Crime-Control in the Post-Wall Era: The Menace of Security

By

Janne Flyghed

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JANNE FLYGHED
Department of Criminology, University of Stockholm, Sweden

Abstract

Over the past ten to fifteen years, an increasing number of social issues have become linked, and then subordinated, to security policy. This policy area has witnessed a paradigm shift, with the emergence of a new security mentality. The crumbling of the walls built up during the Cold War, and the collapse of the Soviet empire, meant the disappearance of the East versus West polarity. And as this world order, based on a balance of terror, passed into history, the nature of the global threat situation was transformed. The antagonisms of the Cold War had hardly had time to cease creating fear before new threat images emerged onto the scene. Unlike the Cold War situation, where world peace was threatened by a frenetic arms race between two highly concrete superpowers, the perceived threats of the 1990s became increasingly vague. The military menace was superseded by what was said to be a much more diffuse criminal threat. For what is it that lies concealed behind such concepts as ‘cross-border crime’, ‘organized crime’, ‘terrorism’ and the like? Previously, security policy analysts had been able to localize the source of a given threat with precision. Their benchmark was now gone, however. Once the established geographical demarcations between Us and Them ceased to apply, it was found that the enemy might instead be in our midst.

The risks and threats affecting our security are today much more diffuse than they used to be. This is not to say that societies characterized by the risk mentality are a new phenomenon. There have always been risks. What constituted the essence of the balance of terror, if not a manifest risk for nuclear war? What is new is that these risks have become both more numerous and more inarticulate. The fact that these threats are more diffuse does not mean that they are perceived as being less serious, however. The fact that they are difficult to specify, and thus to substantiate, instead constitutes an indication of their malevolence. This has had major consequences for the agencies of societal crime control at both the national and international levels.

One important element in this new mentality is found in the presentations of security threats and in the analyses of such threats that form the basis for our perceptions of reality. It is these that provide legitimacy for the new security policy paradigm. The new security concept that was introduced at the beginning of the 1990s is intimately linked to this shifting backdrop. This history is of substantial significance to any consideration of current trends in the development of control policy. Using Sweden as an

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1 The work on this article has been conducted within the context of the project ‘The internationalization of crime policy’, financed by the Swedish Emergency Management Agency (Krisberedskapsmyndigheten). The author would like to thank David Shannon for his translation of the text.

2 One might however think that this was in fact the case, given the inordinate amount that has been written on different aspects of risk since the mid-1990s (Power 2004:12).
example, this article discusses how the means by which societies deal with crises—with the defence of the nation's internal and external security—has changed over recent decades, and how this has affected the area of crime control.

The emergence of the expanded security concept

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the possibility of a military invasion ceased to constitute a credible threat. Instead of rejoicing at the end of the Cold War, however, talk turned instead to 'the expanded threat'. It became increasingly common to speak of threats and risks of a non-military character. Security policy underwent a major change, as it came to be based on a broader spectrum of threats and risks than had previously been the case (SOU 2003:32,181). Paradoxically, the world became no more secure with the passing of the balance of terror. Instead it was stressed that the world had rather become less secure than ever, since the enemy could now come from anywhere.

One point of departure in the Swedish context is found in the Inquiry into threats and risks that was appointed in December of 1992 to investigate the stresses and risks affecting society in peacetime. The report from this inquiry, entitled A safer society (Ett säkrare samhälle) (SOU 1995:19), maintained that the threats the inquiry had discussed 'cause major problems across more or less the whole of society and that the public demand for societal counter-measures is therefore very great'. The threats referred to comprised large flows of refugees, and a deficient supply of electricity, water and electronic components. It was also at the beginning of the 1990s that migration began to be viewed as a security problem (Abiri 2000), a problem that, first and foremost in Europe, came increasingly to be linked to organized crime (Morrison 2000:55).

When the expanded threat was discussed in the 1996 report of the drafting commission on Swedish defence, it was noted that the military threat against Sweden was extremely limited, not to say eliminated (Ds 1996:51,13). The national security situation had been appreciably improved by the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and membership of the EU. The Swedish Government therefore felt that 'viewing security from a purely military perspective now constitutes an obsolete approach' (Proposition 1995/96:12,8). The concept of security was as a result expanded to include 'everything that may affect our national security' (Ibid). According to the Government, this now included everything 'from the hard core of more traditional threats to national security, through the new conflicts that have a tendency to flare up in the aftermath of the Cold War, to the threats and risks that accompany trends in global development and the vulnerability of modern societies' (Ibid:83). The Estonia disaster,\(^3\) the Kobe earthquake, floods in Europe, the sarin attack on the Tokyo underground system and the Oklahoma bombing, which comprise a very broad spectrum of events to say the least, were all named as examples of non-military threats and stresses. The Government noted that this followed an international trend; the majority of countries had already redefined their view of national security.

\(^3\)Over 800 persons lost their lives when the passenger ship Estonia sunk during a storm in the Baltic Sea in 1994.
with the principal trend being towards ‘the introduction of an expanded conceptualization of security’ (Ibid:31). With the passing of the total defence decision of 1996 by the Swedish Parliament (Riksdagen), the security concept was subsequently expanded so as to also include ‘risks and threats besides military attacks, international crises and conflicts in other countries that may affect Sweden’ (Ds 1998:32,13). ‘Supply crises, ecological imbalances, migration flows, nationalism, ethnic and cultural conflicts and terrorism’ were also now counted as elements in ‘the vulnerability of post-industrial society’ (Ibid:34). These were designated as low-level threats (Ibid:36), which became an increasingly well-established concept in the discussion of perceived threats during the 1990s. Threats of this kind may be occasioned by ‘social and economic segmentation, intra-national conflicts, environmental pollution, a scarcity of natural resources and the vulnerability of complex modern society’ (Proposition 1996/97:4,53). Given a description of this kind, is there anything that cannot be viewed as a low-level security threat?

The expanded total defence perspective has not only involved a qualitative and quantitative shift in the nature of the threats themselves, however. It has also had consequences for the question of who should deal with these threats. It has been argued that ‘society’s efforts and measures to prevent and deal with threats and risks, both in peacetime and at war’ must be characterized by a holistic approach (Proposition 1995/96:129,24). The Government Bill Readiness in the face of severe stresses on society in peacetime (Beredskapen mot svåra påfrestningar på samhället i fred) specifies what is meant by such a holistic view.

The holistic approach means that the collected resources of society are to be utilizable in relation to all kinds of event such as major disasters and serious disruptions of important societal functions and in war. The agencies whose task it is to take measures to ensure national readiness are to do so with consideration for the fact that they are to be utilizable across the entire spectrum of threats from peace to war (Proposition 1996/97:11,7).

Thus it is no longer exclusively the military defence sector that is to be responsible for these issues. The whole of society is to be activated. ‘By means of a collaboration between the military and civil defences—in the same way as is to occur in war—we will achieve greater effectiveness at a lower cost in our efforts to strengthen our overall national security’ (Ibid:10).4

Risk, vulnerability, severe stresses, new threats and the holistic approach are all keywords that occur regularly in the context of this new defence mentality, based on the expanded security concept. This has led to a blurring of the distinctions between different types of threat; they run into one another. ‘The expanded security concept means that it is difficult to clearly distinguish between the factors that constitute security policy threats of a traditional nature and those that constitute risks in peacetime’ (SOU 2001:41,31). According to the Government, it is ‘not possible or even desirable to draw a

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4See Bigo 1994 for a discussion concerning the increasing confusing since the early 1990s of the boundaries between military—police, and internal—external security.
sharp distinction at the general level between what constitutes an event that may cause severe stress to society in peacetime and what constitutes an event that does not do so. Since society must be prepared for and capable of dealing with all types of events in peacetime, it also becomes unnecessary to define a general distinction of this kind' (Ds 1998:32, emphasis in original). Previously, threats were of a more concrete nature. Today it has become a question of comprehensive categories of crime such as ‘organized crime’, ‘international crime’, ‘cross-border crime’ and ‘terrorism’. These concepts have a number of elements in common. First and foremost, they are extremely vague. Legislators at both the national and international levels have for decades now been trying to come to agreement as to what these concepts actually refer to, but with no major success. Another common element is that all of these concepts have been employed with increasing regularity since the beginning of the 1990s, particularly since the fall of the Iron Curtain, and even more so subsequent to the events of 11th September 2001 and the bombings in London 7th July 2005; events that have been of central importance for the paradigm shift witnessed in relation to security policy. In addition, they all include a large number of crimes and types of crime. All of them are furthermore difficult to substantiate empirically, which means that it is easy for anti-crime agencies to legitimate counter-measures, the need for increased levels of financial resources and/or new coercive measures. The fluid nature of the concepts themselves also makes it virtually impossible to question assertions as to the occurrence of these crimes, or the relevance of these ‘threats’.

**Threats and threat images**

The term ‘threat’ is employed here to refer to imminent dangers, to phenomena—real or perceived—that give rise to concern and at times also to fear. The level of concern or fear may vary, both by place and over time. What one person perceives as life-threatening may be viewed by another as a normal part of everyday life. There is also a difference between actual and potential threats, i.e., between concrete, imminent, direct threats, and possible threats. These different types of threat, potential or real, form the basis for the production of threat images. Threat images constitute constructions of possible future threats. Some researchers have even claimed that ‘threat images are not to be viewed as either true or false but rather as more or less useful’ (Andersson 2002:4). The analysts that produce threat images work with hypothetical risks and as yet unrealized threats. They construct potential risks. One problem is that these are often presented, either in the threat analysis reports themselves or in media reports, as constituting actual, or at least impending threats.

The express objective of the construction of threat images is to provide the basis for a good level of readiness in case the threat should be realized, something which we may refer to as their readiness function or national defence function. But they may also have a rather more tacit objective, namely that of justifying the existence of various organizations and/or of serving these organizations in their efforts to be allotted more
resources (their legitimacy function). Other underlying motives may include diverting attention from some other problem that is currently more sensitive. One classic example of this is found in the tendency to salvage a problematic domestic situation by acting in the foreign policy arena. In its extreme, political leaders have even declared war to divert irritating attention from domestic problems. The political scientist David Finlay refers to this as the psychological function of the construction of threat images. The threat of an external enemy may also serve a unifying function. It creates a sense of identification and fosters solidarity and a sense of unity. This is usually referred to as the sociological function. In times of difficulty, one-dimensional presentations of an enemy serve as an excellent tool for defining a national identity. Highly simplified constructions of an enemy often produce a greater effect than more sophisticated ones. Conveying a satisfying illusion is easier and more effective than presenting a complicated reality. Another function, related to the sociological, is the political function. Here the focus is directed at common interests in order to produce political support. Finlay argues that by polarizing the good and the evil, it is possible to uphold ideology, nationalism and consensus (Finlay et al. 1976). Taken together, this produces a situation where we live in a world filled by exaggerated threats and risks. The internal logic of the threat analyses that lead to the production of threat images thus contributes to a normalization of exceptional threats and risks (Flyghed 2003). There are many similarities here with the military risk mentality.

The military risk mentality

The classical military risk mentality may with some justification be described as alarmist. The basis for this is that the military have a professional responsibility for the security of the state, which involves a number of important consequences for the professional military (Huntington 1957:64–65).

1. They view their own state as the basic unit in all political organization.
2. They strongly emphasize the fact that the state lives under constant military threat and the risk for war.
3. They stress that these threats are substantial and imminent.
4. They emphasize the importance of maintaining strong, versatile and operationally fit military forces.

The military security mentality includes an understanding that real and lasting security can never be achieved. War is always on the agenda and is virtually unavoidable. There therefore exists within the military a scepticism towards treaties, international agreements and bodies such as the UN. ‘The decisive factor is always the power relations that exist between states. ... Diplomacy is nothing other than a superficial mask for the existence and exercise of power’ (Huntington 1957:66). According to military theory on permanent threats, a correlation exists between professionalization and the perception of risks. ‘This professional partiality—or sense of professional responsibility—leads him to
think that if he makes a mistake in his evaluation, it should be in the direction of overestimating the threat. Consequently, he will sometimes perceive threats to the security of the state where no such threats actually exist.' (Huntington 1957:66). The Norwegian sociologist of law, Vilhelm Aubert, has argued that this constitutes a ‘worst-case-strategy’, which is motivated not only by security needs within the military, but also by a professional sense of duty that gives this strategy a particularly strong appeal. ‘The worst-case mentality constitutes one of the most important driving forces underlying the arms race’ (Aubert 1982:76).

As was intimated above, this kind of thinking has also come to permeate other areas of activity, both military and civilian, that are dependant on threat analyses. The more extreme elements in such analyses have gradually become established as accepted truths. It is very rare to see any counter-force questioning the presentation of threat images of this kind. And should one appear, it is often paradoxically the sceptics that are required to provide empirical evidence to substantiate claims that the threats are exaggerated or incorrect. It should of course be the advocates of the threat images who are responsible for providing empirical data showing that their claims for the existence of new threats are well founded.

The ‘new’ threat images

One of the fundamental elements in the expanded security concept is the view that the nature of existing threats has changed dramatically. But what is it that we should actually be afraid of? How are the images, the representations of what constitutes a threat, constructed? How are these different representations of threat images substantiated? The existence of well-substantiated and correct threat analyses is crucial if we are to know which counter-measures are most appropriate. If the data on which decisions are based are misleading, the wrong areas will be prioritized. Thorough threat analyses are central to effective police work, both in the form of short-term operational analyses and longer-term strategic analyses.

As has been noted above, new threat scenarios first came under discussion in the mid-1990s. The nature of perceived threats expanded first and foremost to include threats against civilian interests in peacetime, a phenomenon which has come to be designated ‘fredskris’ (peacetime emergencies) (Andersson 2000:7). This change did not only take place in Sweden, however. The majority of the EU member states do not today acknowledge the existence of a threat of invasion against their own territory, for example. Instead, the threat image is comprised of various forms of unconventional attack, such as large-scale terrorism and missile assaults (Eriksson 2002:48). The following forms of threat, with some variations, have been presented in official Swedish publications and reports since the beginning of the 1990s.6 The image presented of potential threats is more or less the same in other countries too.

- terrorism
- massive influxes of persons seeking asylum and assistance

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• the spread of weapons of mass destruction
• international organized crime
• environmental disasters
• the disruption of important infrastructural systems such as electricity, radio and television, telecommunications, computer systems and water
• the use of biological and chemical weapons

Particularly good levels of readiness are required because these risks may produce 'severe stresses' on society at large. But what constitutes 'severe stresses'? In a report from the Swedish National Defence Research Establishment (FOA), it is plainly stated that the study of the 'new threats' would become less complicated if one were no longer bound by the concepts of war and peacetime (Frost and Ånäs 1998:9). Instead, the concept 'severe stresses in peacetime' is employed. A severe stress involves a situation characterized by the fact that it (Proposition 1996/97:11,19)

• deviates from what is regarded as normal
• arises suddenly, more or less unexpectedly and without warning
• threatens fundamental values and
• requires quick decisions and necessitates co-ordinated and concentrated efforts by several agencies.

Once again we are faced with a vague concept that gives rise to arbitrariness. What is meant by 'suddenly'; or by 'fundamental values'; and what form of deviations from normality are being referred to?

One of the most commonly occurring concepts in the context of these new threat images is that of 'terrorism'. Since September 11th, its occurrence has expanded almost exponentially. This has meant that national and international counter-terrorism work has been given a high priority and intensified. But this concept is extremely difficult to define (Flyghed 1990). These difficulties have served to bridge the gap between criminality and acts of war. Terrorism becomes a hybrid that legitimizes cross-border counter-measures. Nor does there appear to be any major interest in coming to agreement on a definition, either politically or for purely tactical reasons. The woolly definition of terrorism has in fact shown itself to be a necessary condition for the extensive counter-measures. Without so much scope for interpretation, it would have been impossible to produce the EU's framework decision on terrorism (Ds 2002:35) so quickly, for example. After decades of discussion on how 'terrorism' should be defined, subsequent to the events of September 11th agreement was suddenly reached within just a few months. The vagueness of this concept has also contributed to the idea that the enemy is everywhere (Chomsky 1991). The perception that threats may appear from any and every direction is also a contributory factor in relation to the introduction of new counter-measures. 'Terrorism' thus becomes an ever-present threat that may always be used to motivate the expansion of controls. The authors of one FOA-report, write the following in the context of a discussion of whether measures to combat terrorism should be visible or invisible.

If a country is only weakly protected, it may become an attractive target for attack for this reason alone. If on the other hand it presents itself as having a
strong defence, it may become attractive as a symbolic target. Should a terror attack succeed in such a case, a situation which may be difficult to prevent in an open society, this would involve an enormous loss of prestige for the country that had presented itself as being well protected (Eriksson and Sjöberg 1998:32).

On the basis of this kind of logic, one could ask whether there are any alternatives for action that do not involve a risk for encouraging acts of terror.

As is the case in much of the rest of the world, a large number of measures have been taken in Sweden to combat terrorism without having defined what this concept actually refers to. Even the Swedish 9/11 inquiry, which explicitly deals with Sweden’s readiness to deal with acts of terror, fails to specify what is meant by terrorism. It is true that the inquiry refers to the framework decision on the combat of terrorism that was adopted within the EU in June 2002 (SOU 2003:32,196–200,320), but the framework decision does not specify the concept either, despite the fact that Article 1.1 is reported to contain a definition of terrorism (Ibid:196). All of the crimes covered by the framework decision are acts that are already sanctionable under criminal law within the respective member countries. What is new is that in cases where the intent is to terrorize, the accused should not be sentenced for kidnapping, for example, but rather for a terrorist offence. It thereby becomes possible to impose stiffer sanctions. Thus we find ourselves in a situation where from a global perspective such extensive measures have never previously been taken to combat terrorism, despite the fact that nobody really knows what terrorism is. There has been expansion in not only internal controls and levels of surveillance, but also in direct interventions of a kind rarely witnessed before; and the extent of these measures is largely the result of an incapacity, or an unwillingness, to define what it is that is to be combated. The inmates held captive at the American base at Guantanamo constitute an extreme illustration of this phenomenon. Hundreds of individuals have been locked up in conditions that border on torture without knowing what they are suspected of and with no recourse whatsoever to judicial examination. The British Anti-terrorism Act has produced similar consequences.  

**Empirical examples**

How threat images are constructed and presented is of central importance to the consideration of the introduction of coercive measures that impinge upon the integrity of the individual. Before measures are introduced that constitute an invasion of personal integrity and the civil freedoms and rights of individual citizens, however, there are a number of criteria relating to the underlying threat images that should first be met.

1. The threat criterion. Are there data showing that new or old threats have become more immediate? Is there any reliable and verifiable evidence of this?

2. The harm criterion. If the threat is realized, will it produce substantial harm?

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7 The Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act was introduced subsequent to 9/11 and inter alia gives the Home Secretary the right to make decisions without reference to the legal system. If a suspect is deemed to constitute a threat to national security, he or she may be held in prison for an indeterminate period without charge or a court hearing.
3. The effectiveness criterion. Is there evidence that the counter-measures are effective in relation to the relevant threat? And if so, is the level of effectiveness proportional to the cost?

4. The proportionality criterion. Is the invasion of the integrity of the individual proportional in relation to the threat and the potential harm?

The nature of presumed threats is thus utterly essential to discussions of invasions of personal integrity. If question 1 cannot be answered in the affirmative, no new measures should be introduced. Even if the answer to each of the first three questions is in the affirmative, however, the question of whether the measure is compatible with the principle of proportionality still has to be considered. These questions are rarely discussed, much less answered, prior to the introduction of new coercive measures.

What kind of evidence is there, then, for the new threat images that are being presented? On what kind of empirical foundation are the scenarios that are being drawn up actually based? Unfortunately analyses of these threat-image reports are in short supply. In 1997, however, I did conduct a relatively small-scale study of three threat image presentations produced by the Swedish police between 1993 and 1996 (Flyghed 1997; 1998:49f). I looked for statements that argued for or against the likelihood of an invasion of Eastern European crime in Sweden. A further study was conducted five years later of three threat-image reports produced by the police between 1998 and 2000 (Wimmerstedt 2003). This focused on the risk of an invasion of illegal immigrants. The content analysis is in both cases based on a hierarchy of statements ranging from extremely poorly supported statements to statements that are well substantiated. The statements have been categorized in the following way:

A: Vague unfounded statements. These statements are based on assumptions with no reference to a source. It is not made clear, for example, what type of crime is at issue.

B: No empirical evidence. The statement is clear to a certain extent; it is clear, for example, which countries, types of crime, etc., are involved, but no figures are presented in support of the claims that are made.

C: No verifiable sources. The statement is based on empirical evidence, but no sources are reported that can be verified. Thus it is not possible to check the reliability of the empirical evidence.

D: No basis for a comparison. Clear statement, figures and sources, but no additional statistics to provide a basis for comparisons. It is therefore difficult to determine whether some form of change has taken place over time, either in the form of an increase or decrease, or whether status quo has simply been maintained. Difficult to say anything about possible trends.

E: Ideal. Clear and distinct statement based on empirical evidence that provides a basis for comparison, specifying a source that can be verified and substantiated.

The analysis of the first three reports is summarized in Table I.

These results must be regarded as discouraging. For the most part, the statements were based on general
### Table I. Statements relating to Eastern European crime in three documents 1993–1996

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Note: The following three documents were analysed: 1. The Swedish National Police Board (RPS)'s threat analysis 1993 (Framstånds- och omvärldsslekretariatet, VKA-190-1596/93); 2. The Swedish National Criminal Investigation Department (Rikskriminalpolisen)'s criminal intelligence service, Narkotika- och dopingsituationen i Sverige [The narcotics and steroids situation in Sweden] (annual report 1996); 3. The report Oststategrelaterade brott i Stockholms län [Eastern European crime in the County of Stockholm] (The Project group to combat eastern European crime, Stockholm County Police Authority, Stockholm County Criminal Investigation Department [Länskriminalpolisen]/intelligence unit).

### Table II. Statements on illegal immigration and people smuggling in three reports 1998–2000

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dominated completely; these accounted for 107 of a total of 133 statements. Only four passages were classified as belonging to category E. Despite some improvement, however, the police still have difficulty producing reliable evidence to support their statements. There have also been occasions where politicians have willfully misinterpreted the police’s analytical reports. One example was in November 2002 when the Swedish Minister for Migration and Asylum policy, Jan O Karlsson, and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs claimed that, according to a report from the National Police Board, approximately 15%–20% of asylum seekers from the former Soviet Union committed criminal offences during their time in Sweden. This piece of information became the focus of a great deal of media attention. After a time, however, the analytical team at the National Criminal Investigation Department...
(Riks supplemental) denied the claims. No such report existed (Vestin 2003:4).

Useful experts

Besides the media, there is another category of actors who affect our understanding of what should be perceived as constituting a threat, namely national security experts. The expanded conception of security has meant that military expertise in particular has been given new opportunities to expand its sphere of interest. Military experts have repeatedly expressed concern at the fact that the police bear sole responsibility for managing the new threats that have emerged. One expression of this is seen in the questions raised in relation to whether anti-terrorist work should be dealt with exclusively by the police. ‘Unlike other Western countries, anti-terrorist work is strictly a task for the police. This may involve problems in relation to more serious forms of terrorism where IKFN would not simultaneously be applicable’ (Eriksson and Sjöberg 1998:42). This particular FOA-report argues that this is the case because the police today do not have the ‘resources and training to be able to deal with heavily armed terrorism in Sweden, particularly if this involves weapons of mass destruction. We propose that the dividing line between what constitutes the work of the military and the police respectively in a terrorist situation is made the subject of a more comprehensive inquiry’ (Eriksson and Sjöberg 1998:43). It has also been argued that the Swedish Navy would be more suited than the police to handling the turning back of aliens and the smuggling of refugees at sea (Pellnäs 1996). Navy submarines have recently also been employed to ‘conduct concealed reconnaissance in order to expose organized crime such as smuggling’ (Holmström 2003).

In the border-supervision inquiry, it was noted that ‘[The] multi-faceted threats of today make it difficult to determine in advance whether the measures required to prevent or combat activities that constitute a danger to national defence or the security of the nation are primarily associated with the police/customs, or the military’ (SOU 2002:4,90). The inquiry that examined the question of the state of Sweden’s readiness subsequent to 9/11 includes several proposals that involve a move in this direction (SOU 2003:32,13). The fact that the military has a powerful interest in expanding the objects of its defence-related activities now that the classic threats have disappeared can be seen in a communication from the Government in which the Armed Forces present their view of their own role and activities. On the basis of the concept of a holistic view, the Armed Forces announced that their capacity could be utilized in connection with all of the new threats and risk-situations that had been taken up by previous inquiries. ‘This is particularly so in relation to the possibilities of utilizing the military units of the Armed Forces in peacetime’ (Skr. 1998/99:18).

In connection with extreme events in particular, a large number of people tend to turn up, who are presented as experts but who make poorly founded statements as to the existence of imminent dangers. The news media, and television

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8IKFN is an abbreviation for ‘The intervention of the Swedish Armed Forces in the context of invasions of Swedish territory in times of peace and neutrality, etc.’
news broadcasts in particular, were inundated with such experts during the months subsequent to 11th September 2001. What had happened? And why? Who were they? Who are terrorists? During the Iraq war, the media were invaded by experts of very varied quality, whose statements were almost without exception largely based on assumptions, speculation and general fabrication. The basis of these experts’ speculations was hardly ever questioned. And speculation is exactly what they presented. They were also pressured by reporters, not about their sources, or their evidence, but rather to ‘say something concrete’, to pass verdict; which probably means that at least some of them said more than they may have intended to. It is easy in an interview situation, particularly in the context of a live broadcast, to experience a psychological pressure, to feel a little stupid if one is unable to answer the questions that are posed: Who did it and why? This often paves the way for loose speculation, which is nonetheless perceived by viewers, listeners and readers as established truth.

One person frequently engaged in the role of expert is Magnus Ranstorp of St. Andrew’s University in Scotland. In the context of a large number of media appearances, Ranstorp has been presented as ‘one of the world’s leading experts on terrorism’. But what foundation does he have for his statements? Where does he get his information? What are his sources? These are questions that journalists ask far too infrequently. Take Ranstorp’s claims that Swedes have been trained at al Qaida training camps in Afghanistan for example. ‘It is very difficult to know how many Swedes have visited training camps. It could be anything from 25 individuals to a much larger number’ (Malmström 2002). The veracity of this statement has even been questioned by the Swedish security police, Säpo. According to Ranstorp, however, Säpo have no idea. ‘The dark figure is massive, and the liberal Swedish legislation makes it difficult for the authorities to keep track of people that are not suspected of having committed criminal offences’ (Malmström 2002). Ranstorp is apparently quite keen that it be made easier to legally monitor and control persons who are not even suspected of crimes.

The majority of these useful experts are comprised of the modern day proponents of classical military risk theory, i.e., they overestimate the size of a threat rather than underestimating it. Richard Ericson and Kevin Haggerty have noted that: ‘Risk discourse cultivates insecurities, focuses them on scapegoats, and forces people to accept expert knowledge of risk—a knowledge that creates new insecurities—as the only viable solution’ (Ericson and Haggerty 1997:86). The way these experts present threats thus generates fear, which in turn provides a basis for new threat images that generate even more fear and so on, a process of escalation that builds on the same principle as the spiralling arms race of the Cold War period.

It would be interesting to look back later and see to what extent events actually corresponded to these sometimes completely unequivocal prophecies. It is rare for such experts to be

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9See Nordström 2003 for an interesting study of the way the news were staged by experts and the media during the war in Iraq.
subsequently held to account for their statements. Surprisingly, the same individuals tend to turn up again, despite developments showing them to have been quite wrong the last time they appeared. One central factor underlying the frequency with which these experts appear is that they agree to do so irrespective of whether or not they have anything substantial to contribute. One factor which undoubtedly contributes to their being given the opportunity to air their views is the fact that these individuals are ‘media-friendly’; not because they have a well-founded understanding of a given situation, but because they are well suited to the media context and to making a credible impression on its audience. It is precisely the impression, the form, the exterior, that is of central importance in the world of the media. And every item, article or similar that is able to refer to an ‘expert’ gives an impression of trustworthiness. In their analysis of media coverage of terrorism, Herman and Chomsky have identified a particular kind of useful experts; namely confessions of former radicals. ‘We are witnessing a durable method of producing experts who will say what the establishment wants said’ (Herman and Chomsky 1994:25). Experts are both useful and necessary for the dramaturgy of the mass media. ‘In the absence of expert knowledge, we have to utilize experts’ (Asplund 1979:75), as Johan Asplund has put it.

The end of the Cold War?

Human history is filled with threats, and with the fear associated with these threats. There has always been something that has constituted a threat, both for the individual and for the collective. In line with our gradual ‘civilization’, the threats that have given rise to this fear have increasingly come to be comprised of man-made phenomena. Whether or not people are really more afraid today than they were in the past must be regarded as an open question, however. Humanity has always had to deal with fear. The disastrous historical epidemics—such as bubonic plague, black death and smallpox—for instance, constitute but one example, having claimed hundreds of millions of human lives over the past four to five hundred years (Tallerud 1999).

Much of today’s concern and fear is based on vague threat analyses. The new conception of national security is a central element in the context of these constructions. With the introduction of this wide-ranging concept, a large number of societal problems (including environmental pollution, refugee flows, terrorism and crime) were raised to a new level. Little by little, all of these problems have also become subordinate to considerations of national security. One consequence of this process is that the integrity of the individual has been forced to take a back seat in a way that would have been unthinkable a decade ago. The ‘right to security’ has almost become a mantra for many politicians, both on the left and the right of the political spectrum (Wacquant 2001:402). Jonathan Simon argues that ‘security’ has become the major commodity of our time, both in the political arena and for the control industry (Simon 1993:258). As a result of its intensive exploitation by politicians, the security sector, police and the media, the ‘right to security’ has become more important than the individual’s right to personal integrity, the
right of association, freedom of speech, and by extension the freedom of opinion.

One important consequence of constructed threat images consists in the formation of ‘us and them’ relations. The threats are externalized; it is always ‘others’ who are ascribed threatening characteristics or bad intentions. We are the subjects, these others become objects. The relation to an object involves distance, whereas subject relations are based on proximity. The others become the unfamiliar, and what is unfamiliar and unknown is often perceived as threatening. For this reason these others are also exposed to a greater extent to discrimination, marginalization and, by extension, also to exclusion. It is easier to direct repressive measures at groups that are regarded as objects. According to David Garland, such measures may be a way of ‘compensating for the failure to provide security’ (Garland 1996). The others are thus not only punished but are also made to serve as a form of symbolic evidence that the government is actually doing something to increase the security of citizens (Crawford 2002:32). Geographical borders, and national borders in particular, have been one of the most effective means of creating ‘them and us’. But now that the old national borders are being eaten away at, the conditions for the creation of ‘them and us’ have been transformed. There is a tendency towards the drawing of clearer distinctions within countries rather than between nations. One example is found in the intensified internal control of foreign nationals (Hydén and Lundberg 2004).

There is also a clear tendency towards joint action among different societal actors. Amongst other things, this has affected the relation between the military and civil defence such that the latter must now provide more intensive support to the military in the context of threatening situations (SOU 2001:41,55). On the other hand, however, the military are also to provide assistance to civilian authorities in certain situations. ‘The general threat may also be of such an extreme nature that police resources are insufficient to attend to such important civilian objects as require unconditional protection’ (SOU 2003:32,13).

There has been an expansion in the field of activity of those authorities whose task it is to maintain public order and security such that these no longer focus exclusively on regular acts of war and crime. Instead their focus has shifted to include other forms of public order disturbance, irrespective of whether or not they fall under the remit of the penal law. First and foremost there has been a shift towards the use of proactive, preventive measures, i.e., measures that are taken before a crime or public order disturbance has even taken place. In the international arena, there has also been a move towards the use of proactive, repressive measures for which there is no basis in law. It is possible that this increasingly strong focus on proactive measures, i.e., on shifting forward the point of intervention, and on directing measures at increasingly minor behaviours, has also led to fear being moved forward in the same way. The level of tolerance has shifted. People today seem to experience fear at an earlier stage, i.e., in connection with less serious threats. A qualitative change of this kind in the nature of threats is accompanied by a drastic quantitative shift. Situations perceived as involving a potential threat have
significantly increased in number now that all types of public order disturbance, both legal and illegal, are to be subject to control (Hörnqvist 2004). Charles Krauthammer has described this phenomenon as deviance having been ‘defined up’, with behaviours that were previously regarded as ‘normal’ having come to be viewed as ‘deviant’ (Krauthammer 1993).

Besides the expansion in the number of behaviours that are perceived as threatening and as requiring counter-measures, however, the number of objects that are under threat has also expanded. Today it is not only certain individuals or groups that are under threat, but rather the whole of society. In this sense, the expanded security concept has developed in parallel with the crime problem. During the first half of the 1990s, the crime problem also became something that threatened the whole of society. In 1996, the Swedish Government published the national crime prevention programme ‘Allas vårt ansvar’ (A collective responsibility) (Ds 1996:59), which emphasizes proactive, social crime prevention, in which all the forces for good within society are to join together. The police were ‘no longer alone in having crime preventive competence’ (SOU 2002:70,211). One consequence has been that individual citizens and businesses have come to assume an increasing level of responsibility for their own security (Garland 2001).

The crashing of the hijacked planes on September 11th 2001 became a key event in this context and has had massive consequences. First and foremost, a large number of measures that constitute an invasion of personal integrity have been taken in the name of combating terrorism. Individual integrity and human rights have been pushed into the background, and even the legality principle has been sold down the river. Rather than being based on reliable threat analyses, this degradation of democracy has been driven by unreliable constructed threat images. An uncritical acceptance of these constructions produces a situation where it is the security constructions themselves that become the real threat. Can traditional civil freedoms and rights hold their own against the pressure produced by these poorly founded threat images? If not, an increasing number of non-criminal behaviours will become the object not only of control and surveillance, but also of concrete, coercive interventions. We will also see an increase in direct interventions with insufficient basis in law, or in some cases with no basis in law whatsoever, such as the freezing of financial assets, for example, arrests, detentions and expulsions. Further, these interventions will take place in relation to behaviours that the majority perceive as constituting neither terrorism nor serious organized crime. One obvious danger associated with such an expansion in control is that the measures involved are not perceived to be legitimate and thus become counterproductive. The restriction of freedoms and rights ‘often promotes mistrust and encourages alienation and hostility, thus leading to more violence’ (Talbot 2002:123).

Is the Cold War really over then? The term was coined almost 50 years ago by the British author George Orwell, but gained currency first in connection with its use in a book by the American journalist Walter Lippman a few years later. ‘Cold war came to mean a war-like situation characterized by high levels of tension between East and West, where the
combatant parties used all means besides direct military confrontation to fight one another’ (SOU 2002:87,129). If one ignores the reference to East-West relations, the situation is much the same today. We are still in ‘a war-like situation characterized by high levels of tension’, but the parties involved are no longer East versus West but rather ‘us’ and a virtually invisible enemy in our midst. Did the Cold War not end then in 1989/90? The answer is that, yes, there is a difference. The factor that shows that the Cold War is actually over is that the distinction between non-military and military measures has been breaking down. And the situation today actually does involve ‘direct military confrontation’. We have thereby left the Cold War behind and come a step closer to ‘Hot War’; a war focused on diffuse conceptions of crime such as ‘terrorism’ and ‘international organized crime’. In the post-wall era, walls are no longer surrounding territories; they are built within territories, separating Us from Them.

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