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## A challenged society: constructions of vulnerable and resilient subjects in Swedish total defence policies

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### ABSTRACT

This article analyses the construction of vulnerable and resilient subjects and their dialectical relationship with Swedish total defence policies. Using a post-structural policy analysis, it investigates the problem representations and subjectification processes within these policies. In these, resilience is suggested as the solution to the ‘problem’ of the challenged society, with capable, active and responsible citizens expected to come to the rescue of a society challenged by the crises, disasters and wars of the 21st century. We find that vulnerability is not only constructed as an opposite to resilience but also as a threat. Thus, in the policies, ‘the vulnerable’ are not only considered needing care and attention – but something to fear. This is not only reminiscent of the individualism and responsabilisation associated with the ideal of the resilient citizen but also a vivid example of how societal problems and welfare state challenges are securitised in processes that risk silencing other modes of subjectification and dispossesses individuals and societies of other visions. The main contribution of this paper is the exploration of the dialectical relationship between resilient and vulnerable subject, illustrating how the construction of these subject positions relies on each other rather than as being two separate entities.

### KEYWORDS

Resilience; vulnerability; WPR analysis; total defence policies

### Introduction

This article addresses discursive constructions of vulnerable and resilient subjects in current Swedish total defence policies. Drawing on Bacchi and Goodwind (2016), we understand subjects not as individuals with fixed identities, but as produced and shaped by policies that encourage individuals to become certain subjects by adopting desirable ways of being. Over the past 10 years, Swedish security discourses have been dominated by the topic of whether Sweden’s total defence should be strengthened or not. The Corona pandemic followed by the war in Ukraine has increasingly blurred the ‘*maybe, maybe not*’ that previously characterised the debate, and today there is broad political support for re-establishing Swedish total defence. This debate was reinforced by the discussions preceding the decision in 2022 to apply for NATO membership. Swedish total defence rests on

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two pillars – military defence and civil defence – both aimed at preventing and managing crises, disasters and war. Unlike military defence, civil defence does not consist of a single (military) organisation but of a mix of civil actors such as government agencies, municipalities, regions, businesses, voluntary organisations, labour market organisations and faith communities. In civil defence policies, citizens are emphasised as a central actor in keeping both themselves and their communities safe from harm (MSB 2021). In other words, the responsibility for society's preparedness and defence capability rests, to put it in total defence terms, on citizens as well as non-governmental organisations, authorities and companies.

There has been a shift in attention from vulnerability towards resilience in disaster studies as well as in preparedness practices and policies, and the concepts are widely debated in the field (see, for example, Bankoff 2019; Bankoff and Hilhorst 2022; Chmutina et al. 2023; Tierney 2015). Researchers have argued that resilience and vulnerability are constructed in relation to each other, where resilience becomes defined as the desirable and vulnerability as the undesirable (Bankoff 2019; Bracke 2016; Hilhorst and Bankoff 2022). Although criticised for reinforcing victimisation, vulnerability has long played an important role in social scientific risk and crisis research to emphasise, and to some extent problematise, the fact that different people are affected differently by crises and disasters and that these differences stem from societal inequalities linked to, for example, gender, class and ethnicity (see, e.g., Hewitt 1995; Tierney 2006; Barnshaw and Trainor 2007; Ferdinand et al. 2012; Kelman 2020; Author; Gaillard 2021). However, as neoliberalism has gained ground, more and more emphasis has been put on the need for individuals to become resilient (Bankoff 2019; Bracke 2016). But whilst the neoliberal, resilient subjectivity presupposes a dis-identification with vulnerability (Layton 2008), it has been argued that processes of securitisation have led to a situation where 'the vulnerable' are made into a security threat (Butler 2009; Chmutina et al. 2023). In line with those arguing that crises and disasters, far from being natural phenomena (Kelman 2020), reproduces societal inequalities (Giritli Nygren, Olofsson, and Öhman 2020) we see this as an example of how crises and disasters are, both in their cause and effect, social and political. Based on this argument, the following article sets out to investigate how crises, and the individuals affected by them, are produced in policy practices as well as the effects of this. Drawing on poststructural policy analysis (Bacchi and Goodwind 2016), we investigate the subjectification processes within Swedish total defence policies. The aim of this article is to critically examine how subjects are constructed as either desirable or non-desirable in current total defence policies, and consequently: to gain a deeper understanding of the dialectical relationship between resilient and vulnerable subjects.

The following article makes an important contribution to the understanding of not only the social and political construction of crises and disasters in policy processes but also the effects of this in terms of subjectification processes where the resilient subject becomes the desirable and the vulnerable subject becomes the non-desirable. Furthermore, the article contributes to the discussion of resilience and vulnerability by analysing the processes through which vulnerability is constructed as a threat to society, and the ways in which this could silence other modes of subjectification and other imaginaries of possible futures.

## Swedish culture of total defence and civil preparedness

The fact that total defence has once again risen to the top of the security policy agenda can be understood as a kind of return to, or revival of, the total defence and civil defence culture of the Cold War. Then, as now, it is clear that a society's preparedness is closely intertwined with its political tradition, culture and history. In the case of Sweden, the model for crisis preparedness is characterised by a focus on individual responsibility and voluntariness, which emerge in contemporary crises, not least in the Swedish strategy for managing the Corona pandemic (Bennesved 2020; Author).

Marie Cronqvist (2009) has studied this Swedish model of crisis preparedness based on the rhetoric of civil defence during the Cold War and notes that it is characterised by a balancing act between collectivism and individualism, between welfare and self-protection. This civil defence rhetoric took hold during the Cold War against the backdrop of the threat to the Swedish (national) home and the values it symbolised. The civil defence rhetoric of the 1960s can be seen as a coming together of the Cold War and the welfare state – where the former was to be fought with the order, security and control associated with the Swedish welfare state. In this way, the Cold War found its way into people's homes and everyday lives, i.e. arenas where the preparedness was expected to take place. The brochure *If War Comes*, appearing in different editions from 1943 to 1989, was of great importance for this civil defence rhetoric. This brochure was primarily intended to educate the population in self-protection, i.e. the ability to protect oneself by taking responsibility and safeguarding one's own safety in the event of war. This idea became increasingly central in later editions (Cronqvist 2009), which can be understood against the backdrop of new emerging risks such as radioactivity that could only be safeguarded against through individual knowledge and a sense of responsibility within the population (Bennesved 2020). This also illustrates an ideological transition from a centralistic to a more liberal and individualised Swedish civil defence, and this individualistic contingency planning continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Bennesved 2020).

The Swedish civil defence culture can be understood as being embedded in Swedish history and culture (Cronqvist 2009, 2012). When it emerged during the 1950s and 1960s it was characterised by the social democratic vision of 'Folkhemmet'. This is a political vision that can be translated as 'the home of the people', a symbol of the Swedish welfare state where the whole of society should act as a family with everyone contributing but where everyone is also looked after. Through brochures such as *If War Comes*, the population was educated not only in self-protection and war preparedness but also in moral values, family ideals, work ethic and diligence associated with the Swedish 'home of the people' culture (see also Börjesson, Palmblad, and Wahl 2005). The preparedness campaigns thus reproduced a notion of the Swede as a knowledge-seeking individual, collectively oriented and loyal in the conception of the common good (Cronqvist 2012). In the period from 1943 to 1989, a gradual shift towards increasing individualisation emerges in the civil defence messages. As an example, the 1961 version of *If War Comes* was labelled as the Swedish people's 'self-protection handbook' and had a distinct focus on instructing the individual citizen on how to protect themselves and their families in the event of war (Cronqvist 2012). This shift towards individualism continued in later editions, as the ideal of self-help and 'help for self-help'

dominates and the individual is urged to give up the idea of civil defence as an organisation that comes to the individual's rescue in the event of war (Cronqvist 2012). The Swedish preparedness campaigns of the 21st century are characterised by a similar concern that people will rely too heavily on public sector support in the event of crisis (Author). This is one of several examples of how responsibility for preparedness increasingly shifted from the state to the individual, and several researchers have highlighted the similarities with the shift in responsibility and individualisation that characterises the Swedish welfare system today (see, for example, Author; Bergström 2016; Hobbins 2017; Larsson 2019; Rådestad and Larsson 2018). The social expectations on citizens to practice preparedness are often motivated by the notion of a social contract for preparedness, where society's overall preparedness capacity is described as depending on well-prepared citizens who take responsibility for their own preparedness so that society can focus on the wider consequences of serious events (Author).

During the 1990s, Swedish total defence underwent an enormous disarmament, and thus also a disarmament of civil defence. This was largely a consequence of the Cold War being perceived as having been called off with the fall of the Soviet Union, but it is also part of the neoliberal dismantling policy that has characterised Sweden since the 1990s. Contingency stocks and stockpiling in the event of a crisis or war are not consistent with the neoliberal state's demands for efficiency. According to Sörlin (2021), 53), the dismantling of preparedness that took place in the early 1990s is a policy that prioritises economic efficiency over the safety of society. The current rebuilding of Swedish total defence struggles to reconcile these two ideals – a total defence with a responsible and robust public sector and the neoliberal welfare state's passion for privatisation and outsourcing. This struggle has been put forward as the major challenge facing the governance and organisation of Swedish total defence today (Brommesson 2021; Ds 2017:26). As such, the challenges of civil defence in terms of governance and organisation also illustrate the Achilles heel of the neoliberal welfare state: when central functions and public activities have been fully or partially privatised or outsourced, it becomes increasingly difficult to govern and coordinate the multitude of actors now operating in the Swedish welfare market. There are many examples of how such difficulties manifested themselves during the Corona pandemic, such as the lack of personal protective equipment in health and social care and the debate about who was actually responsible for providing such stocks. Furthermore, as has been noted by several researchers (Eriksson, Svenbro, and Wester 2022; Eduards et al. 2023), the fundamentals of total defence are based on gendered logic that (re)produces gender-based orders and norms, not least through the paternalistic logic of the state as the protector. The notion of total defence as being reliant on the 'will of the public' to take responsibility produces gendered notions of an 'imagined community' and enforces the production of submissiveness and consent from the public (Young in Eriksson, Svenbro, and Wester 2022). Ultimately, these processes and the narratives of a vulnerable nation facing the prospect of war frame military operations as a 'happy object' (Ahmed 2010; Eriksson, Svenbro, and Wester 2022) when the mobilisation of the total defence becomes imbued with imaginaries of a better future, unity and belonging, achieved through the common project of societal security through a strong total defence. However, these processes conceal the intentions of political decision-making through processes of depoliticisation (Eduards et al. 2023).

## Theoretical framework: constructions of resilient and vulnerable subjects

As theoretical concepts, vulnerability and resilience have been of great importance to social science disaster research and security policy since the end of the Second World War. Bankoff (2019) emphasises that the concepts, and their emergence, need to be understood in relation to each other, in that resilience after the end of the Cold War has replaced vulnerability as a key concept in describing human conditions in relation to threats and dangers. While before the neoliberal tendencies of the 1990s, individuals were understood to be vulnerable in relation to dangers and threats, there has been a shift since then towards emphasising individuals' resilience in relation to dangers and threats instead (Bankoff 2019). The shift from vulnerability to resilience within disaster research should be understood in relation to societal changes and political agendas, and as a consequence of how the concepts also switch places in the field: in the policies that frame the guidelines for society's crisis management and crisis preparedness. As such, the shift from vulnerability to resilience can be understood as an expression of the emergence of a neoliberal agenda that took place in the early 1990s, which favoured the free market as an ideal to organise society and perceived the free will and responsibility of the individual as desirable characteristics (Bankoff 2019). In the 'voluntary state' (Bankoff 2019, 227), all choices and responsibilities become voluntary and personal, including those related to security and survival. According to such logic, vulnerabilities such as poverty, unemployment and homelessness are also made a matter of personal choice and failures (Bankoff 2019; Nickel and Eikenberry 2007).

Resilience, in the sense of the adaptability of individuals and societies in relation to crises and disasters, has become a guiding ideal for the societal security discourses of the 21st century (Bergström 2018; Chandler 2013). In line with a neoliberal, and increasingly individualised, societal development, the concept of resilience has also been individualised via an emphasis on people's ability and responsibility to take the lead in various risk-reducing measures and thereby also been legitimised, by filling the void that arises when the state increasingly withdraws from its responsibilities (Gaillard 2021, 37; Author). According to this norm of resilience, resilient subjects are active, responsible and capable enough to take care of their own safety, in other words, they are subjects that do not need to turn to the state for support in the event of crises or disasters (Bankoff 2019). To emphasise how resilience is attributed to individuals through neoliberal discourses, resilience has been likened to a form of governmentality that disciplines people to become enterprising, active and responsible citizens (Bracke 2016; Gaillard 2021; Joseph 2013; Rose 1999). Such governmentality has had a major influence on the field of crisis preparedness, according to Tierney (2015) and others, with citizens today being disciplined to ensure their own safety and security instead of turning to the state for security and support in the event of crises or disasters. Being resilient has been described as the new individualised project for citizens in neoliberal regimes (O'Malley 2010).

Several researchers have taken a critical perspective in studying resilience and emphasise that the concept is used to govern people in desired directions and thereby both create and maintain specific subject positions (see, for example, authors; Bergström 2018; Bracke 2016; Chandler 2013; Hill and Larner 2017). Within critical security studies, such individualisation of resilience has been criticised for being characterised by neoliberal discourses and practices (see, for example, Chandler 2013; Joseph 2013; Welsh 2014).

Rather than being characterised by a complex composition of different resilient and resistant systems, the concept has increasingly become characterised by an ontology that prioritises governance through responsabilisation, where resilience is first and foremost ‘achieved’ through individual responsibility, according to Joseph (2013) and others. The neoliberal interpretation of resilience means that subjectivity and individual adaptability, agency and determination, rather than societal or structural support measures, are considered to be the salvation in times of risk and uncertainty (Joseph 2013). In his analysis of the consequences on the individual of neoliberal discourses of resilience in societal security, Evans and Reid (2013) argue that such discourses constitute the ideal of the resilient subject: a subject who, in order to navigate a world characterised by complexities and uncertainties, must ‘accept the disastrousness of the world it lives in as a condition of partaking in that world’ (355). Resilience as subjectification is thus a fundamental part of the neoliberal cultural project. Through the expectation of resilience, people are made to accept continuous threats and crises, to the extent that other imaginaries of the future become unthinkable (Bracke 2016).

At the other end of the scale, the concept of vulnerability has been criticised for reinforcing the victimisation and stigmatisation of the vulnerable as helpless victims of the consequences of crises, by labelling certain groups as vulnerable. However, research has shown that even ‘the vulnerable’ are capable, proactive and creative in the face of crises and disasters (see, for example, Anderson and Woodrow 1991; Gaillard 2021). The application of the concept of vulnerability in crisis research has also been criticised for focusing (too much) on *who* is vulnerable, rather than on *why* some people are vulnerable (see Ribot 2014 for such a critique). As a consequence of this criticism, social science disaster research has moved from paying attention to people’s vulnerability and exposure, to increasingly emphasising people’s capacity for action and resilience in relation to crises and disasters (Gaillard 2021). However, as discussed earlier, such resilience is often positioned in relation to vulnerability. The neoliberal, resilient subjectivity presupposes a distancing, a disidentification with vulnerability, needs and dependencies (Layton 2008). At the same time, resilience cannot exist without vulnerability, nor without the threat it is expected to address. There is thus a dialectical relationship between resilience and crises/disasters that paradoxically means that resilience reinforces crisis because the latter is a prerequisite for the existence of the former. Bracke (2016, 59) aptly describes this relationship as follows: ‘... without disaster, or at least the threat of it, there is no (need for) resilience’.

Constructions of vulnerable and resilient subjects should be understood against the backdrop of a socio-political climate in which societal problems and welfare state challenges such as poverty, inequality and exclusion are securitised – that is, they are presented as a form of security problem to be solved by means of the methods intended for this purpose, rather than as societal problems to be solved by upgrading the welfare state. As part of this securitisation, the problems are also personified in that it is ‘the vulnerable’, rather than vulnerability per se, or ‘the poor’, rather than poverty per se, that are presented as the problem (Chmutina et al. 2023). By extension, such securitisation means that ‘the vulnerable’ are no longer, or only, portrayed as the weak in need of help, as Chmutina et al. further emphasise. When ‘the vulnerable’ are increasingly made into a security threat, they go from being vulnerable, weak and in need of help – someone we feel sympathy for – to instead becoming a threat and a security problem that needs to be addressed (Butler 2009; Chmutina et al. 2023).

### **Method: problem representations in current total defence policies**

In the following article, we analyse how subjectification occurs through Swedish total defence discourses, with the aim of examining how different subject positions are constructed as desirable or non-desirable in policies. Our analysis is inspired by Bacchi's (2012) post-structural policy analysis (WPR). As with other post-structuralist approaches, the focus of this framework is not on examining a fixed essence of a phenomenon, but rather on how a phenomenon comes into being through various cultural constructions in which specific meanings are attached to the phenomenon (Bacchi and Goodwind 2016). WPR builds on the Foucauldian way of understanding truth and knowledge, not as a reflection of reality, but as different knowledge regimes determining what can be considered conceivable or unthinkable in a given context. As such, Bacchi's post-structural policy analysis focuses on how knowledge and power are interwoven, and how this is expressed through various problematisations (Bacchi and Goodwind 2016). The WPR approach consists of seven steps of analysis, which are interrelated (see Table 1). It starts by asking the straight-forward question 'What's the problem represented to be?', with the aim of investigating what the solutions or proposals to change in a policy say about the underlying problem. The subsequent questions 2–6 direct the attention to deep-rooted pre-suppositions underpinning the solutions, to whether the problems the solutions are trying to remedy could have been thought of in other ways, and thereafter to the effects of this way of conceptualising the problem. In step 7, the attention is on the researcher's analysis and the researcher's own positionality, and its relation to the policies investigated is considered.

As Bacchi (2012) acknowledges, the amount of emphasis given to each question might vary depending on the aim of the study being conducted. As our aim in this article is to investigate how desirable and non-desirable subjects are constructed in current Swedish total defence policies, we have applied the WPR approach by focusing on questions 1, 2 and 5 in our analysis, while questions 3, 4, 6 and 7 are addressed to varying degrees in our discussion of the findings.

We started our analysis with question 1, by examining what it is that is constructed as a problem in the policy documents analysed. In line with the WPR approach, our focus was not on the solutions and proposals that emerge in the documents, but rather on how the context is represented from the outset as a problem, as well as the implicit assumptions made about these problems that form the basis for how they are conceptualised (Bacchi 2012; Bacchi and Goodwind 2016). The analysis started with a thorough reading

**Table 1.** WPR approach to policy analysis.

Question 1	What's the problem represented to be in a specific policy?
Question 2	What pre-suppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the problem?
Question 3	How has this representation of the problem come to be?
Question 4	What is left unproblematic, what are the silences, and could the problem be conceptualised in other ways?
Question 5	What are the effects (discursive, subjectification, lived effects) of this representation of the problem?
Question 6	How has the representation of the problem been produced, disseminated, defended? How can it be disrupted or replaced?
Question 7	Apply this list of questions to your own problem representation.

Adapted from Bacchi and Goodwind (2016), p 20

of each document independently by the two researchers. As the analysed documents advocate a strengthened total defence, we started our analysis by asking the question, *what phenomena are represented in the documents as a problem that needs to be solved through a strengthened total defence, and how are they represented?* We then jointly discussed and compared our findings. In this step, our focus was on comparing similarities and differences in our understanding of the problems represented in the documents, and by jointly returning to the documents and re-interrogating these in order to develop a common understanding of the problems represented. This process of analysis was repeated for questions 2 and 5. While the WPR approach is presented as a linear, step-by-step analysis, for us it has been an iterative process where we have sometimes gone back and forth and reviewed the different questions.

In the next step of our analysis, we moved on to question 2. In WPR, the identification of the problem constructions is followed by an analysis of the assumptions, knowledge and ways of thinking and speaking that form the basis for the creation of these problem constructions (Bacchi and Goodwind 2016). In line with this, we have analysed the discourses used to produce the problem. The analysis and delimitation of the different discourses were performed in collaboration between the two researchers. In line with Foucault (1990), in our analysis discourses are understood as the ‘truths’ and knowledge that are constructed and used to produce specific problem constructions (Bacchi and Goodwind 2016). This means that in our analysis we examine the language, concepts and categories used in the documents to produce different problem representations and that we thereby examine which discourses are used in the documents, and also place the discourses within the broader discursive practice that total defence can be said to comprise.

The next step was to analyse the effects of the problem constructions in the policy documents, i.e. question 5. This meant an analysis of the discursive effects of the specific problem constructions (Bacchi and Goodwind 2016). We therefore analysed the processes of subjectification that the identified problem constructions entail, that is, the subjects that are constructed by the problem constructions, and how the problematisations stated in the policy documents entail a governing of subjects (Bacchi 2012). We continued this analysis by examining which subject positions are constructed by the discourses, and how vulnerability and resilience are ascribed to different subjects.

The documents analysed are all written in Swedish. The translation of the quotes in the article has been translated by the authors. To increase readability, the documents are referred to by using their translated names in the article. As a background to our search for constructions of vulnerable and resilient subject positions, it may be worth mentioning that the concepts of vulnerability and resilience are rarely used in the policies we analyse, and it is particularly unusual for the concept of resilience to be used as it is not yet an established concept in the Swedish language. In our analysis, we have instead looked for translations and applications of these concepts and related subject positions. As an example of such translations and applications, in the documents, vulnerability is often discussed in terms of exposure, marginalisation and (non-)functionality, and resilience is often discussed in terms of endurance, adaptation and responsibility. These concepts are similar to the characteristics that other researchers have described as being characteristic of vulnerable and resilient subjects, respectively (Bankoff 2019; Bankoff and Hilhorst 2022; Chandler 2013). In the analysis, vulnerability and resilience

are thus used as analytical concepts that we apply in the interpretation of the empirical material. However, such an approach presupposes an awareness on the part of the researcher that they can (re)produce normative conceptualisations of different subjects. Within WPR, emphasis is therefore placed on researchers not only examining the problematisations that emerge in the text but also reflecting, through self-problematisations, on the assumptions that form the basis of the analysis (Bacchi and Goodwind 2016).

### **Material**

Our analysis is based on four key texts<sup>1</sup> dealing with the development of Sweden's total and civil defence, published during the period 2017 to 2022, in total 610 pages, and to some extent written by different authors: the Ministry of Defence, the then Secretary of State for Defence Peter Hultqvist and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB). As the re-establishment of Sweden's total defence has moved to the top of the security policy agenda, the number of studies, government commissions and bills with proposals on how total defence, and thus also civil preparedness, should be developed has also increased. In 2017, the report *Resilience. The orientation of total defence and the development of civil defence 2021–2025* (Försvarsdepartementet 2017) was published, written by the Defence Committee on behalf of the Ministry of Defence and the then Minister of Defence Peter Hultqvist (S). The report has become a key text that has largely shaped the initiatives and directions that the development of Swedish total defence has taken since then. The fact that such a development is very much a work in progress is illustrated not least by the fact that since 2020 there have been several policies that point out the direction of Swedish total defence and civil preparedness, including: *Total defence 2021–2025* (Regeringen 2020), *Strengthening civil preparedness* (MSB 2021) and *Civil defence Towards 2030 – total defence in balance* (MSB 2022). These four documents constitute the empirical material on which the analyses in the following article are based.

We read these four documents as contemporary total defence policies in the light of their common features: they were all written by those in power and officials in the field of civil security and preparedness, and they are prescriptive, or normative, in the sense that they indicate a desired direction and guidance (Bacchi and Goodwind 2016) for society and citizens within the new total defence set-up. There are nevertheless some differences between the documents, not least in terms of tone, format, content, sender and intended audience. In Table 2 you find a brief description of each document, henceforth referred to as policy, to provide a more transparent understanding of the similarities and differences of the policy documents. The quotes from the documents in this analysis have all been translated from Swedish to English by the authors.

Selecting certain policies also means excluding others. For the purpose of our analysis, we have chosen to analyse those total defence policies that are concerned with and focus on the civilian component of total defence (civil defence or civil preparedness). From the plethora of total defence policies published over the past 7 years, this means that we have excluded those that focus on the development of the

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<sup>1</sup>The titles are originally in Swedish, but have been translated by the authors for readability. Original titles are included in the reference list.

**Table 2.** Summary of the policies analysed in this article.

Title and year of publication	Type of publication	Intended audience	Approach to total defence
<i>Resilience. The orientation of total defence and the development of civil defence 2021–2025.</i> (Försvarsdepartementet 2017, 249 pages)	Interim report published as part of the Government Offices' Ministry Series (Ds). Authored by: Ministry of Defence, including representatives from all political parties in the Swedish parliament and a number of experts in defence and civil protection.	Politicians and civil servants in the field of defence and civil protection.	This report proposes suggestions for future directions of total defence for 2021–2025, based on an analysis of the international security situation.
<i>Total defence 2021–2025.</i> (Regeringen 2020, 181 pages) (Pro 2020/21:30)	A bill that contains proposals for the overall goals for total defence and the direction of the Swedish Armed Forces' war organisation. Authored by: Secretary of State for Defence (2020), Peter Hultqvist (S)	Politicians/The Swedish Parliament	The bill contains proposals for parliamentary decisions. These include proposals for legislative amendments and approval of the objectives and direction of the Armed Forces' wartime organisation. The bill also deals with the finances, governance and monitoring of total defence, and describes responsibilities, leadership and coordination in civil defence.
<i>Strengthening civil preparedness.</i> (MSB 2021, 38 pages)	A summary report of MSB's National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment. Authored by: Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB)	Civil preparedness actors The general public	The report suggests areas for improvement in order to strengthen civil defence and civil preparedness.
<i>Civil defence towards 2030 – A total defence in balance.</i> (MSB 2022, 142 pages)	A report that contains policy suggestions for strengthening civil defence. The report presents the results from an inquiry assigned to MSB by the Swedish government. Authored by: Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB)	Politicians/The Swedish Government	The report presents policy suggestions for strengthening civil defence, including areas such as funding, organisational structure and management of the Swedish civil defence.

military component of total defence (e.g. the final report of the Swedish Defence Committee on Nuclear Power – The direction of security policy and the design of military defence 2021–2025) or more specifically on new proposals for the public organisation of civil defence (e.g. the public inquiry on the Structure for increased resilience). We also acknowledge that there are policies, not least published after 2022 when the analytical work of this article was put to print, relevant for the scope of this article that have been excluded due to delimitations in time. Thus, our selection of documents; the delimitations in time, and the fact that debates and policies on Swedish total defence is a vibrant subject where new documents are continuously put in to print, comes with some analytical challenges that make it hard to generalise the analytical arguments from this article to *all* Swedish total defence policies. What we present here is an analysis of four fundamental policy documents guiding the development of 2020's Swedish total defence, and our analysis should be understood in relation to these specific documents, described below.

## Analysis

The first step of our analysis is related to question 1 in a WPR analysis, *What's the problem represented to be?* (Bacchi and Godwind 2016). The title of one of the texts analysed, Resilience, clearly shows the aim of the policy text and its purpose. To put it in Bacchi and Goodwind's (2016) terminology, the overall purpose of the text, i.e. the solution that it proposes, is mobilisation to strengthen the resilience of the total defence. In the following analysis, we draw on Bacchi's (2012) post-structural policy analysis (WPR) to discuss why this mobilisation for strengthened resilience is needed, in other words, the problems that are represented that the policy is thought to solve. We then analyse the conditions and assumptions that underpin these problem representations by analysing which discourses are used to produce the problem, as well as the effects of these discourses, in other words the subjectification it entails. In the subsequent discussion, we discuss the power relations that enable these problem constructions to gain legitimacy. We also discuss knowledge formations that could contradict these specific problem constructions, and we reflect on the silences in contemporary total defence discourses and whether the problems could be represented in other ways.

### *Problem representations in contemporary total defence discourses*

Several problems, or threats, related to the Swedish society and its security emerge and are represented in the policy documents. Our analysis shows that these threats are used to constitute a problem representation that we call *A challenged society*, which in Bacchi's (2012) terms, is the problem whose proposed solution is a strengthened total defence and strengthened civil preparedness.

In the introduction to MSB's *Strengthening civil preparedness*, the then acting Director General Camilla Asp ascertains:

Sweden's civil preparedness needs to be strengthened to meet the broad and serious threat and risk landscape that society is facing. Climate change, health threats, uncertainty in the world around us, cyber-attacks and the influence of information are some of the pressures society needs to cope with. The challenges are many and knowledge, cooperation and resources are required to increase Sweden's capability. (Strengthening civil preparedness, 1)

In the above quote, Asp lists several of the threats facing Swedish society. These threats and risks are mentioned in all the documents analysed. We have identified three overall threats that recur throughout the documents. The first, threats related to the security situation, is apparent in this quote:

The security situation in Sweden's surrounding regions and in Europe has deteriorated over time. An armed attack on Sweden cannot be ruled out. Nor can it be ruled out that military force or threats of such may be used against Sweden. (Total Defence 2021 – 2025, 26)

The second threat that emerges is threats related to climate change and society's ability to deal with those.

Today's Swedish society has been built up and has adapted to a certain climate, but a changing climate means that the probability of extreme events changes. This thus places other demands on Sweden's preparedness. Climate change is leading to an increase in average temperatures and more extreme natural events such as heat waves and droughts,

severe forest fires, increased and intense precipitation, floods, landslides and storms'.  
(Strengthening civil preparedness, 10)

The third threat that we have identified is that of a challenged democracy, exemplified with this quote:

Sweden's population is increasingly becoming more diverse. This is an asset for a small, open country. At the same time, it requires building a society that stands together and counteracting segregation in order to avoid social tensions and divisions in society [...].  
(Resilience. The orientation of total defence and the development of civil defence 2021–2025, 45)

These threats all point to the problem in need of being solved through resilience: that of the challenged, and thus vulnerable, society. A strengthened total defence and strengthened civil preparedness are motivated in relation to those threats, thus a problem representation of a society that is challenged and vulnerable to these threats emerges in the documents. The quote above shows that civil preparedness and Sweden's resilience are constructed as needing to be strengthened, and in this way, it is also implied that these are not strong enough today. This is also evident since the documents emphasise that resilience needs to grow and that a societal combining of forces is required to be able to respond to the threats depicted in the documents. We deem this to be a form of problematisation, a deep-rooted conceptualisation of those as problems (Bacchi and Goodwind 2016) that is used to motivate the need for a strengthened total defence and civil preparedness. Through an analysis of the problematisation that occurs in the documents, we have identified two separate, but interlinked, discourses; the discourse of *A challenged society* and the discourse of *A resilient society*. We have delimited those discourses in the material by looking at the similarities and differences in the problematisations of the different threats that are presented through the various documents. They are constructed in relation to each other and are in many ways each other's opposites. They are based on two related ways of talking about society and the threats it faces, and they are used to legitimise the proposal put forward in the policy documents – that is, a strengthened total defence.

The discourse of *A challenged society* and the discourse of *A resilient society* are thus based on our analysis of the problematisations of the various threats that are used to form the problem representation of the vulnerable society, and the solution to this problem, a strengthened total defence. In our analysis of these discourses, we have examined the assumptions, beliefs and knowledge used to produce the problem representation of a challenged society. This problem representation is primarily constructed through the discourse of *A challenged society*. This is a discourse that appears in the description of Swedish society as being challenged and vulnerable through the representation of the threats we initially identified in the policy documents; security threats, climate change and a challenged democracy. This is exemplified by how the threat of a changed security policy situation is represented.

The security situation in Sweden's immediate area and in Europe has deteriorated over time. An armed attack on Sweden cannot be ruled out. (Total Defence 2021 – 2025, 26)

A deteriorating security situation serves as the motivation for an understanding that an armed attack on Sweden cannot be ruled out, while statements such as

Sweden needs a ‘rapid and thorough build-up of a resilient civil defence’ (Strengthening civil preparedness, 8) convey the underlying assumption of urgency and that this resilient civil defence is currently lacking. However, our analysis also shows that the problematisations that build up this discourse also contain processes of securitisation (Chmutina et al. 2023), in that societal problems and welfare state challenges become a problem of societal security that should be solved with the power of total defence rather than through investments in public welfare. Another example of this is how climate change, rather than being a problem affecting the Swedish climate, is constructed into a global security problem:

Sweden is also affected by the effects of climate change in other countries, such as via changes in migration and security policy tensions. Climate change makes poverty reduction more difficult and entails the risk of new health challenges and increased pressure on ecosystems. The changes require adaptation and effective civil preparedness. (Strengthening civil preparedness, 10)

Climate change is presented as a threat not only because of its impact in the form of extreme natural events, it is also ‘a serious and growing threat to global security’ (Resilience. The orientation of total defence and the development of civil defence 2021–2025, 18). Here too, however, an assumption emerges that effective civil preparedness is needed. Climate change and its effects are primarily understood as a threat to Sweden’s security, on the grounds that climate change and competition for natural resources are expected to lead to an increase in refugee flows. These are expected to amplify ‘ongoing conflicts and increase the risk that new conflicts may arise’ (Resilience. The orientation of total defence and the development of civil defence 2021–2025, 18). There is thus a securitisation of both climate change and its victims, where those who are exposed to the devastating consequences of climate change are suddenly presented as a threat to Sweden’s security. This is a painfully clear example of how the discursive construction of ‘the vulnerable’ shifts from being someone to sympathise with to being someone to fear (cf. Chmutina et al. 2023). Similar processes of securitisation are also evident in how the threat landscape of a challenged democracy is presented in the documents. The threat we refer to as a challenged democracy presupposes an understanding of society as challenged, also because the diversity Sweden is seen to be characterised by can create a ‘breeding ground’ (Resilience. The orientation of total defence and the development of civil defence 2021–2025, 62), also through a lack of opportunities for integration, for social unrest and extremism, which can be exploited by attackers. Through this discourse, a vulnerable society is produced whose resilience is currently lacking, or at least weakened. In addition, the threat scenarios presented in the documents are all heavily characterised by a premise and an assumption that these threat scenarios have come about beyond the control of Swedish society.

However, the discourse of a challenged society is constituted in relation to another discourse where a different way of understanding Swedish society emerges. We have chosen to call this discourse *A resilient society*. Through this discourse too, the notion of a society facing challenges emerges. However, this discourse also produces other values and through this, a different conception of Swedish society is produced than the one that occurs through the discourse of the challenged society. The need for a strengthened total

defence is also (re)produced through this discourse, however here the emphasis is on the conditions necessary to achieve this.

Defending Sweden and safeguarding our security, freedom, independence and freedom of action is not only a military task, but a responsibility for the whole of society, that ultimately requires the personal efforts of the population. A will to defend and popular support form the basis for the possibility of being able to achieve a credible total defence. (Resilience. The orientation of total defence and the development of civil defence 2021–2025, 81)

Through this discourse, the responsibility to ‘defend Sweden and safeguard our security, freedom, independence and freedom of action’ is not only made into something that affects all of Sweden’s citizens but a personal matter and something that requires the personal efforts of the population. In line with Ericsson, Svenbro, and Wester (2022), this can be seen as a form of militarisation, where a strong defence becomes an issue that concerns the whole of civil society. This is not least shown by the way in which the will of the public to defend society is assumed to lay the foundation for a credible total defence. In this way, specific conceptions are produced about Swedish society and its population. Defence becomes a ‘happy object’ (Ahmed 2010 in Ericson et al., 2022, 498), a way of creating a sense of cohesion built on a common will to defend.

### **Subjectification in total defence policies: vulnerability and resilience**

Bacchi and Goodwind (2016, 8) argue that the most important element of a WPR analysis is that ‘rather than focusing on how people make policy, attention turns to the way policy makes people’. In line with this, we analysed the processes of subjectification that take place in the documents and the subject positions that are constituted in the documents through the discourses *A challenged society* and *A resilient society*. This analysis involved examining which subjects are implicated in the problem representations that are presented in the policy documents (cf. Bacchi and Goodwind 2016). A process of governance is thus present in the policy documents in that individuals are persuaded to assume specific subject positions (Bacchi and Goodwind 2016). Our analysis of the documents shows how two main subject positions are constituted in the documents; the resilient subject, who is assumed to take responsibility for managing their situation and the vulnerable subject, who lacks the ability to take responsibility.

#### **The resilient subject**

The ideal of the resilient subject emerges in the following way in the documents:

Ultimately, Sweden’s security depends on each citizen’s willingness and ability to take responsibility for their own and our society’s safety and preparedness. (Resilience. The orientation of total defence and the development of civil defence 2021–2025, 64)

The individual’s preparedness - both practically at home and that we are all mentally prepared - is an important pillar for society’s resilience and willingness to defend itself. (Strengthening civil preparedness, 1)

These two quotes clearly illustrate the problem presentations, discourses and subject positions of the total defence discourses. The discourse *A resilient society* emerges in the

quote and constructs a secure and prepared society. However, something more is also being done: all residents of Sweden are ascribed a willingness and an ability to take responsibility, and this is not only about their own individual safety and preparedness but also the safety, security and preparedness of Sweden. This is an example of how the nation's security is linked to its population's willingness to take responsibility, and as such, the nation's defence becomes a matter of the individual's will (c.f. Eriksson, Svenbro, and Wester 2022). This is also evident in other documents:

'The Defence Committee makes the assessment that the individual should be prepared to manage his or her own livelihood and care for a week without support from the public sector. The individual's responsibility is important, not only for their own safety and security, but also for taking responsibility in solidarity to ensure that those who most need help from the public sector in the event of a serious incident can receive that help. The Government assesses that in the event of a serious societal disturbance or heightened alert and ultimately war, citizens' expectations of society's services need to be significantly lower than under normal conditions in times of peace. The Government believes that individuals who do not have an immediate need for help in the event of a serious incident and who have the prerequisites and resources to fend for themselves should be able to take responsibility for their own livelihood for a week and, in solidarity and cooperation with others, assist each other to the extent possible'. (Total Defence 2021 – 2025, 134)

The discourse *A challenged society* emerges in the above quote through the image of a society where citizens cannot expect the same support, help and service from the public sector in the event of a crisis or war. Such a society requires resilience and resilient individuals, who understand that they are expected to, and have the ability to, provide for their own safety and security, unlike those who do not have the ability to do so. The fact that the resilient individual is made into an ideal in the policy documents is evident in our analysis, as the citizens' willingness and ability to take responsibility are positioned in relation to the security of society as a whole that is assumed to be dependent on society's preparedness. In this way, we see in the documents how resilience has become a fundamental part of the individualisation and responsabilisation that characterises the neoliberal society (Joseph 2013; O'Malley 2010). The discourses, *A challenged society* and *A resilient society*, used in the policy documents, can thus be seen as constituting a neoliberal resilient subject, in line with Evans and Reid (2013). This is exemplified by the quote above from the document Resilience, where the resilient subject is constituted as able to take personal responsibility. However, this subject position is often positioned both in relation to the (non-)functioning of society and in relation to a vulnerable subject.

### **The vulnerable subject**

The subject position of the vulnerable subject is constituted against its counterpart as a subject that is presumed to be in need and who lacks the abilities required to handle the problems constituted through the discourse of the challenged society (cf. Bankoff 2019; Drichel 2013). The vulnerable subject is often portrayed as a subject who lacks the possibility to look after their own needs, as appears in this quote from the document Resilience:

The individual's own responsibility is an important part of society's overall ability to withstand and mitigate the consequences of serious disturbances in society's functionality. With good knowledge and preparedness on the part of the individual, the public sector can

focus its efforts on supporting those who are in need and lack the prerequisites to handle such a situation themselves. (Resilience. The orientation of total defence and the development of civil defence 2021–2025, 79)

The vulnerable subject's possibilities and abilities regarding their own action in times of crisis are not discussed, or discussed to a very limited extent in the documents, which can be considered in the context of the criticism made against research into disasters, and its tendency to look at who is vulnerable, rather than see why, and not take into account the 'vulnerable's' abilities to be proactive and capable in the face of crises and disasters (see e.g. Anderson and Woodrow 1991; Gaillard 2021; Ribot 2014). The vulnerable subject is thus a subject in need of protection, society's resources and of other people acting in solidarity with these subjects.

The lack of planning for heightened preparedness and war has meant that the public's knowledge of total defence today is very limited. The favourable security situation that has prevailed in Europe and the Western world has also meant that the perspective of heightened preparedness and war seems alien to many people. Awareness and knowledge of how society can be affected by an armed attack and how citizens should act if war comes therefore needs to be improved. This is an important issue because the capability of total defence is largely based on the will to defend the population. (Resilience. The orientation of total defence and the development of civil defence 2021–2025, 47)

However, vulnerability is not only constructed based on individuals' abilities but also on their knowledge, or lack thereof. As can be seen in the quotation above, the subject position of the vulnerable subject is also constituted through their lack of, or very limited, knowledge and awareness of total defence, which is attributed to the entire 'public'. This lacking or limited knowledge is set in relation to the population's will to defend the nation and ultimately the entire capability of total defence. However, this vulnerability can be counteracted by raising the public's awareness and knowledge about preparedness and by gaining knowledge about how 'citizens should act' the general public will acquire the tools needed to contribute to a greater will to defend and a reinforced total defence. This can be understood against the backdrop of the neoliberal logic that has characterised Sweden since the early 1990s, which purports that all choices and responsibilities, including those related to vulnerability, are made a matter of personal choice (cf Bankoff 2019; Nickel and Eikenberry 2007). As such, the policy documents can be seen as reinforcing a dis-identification with and a rejection of vulnerability, need and dependence (see Layton 2008), which is evident not least as the texts can be seen as reinforcing the image of the resilient subject as something positive and something the vast majority of individuals have the ability to be, for example through an increase in knowledge. In so doing, the policies become a way to steer people in the desired direction, for instance by decreasing their own vulnerability through greater knowledge, and as such becoming a resilient subject.

### ***When the vulnerable subject becomes a problem***

However, vulnerability is not only constructed as an inability to meet one's own needs. Vulnerability is also made into a threat to society, as shown in the following:

'The number and proportion of poor people in the world has decreased. At the same time, global refugee and migration flows are expected to continue to increase, partly due to the conflicts in parts of Africa and the Middle East, but also as a result of population growth, poverty, inequality and the pursuit of better economic conditions. Climate change is a serious and growing threat to global security. Competition for natural resources and the resulting refugee flows amplify ongoing conflicts and increase the risk of new conflicts arising'. (Resilience. The orientation of total defence and the development of civil defence 2021–2025, 18)

The above quotes illuminate how those who are vulnerable due to poverty, conflict and inequality, just like climate change, become positioned as a threat to global security rather than as someone or something to care for and protect. This construction of vulnerability, and vulnerable subjects, differs from previous constructions of vulnerability as a counterpart to resilience. Here, the vulnerable suddenly becomes a threat – something to fear. We interpret this state of becoming as a process of securitisation. In line with Chmutina et al. (2023), we see that this process of securitisation of societal problems affects how both climate change and its victims are represented, in that those who are exposed to the consequences of climate change are presented as a threat to Sweden's security rather than as victims. Instead, the vulnerability of the victims of climate change is constructed as a threat to society through the risk of potential increasing refugee and migration flows. Rather than focusing on the causes of their vulnerability, the focus is on the threat their vulnerability might present to society. The social problems and challenges are thus securitised, and rather than being a problem in their own right become a security problem to be handled (c.f. Butler 2009; Chmutina et al. 2023; Ribot 2014).

In this way, there are slippages and shifts in meaning within the position of the vulnerable subject, in that vulnerability, and consequently the vulnerable subject, are made into a threat to society.

'Increasing xenophobic and radical nationalist currents in European countries are strengthening domestic violent extremism within the so-called Palestine Liberation Army. The white power environment. At the same time, violent extremism within left-wing extremist groups within the so-called autonomous environment can be strengthened'. (Resilience. The orientation of total defence and the development of civil defence 2021–2025, 18)

'Lack of possibilities for establishment and integration can create fertile ground for social unrest and various forms of extremism. Social tensions and economic divisions can also be exploited by attackers to achieve their goals'. (Resilience. The orientation of total defence and the development of civil defence 2021–2025, 62)

This process is also noticeable when certain groups and subjects are made into a threat by being represented as antagonistic. As the quotes above exemplify, this happens through the discourse of the challenged society. In the quotes, we see how the societal problems of a lack of possibilities for establishment and integration are understood as 'fertile ground for social unrest and various forms of extremism'. Furthermore, social tensions and economic divisions are described as something that can be used by attackers.

This process of securitisation also emerges as certain groups, e.g. the white power environment and the autonomous left are portrayed as a threat through elements of violent extremism. We interpret this as a securitisation process since it is the actions of individuals from certain 'factions' that is perceived as the threat, rather than the social

problems that might spur such actions. In line with Chmutina et al. (2023), we see how securitisation affects individuals, turning them into security threats to be dealt with rather than addressing the reasons and social problems that often reinforce these elements.

The documents we have analysed thus have the effect of producing certain subjects, and above all controllable subjects (Bacchi and Goodwind 2016). This is done through what Foucault (Bacchi and Goodwind 2016, 23) calls 'dividing practices', where groups of individuals are separated from each other. This is evident in the analysed documents through the way in which the resilient subject is made into a positive and desirable position, whereas the position of the vulnerable subject is made into the non-desirable. The dividing practices also emerge in the way in which the position of the resilient subject is stated through a direct address, with a 'we' constructed in relation to the other subject positions which are described in a more distanced manner that encourages dis-identification with those positions.

## Discussion

Through this article, we have analysed subjectification processes within Swedish total defence policies, with the aim of critically examining how subjects are constructed as either desirable or non-desirable in current total defence policies, and the becoming of the resilient subject. In line with Bacchi and Goodwind (2016), we started our analysis with the question, 'what's the problem represented to be?'. Our analysis showed that the problem that the policies are trying to rectify through a societal mobilisation to strengthen the resilience of the total defence, is that of a challenged and weakened society. Firstly though, we address the power dimension of this problem representation. In this regard, we want to highlight the context of the production of the documents. The documents analysed in this paper consist of four policy texts that have been produced by governmental agencies, i.e. the Ministry of Defence and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB). Three of the texts, *Resilience. The total defence concept and the development of civil defence 2021–2025*, *Total defence 2021–2025*, and *Civil defence towards 2023 – a total defence in balance*, target politicians and governmental agencies. The fourth, *Strengthening civil preparedness*, targets the general public. Based on the Foucauldian tradition within WPR (Bacchi and Goodwind 2016), these documents can be seen as part of the (re)production of the knowledge formations surrounding Swedish total defence. As our focus for the analysis has been on the (re)production of certain knowledge throughout the documents, we examined the constitutive character of policy (c.f. Bacchi and Goodwind 2016) and its role in producing certain knowledge and subjects through the analysed documents. Our analysis shows how certain ways of understanding Swedish society and its total defence are (re)produced in these documents. Our analysis has not sought to assess whether such assumptions and knowledge are correct or not. Our aim has instead been to critically examine the ways in which they have come to be and the effects they have had. As several researchers have noted, the concept of resilience has become the ideal of societal security discourses in contemporary societies to such a degree that resilience, in an individualising form, where the individual's abilities and responsibilities are the main focus, has become

a form of governmentality that disciplines individuals into becoming responsible (Gaillard 2021; Joseph 2013; Rose 1999). While only one of the documents analysed in this article directly targets the general public, the effects of these processes will be far reaching as this line of thought, and the knowledge formations it rests upon, are taken up by the governmental administrations and disseminated as ‘truths’ in society.

We argue that the discourses we have identified, *A challenged society* and *A resilient society* and their effects in terms of subjectification processes, can be understood against the background of these tendencies. In line with those arguing that resilience cannot exist without vulnerability and that the latter is a prerequisite for the former (Bracke 2016), we see in the documents how the resilient subject is constructed in relation to a vulnerable subject. Our analysis of the documents shows that vulnerability is recognised and ascribed to certain individuals, but what also transpires is how this vulnerability is expected to be countered by certain measures taken by the individual. There is thus a process of responsabilisation in the documents, where the individual is steered in directions assumed to lead to greater resilience, reinforced by the message throughout the documents that the nation’s security and ability to defend itself against the threat scenarios described is ultimately dependent on each and every citizen’s willingness and ability to take responsibility, not only for their own safety and preparedness but also for the whole of society. This emphasis how resilience is a becoming, a process dependent on the overcoming of different forms of vulnerabilities, such as lack of knowledge. However, these processes have consequences that reach far beyond an individual accruing knowledge presumed to make them more prepared for the possibility of crises. What we see in the policy texts is how the becoming of the resilient subject reinforces neoliberal individualistic tendencies, where the individual becomes responsible for overcoming his or her vulnerability in order to ‘achieve’ resilience to be able to face modern society. A further effect is that the conceptualisations of vulnerability as undesirable and resilience as desirable are reinforced. The constructions of vulnerability and resilience in the documents (re)produces a disidentification and distancing with vulnerability (c.f. Layton 2008) whilst the desirable position as the resilient subject is reinforced. What we see in our analysis is thus a subjectification process, where the formation of the resilient subject is achieved through influencing the individual’s will and sense of self in order to make each citizen prepared to assume the responsibility to enhance their resilience. However, our analysis also shows that there are differences in the conceptualisations of vulnerability. Whilst vulnerability most often is constructed as something to be overcome by the individual, for instance by accruing knowledge needed to become more prepared for different crises thus achieving resilience, vulnerability is also in some instances constructed as a threat to the Swedish society. Our analysis shows how those that are vulnerable due to poverty, conflicts and climate change become a threat. Furthermore, it is an example of how vulnerability and the vulnerable, to some extents are located beyond the borders of Sweden. This can be seen as a securitisation (c.f. Butler 2009; Chmutina et al. 2023; Ribot 2014), where social problems such as refugee flows and lack of integration become a security threat.

Returning to Bacchi (2016), one can only ask, what is silenced through this way of conceptualising the problem, and what other ways of thinking are made invisible? To

begin with, our analysis shows that a securitised logic is used. In line with Eriksson, Svenbro, and Wester (2022), we see this as an example of the militarisation of Swedish society, in that the solution to societal problems is sought in an armed total defence. One example of how this happens is when the risks of climate change primarily become a matter of the risk of increased conflicts. Thus, other ways of conceptualising the problem of the challenged society are silenced. When the total defence becomes a 'happy object' (Eriksson, Svenbro, and Wester 2022), and its reinforcement is made into a necessity for the security and safety of us all, other ways of conceptualising the threats depicted in those documents are ruled out. Moreover, gendered and paternalistic logics of the state as the benevolent protector (Eduards et al. 2023; Eriksson, Svenbro, and Wester 2022), are (re)produced in the documents. When the lack of integration and increasing xenophobia identified in the policy documents become a security problem, other solutions than those identified through a strengthened total defence are hard to suggest. In this way, the problem representation of a challenged society and a strengthened total defence as the solution to these problems prevents other possible imaginaries of how these problems could be framed. Thus, what we see is a process of depoliticisation (Eduards et al. 2023), where political problems become security problems and thus removed from the arena of democratic discussions and instead firmly located within the arena of total defence, where political measures become necessary for the safety and well-being of us all. Consequently, the policies reinforce the ideological underpinnings of the current neoliberal welfare state.

However, and as a result, we argue that these problem representations as they are put forward in the total defence discourses also preclude other modes of subjectification and other ways of conceptualising subjectivity. When resilience becomes a fundamental part of the neoliberal cultural project (Bracke 2016) and the resilient subject is heralded as the ideal – not only for one's own sake but for that of the whole nation – what room is left for vulnerability? Vulnerability becomes framed as voluntary (Bankoff 2019), as an (irresponsible) option chosen by those who lack the will to defend, be that themselves or the nation. What we see is a tendency to reinforce a binary image of resilience and vulnerability, which leaves little room for the more accurate description of people as being both vulnerable and resilient, depending on their situation and the context they find themselves in. As such, the notion that people are affected differently by crises and disasters due to structural inequalities (c.f. Hewitt 1995; Tierney 2006; Author; Gaillard 2021) becomes silenced, as are the possibilities for change. The logic of a strengthened total defence accomplished via individual resilience as the solution to societal problems rules out imaginaries of possibilities and alternatives and as such other modes of subjectification. In line with Bracke (2016), one could argue that the focus on resilience in modern total defence discourses runs the risk of dispossessing individuals and societies of visions and imaginaries of other futures. Furthermore, it makes the position of the resilient subject the only desirable, and indeed possible, outcome to strive for.

### Concluding remarks

Lastly, we describe how we applied the last step in a WPR analysis, question 7. This step is aimed at performing self-problematism (Bacchi, 2016), and we therefore reflect on our own positionality and how this might have influenced our analysis. In so doing, we

recognise that our previous experiences and positions within a specific social and cultural context filter what we have been able to see in the texts. As researchers, we position ourselves within a critical tradition and emphasises the importance of examining power relations in society to address and reduce inequalities. We are aware that our own problematisations are affected by our own positionality and have, in line with Bacchi and Goodwind (2016) discussion about self-problematisation, continuously sought to critically interrogate our representations and analysis of the problematisations and solutions put forward through the documents. For instance, our analytical process, where we first independently conducted our analysis and then together discussed, compared and often revised the texts together, has been helpful by creating possibilities to interrogate, challenge and revise different pre-suppositions and assumptions made by each researcher. We have also presented our research and findings at seminars and conferences, thus inviting other researchers to reflect on our analysis. We have used the comments and discussions from other researchers to scrutinise our findings and to reflect upon, and challenge, assumptions that have guided our analysis. Another aspect that needs to be addressed is the positioning of the texts we have chosen to analyse. The documents are all aimed at describing and supporting the reinforcement of the Swedish total defence and were written during a time of political turmoil in Europe. As such, it is perhaps not unexpected that other solutions than those pertaining to a strengthened total defence are absent. However, we remain concerned that problematisations and solutions that do not involve increasing the securitisation of social issues are being ignored or overlooked. Our finding that social problems become securitised by the problematisations in these texts is important to acknowledge, as are the possible effects of this. Lastly, we are also aware that we could unintentionally contribute to normative conceptualisations of vulnerability and resilience, which we have sought to address through continuously reflecting upon our role as researchers.

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### **Data availability statement**

The documents that the analysis is based on is available at the respective governmental agencies' websites.

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