

ÖB anförande 16 maj vid KKrVA internationella konferens "Military Thinking in the 21st Century"

Admirals, Generals, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and an honour for me to share some concluding remarks with you. But it is also a challenging task, given the themes you have been discussing during this conference here in Stockholm. I presume that your seminars and work-shops on military thinking in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have shown the multifaceted palette today's and tomorrow's military thinkers have to take into account.

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. During the conference you have been elaborating on several pertinent issues which are linked to the challenges we have to take into account while reflecting on how our armed forces should be designed and composed in the future.

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 And here we sometimes tend to hang on to solutions that already might be outdated – solutions that seem to be already familiar to us.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?

Therefore, it is important to discuss different perspectives as you have done. And this shows the real usefulness of this kind of gatherings!

Today, I would like to share some Swedish thoughts on how we foresee the future, and which measures we have taken – or would like to take – in a world that changes very rapidly.

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 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2010, national conscription is idle and the Swedish Armed Forces are based on voluntary recruitment.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 type of new force has to be able to interact with different players, inside as well as outside Sweden. This is the reason why we are creating an all-volunteer, rapid reaction task force.

We are now almost 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. Together we have laid the foundation for the further reform and my personnel is delivering high quality performance every hour, every day all year around!

The transformation of the Swedish Armed Forces during the last 20 years has been tremendous and very thorough. When conducting the current reform readiness, usability, flexibility and an all-volunteer force are the cornerstones in the reform.

While implementing the defence reform, everyone involved has had to change their mindsets, including the geographical one. During the end of the nineties and beginning of this millennium, we in Sweden considered our immediate vicinity to be very benign. That was one of the principal reasons for the Swedish Armed Forces to mainly focus on participating in crisis management abroad. In retrospective I think we all agree that we looked a bit 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.

The ability to interact with others is and will be key to the future. Cooperation between states and between organizations in an ever changing world is increasingly important in order to handle the present and possible future challenges.

Working together 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.

The new severe security situation in and around Ukraine may very well lead to new assessments linked to military needs and capabilities. In this context, we must also keep in mind 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. Before 1989 the Baltic Sea region served as an armed frontline between the eastern and western blocks. 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 Russian aggression in Ukraine has weakened the European security architecture.

Already before the events in Ukraine we noted 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. We already note an increased number of Russian readiness exercises and also increased military activity from the NATO nations.

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. Obviously the Russians are ready to use these military units if they find it necessary.

To continue stabilizing the Baltic Sea region, the Swedish Armed Forces have two distinct and important contributions. We are engaged in military cooperation with the countries in the region that share our democratic values in a multitude of different areas ranging from high level visits to common exercises and training.

But we also maintain a credible military capability to be able to refrain from using military power for conflict resolution, if the security situation should worsen.

Closer integration and cooperation among the countries that share the same democratic values in the Baltic Sea region will become even more important in the future, since challenges in a globalized world very often are transnational. Also, by cooperating or by pooling and sharing resources we will obtain an increased output during the build-up phase of our forces, as well as an operational increased output.

Here I believe that cooperation, bilaterally in the region or in a Nordic or a Nordic-Baltic setting, will serve us very well. The Nordic and the Nordic Baltic cooperation could not be seen isolated from other circles of cooperation as i.e. the European Union, 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.

Now, when we cooperate in this close way, we also need to coordinate ourselves in an even better way. Transparency and predictability are pivotal if we are to cooperate more closely. We 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 is something that has to be discussed among ourselves and also between our political masters in different constellations.

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. This will be even more important where we in the western world for some years have seen unchanged or shrinking military budgets, but where we militaries are expected to deliver the same or even more output.

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 in Sweden, something I warmly welcome.

Another aspect we need to keep in mind in austere times is to find a balance between procurement off the shelf and developing new capabilities. In other words, how do we maintain and preferably also develop relevant R&D in our countries – the latter will also create conditions to introduce new capabilities.

I am mentioning this since one of the conclusions in our long term study last autumn to the government was that the Swedish Armed Forces in the future should prioritize high-tech and high qualitative equipment. I believe this ambition is even more pertinent today, given the military development in our immediate geographical vicinity.

And in a world where cooperation is key, countries certainly need to cooperate in the R&D-area where projects tend to be more and more costly and more and more complicated. This is also a very good reason why a country needs to have an own R&D capacity. It permits us to remain an attractive partner, and we can also contribute to the creation of synergies, as for example inside the framework of the European Defence Agency.

I believe that the military thinking in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will require a combination of high tech and unconventional thinking outside the box. The military thinking during this decade will also interact closely with other parts of the society – given the fact that the future threats and challenges are interlinked and interdependent.

And last but not least, important parts of the future conflicts will most likely take place on the field of information.

Given the fact that the military thinking in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will require multifaceted skills, the most important factor will still be the human being!

And the importance of the capacity of the human being has been showed during this conference! I would like to congratulate you to your substantial and high qualitative discussions and seminars, and wish you all the best for the future!

On behalf of the Swedish Armed Forces, I would also like to express how happy we are to have been invited by the Royal Swedish Academy of War Science to support this event! I am also sure that this is shared by our co-supporters – the Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences, the Swedish Defence Research Agency and the Swedish National Defence College.

Thank you and safe travel home!