Research Article **Open Access**

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From 'total' to 'comprehensive' national defence: the development of the concept in Europe

https://doi.org/10.2478/jobs-2020-0006
received October 27, 2020; accepted October 27, 2020.

Abstract: The article discusses the idea of comprehensive national defence from a wide historical and geographical perspective. Countries facing different security challenges have used the concept of involving the entire society in state defence. From a historical perspective, 'total defence', with an emphasis on military components, was used primarily by non-aligned states during the Cold War; the breakdown of the Soviet Union reduced the importance of 'total defence'; however, the emergence of hybrid threats in the 21st century has contributed to the rebirth of the concept in the form of 'comprehensive national defence', for application in circumstances wherein potential adversaries use military and non-military means in an integrated manner.

Keywords: total defence; comprehensive national defence; Finland; Sweden; Switzerland; Austria; Yugoslavia; Latvia; NATO.

1 Introduction

This paper is a continuation of a previous work (Berzina, 2019), which was based on case studies of Finland, Israel, Singapore, Switzerland, former Yugoslavia and other countries, and defines four general dimensions of the concept of comprehensive national defence: military, civilian, informational and psychological. Based on the existing literature, this study aims to conceptualise comprehensive national defence as a form of modern-day total defence by focussing on the essence and major determinants of this defence concept in Europe. The information presented here is structured as follows – a brief description of the security environment of each period is followed by an outline of the perception of major threats and the solutions used to counter them by countries that have adopted total or comprehensive national defence concepts.

The concept of total defence was largely the offspring of World War II as a 'total war'. The Swiss concept of overall defence (Der Bundesrat, 1973) was influenced by the experience 'that armed forces no longer operated in a separate environment and that all segments of society were affected by war' (Spillman, 1987, 6). The Swedish commission responsible for new civil defence law during World War II concluded as follows: 'Total warfare against the homeland, where civil life is the primary target [..], needs to be countered with total defence, including both a military and civil side" (cited in Larsson, 2021, 47). The idea of 'total war' is thoroughly developed in the 1935 work '*Der Totale Krieg*' (*The Total War*) by the German general Erich Ludendorff. The essence of a total war, according to Ludendorff (2015, 21), is that 'the armed forces and civilian population is one whole' because in the 20th-century 'theater of military operations in the true sense of the word extends to the entire territory of the belligerent nations'. Thus, 'total defence' and 'total war' are two sides of the same coin due to the understanding that war requires a whole-of-society approach for both attack and defence.

Over time, warfare has changed along with changes in international politics, the development of armaments and the emergence of new concepts for the achievement of global and regional influences by state and non-state actors. In the present-day political climate, security challenges are primarily related to the so-called hybrid threats. Hoffman (2010, 443) defines a hybrid threat as 'any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of

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conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, and criminal behaviour in the battlespace to obtain their political objectives'. This definition still covers warfare primarily in the military domain, but after Crimea's annexation by Russia and the following war in Southeast Ukraine, the understanding of hybrid threats has been expanded to encompass a non-military dimension. As noted by Davis (2015, 19),: 'Russia [..] is now employing not only the military Instrument of Power (IOP) of the modern state, but also the economic, informational, and diplomatic IOPs in its hybrid threat construct'. As hybrid threats cover all major societal functions, the defence against them must be comprehensive, including areas that are not traditionally associated with warfare, e.g. financial markets, media, civil society and others (Cederberg and Eronen, 2015, 5). Consequently, the two basic principles governing comprehensive national defence are the whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches; these are explained in detail further in the text.

2 Cold War

The security environment in Cold War-era Europe can be best described by the concept of 'the long peace' (Gaddis, 1986), which was a result of the bipolar distribution of power, equality in military power between the two superpowers (the United States and the Soviet Union) and the increase in nuclear arsenal, which would make the consequences of war devastating on an unprecedented scale (Mearsheimer, 1990, 11). Mearsheimer (1990, 29) notes that during the Cold War, 'the locus of European politics shifted to the United States and the Soviet Union'. In the context of security, this meant that most European countries were either part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. At the same time, some countries were not involved in any collective security alliances, and these non-aligned European countries are the clearest examples of Cold War total defence, because, for their defence, they had to rely primarily on their own strength. Stein (1990, 17) names five neutral European states that used the total defence model: Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria and Yugoslavia.

The Swiss defence model of the Cold War period was the adaptation of the centuries-old principle of 'credibly armed neutrality' (Spillman, 1987, 3) to the following new threats: 'superpower nuclear confrontation, the division of Europe into two armed camps, and the political, economic, psychological propaganda, terrorist, and other nonmilitary conflicts' (Stein, 1990, 18). For Austria, the main threat was the possibility of being used as a 'corridor' in a potential conflict between the East and the West (Stein, 1990, 27). The development of the total defence concept in the former State of Yugoslavia was encouraged by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, which showed the need 'to deter Soviet political pressure or invasion' (Johnson, 1971, 2). Sweden aimed at neutrality in a war, based on the experience of World War II (Santalo, 2018). For Finland, total defence provided the necessary self-defence capabilities to achieve a balance between the pressures of the Soviet Union and the West (Valtonen and Branders, 2021, 98). Thus, total defence during the Cold War was primarily used by small and non-aligned states as a defence and deterrence strategy aimed at increasing the costs for a potential aggressor, thus diminishing the likelihood of an attack. This was achieved through the principles that were typical for most of the total defence cases. First, there was an overall determination to resist aggression. For example, one of the strategic tasks of the Swiss 1973 concept of overall defence was 'the capability to conduct a war up to protracted resistance' (Spillman, 1987, 11). In the former State of Yugoslavia, capitulation was even criminalised under the 1974 Constitution (Dulić and Kostić, 2010, 1060). The ability of the Finnish total defence system to maintain national independence during World War II resulted in the narrative of 'the spirit of the Winter War', which embodies the idea of 'the unity of the people against the aggressor' (Harinen and Leskinen, 2009, 57). Second, to transform the spirit of resistance into practical capability, as much of the society as possible must be militarily trained and prepared. This was achieved by compulsory military service, which was an integral part of all cases of total defence during the Cold War. Third, military capabilities in a system of total defence were developed primarily as territorial defence. Mendershausen (1980, 2-3) names four characteristics of the Cold War-era territorial defence: 1) it is a defensive system; 2) it largely relies on latent forces, involving a large part of civil society, rather than a standing army; 3) it involves the use of weapons and technologies other than those used to intervene in other states; 4) it involves military resource planning for territorial defence. Osburg (Cited in Berzina, 2019, 74) gives an apt illustration of the Swiss approach to territorial defence: 'infrastructure denial (in case of attack, significant infrastructure objects in the border area are destroyed to win time for mobilization), unconventional military operations (guerrilla warfare being carried out by small and decentralized units) and civilian resistance (intelligence and logistics support, passive

resistance, documentation of atrocities and the preparation and spreading of propaganda)'. 'Territorial defence forces' at the communal and republican levels constituted one of the three pillars of the Yugoslav total defence system, in parallel with the Yugoslav People's Army and the Civil Defence Units (Johnson, 1971, 11). Fourth, territorial defence foresees the possibility of war in a country, which means a high risk to the security of civilians; therefore, the concept of civil defence plays a particularly important role in the system of total defence.

The two fundamental pillars of the Swiss defence model were the armed forces and civil defence (Spillman, 1987, 7). Larsson (2021, 47) argues that out of the four Cold War-era total defence branches in Sweden, namely military defence, economic defence, psychological defence and civil defence, the last played the most important role during peacetime by promoting 'voluntary civilian participation in extensive war preparedness'. According to the Latvian Western diaspora newspaper, in 1971, Sweden had significant civil defence forces, which included the following components: participants of the military command course, voluntary defence organisation, civilian maritime defence forces, the National Air Force Association, voluntary air force units, voluntary units of motorists, motorcyclists, radio technicians and skydivers, the Civil Self-Defence Association, sports, pistol and general volunteer shooter associations, Lotta units, the National Association of Women Drivers, dog training clubs and the Swedish Red Cross (Latvija, 1971). In total, 'over 1 million Swedes between the ages of 15 and 65 work in 27 organizations for defense purposes in various industries' (Latvija, 1971).

3 Post-Cold War

The end of the Cold War brought about the dissolution of the bipolar world order; this opened up the debate of whether the new world order would be unipolar or multipolar. The idea that the new world order will be unipolar dominated in the West at one time. Krauthammer (1990, 4) was one of the first academics claiming that the new world order is unipolar: 'The immediate post-Cold War world is not multipolar. It is unipolar. The center of world power is the unchallenged superpower, the United States, attended by its Western allies.' This perspective is closely linked with the idea of a US hegemony (Brzezinski, 1997; Layne, 2006, p. 31; Posen, 2014), which was nevertheless challenged by Russia (Smith, 2013) and China (Qiao and Wang, 2007). The end of the Cold War was also the victory of Western liberal democracy over the ideology of Marxism–Leninism. As stated by Fukuyama (1989, 4), the end of the Cold War has resulted in 'the endpoint of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government'. This led to a decline in militarisation, due to the reduction of tension after the disappearance of one of the two superpowers and inspired by the idea of the democratic peace theory (albeit widely contested) that democracies do not fight with each other. The abandonment of conscription in several European countries was one of the hallmarks of demilitarisation. Nevertheless, there were countries that maintained, and even developed, their military capabilities during the post-Cold War period. These were primarily the non-aligned European states that relied primarily on their self-defence capabilities and countries that had their independence restored or were newly established and therefore had to form their armed forces from scratch (Jehn and Selden, 2002). Thus, the trends were diverse. The case of Latvia during the period from restoration of independence to the time of becoming a member of NATO is indicative of the Cold War perspective on the concept of total defence as a solution for non-aligned states, because in the 1990s, the concept of total defence was developed as one of the fundamental principles of state defence; however, after Latvia joined NATO, it was replaced by the principle of collective defence.

Latvia's State Defence Concept (Saeima, 2001) of 2001 named five principles of state defence: 1) total defence; 2) territorial defence; 3) compulsory military service and mobilisation; 4) cooperation between the National armed forces and society; and 5) international cooperation and participation. The principle of total defence as enshrined in this concept was based on the idea of involving the whole of society in national defence: 'The whole of society is involved in national defense and all available civil and military resources of the state and society are used in the interests of this task, as well as constant cooperation between civil and military persons takes place' (Saeima, 2001). The National Security Concept of 2002 clarifies that the total defence system 'consists of a military defense system, a civil defense system and all the material and financial resources available in the country' (Saeima, 2002). The ideas included in these security policy documents of Latvia corresponded to the principles used in the countries that developed their total defence systems during the Cold War. This is not surprising, because Sweden assisted in the development of the total defence systems in the Baltic States in the 1990s (Pāvuls, 1999).

Nevertheless, the concept of total defence was replaced by the principle of collective defence in the security policy documents that were adopted after Latvia received an invitation to join NATO. The State Defence Concept of 2003 stated as follows: 'The basis of Latvia's defence is Latvia's membership in NATO's collective security and defence system' (Saeima, 2003). The same idea was included in the National Security Concept of 2005: 'Latvia associates military security and defense with membership and full integration into NATO' (Saeima, 2005). The total defence concept disappeared from the security discourse in Latvia. The replacing of the total defence concept with that of collective defence was articulated by the Latvian Ministry of Defence in the context of making amendments to the Mobilisation Law: 'As the security situation changes, as well as Latvia becomes a full member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the main emphasis in defence planning is shifted from territorial and total defence to the principle of collective defence' (Freidenfelds, 2003). With Latvia's participation in NATO, compulsory military service was abolished in 2007.

Changes in the global security situation also affected security policy in the 'old total defence countries'. In the immediate post-Cold War period, Finland retained its Cold War total defence principles because of the long border with Russia and the melting Arctic coastline, both of which determined the possibility of military conflicts (Tresch, 2011, 252). Switzerland, Austria and Sweden shifted their focus from territorial defence to international security. Switzerland retained the concept of 'citizens in uniforms' (Tresch, 2011, 252), although 'the Swiss concept of 'overall defense' (*Gesamtverteidigung*) has changed into the concept of 'security policy' (*Sicherheitspolitik*)', and 'the Swiss Armed Forces have become more active in the promotion of peace within an international context' (Ferst and Tresch, 2017, 68). After the Cold War, Austria and Sweden placed more emphasis on international cooperation instead of territorial defence due to the lack of direct military threats (Tresch, 2011, 252). According to Tresch (2011, 252): 'Austria's armed forces have undergone a gradual change from territorial armed forces to a multifunctional crisis instrument' (Tresch, 2011, 252). Trends in the post-Cold War Swedish military are characterised by Holmberg (2015, 244) as follows: 'extensive budget cuts, the transformation of defence capabilities, increased international cooperation, participation in operations and a decision to abandon conscription'. Gradually, Sweden's traditional total defence model was replaced with an 'all-hazards' approach as a result of changes in threat perception – asymmetric threats became more significant than the possibility of invasion (Larsson, 2021, 57). However, as described by Larsson (2021, 58), the term 'total defence' was not easy to replace, 'since a more or less established operational definition of total defence was already in place in up to 150 different statutes and legislative acts at the time'.

However, the most dramatic consequences of the end of the Cold War were experienced by Yugoslavia, where the total defence system became dysfunctional in a situation of growing nationalism and the republic's aspirations for independence (Dulić and Kostić, 2010, 1065). The CIA Directorate of Intelligence (1991, 1) admitted that 'the dual nature of Yugoslavia's military structure, with a federally based army, navy, and air force and regionally organized militia forces, provides the groundwork for civil war'. The concept of total defence was effective as long as the personality cult of Josip Broz Tito ensured the unity of the nation (Horncastle, 2011, 299). After his death, the absence of unifying values and ideals led to disintegration, but the system of total defence brought about the outbreak of violence during the disintegration process, because 'universal military training, mass mobilization, redundant command and control structures, and widely distributed weaponry – have equipped the entire society for war and created two potential contenders' (CIA Directorate of Intelligence, 1991, 1). The case of the former State of Yugoslavia as a multi-ethnic country provides a clear example that social cohesion is a definite prerequisite for total or comprehensive defence to be effective and not to become a threat to society itself.

4 The 21st century

The global security environment in the 21st century has been most affected by events such as the September 11, 2001 (9/11) terrorist attack on the United States, the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, the wave of colour revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union, the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa (which resulted in several large-scale conflicts in the region and the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant [ISIL]), the 5-day Russia–Georgia war, the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the subsequent war in Southeast Ukraine and others. The key characteristic of the security landscape in the 21st century is that the majority of conflicts are asymmetric, in contrast with the symmetrical power structure between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War (Bockstette, 2008, 6). The use of asymmetric tools is largely a direct consequence of the attempts

made by various actors to challenge the US global dominance and military superiority, which is well explained by Mattis and Hoffman (2005): 'our conventional superiority creates a compelling logic for states and non-state actors to move out of the traditional mode of war and seek some niche capability or some unexpected combination of technologies and tactics to gain an advantage'.

Changes in the global balance of power structure, as well as the rapid development of information and communication technologies, have determined the peculiarities of warfare in the 21st century. A broad understanding has evolved concerning the growing importance of information and psychological operations as elements of warfare. Mattis and Hoffman (2005) add 'psychological or information operations' as a fourth block to the concept of the Three Block War (Annis, 2020) because 'insurgencies are wars of ideas, and our ideas need to compete with those of the enemy' (Mattis and Hoffman, 2005). Likewise, Russian military experts Chekinov and Bogdanov (2013, 14) define information as a separate dimension of war. The increasing importance of non-military tools in contemporary warfare has encouraged the application of the concept of hybridity to describe modern-day security challenges. Synthesis of different tools and techniques – both military and non-military – is the key principle that characterises 'hybrid warfare' and 'hybrid threats' (Mattis and Hoffman, 2005). The list of hybrid tools developed by Treverton et al. (2018, 4) provides an idea of the variety of tools that can be used by enemies: propaganda; fake news; strategic leaks; funding of organisations; political parties; organised protest movements; cyber tools (espionage, attack and manipulation); economic leverage; proxies and unacknowledged warfare; and paramilitary organisations. The list is not exhaustive, and all the aforesaid tools might also be used in conjunction with conventional warfare.

The West in the 21st century is challenged by the emergence of new power centres (China, Russia, India, Brazil and others) and the effectiveness of asymmetric warfare in bypassing the superiority of conventional military capabilities. The major turning point in the perception of the new security-based reality in Europe was the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. The annexation demonstrated that Russia was ready to act, including by using military force, to achieve its goals; the West, however, has been unable to counter the annexation. The fact that conventional military superiority may not in itself be a sufficient deterrent against asymmetric threats has increased the need for stronger self-defence capabilities in countries where Russia could pose security risks. The principles of total defence constitute one of the most effective ways to promote national self-defence capabilities, but given the growing importance of asymmetric warfare, the total defence system is also being used by NATO member countries. The peculiarity of the 21st century is that collective defence is complemented with total defence, unlike in the Cold War period, when it was primarily a tool used by the non-aligned states. The concept of 'Comprehensive approach to counter hybrid threats', developed by the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki (Hagelstam, 2018), illustrates how national and international responses of the European Union (EU) and/or NATO member states are integrated to deal with contemporary security challenges; the aspects of situational awareness and comprehensive security are at the core of analyses of hybrid threats and vulnerabilities to them, as well as the response to hybrid threats at national and international levels.

The concept of total or comprehensive defence is associated with collective defence, as a concept of resilience with an emphasis on the civilian aspects of security at a national level. It was decided at the NATO Warsaw Summit of 2016 that 'civil preparedness is a central pillar of Allies' resilience and a critical enabler for Alliance collective defence. While this remains a national responsibility, NATO can support Allies in assessing and, upon request, enhancing their civil preparedness' (NATO, 2016a). During the summit, NATO leaders also issued a 'Commitment to enhance resilience', which acknowledged that 'resilience is an essential basis for credible deterrence and defence and effective fulfilment of the Alliance's core tasks' (NATO, 2016b). Thus, national resilience complements the 'mix of nuclear, conventional and ballistic missile defence capabilities, [which] remains a core element of NATO's overall strategy' (NATO, 2020). Seven baseline requirements for civil preparedness were defined to facilitate national resilience in NATO member countries: '1) assured continuity of government and critical government services; 2) resilient energy supplies; 3) ability to deal effectively with the uncontrolled movement of people; 4) resilient food and water resources; 5) ability to deal with mass casualties; 6) resilient civil communications systems; 7) resilient civil transportation systems' (Roepke and Thankey, 2019).

The developments in non-NATO Finland and Sweden also provide a valuable insight into modern-day mechanisms of total defence. The case of Finland is illustrative of the transformation of the total defence system of the Cold War period into a comprehensive approach to security. Hyvönen and Juntunen (2021, 165) mention several factors that have contributed to the development of Finland's comprehensive security concept: the dissolution of the Soviet Union,

European integration, global economic liberalisation, broadening international security agenda and threat perceptions and New Public Management theories. Valtonen and Branders (2021, 100) argue that total defence transformed into a comprehensive security concept in Finland in the period from 2003 to 2010 when 'The strategy for securing the vital functions of society' was written and updated. Finland's comprehensive security model 'was based on an all-hazards principle, which placed central responsibility to the competent authority, placing all other relevant security actors in supporting roles' (Valtonen and Branders, 2021, 100).

Unlike the total defence system adopted during the Cold War period, the two most important components of which were military and civilian defence systems, comprehensive security is a whole-of-government approach, which integrates all major aspects of societal life. The Security Committee (n.d.) defines seven vital functions of Finland's society, which are essential for society to be prepared for different crisis situations: 1) leadership; 2) international and EU activities; 3) defence capability; 4) internal security; 5) economy, infrastructure and security of supply; 6) functional capacity of the population and services; 7) psychological resilience. The vital functions cover all major aspects of social life that are the responsibilities of the government and the relevant ministries. The Security Strategy for Society (The Security Committee, 2017) provides detailed description of the subtasks and ministries in charge within each vital function. The Prime Minister's Office and the various ministries have a major role to play in this security concept, which is a visible example of the whole-of-government approach.

Sweden returned to the total defence concept in 2015 when the defence bill covering the period from 2016 to 2020 was passed (Sydow, 2018). Sweden maintained the Cold War-era name of the concept and retained the idea that total defence primarily consists of military defence and civil defence, which nevertheless are complemented with other elements, such as psychological defence, cyber defence and others (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015, 5). However, in essence, Sweden's total defence system includes the same basic principles put to use elsewhere, where a comprehensive national defence approach might be used: 'The Total Defence concept entails that when the government orders the highest state of alert, all functions of society are engaged in the defence effort, both military and civilian' (Sydow, 2018). To ensure the involvement of the whole of society in national defence, attention should be paid to aspects such as the ability to quickly mobilise military and civilian resources; the ability of the population to provide for themselves in the first days of a crisis; the will of society to defend the state; preparation for wartime conditions; protection of democratic values; countering disinformation; coordination and integration of the efforts of the public and the private sector; creation of material reserves; cyber capability, transportation; healthcare system; cooperation with private enterprises; finances and others (Sydow, 2018). Unlike Finland, Sweden needs to rebuild its total defence system, which will take many years (Government Offices of Sweden, 2018) because it was significantly modified during the post-Cold War period. Thus, although the various comprehensive national defence ideas appear similar, there are significant differences between countries in the extent to which these principles contribute to self-defence capabilities in real-life situations.

5 Conclusion

The paper traced the development of the comprehensive national defence concept from the end of World War II until the present day. One of the questions to be answered at the end of the article is about terminology: which of the titles, 'total' or 'comprehensive' defence, is more appropriate for describing contemporary security strategies that are based on the whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches? The question is not easy to answer because Switzerland used the name 'Comprehensive Security Policy' during the Cold War, but Sweden is using the name 'Total Defence' in its current policy planning documents. However, given that 'total defence' was largely a reaction to the experience of World War II as a 'total war', but in today's world, the biggest challenge is hybrid warfare encompassing a broad spectrum of tools for the achievement of political and military goals, it may be concluded that 'comprehensive defence' is a more accurate term.

An overview of the development of the comprehensive national defence concept over time provides evidence that it is a highly dynamic concept that is being adapted to the evolving security challenges through addition of new elements that are essential for national defence. One of the important changes that have taken place in the 21st century is that the principles of comprehensive defence are being used by NATO member states, whereas total defence during the

Cold War was used primarily by the non-aligned states. However, the basic idea remains that countries must be, as much as possible, self-sufficient in implementation of their defence strategies. This contributes to the NATO collective security system, which is affected by how well each country does its defence homework. The modern-day concept of comprehensive national defence is based on two fundamental principles – resistance and resilience. Resistance refers to the will and readiness to defend a country in case of military threats. Resilience refers to civilian preparedness to maintain the functioning of society in the event of a crisis, including a military attack. Hybrid threats can be countered if military capabilities are complemented with the society's determination to resist and societal resilience.

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