

**The Will to Defend in an Increasingly Polarized and Segregated Sweden
Does our Whole-of-Society Approach Include the Whole Society?**

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The Will to Defend (Försvarsvilja) has always been a key aspect of Total Defense in Sweden and traditionally it has been regarded as quite high. Yet today's society looks rather different compared to a few decades ago. How has the will to defend been affected by the developments in society?

The premise of total defense planning in Sweden is a whole-of-society approach. For this approach to succeed, a central prerequisite is individuals' trust in each other and in society's institutions. At the same time, we currently see an unprecedented increase in segregation and polarization of the Swedish society: socio-economically marginalized neighborhoods become more marginalized and crime rates are peaking. We see more repressive political measures which increase polarization, make individuals poorer and more vulnerable, and reduce individuals' trust in important societal institutions like the police, the social services, and the social insurance agency. This decreased trust may spill over into a general distrust towards the central agencies involved in the planning of total defense: the Swedish Armed Forces, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, municipalities and county administrative boards. Yet, in communities where trust in public institutions is low, levels of trust between community members can still be high. For example, studies show that neighborhood cohesion and care for one another can be higher in socio-economically marginalized communities than in more prosperous communities. In sum, the will to defend one's country might be negatively associated with trust in public institutions, but inter-communal trust-levels may upset these tendencies given that people may find their community and neighborhood worth defending.

On-going and historic marginalization is often tightly coupled with vulnerability to crises, disasters and armed conflicts. A security-related crisis or an armed attack does not impact the population equally as people live under varying physical, psychological and socio-economic conditions. There are 61 socio-economically marginalized communities in Sweden, spread over 27 municipalities. The Corona pandemic affected individuals from socio-economically marginalized neighborhoods particularly hard,

both in terms of actual disease and in terms of indirect consequences. These vulnerabilities are most likely transferable to crises that are of military and/or security nature too.

Against this backdrop, it becomes interesting to study the will to defend in socio-economically marginalized communities. Knowledge about this issue is sparse but should the will to defend be low in socio-economically marginalized areas, a number of explanations are plausible. Low levels of defense willingness could for example relate to a lack of trust in public agencies or to a lack of interest and/or awareness of total defense planning. It may also be a result of marginalized people being engulfed by other priorities that are about immediate survival, given the lack of work and other life opportunities. It is however also possible that the will to defend is higher among persons who have experienced armed conflicts in their countries of origin.

In this research project we will explore the will to defend in socio-economically marginalized communities using a multi-method approach, combining statistical analysis of survey results with a qualitative study that in turn combines auto-photography and interviews. Through a cross-sectional survey we will investigate whether the will to defend is correlated with the growing up in socio-economically marginalized area, with country of origin other than Sweden and with being a first or second generation immigrant. In the qualitative study we will select a strategic sample of individuals as research participants, equip them with cameras and instructions to take photos/videos of things in their neighborhood that they find worthy to defend (activities/infrastructure/buildings etc.). These photos/videos will later be used as prompts for exploring the topic of defense willingness in semi-structured interviews.