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Resistance and the Modern State. Exploring a society-based resistance capability pathway for Sweden in the shadow of the War in Ukraine.

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For nearly eighty years, a large proportion of Western Europe and beyond has benefitted from a relatively stable international system that managed through intention and no small helping of luck to prevent the outbreak of a major war. This is not to say that the threat of war was not apparent or that nuclear annihilation/mutually assured destruction (MAD) was not high on political and social agendas, but for the majority in Europe, notwithstanding international crises and superpower tensions, internal security and the sanctuary of state borders remained reassuringly inviolable to external foes.

This is no longer the case. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has generated searing questions about what should a state do in the face of a massive military assault by a more powerful external foe. For so-called *small states* such as Sweden,[1] this problem

[1] The idea of what is a small state is quite contested in the broader literature. However, IR scholars have been discussing small state perspectives for over 50 years with one of the most notable examples being, Robert Keohane's influential article, "Lilliputians" Dilemma: Small States in International Politics, *International Organisation*, 23/2 (Spring 1969), pp.291-310. Within political science circles in Sweden and

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is particularly acute as it has limited military resources to defend the country and is in the process of upgrading and increasing the size of its armed forces, but this will take many years to fully accomplish. Consequently, the deterrent effect of the Swedish armed forces (active and reservists), which is less than ten percent[2] of the size of the increased Russian conscription drive of 300,000 extra soldiers in 2022, is not as optimal as it needs to be for the foreseeable future.

This raises the idea of whether Sweden's deterrence level can be raised or complemented by alternative measures such as developing a society-based resistance capability alongside its traditional armed forces. This is not a unique challenge that has arisen for just Sweden because a broad historical view indicates that it has been considered by some of the most powerful and weakest countries in times of great jeopardy. However, it does beg the obvious question of how a state achieve it in the twenty-first century.

A good starting point is to consider what is resistance. A contemporary definition of resistance highlights two aspects: "the preservation or enhancement of the capacity to resist" in the context of "postures of domination and defiance".[3] In less academic terms, it is the means (innate or carefully developed) to oppose something that threatens to alter the status quo. It is interesting that some modern scholars on resistance point to Clausewitz as one of the most notable writers of it.

Caygill suggests that "On War might more properly be entitled On Resistance".[4] A closer reading of Clausewitz reveals an insightful discussion in the chapter called 'The People in Arms'. It suggests a popular uprising or what could be perceived as resistance today can be interpreted as "a broadening and intensification of the fermentation process

other Nordic countries, the term 'small state' is widely used to define it and its immediate neighbours with the exception of Germany and Russia.

[2] Sweden has 14,600 active members of the armed forces with 10,000 reservists. See *The Military Balance 2023* (London: Routledge, 2023), p.137.

[3] Howard Caygill, *On Resistance: A Philosophy of Defiance* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), p.4, Kindle Edition.

[4] Ibid, p.15.

known as war" that Caygill also highlights.[5] Clausewitz was acutely aware of the power of the people in light of how quickly the French Revolution affected the European order with the rise of Napoleon from 1799 onwards.

Engaging the whole of society in the defence of the state - in theory – greatly magnifies the disposable power available to a government in times of crisis and augments its military power significantly. Nevertheless, it requires a fair amount of unorthodox thinking about defence policy and a painful realisation that sometimes the armed forces alone are not sufficient to defend the state. The emerging new security environment in Europe, however, provides a deep incentive for readjusting and challenging accepted defence norms and the pressing need for a society-based resistance capability.

The New Security Environment in Europe

The return of peer competitor warfare to Europe with the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 marks a worrying new stage in the established post-Cold War order of states on a continent that has witnessed two of the bloodiest wars in human evolution. It threatens the existence and way of life of many nation-states, strong and less strong. The imbalance of military power between Ukraine, a huge state with a relatively small population of around 44 million,[6] of the Russian Federation, the largest country by area in the world (nearly double the size of the land mass of the United States)[7] with a population of about 146 million (2015),[8] now increased to potentially 150 million with its annexation of Eastern Ukraine is incontrovertible.

[5] Ibid, p.24. See also "The People in Arms" chapter in Michael Howard and Peter Paret (eds & trans), *Carl Von Clausewitz: On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p.479, Kindle Edition for the background context to this idea.

[6] Bonnie Berkowitz, Dylan Moriarty and Hannah Dormido, "How large are Ukraine's cities? Some U.S. comparisons", *The Washington Post*, 4 March 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/04/ukraine-compared-to-us-cities/ (accessed 4 December 2022).

[7] Russia encompasses 17,098,242 square kilometres compared with the United States which covers 9,833,517 square kilometres. See Statista.com. http//: statista.com/statistics/262955/largest-countries-in-the-world (accessed 3 December 2022).

[8] Ibid.

Furthermore, Ukraine's ability so far to resist the invasion and occupation of its territory by a much more powerful military foe has been, and remains, completely dependent on the critical military life support offered by external sponsors in the West in the form of sophisticated missile systems such as HIMARS,[9] NLAW,[10] Stinger[11] and other essential equipment. Nevertheless, the ad hoc resuscitation of the Ukrainian armed forces comes with many limitations, from the absence of a joined-up strategy of logistics to unfamiliarity with Western equipment that necessitates lengthy training and mentorship. Consequently, despite all the massive external air efforts and relatively successful Ukrainian counteroffensives, Russia in late 2022 still controls about 17 percent of Ukraine or 40,000 square miles,[12] which is the same size as Iceland or nearly half the size of the United Kingdom. This is a very large amount of occupied territory (that continues to expand in 2023) with an estimated pre-war population in Luhansk and Donetsk of around 6 million people.[13] It is impossible to know presently how many remain due to population displacements and refugees, but some estimates suggest that nearly three million Ukrainians crossed the border into Russia during the fighting so far.[14]

This raises the unavoidable issue of what can a country engaged in an outright conventional war with another state do when large swathes of its territory are seized and occupied by opposing forces as a result of the inability of its armed forces to maintain the integrity of its internationally-recognised borders. Should it view this territory and the citizens residing there as lost - a dead zone on the map for conventional military activity - or as an opportunity to launch warfare by other means to disrupt or degrade the hostile

[9] The High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) is a new variant of the very successful Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) and offers high mobility and flexibility with devastating accuracy of fire.
[10] NLAW (Next Generation Light Anti-Tank Weapon) has proven to be one of the unexpected success stories of the initial phase of the Ukraine War of 2022. It has enabled light infantry to destroy the latest generation of Russian Main Battle Tank.
[11] The Stinger missile is a shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missile system produced by the United States.
[12] Julia Ledur, "What Russia has gained and lost so far in Ukraine, visualized", *The Washington Post*, 21 November 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/11/21/russia-territory-gains-ukraine-war/ (accessed 3 December 2022).
[13] Roman Goncharenko, "Donetsk and Luhansk: A tale of creeping occupation", *Deutsche Welle*, 23 February 2022, https://www.dw.com/en/donetsk-and-luhansk-in-ukraine-a-creeping-process-of-occupation/a-60878068 (accessed 4 December 2022).
[14] Anastasia Strouboulis, Abigail Edwards and Erol Yayboke, "Update on Forced Displacement around Ukraine", *CSIS*, 3 October 2022, https://www.csis.org/analysis/update-forced-displacement-around-ukraine (accessed 17April 2023).

occupying elements in these areas? In other words, to tie down and degrade as many occupying units as possible and create a very dangerous environment for the enemy.

The Swedish Question in the Ukraine War

The situation in Ukraine has great relevance for Sweden as it adjusts to the unpredictable security environment unfolding presently in Europe with limited military resources, a large territory to defend and a hostile actor in its neighbourhood. Furthermore, Sweden already has strong historical and present-day ties to Ukraine that are manifest in the donation of significant material support to aid the military effort against Russian aggression. It has consciously chosen a side in the Ukraine War and that pits it against Russia. The hanging security issue in the air in Europe is where Russian expansionism stops in the light that Western aid to Ukraine has undoubtedly cost thousands of Russian lives.

Will it be a case of when the war in Ukraine ends, the status quo ante returns or the war for wider Europe begins as Russia seeks retribution and compensation from those who dared to fight a proxy war against it? Sweden, like other countries in the West, has sent large quantities of lethal munitions in the form of anti-tank missiles such as the capable AT4, designed/developed the infamous British-supplied NLAW, high-value military equipment in the form of armoured combat vehicles (CV90), surface-to-air missile systems (HAWK) and plans to send main battle tanks (Leopard 2) in the near future.

In addition, tension between Sweden and Russia is nothing new, historically speaking, nor for that matter, contesting territory in Ukraine. The Russian victory at the battle of Poltava in Ukraine in 1709 ended Swedish expansion in the Great Northern War (1700-1721). Russia has always been a rival power to Sweden for much of its history and arguably the most significant security threat in the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

The society-based resistance pathway for Sweden is not without challenges and if it decides to develop a capability to enhance the defensive power of the state or contest occupation abroad, which units are most appropriate to deploy for this mission? From a military and strategic perspective, these are extraordinarily challenging issues to address

because they go outside the traditional comfort zones of conventional forces and into the realm of the dark arts of unconventional warfare. Working behind enemy lines (inside or outside of a state) in small groups is not for the majority of soldiers and requires an unusual personality type that can cope with the out-of-the-ordinary psychological strains and stresses of non-linear warfare.

Thinking Unconventionally

Interestingly, though usually unrecognised, the relationship between conventional and unconventional warfare is an intimate and longstanding one that can be traced back thousands of years, but in present-day times, it is often overlooked in the West.[15] This can be in part attributed to various factors, not least from the explicit orientation of modern armed forces to fight other nation-states with the same capabilities. This focus has been reinforced by the recent experience of asymmetrical warfare against much weaker enemies that has not required the extensive development of expertise in this area.

Knowledge about this shadowy aspect of the application of force has traditionally resided in exclusive pools of expertise such as Special Forces. With regard to the types of foes that the West has generally faced for the last generation or so, from Al Qaeda to the Taliban and ISIS, they cannot be described as peer competitors. To offer a baseline of comparison, a peer competitor can be defined as an enemy with similar levels of technology, equipment and manpower. The weakness of the opposition in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria has stifled sustained contemplation of unconventional warfare,[16] particularly against a peer competitor enemy, as opposed to counterinsurgency warfare (COIN)[17] with a few exceptions.

[15] See Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor (eds), *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012).
[16] Perhaps the best work in this sparse area in recent years has been by Hy Rothstein in his excellent book, *Afghanistan & The Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006).
[17] The war in Iraq after 2003 stimulated a widespread interest in COIN, or more accurately, a rebottling of old COIN debates/ideas from the 1960s, best captured by the wildly popular *The US Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual, FM 3-24*, published in 2007 and David Kilcullen's *The Accidental Guerrilla* published in 2009.

These include the brief, successful and seemingly accidental Afghan Model in 2001[18] before the US established conventional superiority on the ground in Afghanistan and again in Iraq - fleetingly in 2003 - during the invasion on the Northern Front after Turkey unexpectedly blocked the transit of conventional ground forces. A rough heuristic can be drawn here: when a state's conventional forces are disadvantaged or weak, it provokes thinking about unconventional ways of contributing to the overall war effort, not least when facing a peer competitor enemy. Under normal circumstances, however, unconventional war is rarely a topic of mainstream discussion.

For a state that does decide to contest or resist the occupation of its land or that of its allies in an unconventional way, difficult choices need to be made as to which assets to employ in this venture. Special Operations Forces (SOF), most notably Special Forces, would be an obvious choice, but for countries that are much smaller than the United States such as Sweden, it is unlikely that these precious military assets would be available for such a tasking under wartime conditions. Equally, for conventional forces, such missions would be simply beyond the scope of their abilities. This poses challenges about how best to conduct a resistance campaign in occupied communities to assist the broader conventional military campaign to win the war or liberate the territories in concert with them.

First, it is useful to consider what constitutes the environment that must be influenced and what type of forces are most appropriate to achieve the objectives. Second, it is helpful to consider historical precedent. The 'occupation' puzzle is nothing new in modern history and looking closely at how the Allies dealt with this problem during the Second World War offers a rich vein of material on the different ways resistance campaigns of this nature can be implemented and sustained without detracting too heavily in terms of resources and manpower from the broader conventional war effort.

Resistance in Occupied Territory: Environment, Purpose and MeansEnvironment

[18] See Alastair Finlan, *Contemporary Military Strategy and the Global War on Terror: US and UK Armed Forces in Afghanistan and Iraq 2001-2012* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).

A good starting place for planning is to think about the type of environment that will characterise these operations. It could be within cities, towns or more rural areas and thought must be given to the relationship of these inserted forces with the population. Will they be embedded in these communities or operate independently with minimal contact? If in a city, public transport - assuming it remains intact - provides a good way for forces to move around, though it also brings them into contact with different forms of potential surveillance in the form of ticket inspectors, taxi drivers and identification checks/roadblocks that throw up the possibility of discovery. If in a rural area, transport and fuel will be critical for mobility and necessarily create logistical demands. Most occupied territories will offer a multidimensional challenge with a combination of urban and rural areas that will facilitate units enmeshed in society and units operating on their outer reaches with minimal contact. For the latter operations, Special Forces are ideal, but for the former, something else is needed.

Purpose

For planners of such operations, the critical question is what is the purpose of these deployed secret forces? There are three areas that these forces can contribute with varying degrees of importance depending on the stage of the campaign. The first is information gathering or intelligence work to assess first-hand the suitability of the resistance soil. An additional benefit to having people on the ground is the capability to provide eyes on information on enemy formations in occupied territory. Modern techniques using satellite imagery, signals intelligence and photo-reconnaissance can all be fooled by simple techniques, disinformation or camouflage whereas having a human being on site is as reliable as it gets in the world of intelligence.

People can identify individual units and even the morale of soldiers from their appearance or behavioural patterns that are hard to identify from space or in the air from drones. They can also mingle with the objects of their attention that cannot be replicated by technological means. The second area is the ability to create resistance networks under the gaze of the occupiers. They can recruit, train, equip and raise an army within enemy-held territory using the same techniques as guerrillas, insurgents and terrorists. In essence, these forces can set up a shadow administration to the occupying forces with the

intention to win over or at the very least gain a "sympathetic"[19] understanding of a significant tranche of the population. In the best-case scenario, as the conventional forces advance on the occupied territory, this clandestine army can rise up and attack the enemy in the soft rear areas while it is pinned down on the front lines by the advancing liberation forces.

The third area is the sabotage of vital enemy assets in the form of the assassination of key leaders, destroying critical infrastructure such as railways/bridges and targeting vital industrial supplies being manufactured in the occupied territories for the enemy's war effort. The effect of these acts of precise sabotage acts is to isolate the occupation forces or force the enemy to reallocate more military resources to quell the instability, which weakens their conventional forces on the front lines. For armies of occupation, from the time of Rome to the present day, working in a hazardous environment where convoys and isolated garrisons are ambushed and sniped at constantly is morale-sapping in the extreme.

Eventually, conventional forces held under these conditions crack, lash out at the civilian population or commit atrocities that further strengthen support for the resistance. What all three areas share in common is the connection of the forces deployed inside the occupied territory that offers scope for coordination with the broader military effort. These units operating deep behind enemy lines embedded within a civilian population are a form of force multiplier in terms of the overall campaign against the enemy and for a small amount of investment, the military returns can be potentially very large if used in a skilful way.

Means

A critical question though is what type of person is most appropriate for conducting these operations. Someone who organises a resistance must be, in modern parlance, a capable social influencer of sorts who can inspire civilians to engage in

[19] T.E. Lawrence expressed this idea of having a very small active component in a population with the majority being "quietly sympathetic" in his seminal work, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, about the Arab revolt against the occupying Turkish forces during World War I. See *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1997), chapter xxxiii.

extraordinary activities that carry life-threatening risks to their communities, their support networks and their lives. Such people need good communication skills and ideally be charismatic. The answer as to who is best for such operations in part points back to the sort of environment that these forces will be required to become embedded within and places an emphasis on certain skills that are often quite difficult to find in military forces.

Above all considerations, the people engaged in this work need fluent language skills and a deep knowledge of the society in which they are about to become immersed. It necessitates personnel with genuine civilian patterns of behaviour who have not undergone lengthy military training and indoctrination that would seep out of them, wittingly or unwittingly. It also places a spotlight on women as ideal operatives to work in this area because in many societies they have never been traditionally or culturally associated with state-sponsored violence, unlike men.

Looking logically at the tasks in hand, the skillset required for conducting resistance activities is relatively limited compared to highly complex military roles and operating advanced equipment. Instead, it needs a rudimentary ability to use communication devices, increasingly internet-based and through available satellite constellations, as well as having a basic understanding of self-defence, with or without, weapons and explosives. This does not entail years of military training, but rather just a few intensive weeks/months and nothing more to ensure that the essential civilian qualities and mannerisms are not lost or diluted. It is, after all, their essential camouflage in this occupied landscape in which they will work.

Spies, Special Forces and Paramilitaries

The qualities required for this type of mission behind enemy lines and working in a civilian-dominated environment draw attention to a perplexing issue of identity and control that beset the operation of these forces in the Second World War. The nub of the problem is definitional: how to characterize people who work undercover (out of uniform) behind enemy lines in a civilian population. Traditionally, this would be a task for spies whose existence is as old as that of humanity.[20] Spies are an accepted part of

[20] Sun Tzu discusses the value of spies in his excellent work, *The Art of War*, written over 2000 years ago.

international diplomacy by all major nation-states and can be subjected to execution, torture or bargaining as a means to exchange captured spies.

The problem, however, is that the focus of spies is information-gathering [21] (running networks of informers and industrial espionage) and occasionally sabotage, though usually other assets are deployed in concert to deal with more intensive activities[22] such as assassination. Trained spies located in specialised organisations of the state such as the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) are typically people who have the expertise of a country, but generally, not in-depth country-based knowledge created by growing up in that society. They are often controlled or coordinated with civilian separate agencies, including but not exclusively the Ministry of Foreign Affairs because embassies are their operating base in a foreign country.

This also has profound legal implications because foreign embassies have protected diplomatic status that a nation-state would not want to forfeit. Spies operate delicately when deployed and tread a fine line between legal and illegal activities in a foreign country with significant implications for their diplomatic hub (it might be closed down) if they are caught. The other major shortcoming of spies is that their focus is not on resistance-building efforts to create a shadow military entity in occupied territory and this task generally falls outside of their skillset.

Special Forces emerged in World War II [23] due to their ability to exploit the porousness of the modern battlespace using technologies such as vehicles, light weapons and explosives to wreak damage far out of proportion to the size of the unit deep behind enemy lines. Wireless communication devices enabled them to send real-time information of enemy formations and be coordinated from headquarters facilitating what is still considered the gold standard of military intelligence-gathering. The key difference

[21] Michael Goodman describes one of the exemplars of a typical modern spy organisation, the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) or sometimes referred to MI6, as essentially *a collection agency* for intelligence. See Michael S. Goodman, "The United Kingdom" in Robert Dover, idem and Claudia Hillebrand (eds), *Routledge Companion to Intelligence Studies* (London: Routledge, 2014), p.138, Kindle Edition.

[22] Loch Johnson has recently described these actions that fall under the umbrella term of covert action as "the third option". See Loch. K. Johnson, *The Third Option: Covert Action and American Foreign Policy* (Oxford: OUP, 2022), p.xi, Kindle Edition.

[23] See Alastair Finlan, "A Dangerous Pathway? Toward a theory of special forces", *Comparative Strategy*, 38/4 (2019), pp.255-275.

with spies is that Special Forces are military entities whose working environment is not delicate and operate under the auspices of a very different agency of the state, the armed forces. In addition, they wear uniforms behind enemy lines to conform with the Geneva Conventions and, while captured Special Forces have been executed and tortured in the past, these are illegal actions.

Executing captured Special Forces cost many German officers who followed Hitler's notorious "Commando Order"[24] their lives after being tried and executed for war crimes by the victorious Allies. Special Forces are trained to create and work with guerrilla formations behind enemy lines, but they require safe areas such as forests or isolated countryside for base areas to develop and train these resistance groups. Urban environments would necessitate Special Forces to work out of uniform and thereby violate their legal status and again they would be conspicuous in a queue with ordinary civilians due to their better condition and physique. Increasingly, Special Forces work in conjunction with other agencies and with indigenous elements on the ground after introductions by spies/paramilitary elements that have paved the way forward for enhanced cooperation.

This proved to be highly effective with the Afghan Model in 2001 which brought about the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.[25] The synergy factor offered by Special Forces generated a powerful connection between tribal warlord/warrior on the ground and state-of-the-air US airpower that proved to be extraordinarily effective as a military tool to crack a political and military regime in a matter of weeks, once the priority had been given to the Special Forces. In this reinforcing role/force multiplier role, military Special Forces would be extremely valuable assets to strengthen a resistance army at the height of a general uprising in occupied territories.

[24] The origins of it are covered very well in a recent book on one of the most famous members of British Special Forces in World War II. See Thomas Harder, *Special Forces Hero: Anders Lassen VC MC* ** (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books, 2021)

[25] See Richard B. Andres, Craig Wills and Thomas E. Griffith Jr, "Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model", *International Security*, 30/3 (Winter 2005/2006), pp.124-160.

Nevertheless, Special Forces do not generally exist in very large numbers and tend to be the " go-to" force[26] for civilian leaders and military elites, even in conventional warfare due to their flexibility and ability to deploy from the air, land or sea. It raises a question today in an outright war context as to whether there would be sufficient assets available to conduct resistance support activities.

The term paramilitary occupies the space between spy and soldier. Loch Johnson, one of the most eminent scholars in intelligence studies, offers a rare modern insight on them and suggests, "with paramilitary operations (PM ops, sometimes referred to in CIA documents as 'preventive direct action' or, in the wry patois of British intelligence, 'ungentlemanly warfare'), one enters an even more extreme, expensive, and treacherous domain of covert action".[27] Paramilitary best describes the identity of forces deployed behind enemy lines and in occupied territory undercover wearing civilian clothes while providing intelligence, developing resistance networks and conducting acts of sabotage where required. It underlines the thorny intellectual puzzle of what is the line between civilians and the military during wartime conditions and under pressing need. Paramilitaries muddy the water between civilians, spies and soldiers.

The benefits of paramilitaries in occupied lands are manifold. For instance, they retain their 'civilianness' and blend in with the background. This makes them very difficult to identify as hostile actors operating in a sea of seemingly passive inhabitants. An attachment to the occupied community through shared background, culture and local knowledge enhances their credibility with the undecided majority. They can also gauge very quickly whether it is possible to develop resistance activities in a particular area by simply talking with people. Not everyone in an occupied territory wants a return to the past and some actively assist the occupiers who they genuinely embraced in some instances in terms of ideology and occasionally kinship. Norway in World War II is a good example of a country riven by different factions, some working for the Allies and the exiled royal family and others actively embracing the German occupation.

[26] Russell Burgos describes this predilection for using SOF as "pushing the easy button". See Russell A. Burgos, 'Pushing the Easy Button: Special Operations Forces, International Security and the Use of Force', *Special Operations Journal*, 4/2 (2018), pp.109-128.

[27] Johnson, *The Third Option*, p.34.

Inserting paramilitaries into an occupied territory, however, is an unavoidable risk as local identities need to be established, cover names accepted and enough space given to them to develop resistance activities (selling the idea, recruiting adherents and setting up networks) before actual training of inhabitants, supply of weapons and equipment can occur. These actions take time with time frames measured in months rather than days and weeks.

There is a common contemporary perception that it takes years to build and train military forces. This is true under peacetime conditions, but during major wars, time is often heavily compressed. Consequently, a norm develops to accept the fact that due to pressing circumstances or necessity numbers will compensate for the shortfall in quality and the costs of major conventional warfare are typically much higher in terms of losses and casualties. It encourages a very different mindset. It marks a shift from peacetime expectations of seeing military forces as precious assets to be used with extreme caution framed with a view to avoiding the politically/socially sensitive issue of casualties/deaths to a recognition of the existence of a new scale of wartime tolerance dialled up to a very high level.

This facilitates greater risk in employing assets within the battlespace that can be replaced quickly because the state is drawing upon the whole of society in this uncommon time of intense need. The same applies to paramilitary forces. Their training can be compressed to the bare essentials: language skills, self-defence, communications and resistance operations. This can all be achieved in just a few months. Modern weapons are relatively simple mechanical technologies and most paramilitaries will have purely self-defence weapons initially such as a pistol and a knife that can be mastered in a few days. Explosives and communications take a little longer and the art of resistance (creating networks, training and tactics) a few weeks more. The language element can be done in a continuous way during this general training.

The final component is the insertion and, if by parachute, this can take a few more days of training. Much of the work by paramilitaries is very much on the job and the skilled and the lucky survive and the less skilled and the unlucky do not. From a management perspective, the coordination of these assets requires a much bigger investment of infrastructure and personnel than the relatively short timeframe to produce

an effective paramilitary operative. What is vital during this training cycle is that the civilian qualities are not overlaid with a militarized identity. It is ironic that civilian qualities are traditionally held up as a sign of weakness in military training, but with paramilitaries, it is literally a matter of life or death that they retain them.

In a legal sense, the paramilitary has very little protection as they operate out of uniform (and are not actually from a recognised military formation) and, as with all clandestine work of this nature, they operate within a gray zone. For the enemy, such operatives are seen as a form of spies, partisans or "terrorists"[28] and treated as such with incarceration, torture and execution of captured personnel being not untypical. For the occupiers of contested land, the presence of paramilitaries is perhaps of greater concern than Special Forces because they are harder to locate, isolate and disrupt.

Paramilitaries can also potentially cause an uprising whereas Special Forces usually cause a local disturbance and the former requires far more military assets to handle than the latter. They also corrode the legitimacy of the occupying force and its puppet administration while they continue their activities and show the population an alternative future. Two major threats pose the biggest challenges to paramilitaries: the first is betrayal by members of the communities in which they are embedded. Official WWII training manuals were acutely aware of this problem and emphasized, "the agent, unlike the soldier, who has many friends, is surrounded by enemies, seen and unseen".[29]

Occupations are usually desperate times for everyone and the pressure to simply survive and feed families dominates existence. Under such circumstances, people are vulnerable to coercion. The second is signal detection through the identification of the location of the radio transmitter. This can also be conducted through computer networks today that are encompassed by the concept of algorithmic warfare being applied currently in Ukraine. In sum, the life of a paramilitary requires a particular type of personality that can work often alone or in small groups without much support with a

[28] German forces in World War II sometimes referred to paramilitaries as terrorists, but not in the modern sense of the term.

[29] *Special Operations Executive Manual: How To Be An Agent in Occupied Europe* (London: William Collins, 2014), p.19. Kindle Edition. This is a reproduction of the official manual taken from *The National Archives* that was a secret document for many years.

requirement for leadership qualities and fortitude in a constant threat environment in which poor decisions and "attracting attention"[30] can be highly hazardous.

For people with little knowledge of paramilitaries and their operations, it may seem like a concept something taken from a Hollywood movie, but in fact, these units were created and employed successfully undercover and behind enemy lines in Europe during World War II. An iconic example of them was a secret organisation called Special Operations Executive (SOE)[31] that was set up in 1940 at the height of an existential crisis for the British state when its most powerful army had been humiliatingly defeated by the German Army in France. It was in the dark days in the aftermath of the Dunkirk evacuation that SOE was created "to co-ordinate all action, by way of subversion and sabotage, against the enemy overseas."[32]

The political impetus for SOE came from Churchill to "set Europe ablaze,"[33] but its critical charter that set out the aims and objectives of this highly unusual organisation was actually written by the widely reviled architect of Britain's appeasement approach with Nazi Germany, Neville Chamberlain as one of his last acts in government before he died.[34] It is important to note that SOE did not come under the control of either the War Office (Ministry of Defence today) or the Foreign Office, instead, it nominally came under the Ministry of Economic Warfare, but its existence was largely a secret.[35] Its leader, Hugh Dalton, had argued persuasively that "subversive warfare was a matter better handled by civilians than by regular soldiers".[36] This was an important decision because it provided the organisation with an environment for free thinking about how to best conduct their operations and with what personnel.

In contrast, the War Office and the Foreign Office were well-established institutions with deeply held conventions (ranks) and habits that would have greatly

[30] Ibid, p.21.
[31] One of the best insights on SOE is offered by M.R.D Foot, a former SAS officer who served in France in the Second World War and had much experience working alongside these secret organisations. See M.R.D Foot, *SOE* (London: Pimlico, 1999), Kindle Edition.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] David Stafford, *Britain and European Resistance 1940-1945: A Survey of the Special Operations Executive, with documents* (Borough: Lume Books, 2021), pp.43, Kindle Edition.

stymied the development and potential of SOE. As it was, organisational competition and tension was a constant feature of the relationship of SOE with the other major organisations of the state throughout the duration of the war.

SOE had much latitude when recruiting people including dual nationals and foreigners, which was not so common in other secret units. At its height of operations, around 13,000 people worked for it with 5000 as operatives [37] and the remaining providing critical support and coordination. Core training was just six weeks with an emphasis on basic skills such as map reading and physical fitness before moving forward to more intense paramilitary training. Interestingly, weapon training was led not by career military personnel but by two incredibly influential mavericks who were formally Shanghai policemen with a fascination for close combat using knives and pistols. William Fairbairn and Eric Sykes,[38] the creators of the famous Fairbairn Sykes fighting knife (the Commando knife) influenced generations of undercover operatives who would end up in future careers such as with the Green Berets[39] and the CIA to name just two illustrious outlets for their graduates.

Much of the modern style of pistol shooting comes from the unorthodox training created by Fairbairn and Sykes that enabled people to quickly and accurately engage targets in daylight or at night with the instinctive "double tap" technique.[40] They also introduced students to unarmed killing techniques from the martial arts that were relatively unknown in the UK at the time. Put simply, intense training of this nature gave deadly skills to men and women in a very short period of time. It also offered a huge advantage to the operatives whose daily encounters with the enemy would often be at

[37] Ibid.

[38] Fairbairn and Sykes were pioneers in the West in what would be called close combat skills today. They produced individually and together numerous training manuals throughout the war on combat pistol shooting and hand-to-hand unarmed fighting. Many of these manuals have been reproduced in modern book form such as William Ewart Fairbairn and Eric Anthony Sykes, *SHOOTING TO LIVE with the one-hand gun* (Uckfield: The Naval & Military Press, 2020), Kindle Edition.

[39] Many of the founding members of the Green Berets created in 1952 had served with OSS. The original purpose of the Green Berets was to parachute behind enemy lines in Europe (if a hot war broke out with the Soviet Union) and train resistance forces in occupied territory. See Aaron Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets: The Birth of Special Forces* (Novato: Presidio, 1986).

[40] Foot, *SOE*.

roadblocks or in the street and these unusual skills could make a difference in escape or survival outcomes.

The final part of the training would involve simulating working in occupied territory with interrogations, contact with enemy units and police elements and the sheer difficulties in sustaining cover identities in a foreign environment. This was the art of not being noticed while operating in plain sight. In literally, a matter of a few months, SOE produced a deployable and lethal asset that would have perhaps received a little more specialist training in the finer aspects of sabotage/explosives, depending on the mission.

From an international perspective, SOE influenced the development of the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) set up in June 1942 and the employment of the combined Jedburgh teams[41] in occupied France cemented the cooperation. What is interesting about SOE is how such a small organisation shaped ideas about paramilitary and resistance operations that would flourish for decades after the end of the Second World War. Many of the future leaders of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Green Berets, America's Special Forces after WWII served in the OSS and/or the Jedburghs.

In essence, the conceptual foundations of paramilitary and resistance work were conceived, planned and executed under the auspices of the Second World War. Much of this work remains little known to the general public in the West, but the experience in Europe, Africa and the Far East showed that this often-overlooked dimension of modern warfare can have a profound influence in terms of fomenting resistance, but also in concert with supporting advancing conventional forces.

Sweden Today

The creation of a paramilitary organisation of this kind would be enormously beneficial for the development of a Swedish society-based resistance capability. Sweden has recently revived its total defence concept (Totalförsvar) whose origins can be traced

[41] See Will Irwin, *The Jedburghs: The Secret History of the Allied Special Forces, France 1944* (New York, Public Affairs, 2005).

back to ideas during the Second World War[42] and developed during the Cold War. The perception of seeing civil society and the armed forces as intertwined in terms of their efforts is a natural one for Swedish policymakers so the idea of a society-based resistance capability would be a natural fit. In recent months, Sweden has confirmed that it will devote 2 percent of its GDP by 2026[43] which represents a very significant allocation of extra funds for defence purposes. Its defence budget of $7.2 billion dollars in 2022 is planned to rise to $11 billion in 2025[44] indicating a very substantial increase in real defence spending in a very short timeframe. This suggests that there is a fair degree of budgetary latitude for defence purposes that is unheard of in modern times for the Swedish state.

From a purely resistance perspective, there is already interest in Sweden about an initiative in the United States concerning the resistance operating concept (ROC)[45] that could be broadened and deepened. The expansion of the Swedish conventional forces will take years to achieve as their military organisations are naturally attuned to a deep-rooted, peace-inclined environment in which training adheres to traditional long timeframes to produce quality personnel. Only under actual wartime conditions does necessity force a radical revision of time-honoured training regimes to pare away all unnecessary activities to produce skilled specialists for the front line as quickly as possible.

Consequently, a gap between what Sweden's political elites want (now) and the reality is inevitable. Nevertheless, and in contrast to the heavy conventional forces, a paramilitary organisation could be up and running with the first recruits in the field strengthening existing civil defences in Sweden in remote communities near vulnerable border areas in the high north, for example, within six months.

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[42] Sebastian Larsson, "Swedish total defence and the emergence of societal security" in idem and Mark Rhinard (ed.), *Nordic Societal Security: Convergence and Divergence* (London: Routledge, 2021), p.47.

[43] "Sweden's supreme commander says defence spending to reach 2% of GDP by 2026", *Reuters*, 1 November 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/swedens-supreme-commander-says-defence-spending-reach-2-gdp-by-2026-2022-11-01/ (accessed 5 December 2022).

[44] John R. Deni, "Sweden would strengthen NATO with fresh thinking and an able force", *New Atlanticist*, 18 May 2022, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/sweden-would-strengthen-nato-with-fresh-thinking-and-an-able-force/ (accessed 6 December 2022).

[45] See Otto C. Fiala, *Resistance Operating Concept* (MacDill Air Force Base: The JSOU Press, 2020).

Paramilitaries could work independently or in concert with regular forces to retard invasion forces or harass enemy vanguard and support units in the exploitable twilight between conquest and control of a region. If nothing else, they would offer a reliable early warning capability as gray zone actions shift gear possibly towards open invasion. It is important to stress that paramilitaries would not be an alternative to the Swedish armed forces, but rather a synergistic element to provide concrete and deployed forward units to help shape the potential conflict environment to the advantage of the regular forces that need time to assemble and deploy in an optimum way.

Conclusion

The experience of modern warfare in Ukraine in 2022 has shown how quickly a nation-state can lose vast swathes of its territory in a relatively short time to a militarily more powerful peer competitor and the limitations of smaller conventional forces in such a situation. It provokes the question of whether the occupied land must remain a zone of no contest until the conventional forces are strong enough to regain it or an opportunity to build resistance and draw upon the power of society. Resistance has many benefits: it reminds people that the state has not forgotten them and turns a potential rest and recuperation area for enemy forces away from the front line into a nightmarish excursion into hostile territory where death is as likely as on the battlefield. It also has tremendous synergy potential when activities are coordinated with conventional forces to tie down, harass and wear down enemy units before they engage in the main battle to defend the occupied territory.

A great deal can be gleaned from the British and American experience of developing and deploying paramilitaries in World War II in the form of SOE and OSS that has great value for Sweden as it adjusts its defence posture to meet the new and urgent challenges of the changed security environment in Europe. A paramilitary capability working in concert with the regular armed forces in terms of training, deployment and coordination in theatre greatly enhances Sweden's ability to react to and resist external threats that may involve the occupation of parts of the national homeland.

These units can be created very quickly to strengthen specific areas of Sweden that are most vulnerable to external aggression while at the same time providing a capability

niche to train/mentor/participate in similar ventures in neighbouring countries such as Finland and Norway that have shared communities in different areas, not least in the high north. In sum, exploring and developing a dedicated society-based resistance capability pathway in the form of creating paramilitary units has great benefits for Sweden in the short and long term. It could potentially greatly enhance the total defence posture, the synergy between civil society and its armed forces and exploit the untapped power of society as a whole to resist in times of national emergency.