

# **An application of a combined framework to set the future direction of the Norwegian Home Guard**

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## **Abstract**

In 2017, the Norwegian Ministry of Defence and the Norwegian Home Guard commissioned a research project to help set a future identity and direction for the reserve-based Home Guard. Using a combination of frameworks, we consider major threats against Norway and, in light of this analysis, suggest a future identity and direction. Our analysis says that, while conventional warfare still poses the most difficult challenge to the country, irregular warfare can be harder to defend against, in that it is often covert, non-attributional, directed at the civilian sector and in the grey zone between war and peace. Limited situational understanding, limited civilian–military coordination, and a limited ability to deal with situations over time contribute to this. We conclude that the Home Guard has the potential to contribute to increased national resilience, in that it has local anchoring, a distributed structure to provide flexible support and the ability to cooperate with civilian organizations. The combined framework we introduce in this paper can be employed to conduct a variety of defence analyses in a coherent fashion, increasing the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of such analyses.

**Keywords:** direction setting; comprehensive defence analysis; organizational systems framework; design thinking; home guard

## **Introduction**

It is a timeless truth that any military organization must adapt its identity and direction to changes in its external environment. Equally true is that such changes are not always

implemented as a consequence of coherent analysis. There is no one standardized step-by-step way of conducting such an analysis. Nor will there ever be, due to the open nature of the changes in the environment and the heterogeneity of organizations. Nonetheless, we should always seek to employ a framework for such analyses, to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The aim of this paper is to establish and apply such a framework for setting identity and direction, using the Norwegian Home Guard as a case study.

This article is based on the outcome of the first of several studies commissioned by the Home Guard and the Ministry of Defence on how to develop the Home Guard (Hove, Berg-Knutsen, Dahl and Rones 2019). This first study is unclassified, while later studies will be largely classified. The research problem in this first study was to establish and apply a framework to outline a future identity and direction. To do this, we first asked: “what are the most important threats Norway faces which the Home Guard can help combat?” Based on answers to this question, and an analysis of associated challenges and needs, we outline a future identity and direction. As we imply in the method section, we set wide boundaries for what is a realistic scope for reform of the Home Guard, including the most radical option of abolishing the Home Guard or merging it with another organization.

The question of future identity and direction has no right or wrong answer: it can be difficult to know when we have achieved an acceptable solution, and every step on the way towards the solution is unique. This type of question is often labelled a “wicked problem” (Ackoff 1974; Conklin and Weil 1998; Ritchey 2013; Rittel and Webber 1973; Rosenhead 1996). The trademarks of a wicked problem underline the need for a coherent framework to ensure a credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable analysis.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. First, we provide a brief history of the Norwegian Home Guard. Second, in the methods section, we present our framework, based on three existing analytical approaches. We then present results from our analysis, in combination with results from 36 qualitative interviews. Based on our analysis, we then proceed to outline a future identity and direction for the Home Guard. Finally, we conclude by pointing towards the remaining studies of the project.

### **The Norwegian Home Guard**

Established in 1946, the Norwegian Home Guard currently consists of approximately 40,000 part-time soldiers. The Home Guard has evolved through the threats and experiences the country has faced – from the sudden and overwhelming German invasion of 1940, to the threat from Soviet Spetsnaz forces in the 1980s, to the current situation of sustained peace, but with new challenges related to an increased interdependence between the Armed forces and civilian society.<sup>1</sup>

At its inception, the Home Guard aimed to function as a locally grounded, rapid-reaction defence against a coup or a surprise attack by a conventional adversary. Over the years, the Home Guard evolved into an organization that was also concerned with societal security,<sup>2</sup> including upholding vital functions in society and critical infrastructure. Today, the Home Guard functions within a system of mutual support and

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<sup>1</sup> See also Norheim-Martinsen (2016) for a discussion of armed forces as “normal” organizations.

<sup>2</sup> The Norwegian term is “samfunnssikkerhet”. For a comparison between the Norwegian-specific term and the societal security term as used in literature, see, for example, Høyland (2018).

cooperation between the Armed Forces and civil society (the total defence concept).<sup>3</sup>

For example, this means that the police can call upon the Home Guard if a crisis, such as a major accident or natural disaster, occurs.<sup>4</sup>

Since the turn of the millennium, the Home Guard has been assigned local territorial responsibility<sup>5</sup> and territorial operations.<sup>6</sup> Today, local territorial responsibility and territorial operations determine the necessary dimensions of the

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<sup>3</sup> The definition of total defence reads: “The modernised total defence concept encompasses mutual support and cooperation between the Norwegian Armed Forces and civil society in connection with contingency planning, crisis management and consequence management across the entire crisis spectrum – from peace via security policy crisis to armed conflict.” (Norwegian Ministry of Defence and Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2018). Similar systems exist in other Nordic countries (see Wither 2020).

<sup>4</sup> There are also other civilian emergency organizations in operation, chiefly the Civil Defence (“Sivilforsvaret”), whose main aim is to protect the civilian population in crisis or war. The Civil Defence is under the command of the Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection, (“Direktoratet for samfunnssikkerhet og beredskap”, DSB), whose chief task is to maintain a complete overview of various risks and vulnerabilities in society.

<sup>5</sup> Local territorial responsibility (“lokalt territorielt ansvar”) includes day-to-day responsibility for planning and management of operations in peace, crisis and war, as well as local cooperation and networking with civilian partners and local government.

<sup>6</sup> Territorial operations (“territorielle operasjoner”) aim to protect military capabilities, critical infrastructure and the population. Main elements include securing and guarding infrastructure, surveillance and control, facilitating and receiving allied support, host nation support, and military–civilian cooperation.

Home Guard, while assistance in crises is a supplementary task, not relevant for dimensioning.<sup>7</sup>

From its inception, a strong link to civilian society has been emphasized. This is perhaps best illustrated through the establishment of a civilian council structure (Bjerga and Gjeseth 2010, 22). At local level, the district councils aim to promote civilian–military cooperation, and the council at national level is generally led by the largest labour union and employers’ organization.

The relationship between the Home Guard and the Army has been a continuing source of debate since 1946. Initially, the Home Guard was organized as a sub-unit of the Army. Several commissions delivered reports on the relationship between the Home Guard and the Army, both before and after the establishment of the Home Guard as a separate defence branch in 1970 (Bjerga and Gjeseth 2010).<sup>8</sup> Despite the northernmost district of the Home Guard and the Army being placed under joint command (“Finnmark landforsvar”) in 2017, however, the debate on whether to merge the Home Guard and the Army is not at its most intense today.

Organizations with similar functions to the Home Guard exist, for example, in the other Nordic countries (Wither 2020), in the Baltic States (Goniewicz, Goniewicz and Burkle 2019) and in Poland (Szymański and Gotkowska 2015).

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<sup>7</sup> For a more thorough review of the roots of military change in Norway over the last 30 years, see Bogen and Håkenstad (2017).

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Bjerga and Gjeseth themselves proposed merging the Home Guard and the Army.

## Methods

### *Part of a comprehensive defence analysis*

This study constitutes the first step of a comprehensive defence analysis (CDA). In Figure 1, we illustrate the CDA model used in Norwegian long-term defence planning by the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (based on Glærum and Hennem 2016). In the top-down scenario analysis, the starting point is analyses of security policy, challenges and aims. This is the element of the CDA to which this paper contributes. How studies of this first element are conducted is not a given, but dependent upon what suits the purpose of the defence analysis. We are of the opinion, however, that the first element is probably the least developed part of the CDA model, and that it could be improved by further development of more formal methods, which is the motivation behind why we developed the combined framework of this paper.

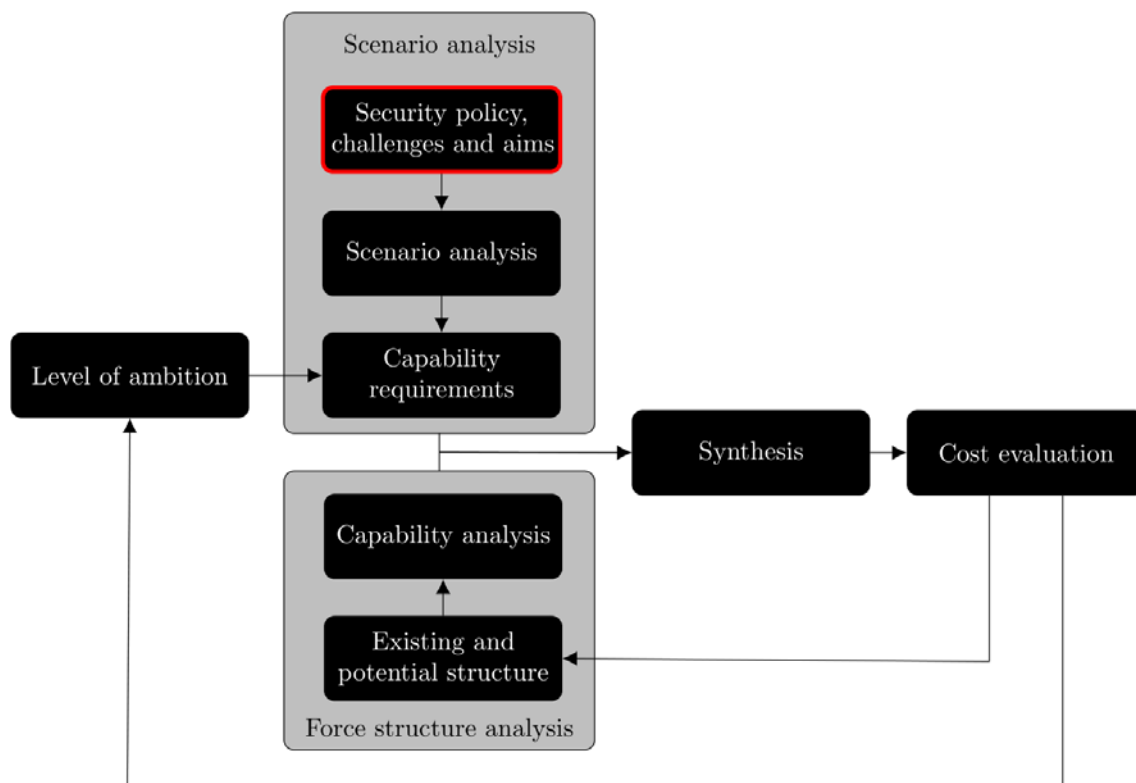


Figure 1. A comprehensive defence analysis.

As this study is the first step in the CDA, it is important for framing future research questions. Based on the results from this study, the follow-on projects mentioned in the introduction will proceed to describe and analyse scenarios and determine capability requirements, based on a given level of ambition. This will largely take the form of numerical and programmable exercises using classified data. In the bottom-up force structure analysis, we would analyse existing and potential force structures and their capabilities. This analysis would also generally be numerical and classified. Synthesizing the force structure analysis and the scenario analysis, we would evaluate them with respect to costs to see whether costs match ambitions in an iterative process until we arrive at the optimal solution.

The policy, challenges and aims element represented by this study is therefore unique in this process, as it is mainly qualitative and can be conducted at an unclassified level. In the following two subsections, we introduce two frameworks that will help us structure the problem and obtain a reliable result.

### ***Organizational systems framework***

As this study constitutes the first part of a possible revamp of an entire organization, we require some sort of organizational framework to help structure the analysis. Therefore, we have employed a general organizational model developed for military purposes: the Organizational Systems Framework (OSF).<sup>9</sup> Figure 2 illustrates our adapted model, and is explained below.

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<sup>9</sup> The Organizational Systems Framework is based on Roberts (2000). The model is a military adaptation of a tradition stretching back at least to the congruence model of Nadler and Tushman (1980). An example of a military application is Berg-Knutsen and Roberts (2015).

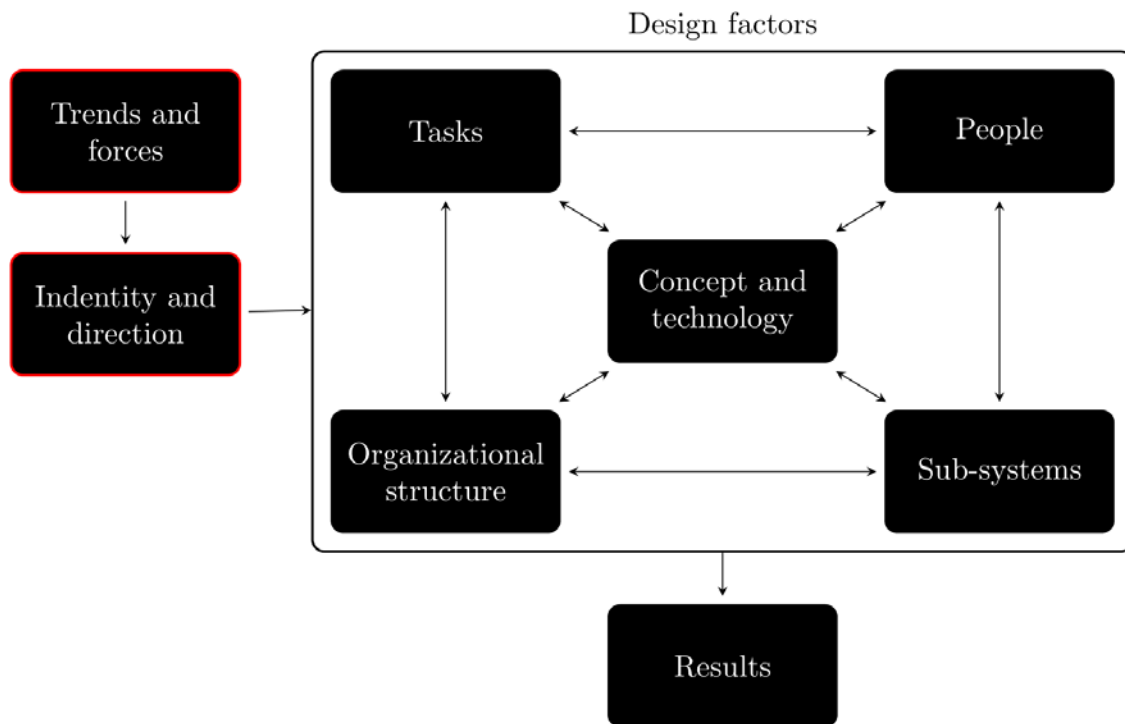


Figure 2. Organizational systems framework.

There are three basic elements of the OSF, of which this study constitutes the first. In this first element, we explored the political, economic, social and technological landscape we expect the Home Guard to face in the future. Still as part of the first basic element, this helped us set the course the Home Guard should pursue, in terms of purpose, identity and values. The second basic element is the design factors. Every organization consists of organizational elements, described in the OSF as concept and technology at the core, then tasks, people, organizational structure, and sub-systems. Sub-systems are, for example, formal processes, human resource management and information management. The final basic element is the results of the first two.

### ***Design thinking***

To help find a solution to our research question, we used a general framework known as design thinking (DT). DT is an umbrella term for a range of user-centred approaches on



how to develop a design (Buchanan 1992; Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla and Çetinkaya 2013; Kimbell 2011, 2012; Seidel and Fixson 2013). Common to many of these approaches is the importance of understanding the needs of the user, observation to obtain insights, visualization of the problem in a variety of ways, prototyping a wide range of ideas and testing them (Glen et al. 2015). In recent years, design thinking techniques have increasingly been used for defence structure questions (Jackson 2019). We based our particular DT model on the Stanford hexagonal model (Doorley et al. 2018), adapted for this study. Figure 3 illustrates our model, which we describe in the following paragraphs.

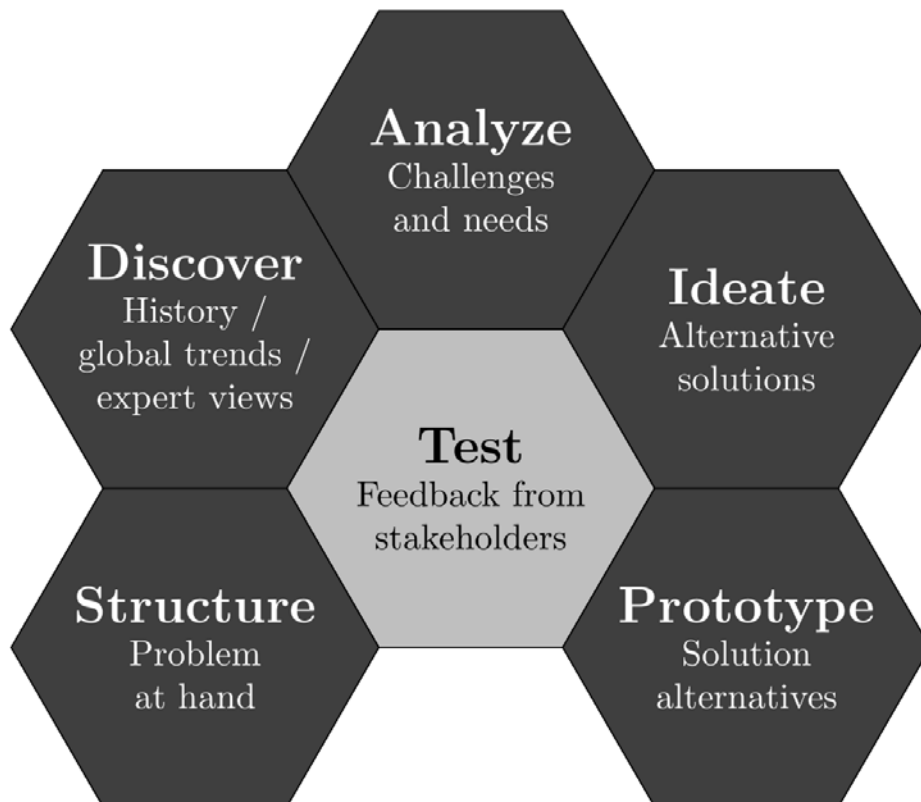


Figure 3. Design thinking.

After we structured our problem properly, we needed to discover where the Home Guard is today and in which directions it could develop. To do this, we conducted 36 qualitative interviews with experts, to a method detailed further in the

next subsection. We also conducted the history review described above (the seminal works being Brox 1996; Bjerga and Gjeseth 2010; Hansen 2004), and reviewed literature, such as the four annual Norwegian governmental threat assessments (Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection 2019; Norwegian Intelligence Service 2020; Norwegian National Security Authority 2020; Norwegian Police Security Service 2020).

Based on the interviews and the literature review, we analysed future challenges and needs for Norway. We limited ourselves to attempting to identify the category of major future challenges for Norway to which the current, or potential future, Home Guard could realistically contribute, and then built future identity and directions upon these challenges, as well as on current roles.

Next, we generated ideas for alternative solutions. We explored a variety of different alternatives. It is essential in DT to “go wide” in terms of concept. Therefore, we considered every possibility, from abolishing the Home Guard to turning it into a tool for frontline operations.

Based on the alternatives, we prototyped possible solutions. In practice, we did this in the form of presentations and draft reports to stakeholders, on which we requested feedback. For example, we challenged stakeholders to a pre-mortem analysis (NATO 2017) early in the project, where we asked them to analyse why the government in the future year of 2030 decided to abolish the Home Guard.

From this test phase, we were able to go back to the discovery phase to refine our research question as we learned more. Similarly, we were able to go back to our analysis to refine the research question, and we were able to refine or generate new ideas and prototypes. The findings we presented in our analysis section are thus developed and refined through several iterations of stakeholder interaction. Over the











of responsibilities between the civil and military sides. With hybrid threats,<sup>10</sup> informants noted that the situation, actor and goals might all be unknown. As a result, responsibilities, legal basis and appropriate responses are also unknown factors. In particular, many informants claimed that it is obvious that Russia changed its attitude towards use of force after the annexation of Crimea.<sup>11</sup> One informant said:

Russia had acknowledged that it could not keep up with Western joint operations doctrine and technological capabilities. A new Russian concept for operations was therefore developed to better achieve strategic goals and be better prepared for war or conflict. The importance of military power as the sole instrument was reduced in favour of other instruments, while military capabilities were modernized. (M)

While not all informants agreed that hybrid warfare represented something new, the informants were more or less united in the view that an increased use of irregular threats was rational in the eyes of potential adversaries, and that this was the most serious threat facing the country. This is, therefore, the direction in which we developed our analysis. It is also a prioritized direction for improvement in the Baltic countries' Home Guard equivalents (Goniewicz, Goniewicz and Burkle 2019), as well as in the other Nordic countries (Wither 2020).

### ***Challenges***

The main worry among many informants was the increased volume of hybrid operations, and their aggregated effect, or what is sometimes called “salami tactics”

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Reichborn-Kjennerud and Cullen (2016) for a discussion of what hybrid warfare is.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Galeotti (2016) and Veljovski, Taneski and Dojchinovski (2017) for a discussion of the Russian hybrid approach in Crimea.



(Calha 2015). Several trend studies, such as DCDC (2018, 132–133), point to a likely increased use of irregular threats. Many of the challenges the informants pointed to are therefore related to resilience and to subset factors such as robustness, redundancy, resourcefulness and rapidity (see, for example, Bruneau et al. 2003). As we elaborate further below, we identified cross-sectoral situational understanding and coordination and the ability to resist attacks over time as the two main challenges.

Many informants pointed to an increasingly close link between state security and societal security, the first concerning the integrity of the state, the second concerning the ability to withstand and handle events that threaten critical functions or lives. At the same time, the Armed Forces have steadily grown more dependent upon civilian society, for example for hospital services, infrastructure and logistics. In combination, this requires a mind-set in which civilian society and the military have a joint situational understanding. Several of our informants, especially among the civilian actors in total defence, pointed out that the Armed Forces are too preoccupied with war at the expense of addressing threats in the grey zone between war and peace and the threats directed at civil society in peacetime:

I think the Armed Forces are too preoccupied with The War [...] Recognizing a hybrid threat is hard. We must have a great situational awareness, regarding both our society, as well as our neighbouring countries. We will not understand when challenges to societal security have become a challenge to the integrity of the state until it is over. (C)

Furthermore, many emphasized that we can no longer think of the crisis spectrum as linear from peace to crisis and then war (see also Almäng 2019). In the worst case, a country could have states of peace, crisis and war at the same time in different areas. Many found it a paradox that the Ministry of Defence recognizes this complexity and accepts the challenges that hybrid warfare poses, but at the same time focuses more and

more on military “core tasks” associated with conventional warfare:

It is a massive paradox that the West places more and more emphasis on military core tasks, at the same time as Putin is placing more and more emphasis on hybrid instruments directed towards civil society. I think Putin is laughing at us all the way to his command centre. (M)

According to many informants, the background for this priority is the Ministry of Defence view that conventional warfare and high-intensity operations are the most difficult type of situation to handle. Many informants opposed this view, claiming that handling conventional warfare is more straightforward than handling hybrid operations. Conventional warfare follows traditional military logic, juridical grey zones are limited and it is clear where to direct society’s resources. With hybrid threats, the grey zones are broader and the situation less clear. Many informants therefore considered a conflict below the threshold for war and NATO support, where we struggle to sustain critical infrastructure and vital functions in society, to be a more complex threat than that of conventional warfare:

The biggest challenge [regarding] hybrid threats is the ability to get an overview of what is happening from the first indications to when the reality of an attack is evident. Identifying when a hybrid operation becomes a threat to the integrity of the state, who is behind it and why is very difficult. [It] takes a lot to acknowledge that we are under attack. (M)

The ability to resist sustained attacks over time was not addressed directly by many informants. However, it was often mentioned indirectly, as in many of the preceding quotes, and it surfaced several times in discussions with stakeholders.

### *Needs*

When asked for specific needs, given the challenges they had outlined, the informants

pointed to the importance of NATO support and an increased uncertainty concerning allied support:

Even though the NATO flank is still important, Norway must be prepared to handle a potential invasion in Northern Norway over a sustained period alone, or with the help of smaller allied forces than we would have wished. (M)

Apart from the need for assistance from NATO allies, we were able to outline three groups of needs related to improved resilience.

**An increased consciousness in the population concerning the threats faced:**

Many informants pointed to what they considered to be a strong link between society's will and ability to defend the country. Their central claim was that the total defence concept must be anchored in the mind-set of the population, and that, in the event of major crises, local networks could be of vital importance:

Without a strong link to the people, we reduce the ability to gain important information, and to prevent an adversary influencing the population. Avoiding subversion is probably the most important [tool] for resilience towards hybrid threats. (C)

Without a will to contribute, we reduce the possibility of extracting resources from that network the people represent and the ability to steer resources in the right direction. (C)

**Improved situational understanding, clear lines of responsibility and mechanisms**

**for cross-sectoral coordination:** In the previous sub-section, we identified differences in situational understanding as one of the main challenges. Many informants emphasized a need for a more comprehensive and joint situational understanding:

The challenge concerning hybrid attacks is that nobody knows how to handle them [...] Sectors report through their separate channels, but nobody connects the

information. That mechanism is missing [...] We need [indicators with regards to] hybrid threats, and someone to see these in connection. (C)

One of the main guiding principles for crisis management in Norway is the principle of responsibility.<sup>12</sup> While the civilian informants approved of this principle, military informants missed a unity of command. They looked for a General for civilian society:

I miss leadership at the strategic level. A kind of command structure created for robust events and to take responsibility in the face of serious events. We lack someone who can gather threads at national level and who ensures cross-departmental coordination. We need a better ability to react. (M)

Many pointed to a difference in understanding between the military and civilians. Civilians struggle to understand the mechanisms and needs of the Armed Forces, while the military struggle to understand civilian mechanisms. Clarification of roles is therefore of great importance:

[Roles are] important in building redundancy and robustness in the face of possible threats, so that the societal functions the Armed Forces depend upon can be sustained. Without a well-functioning society, the Armed Forces will lose their fighting power. (M)

Furthermore, many noted that improved situational understanding was down to much more than simply adjusting formal guidelines. Informants emphasized cultural understanding, trust, joint training, networks and robust communication as important for

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<sup>12</sup> According to the principle of responsibility (“Ansvarsprinsippet”), responsibility in a crisis lies with the same organization as it does in everyday operations. Each government department has a responsibility to handle a crisis that concerns its area of responsibility, including coordinating with other government departments.



































- How do you consider that today's organization of response to the aforementioned threats works?
  - Do you see any specific gaps or shortcomings in relation to responsibility and security needs?
- What do you understand as total defence?
- How do you think civilian–military cooperation works today and what can be improved?
- What are the biggest challenges we face in terms of hybrid threats?
- How should we align and secure ourselves to meet hybrid threats?

## Part 2: Role and tasks of the Home Guard

- What experience do you have with the Home Guard?
  - How do you think the Home Guard functions as a player from a total defence perspective?
  - Does the Home Guard make any difference compared to other actors?
- What role can and should the Home Guard ideally play?
  - What do you think should be the Home Guard's special tasks in local emergency preparedness?
  - What do you think should be the Home Guard's special tasks in national preparedness?
- (But,) does Norway need a military emergency organization like the Home Guard is today? Can't this just as well be solved with civilian preparedness or other types of organizations, actors or resources, or any other branches of defence?

- Why do we need the Home Guard instead of, for example, a larger Civil Defence?
- Do we need to have a Home Guard when we have both Special Forces and the Army?
- How do you think civil–military cooperation works today, and can the Home Guard help to strengthen this in any way?
- Do you see any reasons why we do not need the Home Guard?
- So what would you say is the most important reason why we stick with a Home Guard today?
  - And what is the most important reason why we should have a Home Guard in the future?
- What primary tasks – of a more specific nature – follow the roles you have described above for the Home Guard?
  - (Why are these tasks that should be undertaken by the Home Guard?)

### Part 3: Current challenges

- What would you say are the biggest challenges the Home Guard faces today?
  - (What are the disadvantages and weaknesses of the Home Guard?)
- Are there any specific assignments the Home Guard cannot undertake today that you think they must be able to undertake both in the short and long term?
- What functions and tasks are undertaken well today?
  - What are the main benefits of the Home Guard as it works today?
- How do you think the Home Guard utilizes the civilian resources and civilian competence they have access to?

- How do you think the Home Guard acts as a catalyst for civilian–military cooperation today, and what can be improved?
- How do you think the Home Guard utilizes the civilian competence they have access to in their organization?
- Do you envisage that the Home Guard could hold positions based on civilian competence rather than military competence?

Part 4: The ideal future (Note: It is allowed to ignore the inherited position and to think in new and radical ways)

- If you were completely free to define the purpose of the Home Guard, i.e. the basic idea, or the Home Guard’s mission and vision – what would it be?
- If you did not have to take into account historical practices and various restrictions – how would you design the future of the Home Guard?
- And, what is the most important step that must be taken for the Home Guard to become a relevant and tangible player in national preparedness in the future?
- Which people should constitute the Home Guard’s future organization, and where should they come from?
  - What kind of expertise do the personnel need?
  - How should the Home Guard recruit?
- There have been many debates about the number of soldiers in the Home Guard; is it important and, if so, why?
- How should the future Home Guard be educated and trained?
- Are there any specific factors that make the visions or desires you have for the Home Guard not realizable?
- What can the Home Guard do to achieve the vision you have?

End:

- What significance do your specific background and personal interests have for the wishes and visions you have outlined for the Home Guard?
- Is there something you have not said that you think we should take with us when we now consider the future mission, vision, role and structure of the Home Guard?