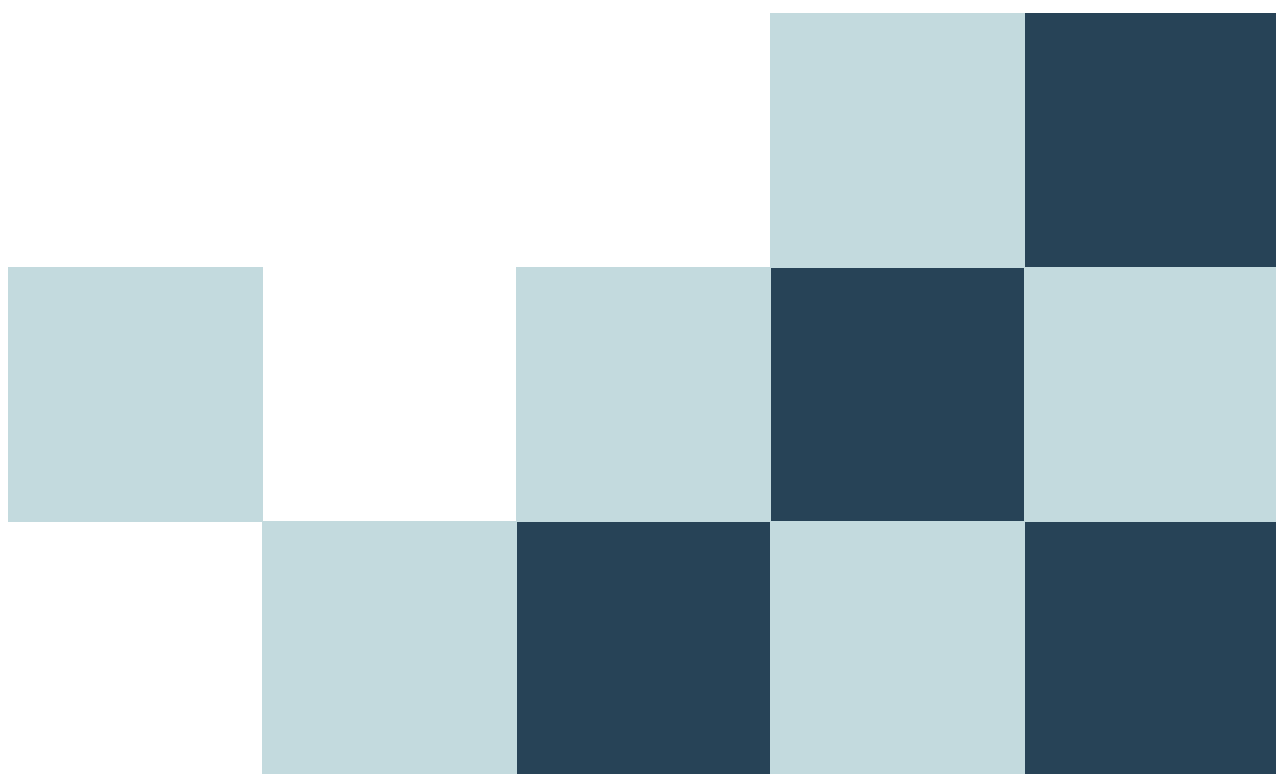




Myndigheten för
totalförsvarsanalys

Preparing evaluation of forthcoming defence decisions

— Reporting on government assignments



Swedish Agency for Defence Analysis

Preparing evaluation of forthcoming defence decisions –
Reporting on government assignments

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Summary

In the 2024 appropriation directions, the Swedish Agency for Defence Analysis (MTFA) was tasked with preparing an evaluation of forthcoming defence decisions. MTFA's proposal focuses on evaluating the implementation of the steering measures adopted by the government in order to put the defence decision into practice.

MTFA's evaluation model includes both follow-up and evaluation. The work is conducted over three phases: a preparatory phase, an implementation phase and a concluding phase.

During the preparatory phase, the steering measures that are intended to lead to the implementation of the defence decision are mapped and categorised. This makes it possible to carry out systematic follow-up and selection of steering measures, and to adapt the work on the basis of available resources. During this phase, the feedback available for monitoring the implementation of the defence decision is also mapped. The preparatory phase results in a follow-up system for the defence decision. The phase concludes with the presentation of an initial evaluation plan, which clarifies the most important aspects and areas to follow up and evaluate during the defence decision period.

During the implementation phase, there is continuous follow-up of the implementation of the steering measures. MTFA recommends combining the follow-up system's results with selection criteria in order to select the steering measures for which implementation is to be evaluated. Process evaluations and impact evaluations, based on operational logic and theory of change, are used to assess the implementation and impact of steering measures. These evaluations examine whether implementation has contributed to attainment of defence policy goals, what the obstacles and success factors are, and whether implementation has been cost-effective.

MTFA considers that a combination of short- and long-term evaluation initiatives provides the greatest possible benefit for total defence. It must be possible for these reports to serve as material to support the government's decision-making. They could also serve as support material for Sweden's national contribution to NATO follow-up and evaluation.

The work is summarised during the concluding phase. The results from the entire evaluation period are compiled here. At a general level, there is assessment of the extent to which the defence decision has been implemented.

The evaluation model proposed by MTFFA emphasises flexibility and learning. This is deemed to be particularly appropriate at a time when the global situation is uncertain, with integration into NATO and an urgent need to build up total defence.

There are challenges associated with evaluating the implementation of a defence decision, such as the complexity of total defence, and the fact that defence decisions often build on previous decisions. This makes it difficult to assess the effects and causes of obstacles. Other impacting factors include changes in the international environment, integration into NATO and political priorities. A great deal of data is available in the field of total defence; but it is of varying quality, and this may pose a challenge. As total defence does not constitute a distinct statistical domain, there is no one overall picture that can be used as a basis. MTFFA considers that there should be requirements in place for follow-up and reporting on the activities implemented as a result of the defence decision.

These challenges need to be addressed in the evaluation, which is one of the reasons why MTFFA is proposing a flexible evaluation model. In the long term, the model may help to establish a long-term approach to evaluating defence decisions that supports the development of total defence as a whole.

1. Introduction

Sweden's current defence policy ambitions mean that military defence, civil defence and total defence as a whole have to be expanded swiftly, and on a large scale. The ambitions and the development that is to take place are expressed in the defence decisions.

The serious security policy situation and the large amount of tax revenue invested in the expansion of total defence underline the need to analyse the situation and evaluate whether the allocated funds are being used efficiently and with sound financial management. It is also necessary to ensure that what has been decided has actually been implemented, and to identify obstacles and success factors regarding the implementation of the decision.

The government has tasked the Swedish Agency for Defence Analysis (MTFA) with¹:

'preparing an evaluation of forthcoming defence decisions. Besides submitting proposals for the focus, method and approach for such an evaluation, the agency shall also submit proposals for areas and aspects to be evaluated. The evaluation shall cover both military and civil defence, as well as total defence as a whole.'

1.1 MTFA's interpretation of the assignment

MTFA has interpreted the government assignment as involving preparation of an evaluation of the total defence decision – hereafter referred to as the defence decision – announced for the autumn of 2024. However, our objective is to ensure that the method and flexible approach proposed can be used to evaluate forthcoming defence decisions as well.

The assignment is to **prepare an evaluation**. MTFA perceives a need for continuous and systematic **follow-up** in order to ensure that the evaluation is based on a solid foundation. This follow-up will provide the necessary material to allow the implementation of the defence decision to be evaluated. Total defence actors are currently producing material by means of reporting, follow-up and evaluation of their own activities or the activities of others. MTFA views this material as providing important components of an evaluation of the defence decision. The assignment also includes submitting

¹ MTFA's appropriation directions have the reference numbers Fö2023/00322 (in part), Fö2023/01892 (in part).

proposals for the **approach** and **focus** of the evaluation, as well as **areas** and **aspects** to be evaluated.

How we have interpreted the concepts referred to in the government assignment, and thus how we use them in the report, is outlined below.

- **Approach** is the overall structure of an evaluation and covers focus, area, aspect and method.
- **Focus** defines the orientation, and hence also the delimitation, of the evaluation. For instance, an evaluation may focus on implementation, development or resource efficiency.
- **Area** is a thematic delimitation, such as personnel, host nation support or defence materiel supply. An area may also be more extensive, such as an expenditure area, or focus on areas where a number of agencies are involved, for example.
- In this report, **aspect** is interpreted as a dimension of an area.
- **Method** involves proposals in respect of theory, design, forms of data collection and analysis for the implementation of the evaluation.

Quality assurance of the report has been conducted via MTFA's internal procedures and with the support of the agency's Scientific Advisory Board.

1.2 Purpose and scope

This report aims to address the assignment regarding preparation of an evaluation of forthcoming defence decisions. The evaluation model we are proposing will need to be adapted and specified on the basis of the content of the defence decision, and also on the basis of the government's steering measures in the form of political decisions and planning instructions, for example.

The report also describes why the model is structured as it is. This will make it easier for commissioning bodies and stakeholders to assess the appropriateness of what is proposed.

The report is limited to proposing an evaluation model for forthcoming defence decisions. We note that there is a degree of uncertainty regarding how future defence policy will be formulated in the light of NATO integration. However, the ambition is for the proposed model to also remain applicable for defence decisions over time.

2. Starting points for work on the assignment

This chapter defines what a defence decision is, and what will be evaluated. It is proposed that the primary focus of the evaluation should be on lessons that can be learned from the implementation of the defence decision. Insights gained can be used in revisions of the implementation of the defence decision in question, and also in the formulation of forthcoming defence decisions. Furthermore, we propose including systematic follow-up as a crucial element of the evaluation model.

2.1 How we define a defence decision

For the purposes of this assignment, MTFFA defines a defence decision as comprising three parts:

- 1) The government's bill on the continued total defence focus for the forthcoming defence decision period. This includes not only the proposal sections of the bill, but the proposal as a whole.
- 2) The Committee on Defence's report addressing the government bill, proposals for the Riksdag's position and any announcements to the government.
- 3) Parliamentary communications informing the government of the Riksdag's decisions².

The Riksdag decides aspects such as the goals for the expenditure area, the goal for total defence and the goal for civil and military defence. The Riksdag also decides on the basic organisation of the Swedish Armed Forces.

2.2 How steering measures are defined

The Riksdag is the body that makes the defence decision, while the government controls the implementation of that decision. The majority of the implementation takes place within the framework of the steering measure that includes agencies' instructions, appropriation directions,

² The 2020 defence decision includes: government bill Totalförsvaret 2021–2025 (prop. 2020/21:30), Committee on Defence report Totalförsvaret 2021–2025 (2020/21:FöU4), Parliamentary communication 2020/21:135 and Parliamentary communication 2021:136.

political decisions, planning instructions and other government assignments, but also through other regulatory amendments.

The steering measures relevant to our proposed evaluation are those that translate the Riksdag's defence decisions into action.

While this definition is necessary for the focus and delimitation of the evaluation, it also presents a number of challenges. Firstly, it is necessary to take into account the fact that the Riksdag and the government may make new decisions for various parts of total defence during the defence decision period, partly as a result of government inquiries that are subsequently finalised.³ Secondly, it is necessary to take into account the fact that steering measures occur in other policy areas that affect the implementation of the defence decision.

2.3 Evaluation focus is on implementation

MTFA's starting point is that an evaluation of a defence decision needs to focus on the implementation of that defence decision and the impact achieved.

A defence decision focuses, impacts and changes total defence. A new defence decision is based on previous defence decisions and steering measures. From an evaluation perspective, therefore, it is important to take into account existing steering, the current situation and legacy when introducing new steering measures through a new defence decision. This is particularly important if it is to be possible to assess and distinguish the effects of newly introduced steering measures alone, or to highlight the significance of previous processes or steering measures for the implementation of the defence decision.

³ For instance, an inquiry submitted proposals on 30 September 2024 for a new Act on the basic preparedness of municipalities and regions for peacetime crisis situations and heightened preparedness in the report SOU 2024:65. It is proposed that the new Act should enter into force on 1 January 2027. Other examples include the ongoing inquiries regarding personnel supply for civil and military defence (En ökad tillgång till personal och ökad uthållighet inom det militära försvaret [Increased access to personnel and increased sustainability in military defence] (Dir 2024:2) and En ökad tillgång till personal och ökad uthållighet inom det militära försvaret [A long-term sustainable personnel supply for civil defence] (Dir. 2023:116). The assignments are to be reported on 1 July 2025 and 27 January 2025, respectively).

2.4 Learning: an important part of evaluation

An evaluation is a thorough assessment of outcomes, outputs, administration and decision content.⁴ Learning, promotion or accountability are its primary purposes.⁵ Evaluations with a learning purpose create knowledge about processes, effects and resource management that can be used for the development of total defence. Evaluations with a controlling purpose assist with and enable accountability by clarifying what worked well or where there were shortcomings, and why.

When balancing learning and accountability, MTFA considers that in this case, there should be slightly more emphasis on learning. Learning is important from a systems perspective, particularly during a period characterised by urgency and large-scale expansion. However, recipients may use the evaluation reports for both purposes.

Learning does not need to take place solely by analysing shortcomings in goal attainment. It can also be achieved by retrospectively examining alternative courses of action or processes that would have led to enhanced goal attainment. The evaluation can also highlight success factors in instances where goal attainment has been strong.

2.5 Existing follow-up provides material for the evaluation model

Conducting a follow-up involves providing a consolidated overview of an activity in as objective and value-neutral a manner as possible.⁶ A follow-up may be based on aspects such as indicators, key performance indicators, performance reports, annual reports, statistics and assessments.⁷ A significant part of existing follow-up takes place on the basis of reporting requirements and assignments in agencies' appropriation directions or other government decisions.

Examples of such follow-up operations include the agencies covered by the government's decisions on capability assessment in civil and military defence. The Swedish Armed Forces are tasked with presenting a wartime organisation assessment and a wartime organisation forecast. In addition, the

⁴ Vedung (2009), page 22.

⁵ Vedung (2009), page 165.

⁶ Sandberg & Faugert (2012), p. 12.

⁷ It is necessary to take into account the fact that total defence planning involves significant protection values and must be handled accordingly in accordance with the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act and security protection legislation.

government has decided that the preparedness agencies should conduct an annual assessment of their ability to contribute to civil defence goals. Furthermore, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency has been tasked with conducting an annual overall assessment of civil defence capabilities on the basis of civil defence goals. These assignments, as well as other follow-up initiatives and assessments, will provide important material for the evaluation model.

Regular follow-up provides an opportunity to track developments over time. Follow-up and evaluation complement one another, therefore. Follow-up makes it possible to understand how the defence decision as a whole evolves over time, while evaluation makes it possible to understand the cause and effect of individual elements of the decision. Following up developments over time also makes it possible to identify individual elements in need of evaluation.

As a result of the follow-up in place, a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators and key performance indicators has been created in the field of total defence. These may themselves need to be evaluated, but data already exist that can be used as background information for evaluations and for following up areas before prioritising between, and selecting, areas and steering measures to be evaluated. MTFAs emphasises the importance of continuing and developing these follow-up operations, as they provide an opportunity to form an understanding of total defence with both breadth and depth.

Finally, it may be noted that the government made a decision in July 2024 on Sweden's new national security strategy. Particular emphasis is ascribed to the development of the total defence system, Sweden's integration into NATO and the fight against organised crime that poses a threat to systems. Any follow-up and evaluation of total defence that takes place as part of the work on the national security strategy could thus provide additional material.

2.6 NATO evaluations

As an ally, Sweden needs to work on the basis of the quantitative and qualitative capability targets assigned to the nation for its military defence. These will affect the implementation of the Swedish defence decision. The NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) comprises five phases. The final phase is an evaluation phase that aims to follow up the results achieved by individual countries in relation to their capability targets, as well as analysing

what this means for overall goal attainment in relation to the collective needs of the Alliance.⁸

Sweden's capabilities will also be followed up and evaluated within the framework of NATO's processes. Cooperation with evaluation functions within NATO will be needed when evaluating the implementation of the defence decision. Material from the evaluation model could also be used as a basis for NATO's follow-up and evaluation operations

⁸ For information on the NATO NDPP process, see:
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49202.htm

3. Proposed evaluation model

MTFA proposes an approach comprising a three-phase evaluation model: a preparatory phase, an implementation phase and a concluding phase. These are described below.

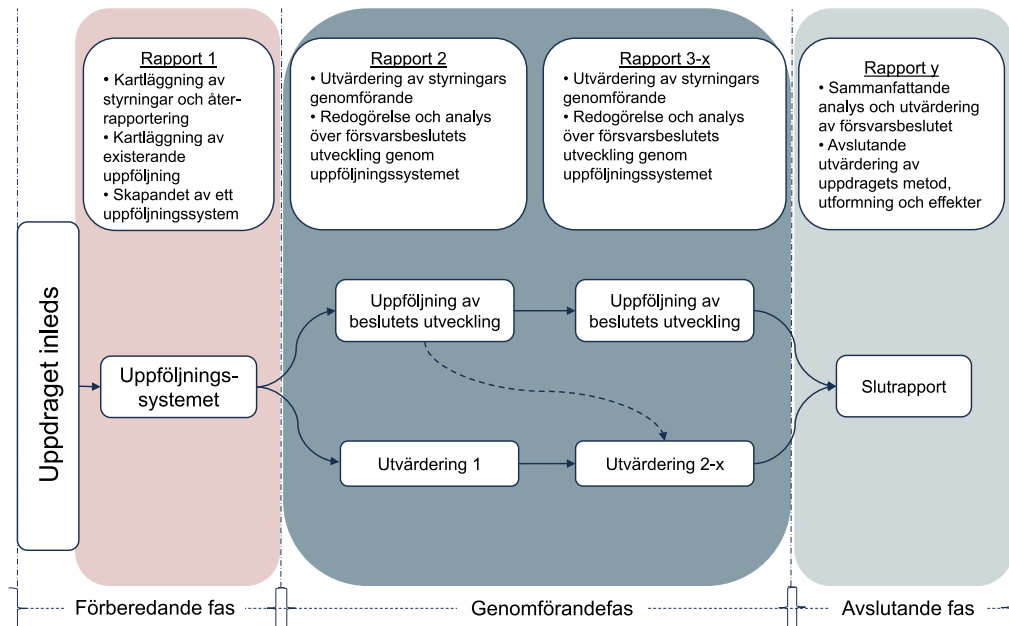


Figure 1. A simplified illustration of the evaluation model

The preparatory phase

The preparatory phase will begin when the government issues the assignment to commence evaluation of the defence decision. A follow-up system and an initial evaluation plan which will form the basis of the overall evaluation will be developed during this phase. The follow-up system is intended to provide an overview of the implementation of the defence decision, and to be used during the work to identify which elements of the defence decision have been initiated, completed or not initiated. The evaluation plan is intended to specify which evaluations are to be carried out, what they are to evaluate and when they are to be reported.

Three surveys will be carried out in order to create the follow-up system. Firstly, the elements of the defence decision will be identified. The steering measures that translate the defence decision into action among agencies will

then be identified. Finally, the report will identify the material and reports that can be used to monitor agencies' implementation of the defence decision. These three surveys will generate information about how the defence decision is to be translated into action, and how these activities are to be reported. These will form the basis of the follow-up system that will run throughout the evaluation.

The preparatory phase also lays the foundation for the evaluations to be conducted during the implementation phase. The selection criteria categorise the elements of the defence decision that have been translated into steering measures. They are prioritised in terms of the order in which they are to be evaluated and the evaluation areas to which they belong. This work forms the basis for the production of an initial evaluation plan in which a combination of short-term and long-term evaluations is specified.

During the preparatory phase, discussions will be held with the commissioning body and consultations will be held with the agencies that will be affected by the work. The purpose of this is to improve the chances of creating a follow-up system and an evaluation plan of high quality and relevance for commissioning bodies and the actors concerned.

The preparatory phase aims to deliver the follow-up system and an initial evaluation plan. The continued need for information gathering, as well as further development of the areas and aspects indicated in this report, will also be described in the evaluation plan.

Implementation phase

The implementation of the steering measures selected using the selection criteria is evaluated during the implementation phase, with a view to striking a balance between short-term and long-term evaluations. Results from the follow-up system will also provide material for the selection process by identifying those elements of the defence decision that have not been initiated or completed.

Work on the evaluations will be implemented as part of various sub-projects. These need to be able to design their information gathering, analysis and report compilation on the basis of the context applicable to the steering measure in question. The working methodology will comprise qualitative methods with interviews and document studies, as well as quantitative analyses on the basis of existing and additional data.

Different sub-projects will be initiated and completed during the implementation phase. As an evaluation is completed, a report will be presented that includes options for action that can be used as a basis for adjustments, extensions or new decisions for total defence actors.

The follow-up system produced during the preparatory phase will be used, updated and developed throughout the implementation phase. The implementation phase is the longest phase. Its duration will be adjusted in relation to the defence decision period.

The concluding phase

The concluding phase has two purposes. The first is to provide input in the form of material for a defence commission, or for a new defence bill.

Therefore, it will be important to start early on compiling and synthesising results and observations from completed evaluations. This part of the phase will commence while the implementation phase is still ongoing.

The second purpose is to produce a final report. This should comprise an assessment of the extent to which the defence decision has been implemented. It should also provide an indication of the level of goal attainment in the areas evaluated. Finally, the final report should include an assessment of the evaluation model and approach, as well as observations on development needs and challenges that impact the chances of conducting relevant evaluations in the area in the future.

3.1 Selection, areas and aspects of the evaluation

The evaluation needs to be delimited on account of the scope of the defence decision, as well as the time and resources that would be required to evaluate it in its entirety. Therefore, there is no evaluation of the implementation of all steering measures that translate the defence decision into action among agencies and other total defence actors; instead, a selection is made. As the selection method has a major influence on what is evaluated, there is value in describing how it is intended to operate.

The assignment also includes submitting proposals for areas and aspects to evaluate. MTFFA suggests that an evaluation of forthcoming defence decisions should focus on a limited number of areas over time. However, there should be scope to refocus or broaden the range.

3.1.1 Selection criteria and selection process in the model

One important issue focuses on how steering measures are selected, and which goals are followed up. Selection criteria are needed to select which

steering measures are to be included in an evaluation. These criteria need to be developed as work progresses, but MTFA considers the following to be appropriate:

- capability contribution
- system change
- economic impact
- timeliness.

The **capability contribution** criterion refers to the extent to which a steering measure leads attainment of total defence, military defence and civil defence goals. Some steering measures are deemed to be of greater significance than others for overall total defence capability. That is why steering measures need to be assessed in relation to other steering measures, and ranked on a scale that clearly indicates their importance to overall capability.

System change refers to the capture of steering measures whose implementation alters total defence in some way, across the full spectrum from changing a few individual elements of it to aspects that have a greater impact on total defence and society. Such steering measures may be of particular interest in a selection process.

The **economic impact** of a steering measure may carry significant weight when selecting what is to be evaluated. The extent of the financial commitment needs to be taken into account, not least in terms of financial risks and secondary effects resulting from locking in large amounts of funding in planning may have on other steering measures or activities. That said, the extent of the financial commitment must not prevent other steering measures being prioritised.

Timeliness reflects the level of political or societal interest in an area. Urgency or temporal proximity may also be included under this heading, as can global developments.

Besides these criteria, the feasibility of conducting an evaluation also needs to be assessed. This may involve assessing resource needs in relation to available resources. The clarity of the design of the steering measure also needs to be considered; whether it is possible to define a goal for the steering measure, for example. Finally, the benefits of conducting an evaluation need to be taken into account.

Steering measures should be selected in such a way as to provide, as far as possible, a comprehensive view of total defence components, development and the implementation of the defence decision. The weighting to be assigned to each criterion may vary depending on the time, the area and steering measures.

We would like to emphasise that this is an iterative process that should take place continuously throughout the entire defence decision period, with recurring priority classifications and selections; not least because steering measures may be added throughout the period.

3.1.2 Proposed areas

In this context, areas are primarily the elements that constitute components of military capability development, including materiel, personnel, infrastructure and organisation. These are to be regarded as broad areas, which will of course be monitored during the evaluation. The same areas should be used for civil defence, as far as possible. Additionally, we propose that other areas could be included in the forthcoming evaluation within the scope of the growth of total defence, for example:

- interfaces and dependencies between and within total defence actors
- defence materiel supply and security of supply
- integration into NATO.

There are interfaces and dependencies between actors and areas that are unclear to an extent. Civil defence in relation to the military is one such major interface. There are also interfaces within military defence, such as the Swedish Armed Forces' collaboration and cooperation with the Swedish Defence Materiel Administration and the Swedish Fortifications Agency regarding the supply of materiel and infrastructure. There are also interfaces within civil defence.

Materiel supply has repeatedly been impacted by cost overruns and delays, thereby requiring reprioritisation and other trade-offs. Although the materiel budget has increased, it is important to ensure that funds are spent efficiently. For materiel supply to develop effectively, it is important to follow up and evaluate the materiel procurement process by studying priority procurements from an efficiency perspective, for example. Security of supply could be studied in similar ways.

Integration into NATO and the Alliance's demands on Sweden will impact the development of total defence in a number of respects; for instance, via

Sweden's participation in NATO's operational activities and the consequences of this for Sweden's own capability development. Another example is host nation support; that is, the ability to provide military and civilian support to allies on and outside Swedish territory, and to receive such support from allies.

3.1.3 Proposed aspects

MTFA proposes application of at least the following three aspects to the evaluation of the defence decision:

- collaboration
- growth
- efficiency.

Collaboration between agencies is a particularly interesting aspect to analyse in development of total defence. Collaboration and functionality in work between agencies is not a clearly identified reporting area, except in certain specific and joint assignments to agencies.

Military defence and civil defence, and hence total defence, are undergoing rapid growth. One important aspect of the evaluation, then, will concern how this growth is implemented. Growth can be analysed on the basis of both scale and pace.

The concept of efficiency comprises the relationship between time, cost and quality. These elements can then be refined into further factors. For instance, time can be divided into *speed* and *delivery reliability*, while *cost* may involve financial management, but also getting things done at minimal cost. Finally, *quality* can be broken down into factors such as minimising errors, compliance with requirements specifications and flexibility in adaptation.

These aspects allow evaluations to be conducted from several angles, which provides an opportunity to follow up individual parameters while also viewing the parameter in relation to how it impacts, or is impacted by, other aspects. As the evaluation model is designed, aspects – just like areas – should be able to develop over time, or else remain in place in parallel with the introduction of other aspects to the work.

3.2 Method for the evaluations

In the context of evaluation methodology, the defence decision is a complex challenge.⁹ Such challenges are defined by the fact that they are not easy to delimit, that start and end points can be difficult to establish, or that there are many dependencies and actors involved in the aspects to be evaluated. That is why our methodology needs to be made up of different evaluation methods with flexible execution. As the evaluation model should be able to deliver evaluations on the implementation and impact of steering measures in the short and long term, MTFFA recommends the use of both process evaluations and impact evaluations.

Process evaluations can be used to assess how a steering measure is implemented carried out in practice, thereby creating material and recommendations that can improve the conditions for implementation. Process evaluations can take place earlier in the defence decision-making period, and with shorter timeframes. Impact evaluations can be used to provide answers as to whether the implementation of a steering measure has an impact on the attainment of defence policy goals, and if so why. Impact evaluations generally require a longer time horizon, as the effects of a steering measure may take time to become apparent.

The complexity of total defence means that it is not possible to evaluate either its implementation or its effects in isolation of any one activity. An operational logic therefore needs to be established in order for process evaluations and impact evaluations to be able to describe an activity and its expected results. A theory of change complements operational logic by describing how implementation and effects take place within a complex system, which affects both implementation and effects. Operational logic and theory of change constitute a basis for process evaluations and impact evaluations.

3.2.1 Operational logic and theory of change

Establishment of an operational logic that can form the basis for the evaluations is a key element of the evaluation model. An operational logic describes the intended relationship between resources, activities and goals within a specific activity.

⁹ The concept of a complex challenge relates to the discussion found in the evaluation literature on *wicked problems*.

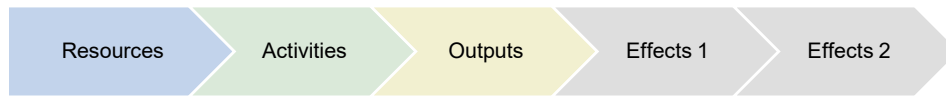


Figure 2: Example of operational logic

Resources that are available to an activity, or that are provided through steering measures, are used to deliver outputs. This is achieved by means of activities. In the long term, these outputs should lead to desired effects, which are often expressed in terms of capability. These effects are often dependent on a number of outputs, which makes it important to identify links and dependencies in the operational logic.

Describing an operational logic is an initial step in an evaluation, as it creates a structured view of how the activity is supposed to work and what it should lead to. A clear operational logic provides two contributions to the evaluation. On the one hand, it clarifies how the activity's actions are linked to the effects the activity is aiming to achieve, which makes it possible to identify the point in the chain at which things can go wrong, or where success can be achieved. On the other hand, it can be used as a basis to assess how well the activity is following its plan and whether the intended effects are being achieved.

Operational logic focuses on the internal logic within an activity. Understanding the internal logic of an activity is necessary – but not sufficient – to evaluate its implementation or its effects within a complex system. Both of these are dependent on factors beyond what the operational logic is able to describe. A theory of change also needs to be applied in order to address the change that steering measures and their implementation and effects aim to achieve.

A theory of change describes the overall pathway from actions to long-term goals. It includes not only the internal logic of individual activities, but also external factors, underlying assumptions and the context in which the activity takes place. In a total defence system characterised by what is known as a goal hierarchy, a theory of change can describe both how the breakdown of goals shapes activities and how their results, together with external factors and context, can be aggregated to form effects.

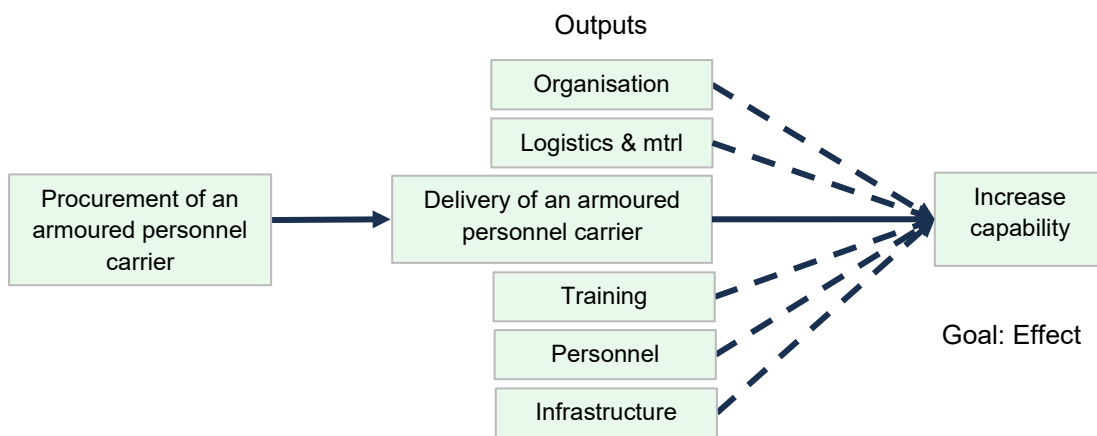


Figure 3: The dependence of an effect on several outputs

The figure above illustrates our line of reasoning on operational logic and theory of change using the example of the procurement of an armoured personnel carrier. An operational logic can describe the intended relationship between resources, activities and goals within the activity procuring and supplying the armoured personnel carrier. However, the delivery is reliant on a range of other factors if it is to have an impact and change capability. By focusing on the overall goal to be achieved – enhanced capability – as well as the components, factors and contexts influencing the attainment of that goal, a theory of change can describe more clearly the overall nature of the change.

3.2.2 Process evaluation

Process evaluation is a key element in the evaluation model and aims to assess how a steering measure is implemented in practice. Process evaluations are used to determine whether the steering measures are implemented within an activity, and if so how, and to identify various factors that affect implementation.

Process evaluations may examine factors such as resource utilisation, collaboration between actors, planning and the quality of activities implemented. By evaluating the implementation process, this approach can provide information on why a particular steering measure does not achieve the desired effects, or why some activities generate better results than others.

Implementing process evaluations is both a complex and a challenging task, as it often requires qualitative data collection from a series of sources, often

while activities are ongoing. It may be difficult to isolate specific factors that affect implementation, and to assess whether deviations from the plan were necessary adjustments or the result of inadequate planning. It is difficult to gauge the quality of implemented activities in an objective manner, particularly if the assessment is based on the subjective experiences of the people implementing the activities.

The advantage of process evaluation is that it provides information on how implementation can be improved within a shorter time frame, which in turn may lead to adjustments that improve the chances of implementation. Moreover, process evaluations provide answers as to whether implementation has gone according to plan. It also develops the theory of change and provides information about what the key components are, which in turn lays a solid foundation for future impact evaluations.

3.2.3 Impact evaluation

A key approach to the evaluation model involves impact evaluations, which are used to assess the effects of implementing a steering measure. The aim of impact evaluation is to find out whether a particular effect was created, and if so how, and to determine which factors influenced this effect.

Conducting an impact evaluation involves assessing aspects such as the change in capability that occurs as a result of steering measures. This type of evaluation is complex, and is based on an assessment of the difference between the evolution of the capability after the steering measure, and its evolution with no corresponding steering measure (the latter being referred to as the counterfactual level). A capability may develop over time and under different conditions, as shown in the figure below.

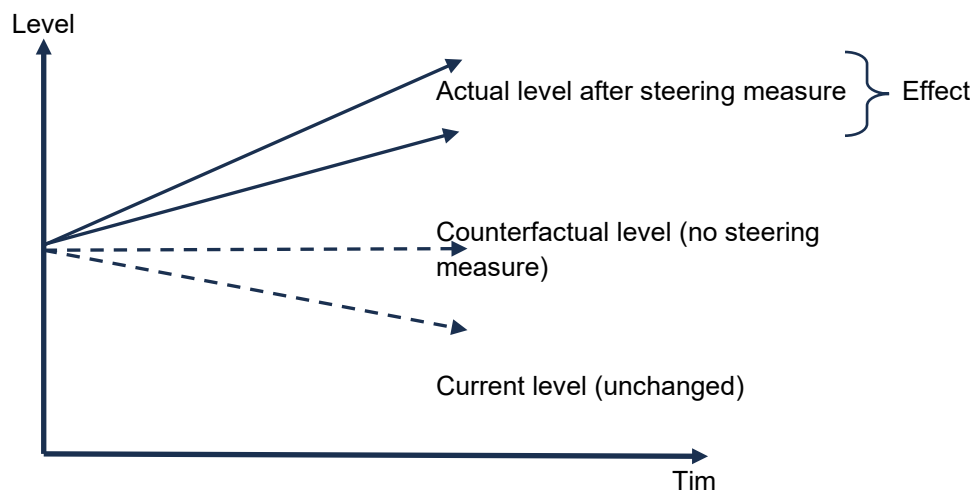


Figure 4: How impact evaluation helps to identify effects

The actual capability level would need to be known in order to measure this effect, and this is possible via the follow-up system. An impact evaluation assumes that it is possible to assess how the capability would have developed from a counterfactual perspective. In other words, the assessment takes into account other factors that may affect the ability to increase or maintain capability. In turn, information on these factors can be created by means of previous process evaluations.

Conducting impact evaluations is challenging. It is difficult to isolate the effect of a steering measure from other factors that influence development. Determining the counterfactual level is even more challenging, as this can be influenced by a range of factors and thus may not necessarily correspond to an extension of the current level going forward. For instance, ongoing capability development or donation of materiel to Ukraine may affect the capability level even without a specific steering measure in the defence decision. Impact evaluations may also require extensive and detailed data over time.

Despite the challenges presented by impact evaluations, they are necessary in order to determine whether the implementation of the defence decision will lead to the intended effects and goal attainment, and if so how.

3.3 Summary of the evaluation model

The model consists of a preparatory phase, an implementation phase and a concluding phase. A follow-up system is created in the preparatory phase which is based on steering measures and total defence reporting. Evaluations of a selection of steering measures are conducted during the implementation phase. The results of these evaluations and follow-up operations are reported regularly. The work carried out during the implementation phase is delimited by means of selection criteria, the choice of priority areas and the aspects used to illustrate the evaluations. The concluding phase results in a final report based on previous follow-up and evaluation, as well as an evaluation of the approach, method and model.

A combination of methods ensures both shorter and longer-term evaluations of the implementation and impact of defence decisions. Both of these approaches develop and are developed through operational logic and theory of change.

The proposed model allows a long-term approach to be established for evaluating defence decisions, supporting learning and development of total defence as a whole. The proposed model is flexible and allows for evaluations and working methods of different types. The overall focus is on the implementation of the defence decision.

Besides being flexible and open to adaptation on the basis of changes in circumstances and the need for reprioritisation at a national level, MTFA advocates development of approaches and methods while taking into account the follow-up and evaluation work taking place within NATO.

4. Challenges in evaluating defence decisions

There are challenges involved in evaluating defence decisions, and these need to be addressed if the evaluation is to be useful. In this chapter, we set out the challenges we have identified, and how we propose addressing them.

4.1 No natural starting point or end point

In 2015, the Riksdag and the government made a decision to resume total defence planning. The first defence decision period was from 2016 to 2020, and the second from 2021 to 2024. The forthcoming defence decision will be the third since planning was resumed. For obvious reasons, actors within the various elements of total defence have made different amounts of progress when it comes to developing and implementing the government's steering measures.

Although the evaluation focuses on the forthcoming defence decision, previous decisions need to be taken into account as well, as previous steering measures may also influence the forthcoming defence decision. That is why it is not possible to isolate a fixed starting point in time. If previous steering measures are deemed a priority for the continued development of total defence, they may therefore be included in follow-up and evaluation, or highlighted in some other way.

Similarly, steering measures in the forthcoming defence decision may have goals that extend beyond the defence decision period. Such measures may need to be followed up in stages by means of process evaluation, for example, or handled separately.

4.2 Many total defence actors and steering measures

Defence decisions impact a large part of the state and society, distributed across many actors at various levels. A very large number of steering

measures are used to translate defence decisions into action¹⁰; and these may also take different forms, such as steering by objectives or the allocation of funding. Collectively, evaluating both processes and effects at an overall level presents a challenge.

The Riksdag's 2020 defence decision contained eleven proposal and decision points and 21 assessments. The government's translation of the defence decision included a number of steering measures with varying degrees of specificity. This is addressed in the model through the creation of a follow-up system, and also through criteria and methods for making an ongoing selection of steering measures to be evaluated. This allows the work to be carried out flexibly and focused on different actors, or clusters of actors, as well as on different issues and goals, depending on what is deemed to be the most highly prioritised aspect.

4.3 Changing priorities during the defence decision period

A defence decision extends over a number of years. It is already difficult to evaluate the implementation of the steering measures because of how many of them there are and their varying degrees of specificity. New decisions and steering measures may also be introduced during the decision period as a consequence of global changes. Reprioritisation and shifts in political goals may also take place during the defence decision period. This is addressed during the evaluation work by working iteratively with the selection and prioritisation of steering measures whose implementation is to be evaluated, and by using different evaluation and data collection methods. Major changes should be managed in dialogue with the commissioning body.

¹⁰ For instance, the government translated the Riksdag's 2020 defence decision into five political decisions and planning instructions: Inriktning för en sammanhängande planering för totalförsvaret [Direction for coherent total defence planning], Inriktning för Försvarsmakten 2021–2025 [Direction for the Swedish Armed Forces, 2021–2025], Försvarsmaktens operativa förmåga och försvarsplanering 2021–23 (H) [Swedish Armed Forces' operational capability and defence planning 2021–23 (H)], Anvisningar för det civila försvaret för försvarsbeslutsperioden 2021–2025 [Instructions for civil defence for the defence decision period 2021–2025], and Uppdrag till MSB att göra en samlad bedömning av förmågan inom det civila försvaret [Assignment to the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency to conduct an overall assessment of civil defence capabilities]. Corresponding decisions and instructions with included steering measures for the next period form the starting point for our model.

4.4 Assessing effects

One challenge for any evaluation is to isolate and assess the impact of something, but also to attribute that impact to a specific origin. This is addressed through the use of both an overall theory of change and specific operational logics within the model. Working with both process evaluation and impact evaluation also makes it possible to select the method that provides the most benefit.

MTFA proposes that both shorter and more delimited evaluations be conducted together with longer-term, broader ones. Not only does this ensure that the results of the work can be used quickly, but also ensures that methods can be tested and the model and the work can receive feedback and undergo development. In addition, it is proposed that the evaluation period should be concluded with a final report that is able to address more general issues, as well as complementing and interpreting previous results. Finally, the model may form the basis for continued analyses and evaluations even after the end of the defence decision period – either self-initiated or in the form of government assignments.

4.5 Different conditions for evaluation of civil and military defence

Civil and military defence differ in a number of respects in terms of organisation, funding, the number of actors and activities. As collaboration is a key, and in many ways fundamental element of civil defence¹¹, the interfaces and dependencies between actors will be important for the implementation of the defence decision. An evaluation needs to take this into account and adapt accordingly.

The conditions for breaking down overall goals into more specific goals or capability requirements also differ between civil and military defence, and for total defence as a whole. Military defence has extensive experience of traceability and the breakdown of goals, while civil defence actors perceive goals relating to civil defence as being vague and unclear.¹² Difficulties in formulating clear, specific goals for total defence elements have consequences for the chances of conducting an evaluation.

To address these differences, the model needs to be flexible so that structures and methods can be adapted on the basis of the conditions

¹¹ Swedish Agency for Defence Analysis (2023)

¹² Swedish Agency for Defence Analysis (2024)

prevailing in civil and military defence. Moreover, the evaluation needs to be conducted with access to expertise in both civil and military defence.

4.6 Data quality shortcomings for total defence

MTFA argues that there is currently no coherent way of shedding light on total defence in quantitative terms, nor a system perspective when producing performance indicators and key performance indicators. Furthermore, the availability of indicators differs between military and civil defence. This results in inadequate coverage for evaluating total defence, which presents a challenge for our proposed model. There is a substantial volume of assessments, reports and follow-up operations in the field of total defence, but the various elements of the material are not always mutually comparable or capable of being combined in ways that enable observations to be made about total defence as a whole. With this in mind, we argue that there are shortcomings in data quality.

Addressing such data shortcomings is an extensive undertaking requiring specific analysis, particularly in respect of effective information sharing between agencies while maintaining compliance with legislation on confidentiality and security protection.

Different methods may need to be used to address this shortcoming, depending on the area that is subject to evaluation. This work also allows us to draw conclusions on the need for improved data collection. This paves the way for learning that can form the basis for supplementary proposals on the development of reporting chains, collection of statistics and data storage, for example.

Improved future data collection in the field of total defence may improve the chances of producing relevant compilations and analyses. It may also make it possible to create an overall view of total defence and initiatives in the field. Standardised data collection also has the potential to reduce the current reporting burden by reducing the number of overlapping data collection operations.

5. State of knowledge on evaluation of defence decisions

MTFA has studied previous evaluations of Swedish defence decisions, literature on defence policy evaluation and international approaches. We note that previous evaluations, as well as the research literature and international efforts, differ from the assignment allocated to MTFA. Hence, there is no best practice in terms of evaluation method that can be used as a basis. We set out this analysis in this chapter.

5.1 Few evaluations of defence decisions have been carried out

The Committee on Defence conducted three evaluations¹³ of defence decisions in the 2000s. At first glance, there are similarities between these evaluations and the one that MTFA has been tasked with preparing. However, the structures and implementation of these evaluations differ from the model proposed by MTFA in a number of important respects.

The three evaluations, which were conducted in 2003, 2007 and 2014, were marked by a period of defence budget cuts. They also focused on military defence, and a small number of delimited areas. The first evaluation was guided by the question of whether the units on which decisions had been made would be operational in 2004. The second examined the Swedish Armed Forces' operational organisation and its capability for international operations. The third evaluation was reminiscent of the first, but the main goal here was to clarify whether the units established had also been staffed.

The evaluations used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Interviews were complemented by document analyses and collection of data from both open and classified documents. In one of the evaluations, the Swedish Armed Forces were tasked with submitting supplementary assessments of the organisational situation for training, wartime service, wartime capability, preparedness and materiel. None of the three evaluations includes a clear description of the methodology for the evaluation. As a result, it is impossible to compare the results of the evaluations: a

¹³ 2003/04:URD1; 2007/08:RFR6 and 2014/15:RFR4

shortcoming that demonstrates the value of using a model that is transparent and robust over time.

In addition to the evaluations conducted by the Committee on Defence, the Riksdag decided, in connection with the 2020 defence decision, to conduct an evaluation of the implementation of the defence decision. The aim of this was to ensure that the reinforcement and cost developments were aligned with the direction and financial framework decided by the Riksdag. The evaluation was conducted by the Committee on Defence and resulted in the report *Kontrollstation 2023*¹⁴ [Control station 2023] in April 2023. This report focuses on following up military defence, with emphasis on finance, and on the issue of whether the Swedish Armed Forces and other agencies within the military defence field are achieving the goals set for them.

5.2 Research on defence decisions is limited

Existing research and literature on the evaluation of defence decisions is limited, both in Sweden and internationally. MTFFA has identified in the academic literature a small number of attempts to construct a coherent model for evaluating political decisions in the field of defence. Despite the lack of supranational steering, these have focused on analysing what has come to be known as the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy. One of the models adopts a negotiation theory perspective on the field in order to analyse how language is used as a signal in the policy text, and how it affects the implementation of policy.¹⁵ Another is based on analysing how well a policy is perceived to signal a capacity to counter threats through coercion, or to contribute to deterrence.¹⁶ A third model focuses on evaluating the impact of defence policy on other policy areas, in order to clarify the degree of coherence in planning and preparation from a holistic perspective.¹⁷ The frameworks that have been developed are interesting from an analytical perspective, but it is unclear to MTFFA whether they have been applied in practice, and if so how.

5.3 International perspective on defence policy evaluation

When working on the assignment, MTFFA has examined the methods commonly used for follow-up and evaluation in military and civil defence.

¹⁴ Ds 2023:12 (2023)

¹⁵ Kirchner, E. & Sperling, J. (2007)

¹⁶ Merlingen, M (2013)

¹⁷ Ginsberg, R. & Penksa (2012)

As regards defence decisions, we have been unable to identify any international equivalent to the evaluation model we are proposing. However, there are ambitions and efforts that merit attention. Among these, it may be noted that Finland has a system of follow-up groups appointed by Parliament that carry out follow-up of various areas of defence, which provides an element of long-term continuity in the work and may eventually develop into an evaluation system. Furthermore, the Ministry of Defence in the UK has developed an evaluation strategy to ensure greater impact and learning from follow-up and evaluation operations within its area of responsibility. The aim is for the strategy to contribute to more efficient use of resources within defence, but also to enhance the ability to identify areas of strength, or areas where development is needed.¹⁸ The work of the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) on a defence analysis – which, admittedly, is based on its own research priorities and not on politically prioritised initiatives – can also be viewed as an attempt to develop a method for identification and evaluation of critical development areas.¹⁹

Besides these examples, most countries – including Sweden – have inspection and evaluation agencies that are tasked with follow-up activities and the use of funds in their own respective areas. In the United States, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) is particularly noteworthy. This agency has the opportunity to take action across all policy areas and, by virtue of its size, is able to produce a wide range of analyses in the field of defence, from individual materiel systems to defence as a whole. There are also more specialised functions, such as the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). It is particularly interesting to learn from the agencies in the US, given the size and complexity of the defence activities that they examine. As stated previously, NATO's evaluation work – not least the work being conducted within the framework of the NDPP – should be of importance when implementing Swedish evaluations of defence decisions.

¹⁸ Ministry of Defence (2023)

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