

Cooperation in a Changing World

Most welcome to Stockholm! I suppose it is not by chance you visit Sweden around Midsummer – this is one of the absolute high lights in Sweden, with white nights and nature in full blossom. We are also fortunate to celebrate Midsummer in a free and democratic country. These are core values that we tend to take for granted. But as developments in our geographic vicinity show, these fundamental values are not respected by all. Peace and democracy have been violated by the unacceptable Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The world is changing fast. And in this ever changing world, the Swedish Armed Forces continuously conduct missions inside Sweden, in our vicinity and far away. Simultaneously, we continue the implementation of the defence reform. I am proud to tell you that even if we have a hard work load, my personnel is solving their tasks in an excellent way and with high quality.

When we are in the midst of so many parallel processes, it is sometimes hard to think about the future. Now, it has always been complicated and challenging to forecast the future. But I believe it has become even harder today, given the fact that the world is ever changing.

The way a country chooses to task and organize its own armed forces is a function on how the overarching security policy environment is interpreted by the nation. This is a rational way of thinking. But in this ever changing world we should also realize that we have to be able to rapidly prevent and meet new threats and challenges.

And here we sometimes tend to hang on to solutions that already might be outdated – solutions that seem to be already familiar to us. So the difficulty is how to identify our real needs for the future.

While reflecting on this, one might allude on Bertrand Russell's analogy on blue-tinted glasses in explaining Immanuel Kant's theory on "Das Ding an sich". Are we able today to look behind the world as it appears to us? Or do we all tend to look at the world through the same bluish lenses?

Actually, I would claim that the events at Crimea and in eastern Ukraine represent a new type of warfare. But we might also want to ask ourselves if we didn't want to see what was coming.

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But let me begin with a retrospective. The changing world is the reason why the Swedish parliament and government in 2009 came to the conclusion that it was time to no longer apply compulsory national conscription in peace time. Since 1st of July 2010, national conscription is idle and the Swedish Armed Forces are based on voluntary recruitment.

During the 20th century a massive anti-invasion force based on conscription matched the threats at that time. But as the very worrisome development in Ukraine shows, today we need versatile, usable forces with increased operational effectiveness, high readiness and flexibility that can solve tasks at home, in our vicinity and further away. This is the reason why we are creating an all-volunteer, rapid reaction task force.

We are now four years in to the reform. Even though the implementation of the reform is a huge effort for everyone in the Swedish Armed Forces, I am proud to say that we are doing well.

We have learned a lot since July 2010. Today, our recruitment is going well, but still the challenge is to make our soldiers and sailors stay during several years. Here we are continuously working on the mechanisms to make them stay longer.

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During the end of the nineties and beginning of this millennium, we in Sweden considered our immediate vicinity to be very benign. That was the principal reason for the Swedish Armed Forces to mainly focus on participating in crisis management missions abroad. In retrospective I think we all agree that we looked too far away from our own country and our vicinity.

Times change, hence we need to refocus on our own country and our geographical vicinity, something the very worrisome developments in our geographic neighbourhood show. This is also underlined in the long term study that the Swedish Armed Forces last autumn handed over to the government.

But we must continuously strive for a balance between national and international tasks. In my view international missions and exercises are pivotal in building and developing our overall military capabilities.

As NATO is preparing the transition from ISAF to RSM, Sweden is winding down its military engagement in Afghanistan. The Swedish Armed Forces will remain engaged in Afghanistan in RSM with smaller numbers.

Our geographical focus for the international missions is changing from Afghanistan to Africa, where the Swedish Armed Forces participate in the EU-led missions in Mali and Somalia. These two missions, EUTM Mali and EUTM Somalia, are training missions with the aim to train the trainers.

Thereby we contribute to the building of African capabilities – just as the ISAF-mission has contributed to the build-up of the ANSF, and as the RSM will do. I believe that the concept “train the trainers” will be of increased importance during the coming years.

Later this year, Sweden will start deploying an ASIFU element in Timbuktu to the UN-led mission in Mali, MINUSMA. The plan is to cooperate with the Dutch ASIFU component. By deploying this technical advanced component, we will provide the mission with increased situational awareness – which is crucial in the vast areas in Mali and Sahel.

But even if we still contribute to international missions, we foresee fewer missions with larger troop contributions during the coming years. Therefore advanced international exercises will be even more important in order to maintain and develop our capabilities.

Hence, the Swedish participation in NATO Response Force (NRF) or rather RFP (Reserve Forces Pool) is an excellent way to maintain and develop these skills in an international setting.

The ability to interact is crucial whilst today's and tomorrow's challenges don't know any boundaries. In our globalized world, nations and regions are becoming more and more interlinked and interdependent. Events can occur and change very fast, something we have seen during the recent months in Ukraine.

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The new severe security situation in and around Ukraine has led to new assessments linked to military needs and capabilities. In mid-May, the Swedish defence commission released its report. Among other proposals, the commission suggests 10 more fighters and one more submarine in order to increase the Armed Forces capabilities.

The proposals are good news, but we should also keep in mind that they have to be financed - and added to that we need to address old imbalances both in equipment and among our personnel.

Whilst making new assessments, they should be done both nationally and in dialogue with other democratic countries and organizations. In this context, we should remember that several other aspects are intertwined with the military dimension of today's crises and conflicts.

In Sweden's geographical vicinity, the Baltic Sea area up until now has been a good example on how stability and security has increased since the end of the Cold War. Until the Russian aggression in Ukraine, our neighbourhood was considered an area of increased cooperation and shared political as well as military partnerships, hence an area of stability and security. But the last months' events in Ukraine have dramatically changed our notion of progress – rather we might ask ourselves if we have not taken several steps back. The unacceptable Russian aggression in Ukraine has seriously weakened the European security architecture.

Already before the events in Ukraine we noticed an increased strategic interest in the Baltic Sea region and an increased military capability as well as military activity. Last autumn proved this with several exercises in the Baltic Sea, as the Russian exercise Zapad, NATO's exercise Steadfast Jazz and also the exercise Northern Coast, led by Sweden. These trends will most likely continue, given the worrisome development in our geographic vicinity.

The increased strategic interest in the Baltic Sea is also linked to the increased trade and energy flows. The same goes for the Arctic, where climate change opens up for new sail routes and possibilities to explore natural resources.

It is of utmost importance that the Arctic countries have agreed that challenges in the Arctic area should not be solved by military means. This is also something we have discussed and underlined in the group of Arctic CHOD:s.

Given the very sensitive character of the nature and environment in the Arctic, there are risks when sea traffic and exploration increases. One of the challenges is therefore to prevent environmental and maritime disasters. And if the worst would happen, the Arctic countries must be ready to act. In such case, military resources and knowledge could serve as a complement to civilian rescue resources.

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From a Swedish point of view, advanced international exercises serve as an instrument to increase our interoperability but also to manifest our firm conviction that we build security together with other nations and organizations. This goes especially for our engagement in our geographical vicinity.

The Russian aggression in Ukraine confirms the increased Russian emphasis on dominating the Russian “near abroad”. The Russian aggression also shows that Russia considers military means to solve political disputes in a different and more aggressive way than previously believed and advocated by Russia.

This also confirms our earlier assessment that the current very ambitious Russian military reform is delivering operational effect and more capable and efficient Russian military units. We also note that the Russian way to act in Ukraine is a new type of warfare where both military and non-military means are used in a coordinated manner. In this way of conducting a conflict, long term planning are pivotal as well as long term information operations.

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Closer integration and cooperation among the countries that share the same democratic values in the Baltic Sea region will in the future become even more important. Acting and exercising together is an excellent way to manifest solidarity between nations that share the same democratic values. Also, by cooperating or by pooling and sharing resources we obtain an increased output during the build-up phase of our forces, as well as an operational increased output.

The Nordic and the Nordic-Baltic cooperation could not be seen isolated from other circles of cooperation as i.e. the European Union and NATO, instead they are mutually reinforcing.

On a bilateral basis, we in Sweden and Finland will further enhance our cooperation. We will build on already existing structures, hence we will begin to enhance the cooperation between our Navies and our Air Forces. Common military activities are also a prerequisite for an increased military threshold in our geographical vicinity.

The close cooperation between Sweden and Finland is also manifested in our common engagement in the CFI TF where we, together with other nations are contributing to the development of the partnership to NATO. For the time being Sweden is co-sharing the TF with Belgium. The aim of this setting is to help achieve the full potential of the possibilities open for partners through the Connected Forces Initiative. Until broader, long-term partner-modalities are defined, the group of seven Nations (Australia, Austria, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Sweden and Switzerland) with special security arrangements with NATO are eligible to form the core-group of the advisory CFI TF.

Up until now, the CFI TF has produced two informal papers which are high-lighting the potential win-win situation between allies and partners in operations. The first paper is entitled “Day One Connectivity” and the second “Inclusive Partner Default Setting for Education, Training, Exercises and Evaluation (ETEE)”. These informal papers will also serve as input to the NATO Summit in September.

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A general remark whilst cooperating more closely is that we also need to coordinate ourselves in an even better way. We also have to reconsider traditional national identity markers while looking at new forms of cooperation. This goes especially for procurement of equipment, but also for other issues as national legislation.

Transparency and exchange of relevant information will be pivotal if we want to cooperate, pool and share. But one crucial issue is how we nationally optimize the balance between air force, army and navy, keeping in mind that we need to cooperate between nations and organizations in several areas.

This type of discussions is becoming even more important in the current worrisome security environment. They have to be conducted both nationally as well as in different bilateral and multinational settings.

In a world of limited or even shrinking resources for us in the military we need to think outside the box. Cooperation, rationalization and pooling and sharing are all important, but they need to be complemented by new investments as well. New investments are now discussed and will happen in Sweden, something I warmly welcome.

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So, there are quite a few challenges ahead. They will require multifaceted skills, where the human being still will be the most important factor! Therefore, we need continuously to adopt and develop ourselves if we also in the future want to recruit personnel with the most adequate skills.

In a globalized world it is also pivotal to develop international personal contacts and network, something you do continuously at the NATO Defence College. Therefore I wish you a both pleasant and interesting visit to Sweden.

Thank you! I am now ready to take questions!