



# The Military Profession in Times of Change

Understanding the Capacities for Handling Military Change among Swedish Officers

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## Abstract

With the aim to situate the study of military professionalism and its relationship to change firmly in an empirical analysis, this thesis uses the method of grounded theory to study the elements of military professional mindset that impacts on the professional capacity to understand and handle military change. Theoretically the study situates itself in both the study of military professionalism and the study of military change, and challenges previous literature by stating that there are elements of the military profession that makes it adaptable to change. The results are based on data from interviews with military officers working for the Swedish Armed Forces and the analysis is developed through a multiple-step coding procedure which thoroughly grounds the study in empirics. The study finds that military professionals have a holistic mindset when understanding their own profession in relation to the military organisation and military change. Both rigid and definitive elements, such as hierarchy and loyalty, and less rigid elements, such as flexibility, adaptability and military preparedness, impacts the capacity to handle change and are seen as important elements of the professional mindset.

Keywords: *military profession, military professionalism, military mindset, military change, Swedish Armed Forces.*

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## I. Introduction and Research Problem

Since the beginning of the study of the military profession, change in military organisations and its impact on military professionalism has been a recurring theme in the literature. Not only have external changes been theorised to potentially cause a de-professionalisation of the military (Janowitz 2017:425; Nuciari 2018:8; Burk 2002:29), but the military profession in itself has also been theorised to be especially inapt to handle changes (Hasselbladh and Ydén 2020:484; Soeters 2018:268). The defining features of the military profession have been said to be irreplaceable in their importance for military effectivity, and a change away from these unique features is seen as a process that might have a detrimental effect on military performativity in combat (Bolin 2008:164; Kümmel 2018:489). More importantly, with an emphasis on the conservative and rigid nature of both military organisations and the military profession, military professionalism has been said to be an obstacle to the successful managing of change (Hasselbladh and Ydén 2020:484; Soeters 2018:268).

At the same time, the military profession has to change and respond to changes in both mission type, the geostrategic setting and technological advancements. The military profession of today exists in a changing world and it has since the creation of the modern army undergone a number of major military changes; changes that reputedly have been handled in some way. With the military organisation theorised to be a rigid and slow-to-learn bureaucracy and the military professional seen as someone inapt to change, it is easy to theorise around a de-professionalisation or a crisis, as soon as external changes prompt the military to adapt. This thesis however argues that there are other elements of the military profession that makes them adaptable and responsive to change, and that there is a need to look further into what elements of military professionalism that impact the capacity to handle large changes.

With previous research often starting out with a theorisation of the military profession beforehand, many elements that are of empirical importance to the military profession and has an impact on its relationship to change remain understudied. There is a need to within this field adopt an approach that more thoroughly grounds its analysis in empirics. This thesis does this by using a thorough empirical analysis and the method of grounded theory to understand the subject. By using in-depth interviews with officers in the Swedish Armed Forces, material on how military professionals have understood and handled the military changes that Sweden has undergone since 2000 was collected and analysed. The study contributes to the existing field by developing theoretical concepts directly related to the military profession and military change, and thus generating new and empirically grounded knowledge on the military profession of today. In addition, it contributes to the understanding of the Swedish Armed Forces and how the changes it has undergone in the latest two decades is understood by and have impacted on its professionals.

After presenting the research aims and questions, the following chapter presents previous research on military professionalism and military change. In relation to previous research, the more grounded perspective of military mindset will be outlined and inform the subsequent theoretical approach of this study. Next, the research design will be described, with the method of grounded theory, the data collection and the data

analysis further explained. The fifth chapter presents the analysis and the four elements of military professional mindset that were found to be important for the understanding and handling of military change. Lastly, the findings, as well as the limitations, of the study will be discussed in addition to some notes on future research.

### Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is threefold. It attempts to firstly provide a theoretical and empirical input into the discussion surrounding the military profession and its capacity to handle change, secondly, provide an input into the discussion of the definition of military professionalism and thirdly, provide empirical knowledge on how military professionals in a given case have handled large scale military changes.

It does so by asking two questions.

Q1. How do military professionals understand military change?

Q2. What elements of the military profession impacts the capacity to handle military change?

## II. Previous Research

This section will describe previous research that relate to military professionalism and its relationship to military change. It will start by describing the most influential definitions of military professionalism, which in this thesis are described as part of a typological approach. It will go on to define military change, and then outline the main theories of military professionalism and military change. Following this, problems with existing theories will be discussed and the last section will describe how an approach using the concept of military mindset is more useful than previous attempts in order to make sense of the military profession and change.

### Military Professionalism

Before going into the research on military professionalism and change, the foundation of the field has to be described. Huntington (1957) and Janowitz (2017)<sup>1</sup> are widely considered the founding fathers of the field of civil-military relations and the concept of the military profession<sup>2</sup>, and their publications have had an enormous impact on the field. They were concerned with the successful subordination of the military to the political elite and national public. Huntington, whose definition of the military profession has been widely used and accepted, defined it in relation to a general definition of professions including expertise, responsibility and corporateness. The military profession was said to include an expertise in the management of violence, a responsibility for the military security of the parent society and a corporate character in the form of an autonomous unit that is organised to perform the tasks of the profession (Huntington 1957:13ff). Janowitz saw the military profession as a social group in constant development and despite not giving a formal definition he included expertise, lengthy education, group identity, ethics and standards of performance in his conceptualisation of the profession (Janowitz 2017:5ff). Abrahamsson's work is also considered important in the field, perhaps even more so in a Swedish context, and he defined professions in large, including the military profession, to consist of a specialised, theoretical knowledge stemming from lengthy education, a professional ethics and a uniting esprit de corps (Abrahamsson 2005:12,14). Since these first conceptualisations of the military profession, most scholars have acknowledged the professional status of the officer corps, however there has been some differences in what to include in the concept of military professionalism (Harries-Jenkins 1990:118). Huntington's and Abrahamson's definitional approach has been guiding and most definitions and conceptualisations settle on an inclusion of some form of abstract knowledge centred around the management of violence and acquired through education, a commitment or

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<sup>1</sup> Originally published in 1966.

<sup>2</sup> Most commonly only the officer corps is included in the military profession (Huntington 1957:17). The separation between the officer corps the rest of the military stems from officers undergoing some form of longer education to learn a more advanced skill and also hold larger responsibility for the military task. This thesis uses this definition, and only includes the officer corps in the military profession.

responsibility in the realm of violence towards the parent society and, finally, a corporate sense of unity or esprit du corps (Nuciari 1994:7; 2018:7; Segal and Segal 1983:161; Morgan 2005:159; Abrahamsson 2005:11; Ledberg 2019:71, Burk: 2002). This perspective of the military profession, was described by Harries-Jenkins (1990:124) as the ‘typological approach’ as its concerns “itself essentially with the distinguishing criteria of military professionalism”.

## Military Professionalism and Military Change

Military change is a broad concept which has been used in various ways, oftentimes without a proper definition (Kronvall and Petersson 2016:281). Farrell and Tariff argue that military change can come from “cultural norms, politics and strategy, and new technology” (Farrell and Terriff 2002:6) and results in a “change in the goals, actual strategies, and/or structure of a military organisation” (Farrell in *ibid*). Their definition focuses on major changes within military organisations which given the focus on large and transformative changes in previous literature on military professionalism, is suitable for this thesis.

The field of military professionalism and military change can be divided into two different perspectives. The first concerns a general view of the military organisation and its professional ability to respond to military changes. There is a tendency to view military organisations in large as especially rigid in the face of change. This is defined by Hill (2015:87f) as the “conservative culture hypothesis” which includes “a claim there is something in the essence of the military milieu or the military mind that is antithetical to change”. Soeters (2018:268) for instance discusses military culture, and writes that this serve as mental limitations for innovation within the profession and that “professionals’ social and cognitive boundaries generally tend to retard the spread of real innovations” (*ibid*). He argues that military organisations will have to change their culture in order to cope with the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but that such a change will be more difficult in those “armed forces where the warrior ethos, emphasising the military’s core aim of eliminating the enemy, is strongly rooted” (*ibid*:268). Hasselbladh and Ydén (2020:484) similarly connects the slow change of militaries to the warring side of the organisation, through the idea of a “logic of external conflict”, which they borrow from Boëne (2000:12). The logic of external conflict “implies a dominant system of professional cognition” and an “evolving pattern of collective sensemaking and reasoning” (Hasselbladh and Ydén 2020:484). In order to cope with the risks and chaos of war, the military profession wants to produce certainty out of uncertainty and therefore sees learning as a “cautious, highly regulated and formalized process” (*ibid*:478) which produces an organisation that adapts slowly. Within this, Huntington (1957:62) can also be placed, as he argues that the military ethics are universal and timeless in essence, writing that

So long as there is no basic alteration in the inherent nature of the military function there will be no change in the content of the professional ethic. Simple changes in military technique [...] do not alter the character of the military ethic any more than the discovery of penicillin altered medical ethics (*ibid*).

In other words, while being perhaps conservative in their ethics, the military profession would be able to absorb any external changes by its existing form. Janowitz, responded to this by constructing a theory of

the military profession as a social system constantly having to respond to external changes. He saw the potential of “a crisis as a profession” as the ideal model of a military professional moved away from the ideal of a heroic leader or warrior towards that of a military manager or technical specialist due to external changes (Janowitz 2017:vi, 46).

This introduces the second perspective in the field which concerns military professional ability to successfully incorporate change into the definition of the military profession. The idea of a role crisis or deprofessionalisation has since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century been recurring (Nuciari 2018:8), and this has to a large extent taken off from the typological definition of the military profession to argue that in order to successfully cope with military changes, the profession would have to redefine itself. Some argue that technological advancements, for instance nuclear weapons, blurs the line between war and peace and makes the required skills for a military professional resemble the skills of a civilian technician (Janowitz 2017:424). Economic changes include Moskos’ institutional /occupational (I/O) model which state that the military with the introduction of an all-volunteer force (AVF) instead of conscription would move from being an institution based on non-market values, such as national responsibility and a uniting esprit du corps, to being an occupation driven by market forces (Moskos 1986:378, see also Shields 1993:515).

Finally, the subject which this study will primarily deal with is the change in mission type. This theme spurred after the end of the cold war and it concerns the transformation from traditional or conventional combat tasks to operations other than war (OOTW) or non-traditional missions (Nuciari 2018:45ff; Burk 2002:29; Burk and Moskos 1994:148f; Segal and Waldman 1994:163f; Morgan 2005:434; Janowitz 2017:425). In this, the military change includes a change into missions such as peacekeeping or peace-enforcement missions which in terms of military professionalism differ in their emphasis on a minimisation of force and an inclusion of non-military tasks within military responsibility (Morgan 2005:159; Burk 2002:29). The fear is that the widening of responsibility and tasks, as traditionally defined to lie in the management of violence for national security, will be difficult to absorb by the existing military professionalism. Bolin (2008:164) for instance writes that a “widened professional role can give way for cognitive tensions and difficulties for officers to form a logically consistent professional role for themselves”. Kümmel (2018:489) also wrote that “especially with regard to the individual soldier there is concern that the multitude of capabilities and roles requested for the hybrid soldier may lead to an identity crisis and, perhaps, to a mental breakdown of the individual which may endanger military effectiveness”. What this second perspective have in common is that it theorises that an external change, be it technological advancement, recruitment mechanism or mission type, will push the military towards the civilian world; thus, civilianizing the military itself. Essentially, they argue that a move away from the traditional organisation of the military will have an impact on its effectiveness and preparedness.

### Problems with Existing Theories

Two perspectives on the military profession’s relationship to change have been described; the first focusing on military obstacles to change and the second focusing on the impact of external change on the military



profession, and in extension the effectivity of the military. Both perspectives assume that changes will not be able to be absorbed by the military profession without it changing its form; a form that is considered essential for its performance. As such, the views overlap, however they stem from different analytical levels.

Looking at the theories of a deprofessionalisation, these take off from the original definition of the military profession. Huntington constructed his ideas of the military profession as part of his theory of civil-military relations. He was concerned with the separation of the civilian and the military sphere. The typological approach, building upon Huntington's tradition, is therefore a structural or macro definition in the sense that it offers an external view of the aspects of military professionalism that differs from civil society in order to definitionally separate the two. What started out as a safeguarding or delineation of the military profession in relation to civil society, has then taken on a life of its own, where the definition of the profession leads to a number of theories of a de-professionalisation as the military is forced to adapt. These tendencies make for a static comparison of the current military profession to an idea about what it once was. It becomes literature that focus on "the effect of contemporary change upon the traditional interpretation of the established criteria of professionalism" (Harries-Jenkins and Moskos 1981:21) and thus offers little leeway for new interpretations of military professionalism that might be more open to change.

Janowitz updates the idea of the military profession in saying that it may move from the traditional ideal of a heroic warrior to a military manager or technician in response to external changes. His interpretation of the military profession is thus more dynamic, and in addition he sees little issue in terms of effectivity as a civilianisation of the military occurs. He instead views the problem as one of professional identity, in which military professionals themselves favour a traditional warrior ideal centred around performativity in combat over other more civilian ideals (Janowitz 2017:34). As such, while constructing a civil-military theory, Janowitz still situates professional obstacles to change at the professional level. In comparison, typological approaches to the military profession results in the use of a definition pertaining to the macro level to make assumptions about what happens at the meso or micro level. The levels are inherently intertwined, perhaps more so with the military than with other organisations. Yet, professional capacities are not entirely captured by the typological definition, meaning that the conclusion that a role crisis occurs primarily stem from an external idea of what the military profession is, or used to be, in relation to civil society rather than focused on what actually happens on the level of the professionals.

The first perspective mentioned above regarding the conservative culture hypothesis is more suitable in a sense to understand the military profession and its relationship to change, since it is more concerned with the content of the military profession rather than its form. However, it tends to focus on certain parts of military professionalism and disregard others. Snider (2005:14f) for instance places organisational inertia on the bureaucratic side of the military organisation and write that "professions excel where bureaucracies cannot – in the creation and adaptation of abstract expert knowledge and its application to new situations". In line with this, most scholars writing about military professionalism agree that professions are intellectual in nature and practice skills that are abstract in the sense that they contain diagnosis of the situation and

action in response (Huntington 1957:18; Abrahamsson 2005:12; Evetts 2003:771), rather than mechanic performance. This should make for a professional capacity to handle both specific and general change. In addition, military professionals should according to their core task of management of violence contain elements that make them apt, rather than inapt, for change. Soeters (2018:268) for instance, despite reaching the conclusion that military professionals suffer from “cognitive boundaries” which “retard the spread of real innovation”, starts his article by saying that the warring side of the organisation produces a culture of preparation for the unexpected, “a demand for commanders who are flexible” and a can-do mentality (ibid:256). Similarly, Hill (2015:87f) writes that while the conservative culture hypothesis about the military states that “the classic military virtues of obedience, self-sacrifice, collectivism, devotion to tradition and knowledge of history are strengths in preparing for and fighting war, but liabilities when the organisation is seeking to change” it might also be the case that that “the same characteristics that may hinder the emergence of ideas (for example, a strong deference to authority)” could also promote and facilitate their implementation. This fact; that the military profession may contain both capability and incapability to change is seldom brought up nor investigated in existing research. Neither the typological approach nor the conservative culture theory does much to encompass this complexity, and a more grounded perspective is needed, which actually builds its theory on what happens at the professional level.

## Military Mindset

Huntington and Abrahamsson, and to some degree Janowitz, offer a different definition of the components of military professionalism as they discuss military mindset. This is less of a formal definition of the profession and more of theories of the military mindset that stems from the core task of combat (Harries-Jenkins 1990:120). Huntington (1957:61) introduced the “military mind” which “consists of the values, attitudes, and perspectives which inhere in the performance of the professional military function and which are deducible from the nature of that function”. The military mind of Huntington is essentially the man of “Hobbes, Burke and Clausewitz” (Boëne 1990:14), in which the management of violence produces a professional mindset that is conservative in nature, emphasises the violent and conflictual side of humanity and therefore sees history as cyclical in terms of war and peace (Huntington 1957:65ff). The military mind knows that the subordination of the individual will to the collective will is important in order to achieve security. Their professional responsibility prompts them to prepare for the worst and be careful about promises of peace, and they “always favours preparedness, but never feels prepared” (ibid:69). Abrahamson also discusses a notion of the military mind, or “professional values” (Abrahamsson 2005:72), which he sees as derived both from an element of selection – only some people decide to join the military, only some get accepted, and only some choose and are chosen to become officers – and from being socialised into the profession (ibid:75f). In his theory of the military mind he includes five components; nationalism, pessimistic view on human nature, alarmism, political conservatism (ibid, 80) and authoritarianism (ibid:81). Janowitz discusses military ideal types as he writes that “the military profession consists of a mixture of heroic leaders, military managers and technical specialists” (Janowitz 2017:xiii). The heroic leader is in his book the traditional ideal of the military professional’s “self-conception and professional ideology” (ibid:xiv), emphasising

the uniqueness of military professionalism in terms of being an “expert in war-making and the organised use of violence” (ibid:15).

These definitions offer valuable insight into more grounded aspects of the military profession that might affect capacities for handling change. It moves the analysis from an external macro perspective to a more sociological view of the military profession and its development of certain traits, mindset or attitudes in relation to its core task. It also combines the two main perspectives described above by creating a bridge between military professionalism and military culture, and it is connected to other concepts which are, often briefly, mentioned in relation to the military profession. These include for instance operational ideology (Harries-Jenkins and Moskos 1981:14), professional orientation (Jans and Frazer-Jans 2009:241) or the abstract idea of a professional tacit knowledge developed through a number of professional experiences (Tillberg 2011:21).

The above conceptualisations of the military mindset still emphasise a conservatism within the military profession, and this study will therefore not build upon their exact definitions of the military mindset. Instead it will build upon the idea that a professional mindset is developed as a result of the military function and explore elements that affect professional capacity to handle change. Given the previous critique of the often-used external perspective, this study will not theoretically construct these elements beforehand, but instead develop them in accordance with the data. This is further explained in the research design section.

## Empirical Background

The Swedish Armed Forces (from now on referred to as SAF) have since the cold war undergone major changes in terms of its military organisation. With the fall of the Soviet union and the end of bipolarity, there was no foreseeable threat to Swedish territory in the coming ten years (Swedish Cabinet 2004:25), and the military organisation was therefor to be transformed away from the large total defence of the cold war and instead become a leaner, more professional and quickly deployable organisation (Edström and Gyllensporre 2014:137). With the defence planning of 1999 and 2004, SAF began a transformation from a national defence organisation aimed at protecting Sweden from a territorial invasion by a foreign power (*invasionsförsvaret*) to a military organisation focused on expeditionary forces suitable for international missions (*insatsförsvaret*) (Müller-Hansen 2017; Swedish Cabinet 1999; 2004). These two military forms have been described as complete opposites (Haldén 2007:43), implying the width of the transformation. Following a general western trend in military affairs (Howorth 2011:41), the defence budget was cut, the conscription was laid dormant and replaced by an all-volunteer force (AVF), the total defence structure was dismantled and the armed forces were slimmed in order to create a “usable, available and flexible” force (Swedish Cabinet 2008:48). In 2015, this trend was reversed. With Russian aggression in Georgia (2008) and, more importantly, Ukraine (2014) the territorial threat was reintroduced on the agenda and Sweden’s national focus grew (Swedish Cabinet 2015:9f). In 2018 conscription was reactivated and SAF is currently experiencing an increasing budget, opening of new regiments and a rebuilding of the total defence (Müller-Hansen 2017; Swedish Cabinet 2017). Today, Sweden can be regarded as having a hybrid model of military

organisation, with both national and international focuses. In twenty years-time, Sweden has undergone two major and radical changes in their defence planning, organisation and strategy. Given that change has been rapid and extensive during these two decades, Sweden is a good case to study in order to understand how military professionals have handled the large military organisational changes that have occurred.

In relation to what was written above concerning the different changes that have been said to affect military professionalism (technology, recruitment structure and mission type) this thesis deals with the change in mission type. Technological advancements are constantly ongoing, and Sweden did during this time period both change in terms of focus; between national and international, and in terms of recruitment mechanism; between conscription and AVF. The change in mission type was all encompassing and meant an enormous shift in focus and organisation, with the following nationalisation also implying a transformative shift. This thesis will therefore focus on this change.

In situating the case in a broader universe of cases, Sweden as a small state is faced with the dilemma of having to choose what type of force to develop, due to economic limitations (Ingebritsen and Gstohl 2006:6f). Apart from the risk of a professional role diversion or cultural conservatism faced by large and small states alike, small states also face the difficulty of producing both expeditionary and national capacities since they simply cannot afford to extensively keep both. Changes in mission type may therefore strike harder at a small nation like Sweden, who is faced with more binary options in terms of force development, which might also make them more cautious by nature.

### III. Theoretical Approach

This section will describe a theoretical approach that takes off from the idea of military professional mindset and which will form the basis of this thesis.

The theoretical approach aims to provide an open theoretical guidance in the search of different elements of military mindset which builds capacities for change within the military profession. The approach builds on the idea of a military mindset among military professionals that affects how they understand and handle military changes. Mindset is defined as a set of attitudes and beliefs that “shape cognition and behaviour vis-à-vis environmental stimuli” and may exist both among specific individuals but also be shared within a profession (Daugaard-Nielsen and Holm 2019:593). Bolin, in her account of the Swedish shift to internationalisation in 2004, uses the concept of attitudes (Bolin 2008:120), which is regarded a conceptually more narrow perspective. Mindset encompass attitudes as well, however, also incorporates a more holistic idea of human cognition. It is, as mentioned, a concept that is grounded in previous literature on the military profession, and just as previous studies by Huntington (1957:61) and Abrahamsson (2005:72), this thesis views the professional mindset as a product of the professional task. Furthermore, the study assumes, in line with Abrahamsson, that professional mindset stems from both a level of self-selection in which only certain individuals choose to advance their career in the military, and from a professional socialisation into the profession (ibid:75f). The military professional mindset is therefore expected to functionally derive from the military task.

An agreement exists in previous literature that the military profession strongly centres around the management of violence with military organisations building upon a unique functionality – they are organisations that are to work well during the worst of times and its members are supposed to be able to perform their tasks during difficult circumstances. With the management of violence being so particular and demanding, the military profession and its characteristics needs to, in part, be understood in the light of the logic of external conflict (Boëne 2000:9) as it is a defining feature of the profession. “While fighting [...] wars is not the professional soldier’s only task, it is the task that only the professional soldiers can do” (Snider et al. 2005:146). Therefore, military professional mindset must in part stem from the task of combat and waging war and this is to be regarded an important building block of the military professional mindset. This study however argues against previous research by saying that this logic does not necessarily have to imply difficulties in coping with change. Instead, it might generate elements related to adaptability, reciprocity and responsiveness. Furthermore; with the mindset being derived from the main military task, the theoretical approach is also open for a shift in the military mindset as main task changes. Mindset is regarded as stable, yet not static. It is functionally derived from the professional purpose, and a change in purpose might therefore affect mindset. This will be integrated into the analysis.

## IV. Research Design

### Methodology

This thesis aims at understanding understudied parts of military professionalism that may explain how military professionals handle military change. For this, grounded theory is a suitable option. Given the focus of the study, in depth information concerning how military professionals view change has to be collected. This is best done through in-depth interviews. Grounded theory allows for an open approach to data in which the concepts and categories are developed in tandem with data collection and is therefore well suited for the aim of this thesis (Charmaz 2003:676). It is an abductive approach that focuses on theory building through a close interaction between data and analysis, and it is concerned with not forcing the data into preconceived categories (ibid:680) which is especially rewarding in this case, given the mentioned critique of previous research on military professionalism. This thesis mainly uses Charmaz' (2003; 2014) guides on how to do grounded theory research.

### Research Problem

A debated point within grounded theory is how the research problem should be constructed. Some argue that the researcher should go into the field as a blank slate, without theoretically preconceived ideas (Bryant 2017:147). Others argue that research should still be situated within the existing field and that a certain level of previous knowledge has to exist in order to produce valuable insights (Charmaz 2014:306). This thesis adopts the latter method by constructing the research problem theoretically with the aim to relate findings to previous knowledge.

### Data Collection

The data collection, in this thesis the interviews, are at the heart of the grounded theory method. The goal is to both produce qualitative and in-depth data and to regard the data collection as a process in and of itself which produces the focus of the study. The interviews are performed to reveal the most important themes in tandem with the data production and to allow the data to produce the concepts of interest. Some researchers therefore argue that no interview guide should be constructed beforehand in order to keep the interviews as open as possible (Charmaz 2003:676). However, grounded theory interviews can also be constructed as semi-structured interviews in which questions based on the theoretical focus and aimed contribution is included, but where there is also room for the development of other aspects that arise during the interviews. What sets grounded theory interviewing apart from regular semi-structured interviews is the possibility to alter the interview guide as the research proceeds in order to narrow the focus as the research moves forward, allowing an increasingly succinct interview focus (ibid). The aim is not to produce consistent and comparable points of data, but to through the interviews find new angles and perspectives on a particular issue. This thesis uses a semi-structured interview method. An interview guide was constructed, building upon important concepts and theoretical segments from previous research as well as more specific questions relating to the case. A pilot interview was then executed in which the guide was tested on a member of the

sample who was not included in the final analysis. The test-respondent was given instructions to comment on the questions, to say if anything was unclear or if another type of lingo should be used, and finally provide a general comment on the overall perception of the interview. This was considered especially helpful given the rather closed and specialised world of the military wherein obvious truths unknown to the outsider might exist. It needs to be added here that grounded theorists generally perform multiple sequential interviews with the same respondent over a long period of time, and thus has more leeway to correct the questions as they go along. Given the scope and timeframe of this thesis this was not possible, and the pilot interview was used as a remedy for this.

The interview guide (see Appendix A<sup>3</sup>) centred around three themes; questions on the content of military professionalism, being an officer and working within SAF, questions on the changes that SAF has undergone during the latest two decades and questions regarding the understanding and handling of those changes.

The case of Sweden was chosen out of interest, accessibility and the aim of in-depth and open interviews, most ideally undertaken in a familiar language. In addition, given the changes that SAF has undergone since 2000, it is a theoretically useful case to study as the officer corps of SAF have experienced extensive military changes.

Military professionals studying the higher officer program at the Swedish Defence University (SEDU) were contacted and asked to participate in interviews. They were informed beforehand on the subject of the thesis. Eight respondents agreed to participate, and the sample was therefore based on the group who volunteered to participate. The group of respondents consisted of both men and women, representing the army and the navy, however with a majority serving in the army.<sup>4</sup> They all hold the rank of major. The respondents all joined SAF sometime between 1995 and 2001, meaning that they have experienced the change from territorial defence to international missions and the following new national focus.

The interviews were conducted one on one during October 2020 and they took between 1h 20m and 1h 40m. Due to the covid-19 pandemic only three interviews could be done face to face, with the rest taking place digitally. The respondents were first informed in more detail about the subject of the study. They were then informed about research ethics, including the principle of informed consent and the voluntary nature of participation, meaning that they could at any time abstain from answering a question, choose to interrupt the interview or at any time in the future choose to end their participation. With consent, all of the interviews were recorded.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> With the reservation that the guide was revised several times, and only provided a preliminary and loose structure to the interviews.

<sup>4</sup> A more specific description of the composition of the group cannot be provided out of concerns of anonymity.

<sup>5</sup> Interview transcriptions (in Swedish) are available upon request.

## Data Analysis

After the data collection, the second most important point of grounded theory is the coding and processing of the data. The processing begins already at the transcription phase, in which the researcher is getting familiar with the data (Glaser, Thulesius, and Åström 2010:176f). In this thesis, the transcription itself included a selection process, in which some interview sections that were considered irrelevant for the study were not included in the transcript. This was done out of time concerns given the lengthy process of transcription, and only a few sections that were clearly unconnected to the focus were excluded.

The data analysis of grounded theory has similarities with thematic analysis, wherein the data is coded for patterns (Braun and Clarke 2006:80), however in grounded theory the themes are not present beforehand, but instead developed with the data. The formal analysis consists of two steps; an initial open coding and a subsequent more selective coding (Charmaz 2003:684). Using a unit by unit coding procedure in the first step (Wallenius et al. 2019:457) the interview transcripts were read through several times and each respondent's answers was coded in terms of interesting units or pieces of information. This resulted in roughly 600 different unit codes. This initial coding has the goal of creating codes that remain close to the data (Charmaz 2003:684). The second coding procedure means raising the level of the codes and creating more general categories, comparing the codes of each respondent to each other and finding the most frequent and important codes (Charmaz 2014: 138f). In this thesis this meant grouping the codes into categories, sorting them by frequency and also translating the codes from Swedish to English. Since not all codes transferred from the initial coding to the second coding, the second coding also means a selective process in which some codes are excluded based on infrequency or theoretical irrelevance. Several scholars using grounded theory create theoretical categories and concepts already in this second coding stage (ibid). In this thesis, it was considered more comprehensive and intuitive to organise the codes according to their empirical properties first and then create the theoretical concepts in the next stage, where these more general codes and categories were used to create a theoretical approach that corresponds both to the data and to previous research. This was done through a method of memo writing in which theoretical categories based on the data were created and codes from the final coding procedure were theorised around. This is what then turns into the final analysis section. The memo writing also meant the translation of direct quotes from Swedish to English.

## Methodological Limitations

When it comes to interviews there are always certain caveats to consider. This thesis concerns changes that happened over a twenty-year period, which places huge demands on the individual memory of the respondent. The human ability to remember and retell events and processes accurately is inherently limited, even more so with distant events. Therefore, the analysis has to be sensitive to the fact that not all answers are correct representations of reality. In terms of large-scale changes, it is also easy that our interpretation of the past is affected by the present or how the turn of events played out. For instance, the Swedish change in 2015 might have had an impact on how the respondents presently understand the initial move towards



an international defence. It may also be easier to theorise about a positive attitude towards change in hindsight; when you have emerged successfully on the other side, initial troubles and worries might be forgotten. This is an inherent problem with testimonies, however as well put by Doris and Murphy, “the alternative to relying on eyewitness accounts is a phenomenologically impoverished account of the issues, and this carries a greater risk of distortion than do the vagaries of testimony” (Doris and Murphy 2007:33). The solution is to be aware of these limitations, and approach the material with an open, yet critical mind.

An addition, every method comes with its own potential pitfalls, and grounded theory is no exception. While the open coding procedure allows the research to stay close to the data in a way pre-operationalised concepts do not, operationalisations beforehand ensures a more neutral approach to the data processing. With grounded theory, one has to pay close attention to all sides of the data and make sure to not be one-sided and cherry pick information that fits a certain type of theoretical framework. Own biases in terms of pre-conceived ideas about what the results should be has to be acknowledged and then, as much as possible, put to the side as the coding begins.

## V. Analysis

The following analysis is structured under four headlines that captures different elements of the military professional mindset. During the data analysis these were found to be important for how military professionals understand and handle the changes SAF has undergone. The overarching concepts are separated for the sake of clarity and structure, however theoretically they are to be viewed as intertwined and dependent on each other. In terms of terminology, the military change that took place in the early 2000's with the dismantlement of the total defence structure and the focus on more internationally deployable, expeditionary forces will for the sake of simplicity be termed the *internationalisation*. The military change that started in 2015 and is still ongoing, including the reintroduction of the territorial threat, and increased national focus and a growth in terms of the defence structure, will be referred to as the *nationalisation*.

On a general note, all respondents showed concern of their profession and the professional purpose they fulfil. They also viewed the profession as one marked by responsibility; both given the serious mandate and given the importance of the provision of security. A feeling of responsibility was, among other things, shown through the expression of concerns for the performance of that responsibility. The respondents were opiated about the security of Sweden and, in extension, the wellbeing of SAF as this directly impacts Swedish security. Different opinions however existed concerning how to best create a capable armed force and military profession. This impacted the view on the changes that SAF has undergone, and it also made for differing understandings of the internationalisation versus the nationalisation. National defence comes natural for armed forces as it is what they were originally created for, and it serves as a baseline for the organisation and the ultimate purpose. The internationalisation of SAF was therefore more controversial than its nationalisation; it was understood as more of a hot topic than the nationalisation, which was noticeable during the interviews. The nationalisation was considered necessary and justified among the respondents and the change in 2015 was not understood as an issue for the professionals themselves (R2:13; R3:24; R4:30; R5:34; R7:50; R8:57), apart perhaps from some personal boredom in comparison to the more exciting action of international missions (R4:30) and the organisational burden of growing and doing two things at the same time (R2:13; R3:23; R4:31). As such, it is seen mainly as an organisational, rather than professional problem to change to a national defence. The internationalisation on the other hand was more controversial. However, going back to what was said in the beginning of this paragraph, the understanding of the different changes hinge on an understanding of the professional responsibility and an idea of how to best create an effective armed force.

### Hierarchy and Expertise

Management of violence was expected to be central to the understanding of the military profession; especially for the professionals themselves. As it turned out, while management of violence remains a core element of their profession, during the interviews the element of leadership was more pronounced. Being

military leaders was central in the respondents' understanding of their profession, and leadership came up repeatedly during the interviews.

Therefore, while the respondents' expertise lies in the management of violence, their own mindset appears to a large extent to be influenced by a hierarchical positioning as both leaders and subordinates. The strict military hierarchy is not only seen as a way to simplify everyday work, but also as a cognitive understanding of their own role, expertise and purpose. Hierarchy serves as a functional placement of their competence within the system and delineates their professional role (R1:3; R2:10; R3:21; R7:47). This impacts the understanding of the organisation both downwards, towards subordinates, and upwards, towards superiors. Since the route to advancement is the same for everyone, there is a general knowledge about what to expect from both superiors and subordinates; "all of those who are at the top have also been at the bottom of the organisation before. There is an awareness of what one asks of the subordinates" (R1:3).<sup>6</sup>

Hierarchy also informs the view on information and decision making. Among the respondents, it is assumed that more information exists at the higher levels. This creates a general trust in that superiors will make the right call based on the information accessible to them. It also creates a humbleness in terms of judgement, which impacts the capacity to make sense of organisational change, as several respondents explain that they might not have access to the same information as their superiors and thus be less informed (R3:20; R6:38; R8:53, 55). Furthermore, different decisions are taken at different levels, which concludes that not all decisions are the respondents' to make (R2:12; R6:42). When asked about the characteristics of a good officer, several respondents describe how one should be open and supportive of discussions up until the decision has been made and after that meet it with acceptance. When a final decision is made, personal feelings should be put to the side (R1:2; R6:37; R8:53,55). One respondent also said that an officer should be humble and "understand that you are only one cog in the machine" (R3:31).

This is applied primarily to the internationalisation of the defence, with respondents saying that when a change is due, an officer has to trust that the decision is well-informed and made with the best intentions based on the information accessible and the goal of the organisation (R7:54; R8:53). One respondent said that

I have accepted that there is a higher purpose to being in this profession. There is always someone who is older and more experienced and who has a bigger responsibility than I do, who has made a decision on grounds that you hope to be well-founded, and therefore you have to trust that the decision is the best one at the time. If you do not believe that, in such a simple thing as an organisational change, why should I then trust that their decision is right at other times? Trust has to be present in both worlds. It cannot be the case that I only trust you when we are abroad, while thinking you are an idiot at home and not trusting your

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<sup>6</sup> Here a certain scepticism comes forth related to the educational system, which now includes the possibility for people who have done basic military training and holds a civilian bachelor's degree to become officers with just one year of military education. This sort of back-door entering into the higher ranks can be considered a potential loss of the level of practical awareness that is expected to exist at all levels.

organisational change. Instead, you have to accept that not all decisions are as you yourself would like them, [...] This is the foundation of the entire combat mentality of SAF (R6:44).

This quote exemplifies a mindset in which the entire organisation including hierarchy, greater purpose and combat mentality is tied together. A hierarchical positioning emphasising the extent of their professional competence, is vital both in a combat situation in order to make sense of who is responsible for what, but also serves to delineate which decisions the professional has a say in. The above respondent was asked if the sentiment is the same when it comes to superiors who are not military; instead the political elite. The respondent then answered that while political decisions might go against what would be most effective from a military point of view, “one has to accept that it is not a military decision to make. The military makes other decisions, but not that one” (R6:42).

Competence and expertise are delineated by hierarchy, and there exist a determination to not question decisions existing outside ones’ area of expertise, which creates an acceptance for decisions made at the top. This is paired with a described iron-will to execute the decision once it is made, and also a sense of responsibility for the own area of responsibility. One respondent explained that when they identified that the newly graduated officers coming to their unit had not practiced enough leading and command, they decided to more extensively practice that with the new officers as they arrived (R3:22f). Closing in on the specific capacities of the different respondents; while being aware of the bigger picture in terms of for instance greater purpose of SAF, they focus on their own ‘cog’ in the wheel and are concerned about the performance within that cog. In addition, the respondent above assures that performance in the face of change by altering the own groundwork within the unit.

Hierarchy informs differences in information, and information and intelligence are critical points in the understanding of the changes SAF has undergone. Some concerns were expressed, specifically regarding the information upon which Sweden acted when introducing the internationalisation. This is primarily criticised in relation to how things played out, with the renewed Russian activity in Europe. One respondent explained that at the same time as having the attitude that any change or challenge should be handled;

There is certain bitterness in that we said this already in 2004; are we really sure that it will last that long? [...] There is a certain naivety in believing Russia would become a western democracy overnight. [...] On the political side there was an expectation that Russia would adapt and want to become like every other western European large- or middle power. And that impatience to be able to spend SAF’s millions on something else, there is probably a certain amount of bitterness, so to speak, that no one wanted to explain the taking of that risk (R1:4).

The respondent described how it would have been favourable to look at hard facts instead of Russian rhetoric in order to more properly assess the situation (ibid:5). Others similarly criticised the decision for not being based on a long-term assessment and for the predicted ten-year peace to have been based on naïve and wishful thinking (R2:11; R5:33f). A frustration related to the feeling of responsibility can be found wherein decisions made at the top are seen as uninformed or based on the wrong intelligence, which the

organisation has suffered from. While still emphasising the following of superior order, there is among some respondents an implicit questioning of superior expertise, primarily then directed at the political elite. One respondent explained how a former commander-in-chief was regarded more of “the government’s commander-in-chief than SAF’s, as he tried to move SAF quite quickly and quite far” and that this was regarded a “lack of loyalty towards the rest of the organisation” (R1:5). This metaphor was given to explain the situation:

If the organisation has come to a certain conclusion and we say that we would like [the commander-in-chief] to buy us a Volvo. And then he comes back and says that he heard us but that he decided to get a Porsche instead. We are then loyal to him and say yes, there might be some logistical issues, but we’ll solve it, boss (ibid).

Furthermore, some respondents explained the period between 2000 and 2015 as marked by a general feeling of the military profession not being valued; “military expertise was not something you would stand up [...] and say I am an officer and I am proud of it” (R1:3). The fact that the Swedish minister of state called the SAF a “special interest”<sup>7</sup> was brought up by one of the respondents as an evidence of a lack of political belief in the SAF (R2:9). The respondent explained how the internationalisation meant a loss of purpose and how the entire organisation suffered from “collective low self-esteem” (ibid:11) and that “not even the politicians knew what to do with the armed forces” (ibid) which resulted in an organisation that “fumbled and sprawled” (ibid). This is connected to the purpose as the respondent said that

Over the course of one night we lost what we aimed at. In essence we had so few units, for us who had grown up in the old system, we could not understand how we were supposed to defend the nation. If we weren’t defending the nation, which was our purpose, what were we then supposed to do? (R2:11).

The internationalisation therefore stands out among some respondents as a change that made SAF unable to perform their expertise, primarily seen as the result of lack of political legitimacy granted to the armed forces combined with such a severe reduction in size and capability that the performance of the expertise was considered impossible. It shows a paradox in the fact that the respondents are both experts and subordinates, wherein some respondents emphasise their hierarchical positioning and others their expertise, the latter which was then seen as suffering severely by the internationalisation.

## Loyalty

Almost all respondents spontaneously mentioned loyalty at some point during the interview (R1:2, 5; R2:17; R3:20; R4:25; R6:42f; R7:48; R8:53). Loyalty was among the respondents seen as an important feature of the profession and from the interviews a multifaceted idea of loyalty emerged. It was described as multi-layered wherein the professional is expected to be loyal towards many different segments of the armed

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<sup>7</sup> Translated from Swedish; “särintresse”. See DN (2013).

forces including loyalty towards the SAF, towards a unit and towards a task (R2:17). It was also seen as a characteristic of a good officer (R3:20).

Furthermore, loyalty was explained by some respondents to have a strong relationship to change. Mutual loyalty between the professional and the organisation was described as important, for instance the closing down of regiments in the early 2000's was described as a lack of loyalty from the organisation. One respondent said that

When there are constant cutbacks and quite forceful cuts in the [organisation], you remove both capacity and people. And people who have had their units closed many times; in the end you sort of loose faith and you move from being loyal to SAF to instead having the perspective of this being a job like any other. Whilst, if you had the perk of never being closed down [...] I believe you have another loyalty. Every time you cut back in the organisation and someone is affected by that, some of the loyalty towards the organisation is carved out as well (R7:48).

Loyalty was however also described as something that may help the professionals in handling changes. One respondent, who had personally experienced the closing down of two regiments, explained that this meant a big change but that there “existed other units” to move to and that the respondent had handled the change since

I have had a faith in my organisation, and towards what I've been doing, I've felt it to be important and because of that I have not seen that change as something decisive in whether or not I should stay [in SAF] (R8:53).

Furthermore, the respondent specified that “the loyalty, to feel a strong sense of loyalty towards SAF, has been decisive” (ibid) in keeping that faith in the organisation. A deep loyalty towards SAF and SAF's purpose and role in Sweden was considered important for the professional's understanding of the task and their own professional performance. This loyalty was described as the thing that would make them keep going to work even in the face of crisis and war. One respondent explained that if this loyalty would be lacking, one should think of changing profession (R7:48f). Another respondent also explained that loyalty means “doing what you can with what you have, and if you do not accept that, there is a risk of becoming very sensitive to trends and very easily affected” (R6:43). The respondent also connected loyalty to personal opinions in saying that even though there might be personal objections to certain decisions, loyalty trumps personal feelings (ibid). As such, loyalty clearly served as an important element in handling change among the respondents.

## Flexibility

Several respondents point to a paradox in the SAF, and in military organisations in general, similar to what Snider pointed out when he said that “professionals excel where bureaucracies cannot” (2005:14f). All respondents in some way referred to an organisational slowness to change (R1:5; R2:9; R3:22; R4:28; R7:45;

R7:45; R8:54).<sup>8</sup> One respondent said that creating change in SAF is like “turning an oil tanker” (R3:22) and another said it is like “turning a hangar ship” (R7:50). This was to a large extent considered to have to do with resources, in that materiel development and force procurement is a lengthy process resulting in a lag in producing the type of force required (R1:4). This requires constant predictions of what type of force that is required tomorrow; predictions that are considered difficult to make (R4:28). There is a practical contradiction in “growth vs accessibility” (R1:4) in that change in strategy has to be followed by several assessments in terms of material procurement, recruitment demands and educational slots both at the officer programme and the higher officer programme (ibid). There is thus an unavoidable organisational inertia and adherence to certain procedures, which the professionals have to deal with.

However, there is also an idea of a procedural thinking or cognition that might hamper innovation. Some respondents testify of a culture of conservatism that sometimes limits innovation. At the same time the organisation needs innovation since it exists in a changing world, to which it has to respond. This creates a paradox when the organisation has to change

through technical developments, transformed role in society, changed techniques of warfare and changed threats. And these things create some sort of paradox. There is a tension in-between. Between the conservative organisation that is in need of constant change in order to be relevant (R4:27).

Previous research has oftentimes seen cultural expressions such as military rituals and traditions as examples of organisational and professional conservatism and rigidity. At the same time, others have said that these unique expressions are important for the performance of the military as they create cohesion and a sense of unity (Boëne 1990). One respondent captured this by saying that “at its core, SAF is a conservative organisation that does not like change. SAF’s brand is to a large degree built on traditions, symbols and some values that are hard to change” and when asked why SAF was conservative in these regards, the respondent believed that a common culture or sense of unity stemming from rituals and traditions increases people’s drive and willingness to take risks (R4:27). This type of conservatism in terms of rituals and traditions was however seldom brought forth as the main reason for professional inability to change or innovate. Instead, the type of conservatism that hampers successful change is understood primarily as a sort of procedural thinking that might be slow to update. One respondent explained how the high average age within the military elite and the requirement to abide to the rules when it comes to advancement in rank for instance, produces a likeminded group of military leaders making it difficult to diverge or innovate. “If you are working in a very hierarchical organisation that is built upon doing the right thing at each level, then it is very difficult to do something differently” (R7:50); a quote which also challenges what was previously said about hierarchy being facilitative of change, as it may also imply a strong adherence to tested procedures.

The internationalisation is described to have meant a change in many of the procedures of which the professionals had grown accustomed to. They reported that there were several officers who struggled with for

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<sup>8</sup> Translated from Swedish “trögrörlighet”.

instance the introduction of the AVF. While a conscript system consists of clear procedures that are the same each year (R6:42; R7:47) the AVF meant fewer clear procedures and much more processes occurring simultaneously and at different levels (R7:47). In relation to both the move away from a conscription system and the increase in international missions, one respondent said that the change meant going from “being an education machine in an education factory to a person who has been able to use my expertise abroad and practice what I’ve learnt, not during an exercise but in a real situation” (R4:29). The internationalisation, with its general transformations of the organisation and the increase in international missions, thus meant a move away from a procedural thinking, which places new demands on the professionals. Change, both specific and general, challenges the procedural nature of the organisation, however with several respondents saying that officers should be open minded and flexible, the professional’s ability to handle change takes centre stage. One respondent, when asked how to solve the paradox of an organisation that demands functionality and reciprocity yet takes years to alter and has conservative tendencies, replied “by having officers who are prone to change” (R4:27). Another said that a good officer has to be “prone to change. Even if we move in the concept of change rather slowly” (R7:45).

Several of the respondents explained how flexibility<sup>9</sup> had become somewhat of a buzzword in SAF in the latest years (R2:16; R3:20; R8:56, R7:55f). Focusing on the aspects of flexibility that emerged during the interviews it can be said that within the framework of flexibility, there is a notion of the development of performance and ability to cognitively become flexible. This has previously, however rather briefly, been described as a “cognitive elasticity” (Finkel 2011: 4, 273) or “mental agility” (Krulak 1999:21). While this thesis has regarded mindset as something relatively stable, however not fixed, that stems from the professional task, during the interviews it became apparent that mindset is also something the respondents think about actively and also choose to form in certain ways. They appear to regard cognition as elastic, probably as a result of working with demanding tasks. They exhibit rigidity in some aspects of their mindset, such as hierarchy or loyalty. Other aspects are characterised by a conceptual thinking, described by Swain (2005:182) as depending on “consideration and manipulation of abstract ideas and principles”. Flexibility would be such a conceptual thinking, which the respondents explain have become an important segment in their education as officers, and which also appears to impact their capacity to deal with change. This was also by several respondents integrated into the idea of a good officer (R1:2; R4:26, R7:45). One respondent said that

A good officer has the capacity to change perspectives and adapt to changes. Warfare is largely about meeting the opponent’s actions with something new, create asymmetries or change oneself in an unexpected and surprising way. One also has to be open, flexible and changeable. Both cognitively and in what you do. Stereotypical, rigid and uncompromising people have difficulties becoming good officers (R4:26).

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<sup>9</sup> With Finkel (2011), who has developed the concepts of military flexibility, being integrated into the respondents’ curriculum. Furthermore, flexibility in Finkel’s definition is directly incorporated into Swedish military doctrine (Försvarmakten 2020:132f;152)



There is thus some idea of a cognitive ability to be flexible and adaptable. The same respondent explained how international missions is not only about improving “the craft of the profession” but also gaining “experiences of other cultures” and “other ways of thinking” which allows one “to grow cognitively” (ibid:25). Another respondent told of how “in essence, everything we are educated to do is to be able to adapt to the situation we’re in” and when asked how one practices adaptation, the respondent said

By being exposed to something similar. I listened to a lecture [...] about an education whose purpose was that the person being exposed should feel that they didn’t reach the goal. By not reaching all the way you practice the ability of what to do when things don’t work out. And that what matters when things go wrong, is that you don’t just sit there and act a victim or feel powerless, instead you can practice everything going wrong and then evaluate and reflect on that (R8:55f).

Flexibility, and adaptability, is however described as something that is not recent in professional thinking, but which has existed throughout, only that it has been more thoroughly pinpointed now (R8:56). Adaptability can also be connected to decisiveness, two concepts that do not intuitively pair up. Being decisive about certain elements, goals or purposes lays ground for adaptability in practice. One respondent explained how military professionals, the respondent included, tend to opt for a black and white assessment which is caused by their desire to get to work and act (R3:22). Thus, while definition and goal setting can be decisive and strict, ensuing action can be marked by adaptability and flexibility. For example, when the respondent’s regiment risked closing down in the early 2000’s, this was turned around by the then head of the regiment and several capacities were able to continue existing. The respondent explained how this was based on a sentiment of never giving up.

We have not given up, mentally we are not closed down. I think it is part of our mentality, when we get closed down, we stand up again. It is part of who we are, that we will never give in. That has been an important factor in our success (R3:23).

When asked why they never give up, the respondent said that

It is something we practice. In our basic training, part of our pedagogy is that when you fail completely<sup>10</sup>, you should then turn it around and be able to get back up again. And then you do that over and over again and eventually you will feel that you will never give up (ibid:24).

This presents a flexible approach and innovation in terms of choice of action, yet decisiveness in performance. Furthermore, it can be added that in terms of decisiveness, frustration might ensue when too much flexibility is expected from the professional and little structure is provided by the organisation during times of change. This is presented as one of the issues when it comes to handling change. One respondent explained in relation to the nationalisation that in rebuilding the defence, the political side has to provide

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<sup>10</sup> Translation from Swedish “gå på pumpen så att det stänker om det”.

money and “not just talk” (R2:12) and that the lack of promised funds and political decisive action wears on “an officer corps that is task oriented and aimed at performance” (ibid).

Long-term planning is similarly seen as measure for providing the necessary clarity and certainty required to perform professionally and which, in its absence, might cause professional frustration. One respondent said that the internationalisation has lacked long-term planning and that it was “because we haven’t had any external enemy for a number of years. At least officially, it might have been there all along, but we haven’t talked about it” (R5:33f). When asked if there had been an unofficial enemy the respondent said that it is “difficult to say, I would say no one has wanted to say it out loud. It has been there, but no one have dared to use it [...] we’re talking about Russia. No one has dared to use it. It has been the “opponent” and other euphemisms, it is only in recent years that we have begun talking about Russia. Which makes everything much easier” (R5:33f). The respondent also expressed how the lack of a higher purpose with the internationalisation created a number of special solutions and adaptations, making the organisation “severely sub-optimal” and that with the nationalisation, the organisation is now able to have “longer arguments about what we need and don’t need” (ibid:33). As such, the international defence was considered scattered and unfocused by the respondent, which decreased professional capacity.

The internationalisation was described to make the organisation “anorectic”, with many regiments and capacities being closed down (R4:30). Procedurally it meant a move away from most things known for the organisation, and the introduction of much insecurity in terms of the future of the armed forces. While change itself might be successfully handled with flexibility among the professionals, uncertainty on behalf of the larger organisation might be more difficult to handle. The interviews show that while the internationalisation might have had errors in its implementation and results, the change itself is generally considered necessary – and the decisiveness of the change as well. While being critical of certain results, several respondents explain how the change meant a turn for SAF that both provided a long-term plan to work with and a clear structure to aim at. What it did imply was a diversification of the methods to achieve that long-term plan, which by some respondent was felt as a lack of structure and higher purpose. The internationalisation is as such described by the respondents both as a very decisive shift – with a strong “pendulum movement” (R1:5; R2:12; R7:49) going from one side to the other – and as a scattered shift – in a move away from a clear singular operational route to a diversification of methods and goals; with both shifts demanding flexibility from its professionals.

## Preparedness

Huntington (1957:64) theorised that military professionals see the world engulfed in constant cycles of war and peace; which serves as a functional mindset due to the military responsibility, and makes military professionals favour preparedness for war even in times of peace since the latter is finite and the first potentially disastrous. This also connects to Abrahamsson’s (2005:80) idea of alarmism and a pessimistic view on human nature being part of the military mindset. Thompson picks up on this as he theorises around a cyclical versus arrow understanding of time (Thompson 1994:78). Some respondents express Huntington’s cyclical

understanding of time, in that they saw the Russian geostrategic return as inevitable and expected. One respondent explained how “if one wants to know what will happen tomorrow, one should read about what happened yesterday [...] the eternal peace has never existed” (R2:11). This view impacts on the understanding of the internationalisation, as this becomes regarded a waste of time and resources with the return of the main enemy. With a cyclical view of time, the frustration is understandable since the return of Russia could have been anticipated and therefore acted upon. The critique of the lack of long-term perspective mentioned previously also has its role in this, wherein a cyclical view of time lays way for a predictability in the system in which Sweden should have planned its forces according to the risk of a Russian return. One respondent, when asked about the main purpose of SAF, replied by explaining it in terms of being able to secure the free will of Sweden and ended by saying that “this was considerably more easy to understand a couple of years ago, when I did my basic training” (R5:31). The respondent continued and said that

We are there again soon, but back then it was more pronounced, we had an enemy then [...]. But then came a couple of years when we didn't, and that has had a number of consequences that we still carry with us today, I would say. And I would say that the international defence is a consequence of our lack of enemy (ibid).

Furthermore, the respondent said, the lack of Russia as a clear enemy led to international missions that were all extremely “tailormade” making it difficult to reuse the materiel, and by sending “special companies all the time, that it is eventually impossible to find resources for” SAF was “pouring money down the drain<sup>11</sup>” (ibid:34). Another respondent explained how they now have to “try to break in an organisation with international materiel into the national” and the issue is that SAF “has to live with the international legacy” (R2:9).

In comparison, one respondent said that “I do not think we should have been sitting here [...] waiting for the Russian assault wave over the Baltic Sea, that would not have benefitted us today” (R6:39). Opposite to a cyclical view of time, Thompson (1994:78) posits an arrow view of time. Among the respondents, this is associated with a view of the world as in constant progress, in which the current Russian threat differs from the one faced by Sweden during the cold war. It also relates to a pronounced view of the nationalisation as something new rather than a return to the cold-war perspective. In that view, the new national defence is then best captured by the Swedish term *nygammalt*, meaning ‘new yet old’ (R1:3; R2:13). Instead of viewing the internationalisation as an abruption, the respondents appear to see little difference in the overarching purpose between the two types of organisation and to regard them as different methods for the same aim of protecting Sweden. By building international relations, acting as a preventative measure against conflict spread and ensuring strategic gains such as increased UN influence, international missions further Swedish national interests (R1:1; R2:7; R3:19; R4:25; R5:36; R7:49; R8:52). Ensuring Swedish security was still the top priority during the international defence, however they “chose to do it in Kosovo and Afghanistan,

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<sup>11</sup> Translation from Swedish: “slänger pengar i sjön”.

among others” (R7:45) and that it meant a “strong shift in main focus” but that “the political and strategic purposes has always been the same, it is the method that has differed” (ibid). One respondent explained;

When no direct threat to the Swedish nation was perceived, and above all when you saw more threats, some of which SAF could have an impact on, it was necessary to make a change. Even if I am critical to some results, I am not critical to creating international service and making those changes. The challenge is to predict the future [...] and the future is quite hard to predict. [...] That is why we are in the situation we are in today, with a knife at our throat [...] because SAF changes slowly, not just because it is conservative but because changes take time in a practical sense (R4:28).

Similarly, another respondent said that

I believe that I belong to a changing time that one has to keep up with. You have to adapt your resources accordingly. And if we didn't have good enough resources in the end of the 90's, then we had to do something about that. If what we call *insatsförsvaret*, or an all-volunteer force, became the result of that, then may so be it, that was the best solution we could come up with (R5:39).

Necessity and preparedness thus seem to play a role in the understanding of change; with the professionals being invested and concerned about the abilities of SAF, necessity and not whim should guide any potential reforms. To most, the purpose with the internationalisation was clear, and they describe how the organisation made necessary adjustments in response to changes in the security environment (R1:4; R4:28; R6:39; R7:47; R8:51f). The main issue with the internationalisation then becomes its impact on the nationalisation.

Differences in time view are also made apparent in terms of perspective on main threat and worldview, and this connects to the idea of procedural and conceptual thinking mentioned above. With the return of the Russian threat, the international missions can be considered a procedural waste of time in terms of preparation— it included the development of tailor-made material inapt for Swedish territorial defence, it involved facing insurgents in non-conventional, asymmetric warfare oftentimes with blurred lines between combatants and civilians and it took place in geographical settings completely different from those of Sweden. Those who argue that the internationalisation was not an abrupt one however do not view the gains primarily in a procedural manner, but in a conceptual one. They see the gains in terms of leadership and exposure, which will be explained further down.

There is also a difference in how the respondents view the future threat towards Sweden, and this is connected to the questions regarding whether the current change is a return or a progression. Furthermore, it depends on if one centres the professional expertise around the responsibility of Swedish security or around the provision of management of violence to whatever purpose that is politically decided. This is related to what was written above concerning expertise on the one hand and subordination on the other. All those asked what SAF should do in peacetime, unanimously said that they should make preparations for wartime (R1:6; R2:17; R4:30). While some see international missions as a preparation for war, others see the international defence as a damage to the preparation for the kind of war Sweden might face; namely a Russian attack. Those who firmly place the international defence within the framework of the current national

capacity also appear to view preparation for war in a broad sense – perhaps then a conceptual preparation rather than procedural. This includes an idea that it is not only SAF that is undergoing changes but the world as well, wherein the new national focus includes new and different types of threats than the pre-2000 national focus. Several of the respondents are outspoken of the fact that their profession is existing in a transforming world, both in terms of the geostrategic situation and in terms of a new and broadened threat perspective (R4:32; R6:44; R8:54), and that this stands to be one of the main difficulties in the profession.

What's difficult is that, where do one draw the line for an armed attack? We talk about the grey zone. Where is the line that would make government and parliament think about deploying us? And how do we meet that? How do we prepare? I guess it concerns a mental image that I have where I can easier picture an armed attack in the form of something cyber-related than a state landing on Swedish soil (R8:54).

The respondent continued to say that

Maybe this builds on my changed perspective, that war more and more concerns gaining the profit of war but not at the cost that it would mean, with mass destruction and that number of casualties (ibid).

Another respondent, when asked if it is natural for SAF to look at changes in threat scenarios, said that it is central for SAF to keep up in the changes in threats, and that

Particularly that demarcation between war and peace [...] that is now called grey zone, is the most difficult for us, where we ourselves have defined the separation in responsibility of each authority. I believe that will be the hardest thing for us, to find our new role in that. I also believe that in particular our own role of expertise as militaries; what advice we are to give, when there is no longer occurring security threats within our mandate, that will also be a challenge for us (R6:44f).

When asked if the respondent thought it was doable, the answer was “absolutely, I believe so. Those threat scenarios exist abroad, and there exists experience [of that] in part among officers” (ibid).

Viewing the threat for which SAF is designed to counter, as changing thus situates international missions within the current national defence in a professional sense. When asked how transferrable the lessons from international missions are to a national defence, the respondents' answers varied from everything being transferrable (R6:40), to some things being transferrable (R3:19; R4, 25, R5:36; R8:52) to extremely little being transferrable (R2:8). What the respondents agree on is that international missions can be personally developing for the military professional in terms of leadership during difficult circumstances (R6:40; R3:19; R4, 25, R5:36; R8:52; R2:8). In terms of exposure, international missions are said to provide an environment that is hard to replicate in simulated exercises (R4:25). It is considered a situation that place demands on the individual's personal judgement, creativity and responsibility (ibid). It also serves as a test for the system itself; for the unit and the operational capacity with international missions giving lessons in the form of “how the individual responds when things happen, to the testing of certain methods, to planning and assessment of intelligence and so on” (R3:19). Furthermore, one respondent explains how the 24/7 leadership in situations characterised by friction and complexity holds similarities to what a national defence would look like and that the gains of having members of SAF who have worked abroad is that “they have

experienced that messiness [that would be the result of a national attack] at their level at several times” (R6:41f). Another respondent similarly stated that “you get better soldiers and officers if they experience real-life combat. That is my firm belief” (R3:19). The same respondent also explained how the internationalisation meant a professionalisation of the armed forces, with international missions and cooperation with other nations “forcing a development in the professionalisation” (ibid:21).

The analysis shows that there were little issues in terms of a professional widening of missions and mission type. Neither was any voices raised concerning the effect of the participation in international missions on military professional effectivity. One respondent, when asked about if they internally discuss the multitude of different tasks that international missions entail, said that “absolutely, but we have always handled that. And that has never been the issue. The issue is, as I said before [...] that the organisation in terms of materiel is inflexible” (R2:16). Another respondent explained how the broadened view of the profession one gains from international missions was considered one-sidedly positive (R8:55).

Views on the current and future threat impact on how professional preparedness is best achieved, and what sort of changes that might affect this preparedness. There exists a pessimism in terms of human behaviour among the respondents in that competition and violence are seen as integral parts of human nature (R1:6; R3:25; R4:32; R6:47; R8:59), paired with a scepticism towards the longevity of international peace cooperations (R2:18; R3:25). When asked if SAF’s services will always be needed, the respondents are unanimous in their belief that it will (R1:6; R2:17; R3:24; R4:30; R5:36; R6:44; R7:51; R8:56). There is thus a certain cyclical view in that there is always the risk of war sometime in the future, for which SAF should prepare. Ideal preparation however depends on type of threat, and the current status quo is perceived by the respondents to no longer mainly be characterised by the threat of large-scale conventional attack. With uncertainty regarding what type of force that is required tomorrow, flexibility and adaptability takes central stage in terms of conceptual preparation. This is a type of preparation that places high demands on both the professional and the organisation, however the main issue as described by the respondents is in terms of organisational elements, such as materiel, not professional elements.

Lastly, this can be connected to the element of effectivity, a common theme within existing research on military professionalism. Several respondents, when asked about military effectivity, defined it in terms of reaching the given goal with as few resources as possible (R1:2; R2:9; R3:20; R4:27). This is connected to an idea of battlefield reciprocity wherein resources are finite, and one has to be the last man standing (R3:20f). Inherent in the idea of effectivity is therefore a resource perspective, which further explain a frustration in terms of preparedness when resources are seen as being wasted. Other ideas of effectivity are however also given, for instance that effectivity is about “reaching the effects one aims at” (R6:40); whatever the goals might be. Another respondent said that effectivity is about standard operating procedures (SOPs) but questioned whether effectivity has an inherent value in and of itself, instead favouring a more situational analysis (R4:27). This points towards a broadened idea concerning effectivity, which also impacts the idea of preparedness. A national defence with one clear enemy may provide an easier task to assess the effectivity of

the defence in comparison to the broadened threat SAF is facing today. Effectivity is procedural in essence and has been a core measurement for military professional capacity. With a less streamlined organisation, and a broadened idea of threat and security, effectivity in a total, procedural sense might however become difficult to measure.

## VI. Discussion

### Limitations of the Study

This study does not provide a comprehensive theory of military professionalism, and neither was that the goal. It provides a theoretical analysis of elements of the military profession that impacts on capacity to understand and handle military changes, analysed through an approach of military professional mindset. While armed forces hold many similarities in the form of their purpose and organisation, with the military profession also being similar between cases, further research would have to define how generalisable the findings of this study are. This thesis provides a study of the military profession in Sweden today, and its results heavily depend on the sample that was used and how these specific interviews turned out.

To this, it also has to be added that while there were people who left SAF during the period of 2000-2020 because of the changes that occurred, this study has exclusively dealt with professionals who stayed and chose to advance their career in the organisation. It therefore does not raise alternative voices which might provide additional insights into the understanding of military professionalism and military change.

Lastly, the study has not evaluated any external, objective sources of for instance military effectiveness or preparedness, since this was not the focus of the study. It provides an internal view of the profession and the organisational changes. It is also an account of events in hindsight, meaning that the testimonies are based on how the respondent's themselves remember the changes and how they understand them at this point in time. As such, it does not claim to provide an objective truth of how the events played out, but instead several subjective, internal understandings of the situation.

### General Conclusions

This study set out to answer the questions regarding how military professionals understand military change and what elements of the military profession impacts the capacity to handle such a change. It aimed to, in relation to previous research, argue that the military profession contains elements that make its professionals able to undergo large military changes. Using grounded theory, interviews of eight Swedish officers studying at SEDU was analysed. The method of grounded theory has allowed the analysis to evolve in tandem with the empirical material, with the interviews being guiding of the focus and development of important concepts. It allowed the results to be developed through concepts present among the military professionals, which is considered as a large theoretical and analytical gain. This resulted in four elements of military professional mindset that during the analysis came out as important for the professional understanding and handling of the changes that SAF has undergone in the latest decades.

The concept of mindset neatly captures the professional attitudes, insights and conclusions included in a certain profession. What this study found is that mindsets often work in a coherent and holistic way; wherein attitudes and beliefs about one subject often correspond and is related to attitudes and beliefs about another subject. In this study it was found that thoughts on worldview, hierarchy, military purpose and performance



were tightly grouped together, forming a conclusive mindset and placing the professional in the larger system.

The internationalisation came forth as the most controversial change out of the two as it meant a strong abruptness from previous defence structure and an entire rebuilding of the defence, whereas the nationalisation is considered less controversial and more traditionally in line with the purpose of military organisations. The study showed that both military changes, however primarily the internationalisation, was handled with both professional inflexibility or rigidity and flexibility. It showed that there are elements of rigidity in the military profession; they value hierarchy, loyalty and a clear division of labour, they have knowledge of the limits imposed on them by a slow-moving organisation, and they demand clear plans of action and an outspoken purpose. Hierarchical positioning and loyalty are elements of the military profession which the professionals themselves have leaned on in order to understand and handle the changes they have had to undergo. A strict adherence to these elements, in which hierarchical positioning delineates one's responsibility and professional expertise, and loyalty creates and demands a mutual trust between the organisational top and bottom, made for an acceptance and understanding of the changes that SAF has undergone.

These elements could be considered conservative in the sense that they are traditionally valued and have been integral parts of the military organisation for a long time. However, they did not hinder change but instead facilitated its implementation, which is in line with what Hill (2015) argued. Furthermore, while previous literature to a large extent describes this as a conservatism in both content and form, this study has showed that it mainly concerns form. Hierarchy and loyalty serve as frames within which the military professional has to work in order to perform the politically given task, which then also eased the changes they underwent. Its content; what that task is and how the professionals best execute it, may however vary without a professional crisis following nor a professional objection ensuing.

This content concerns the flexible and adaptable elements of the profession, elements that helped with the handling of change and also appear to have been further developed during the internationalisation and then brought into the national defence. The internationalisation demanded new types of performance; both in terms of its broadening of mission type and task for the professionals, but also in terms of the creation of new procedures. In most likelihood, the professional mindset has not remained the same during these two decades, implying that the mindset under scrutiny here has been shaped by the changes the professionals have undergone. It therefore has to be stated that the testimonies might not completely correspond to how the internationalisation was initially met at the time. Today, the SAF faces a nationalisation, however within this the respondents include a broadened threat perspective and new demands of performance. The idea of performance as flexible and adaptable seem to, at least conceptually, absorb many of the changes they have undergone and are undergoing wherein most experiences are seen to have role in a cognitive development. Furthermore, while previous research, for instance Hasselblad and Ydén (2020), assumes that military professionals always want to reduce uncertainty and therefore experience difficulties in the face of change, this

study showed that the respondents do embrace complexity, and actively think about it when trying to understand the profession in times of transition.

The theoretical approach used in this study built upon previous research in that it assumed that a combat mentality, or the logic of external conflict, would be an inherent part of the military mindset. Previous research on the military profession has begun with a view on combat as the unique functionality which the entire organisation and profession builds upon. This is what the typological definition is based on, with the military profession including an expertise in the management of violence, a responsibility towards the parent society and a corporate character or sense of unity; all said to functionally increase combat readiness. This has then produced an expected conservatism, where performativity in combat, effectiveness and preparedness is regarded a streamlined process on which a change in the core organisation of the profession or an inclusion of other tasks can have a potentially detrimental effect. While leadership turned out to be a pronounced aspect of the military profession in this study, so was the idea of combat and preparation for war. However, it also found that during times of transition, which SAF went through in the early 2000's and are going through now, estimates of preparedness are difficult to make. In not being sure what to prepare for, professional preparation is understood in a broad sense including a number of different roles, tasks and missions, and where conceptual rather than procedural elements are emphasised as professional virtues. With the focus still being on combat and performance during war, war itself is defined in a broader sense than previously. Preparation is no longer as streamlined as it once was, since conventional war is no longer the sole purpose of the national army. As such, SAF professionals appear to have successfully absorbed a widened idea of the profession, which also situates a wider variety of tasks within the idea of military preparation and practice. The fear was that this would cause a damage to the core function of the provision of national security, however since the definition of the core function appears to have changed as well; the effect of the widened role is difficult to assess.

The results of this study also showed an inherent paradox in the military profession. While being experts, military professionals are also subordinates to the political elite and are to be used as a tool of the state. This was touched upon by Huntington (1957:74) as he wrote about "military obedience versus professional competence", to which he answered that "superior political wisdom of the statesman must be accepted as a fact". He however acknowledged the potential frustration regarding changes made by a political elite lacking the professional expertise and sense of responsibility for the provision of security of the military (ibid). Some respondents expressed this frustration, simultaneously being aware that they are part of an organisation that requires subordination. Huntington could perhaps not picture a world where the end of the era of nation states would be proclaimed and where a state would say that no territorial threat was foreseeable in the near future. Subordination of the military to the civilian will is the core of the study of civil-military relations, however the question might be asked regarding what happens when subordination forces the professionals to dismantle their own profession? This was the feeling among a minority of the respondents, and it shows the sometimes contradictory nature of the two components of subordination and expertise, both integral parts of the military profession. This finding connects to Janowitz who wrote that professional frustration

in the face of change shows the importance of “maintaining a sense of professional self-esteem” (Janowitz 2017:435). In this study, this was the closest to a professional crisis that was found, and it did not relate to change in mission type or recruitment structure, but rather a perceived loss of legitimacy for the armed forces and a feeling of political disregard of professional competence.

### A Note on Effectivity

Although any definitive answer regarding how to create an effective military profession is beyond the scope of this thesis, some notes are to be raised on the point. Responsibility is often mentioned in relation to the military profession, wherein the serious mandate and task of the armed forces makes its professionals aware and concerned about the responsibility they hold as the main provider of security. Some respondents spoke of a pendulum effect in which the internationalisation meant a pendulum swing too far. While professionally being able to handle and understand this swing, responsibility for Swedish security may build concerns regarding the character of the extreme shift. Responsibility and a worst-case scenario analysis can reasonably lead to a critique of this type of back and forth motion. Would SAF have been more effective today if it would have stayed on the national route? This is a difficult question, and the respondents disagree in terms of the answer. While organisational features such as materiel clearly are pointed out as an issue when it comes to readjustment, purely professional effectivity is not described as a major problem by the respondents. According to several respondents, the opposite applies, wherein the period of international missions and AVF created a more professional and prepared officer corps. Part of the issue when it comes to effectivity is that it is inherently difficult to measure. Furthermore, effectivity essentially means being effective at *something*. While the changes SAF has undergone might have reduced traditional conventional effectivity, effectivity in other sections might have increased, and the question regarding effectivity becomes dependant on what they are asked to do. The implications of a broadened idea of security on the military profession and measurements of effectivity is an important route for future research, in order to fully grasp contemporary notions of the military profession and its performance.

### A Note on the Future of the Military Profession

The study shows that the future focus of Swedish security is one seen through a multispectral lens; with a level of continued presence abroad, the Russian reintroduction of the agenda and an increased emphasis on grey zone activity. With flexibility being included both in Swedish military curriculum and doctrine, it is clearly an emphasis within SAF. The idea of the flexible soldier has been introduced before, for instance by Nuciari (2018:55) who sees it as someone who can shift between the peacekeeper and warrior roles. Flexibility is in itself a rather vague concept which necessarily does not provide a concrete plan for professional development. It does however capture a general trend towards a more conceptual view of the military profession wherein the individual and its ability to cognitively perform takes centre stage and regulated behaviour and SOPs takes a step back. In the beginning of the OOTW shift Krulak noted that US missions abroad had “involved conventional combat, peace support and humanitarian assistance” at the same time (Krulak in Boëne 2018:195). His solution was the “strategic corporal” (Krulak 1999) which included the idea of a

'mental agility' and decisional power traveling downwards in hierarchy. Previous ideas of the flexible soldier have to a large extent concerned itself with the ability to shift between international missions and national defence – essentially to handle diversity between different operational settings. However, with diversity intensifying nationally and an increased variety of threats faced by the nation state, flexibility is likely to be even more emphasised in the shift between roles in a national setting as well.

Flexibility can be seen to increase individual responsibility and place greater demands on individual cognitive performance, and the question is if that also implies a further decentralisation in decision making, in line then with what Krulak hypothesised. Such a shift could then be connected to the idea of heroic or charismatic leadership in which the ideal of individual performance is stronger than that of standardized processes and an “institutionalized state of mind” (Stern et al. 2020:4). This would be an interesting development, as it would circle back into a type of military professional that has been theorized to be vanishing. Further research is needed to more thoroughly understand this.

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#### *Interview material*

Respondent 1, Officer in the Swedish Armed Forces, interview, 2020, October 1.

Respondent 2, Officer in the Swedish Armed Forces, interview, 2020, October 2.

Respondent 3, Officer in the Swedish Armed Forces, interview, 2020, October 5.

Respondent 4, Officer in the Swedish Armed Forces, interview, 2020, October 6.

Respondent 5, Officer in the Swedish Armed Forces, interview, 2020, October 8.

Respondent 6, Officer in the Swedish Armed Forces, interview, 2020, October 12.

Respondent 7, Officer in the Swedish Armed Forces, interview, 2020, October 12.

Respondent 8, Officer in the Swedish Armed Forces, interview, 2020, October 13.

## Appendix A – Interview guide

*Translated from Swedish*

### **General questions**

- Could you describe how you came to join SAF / why you stayed / what you have worked with within SAF?

### **Questions concerning SAF**

- What do you consider to be the main purpose of SAF?
- Are there other purposes?

### **Questions concerning the military profession**

- What is a good officer like according to you?
- How would you define effectivity / is effectivity important?
- Would you say that there is a particular SAF mentality /mindset / way of viewing the world?

### **Questions concerning change**

- Would you say SAF has been characterised by change or continuity?
  - What is your own attitude towards change?
  - Are there different parts / elements of SAF that have been characterised by change or continuity?
- How have you experienced the changes SAF has undergone?
  - Could you describe how you felt about the internationalisation / when you heard about Georgia / Ukraine / the current nationalisation?
  - What changed?
  - Who pushed for the change?
  - Was it difficult for the organisation / for you personally? Why/ why not?
- Did you experience the two changes differently?
- Do you find SAF to be sensitive to trends?
- Have you been on any international mission?
- What is your opinion about international missions?

### **Closing questions**

- What should SAF do during peacetime?
- Will SAF's service always be required?
- Is there anything you would like to add?