensure that 'there is not a single citizen, company, or organisation that do not know what they would do' should the underlying grey zone conflict escalate into a full-fledged conventional war (lrt.lt, 2023a). However, the realities are viewed to be as quite the opposite, as Žilvinas Tomkus, Vice Minister of National Defence, acknowledges that for 'those who do not have an obligation, when day X happens, you cannot guarantee that those [civilian] people will actually come and contribute to the defence of the country' (lrt.lt, 2023b). In other words, while the expectation is that the population and individuals would inherently be responsible enough to defend their country and society, they currently lack the informed knowledge to do so effectively.

5. Conclusions

In the same way that one can speak of a total defence, this concept necessitates a total state, a total society, and in a sense, a totality of values, all coeval to one another. However, the inverse corollary of total defence, total war, inherently implies genocide, or at least its potentiality, due to the inclusion of all members of a society into defence (Heuser 2022, p. 45). The population of a country, as well as its constituent individuals, then become both subject and object of defence, although in the analysed cases, their agencies are either presumed or discursively situated by decision-makers and legal provisions.

To this point, the outcomes of the Russian invasion of Ukraine have solely reinforced the trust in the population-centric approach that had already been

implemented by each of the case countries. The will, resistance, and resilience of the Ukrainian people served as a testament to the extant Finnish, Swedish, and Lithuanian strategies, demonstrating that this whole-of-society approach would be the determining factor against an adversary that otherwise held conventional superiority across the board. Simultaneously, Russia is increasingly viewed by all three countries as the most likely adversary in the short- to medium-term.

On the theoretical issue of responsibilisation and agency within this paradigm, the legal provisions and elite approaches converge on their core principles. One shared assumption in each of these cases is that knowledge regarding conduct and responsibilities is paramount. This manifests either through the presumption that individuals will necessarily act as they are expected to or that they would act in such a fashion should they be properly informed. Society is seen as both resilient and resistant by the mere virtue that it is society *eo ipso*, one that would be necessarily inclined to fight for its own independence and freedom.

In some of the cases, that is, the Finnish and Lithuanian cases, this discursive ligature solely treats the individual citizen as the constituent member of society. In the Swedish case, however, this is broadened to all of those living and residing in Sweden, whether citizen, migrant, resident, or otherwise. While there has been a returned focus to the responsibilities of citizenship, particularly highlighted by Prime Minister Kristersson, the overall approach is more broadly congruent with the precepts of neoliberal governance wherein citizenship matters less than the necessary rational calculus undertaken by the individual as an agent. However, in all cases, this societal resilience is consistently framed as something that needs to be communicated, built, or practiced, rather than definitively achieved, which makes it an ongoing iterative process rather than an overarching goal.

While punitive measures, such as imprisonment and fines, for failing to meet the call for conscription or to fulfil the constitutional obligation to contribute to total defence in some fashion, are mentioned in legal provisions, they are muted in the broader discursive formulations of total defence and resistance. The focus on the lack of responsibility coming from a lack of knowledge or lack of consciousness

regarding such obligations illustrates that decision-makers either assume their populations will fulfil their responsibilities if they are cognizant of them or assume that a stress on the punitive element of the conscription or failure to act in accordance with the established limitations of conduct for total defence would be counterproductive to their overarching strategic goals.

Regarding exceptionality and sovereignty in wartime, the strategies of power diverge significantly among the cases. Each illustrates a markedly different approach to limiting the role of the potential executive decision-maker who might wield dictatorial power of command in such a situation when the entirety of society is mobilized. Finland and Sweden have their constitutional provisions and documents regarding total defence framed in such a way that the executive could never hold sole decisional power without having approval by their respective parliaments as representative of societal will. Conversely, while this consideration is also in play in Lithuania, the country takes a more radically democratic approach. By allowing the individual the autonomy to choose for him or herself whether to accept the government's congruence with Lithuania's sovereignty ultimately allows the individual to decide to take up arms in defence of society and the self. However, this decision can only affirm and maintain the *ante bellum* political order, not establish a new one. Aligning with Schmitt's observations regarding liberal democracies, there is a shared imperative across the three cases to forestall the emergence of a dictatorial sovereign through a mechanistic constitutionalism that encompasses all conceivable states of exception.

The two commonalities between the three countries, however, are their commitment to the maintenance of the *ante bellum* socio-political order even during the state of war and their trilateral linkage of state, society, and values. Guiding neoliberal incentives and providing opportunities to contribute to total defence without requiring participation in combat operations allows the conduct and potential autonomy of the individual subject to defend the political community under the auspices of the state. Consequently, shaping definitions of society and the nation along the lines of it being a community of neoliberal values regarding assumptions about inclusion in the political community implies that all choices would be directed to the preservation of this political community. In his work 'The Tyranny of Values', Schmitt outlines that when one speaks of 'values', they aim to

establish and enforce certain standards, which are not merely exercised like virtues or applied like norms but are rather dictated and enforced (Schmitt, 2018). Claiming universal validity without referring to the source of this validation is an attempt to obfuscate the power relations inherent in this constellation, and the situation of values vis-à-vis total defence is no different.

Overall, this framework therefore represents a strategy of power aimed at the continued preservation of the state by linking it with society and values in one discursive construct, which necessarily excludes all elements that would not contribute to its self-preservation. In this way, the wartime paradigm of total defence also reestablishes the friend-enemy distinction that is blurred during the normal conduct of peacetime; those who responsibly adhere to the appeal to freedom and respond to the threats to control are included in the political community, while those who do not engage in such practices of self-care are implicitly treated as aligning with the adversary. This extension of the model of the commissarial state includes all members of society who actively participate in total defence. The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the Finnish, Swedish, and Lithuania cases illustrate and vindicate Schmitt's assertion that the 'state and politics cannot be exterminated' (Schmitt, 2007, p. 78). The recreation of the political community is inherent in the neoliberal articulation of total defence, with the friendly community being aligned with established societal values. While the treatment of adversaries as enemies is more muted and subtle, those who oppose or deviate from these values are implicitly regarded as potential threats to the community and the viability of total defence for the preservation of the state and society. However, the extant legal provisions and evolving discourses aim to delineate a spectrum of conduct, thereby mitigating the likelihood of such a scenario and enabling the emergence of more autonomous subjects.

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