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The Culture of Leadership

The relationship between national culture and leadership models

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to discuss the influence of national culture in leadership within military organizations and also to explore the effectiveness of a specific leadership model in a multinational context. Developmental leadership (DL) is a model used by the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF) since 2003. However, the aim is not to answer the question of if a certain leadership model has an effect or not and therefore legitimize or discard the use of it. It rather raises the question of why this leadership model has been chosen to become such an integral part of an organization. This thesis analyzes DL by classifying its components using Hofstede’s theory of cultural dimensions as a basis and compares the results with Sweden’s cultural dimensions to find a correlation. The results show a high correlation between DL and Sweden, but DL does not correlate with Belgium’s cultural dimensions. Sweden’s characteristics are also complemented by empirical data collected for the purpose of this thesis. According to this interview study with Swedish officers, even though DL is not consciously applied to their leadership styles, it coincides with the characteristics of their vision of an ideal leader. Moreover, DL consists of components that are suitable foundations for an effective multinational leadership.

Key words: leadership, Developmental leadership, Utvecklande Ledarskap, national culture, cultural dimensions, Hofstede, Swedish Armed Forces
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

A majority of all military operations are conducted by multinational forces, either as an intervention force such as ISAF in Afghanistan and KFOR in Kosovo, or as a permanent multinational force like the NATO. Moreover, governmental budget cuts to the armed forces budgets have encouraged multinational cooperation and led to several European multinational military units (Soeters & Manigart, 2008, p. 3). Globalization and the end of the Cold War have changed the structure of society. Armed forces of today operate worldwide in regions which culturally differ from their own. However, the vulnerability to threats has thus also increased. Instability in a region not only affects the bordering nations but ultimately has a worldwide impact through mass migration, organized crime, terrorism and economic instability. “No single country is able to tackle today's complex problems on its own” (EU, 2003, p. 1).

Consequently, multinational cooperation between armed forces has become standard practice rather than exceptional. Even the most powerful and advanced armed forces need allies to perform their large-scale operations (Soeters & Manigart, 2008, p. 2). There is a demand for cross-cultural competence for military personnel on all levels (Selmeski, 2007).

Units of different nationalities in multinational operations will share camps where the simplest things can lead to disagreement due to cultural differences with regards to such things as food, alcohol policy and code of conduct between ranks. On higher levels leadership styles can be a culturally diverse (Soeters & Manigart, 2008).

National culture has been more of an issue on the military setting since the beginning of the Second World War, when multinational cooperation became a reality. On the one hand, there were the permanent conventional alliance NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and on the other hand, there was UN that began with peacekeeping missions. NATO and the Warsaw Pact developed common operational procedures and training concepts. They created common headquarters and aimed to standardize their weapons and support systems to create interoperability (Soeters & Manigart, 2008).
Multinational cooperation, however, is not a military peculiarity. In the world of business it has since long been a rule to take culture into account when working internationally. Here, failing to consider the cultural aspects and differences when dealing with production and marketing strategies in a foreign country can ultimately lead to the failure of a project (Soeters & Manigart, 2008, p. 4).

According to Selmeski (2007), the context of an academic study in culture and organizations are primarily aimed for the context of business in Western, bureaucratic, for-profit, IT era, and does not apply at all in dealing with cross-cultural competence in a military context. However, Soeters (1997) has used Hofstede’s study on Cultural Dimensions (1980) and applied it to a military context and has discovered both similarities and differences when comparing the results to the original civilian study, which the thesis will discuss later on.

The Swedish Armed Forces (SAF), in 2013, is involved in the activities of several multinational military organizations on operational level, for instance Partnership for Peace (Pfp), ISAF and EU administrated efforts. Camp Northern Lights in northern Afghanistan, where the Swedish contingent has been based since 2006, has also been the base for Finnish troops where interaction between soldiers is taking place on daily basis. An interesting question to examine is how a Swedish commander, with his or her leadership style, is perceived by the Finnish soldiers and vice versa?

To the same extent as in international business, multinational cooperation has become a reality in the military context, thus a Swedish officer must prepare for it and the cultural aspects must be taken into account. Sweden’s national culture is different from, for example, Belgium’s culture in terms of norms and values even though they both are modern, Western nations. The culture of a nation shapes the core values of the individual and might be reflected in how an individual feels, thinks and acts (Hofstede et al., 2010). Possibly also in how an individual leads.

On that subject, Developmental leadership (DL) is a model used by the SAF since 2003. The need for a new updated leadership model with a scientific legitimacy was recognized. Consequently the Swedish National Defence College was tasked to develop a model (Larsson & Kallenberg, 2006, p. 44). As a model and concept it is used as a tool for evaluation and
development for all employees in the SAF and the model is part of the education of future officers at the Swedish Military Academy (Larsson et al., 2003).

On the other hand, the Belgian Armed Forces do not have a specific leadership model they apply in their organization. What are the reasons for this choice (or passivity)?

1.2 Purpose and Research Question
The objective of this thesis is to discuss the influence of national culture in leadership within military organizations and also to explore how effective a specific leadership model has in an international context. However, the aim is not to answer the question of if a certain leadership model has effect or not and therefore legitimize or discard the use of this leadership model in an organization. It rather raises the question of why this leadership model has been chosen and has become such an integral part of the evaluation, development and training of leaders and its application in operational settings. The main focus will be on national culture; however aspects of organizational and military culture will also be discussed.

Furthermore, to add an additional perspective to the research, the thesis will attempt to identify a leadership model suitable for Belgian culture, but more importantly, identify why it is suitable.

Therefore, the research question that the thesis will try to answer is:

**What is the relationship between national culture and leadership models in military organizations?**

The emphasis will lie on the relationship between the national culture of Sweden and the Developmental Leadership model.

1.3 Previous Research
There are numerous texts on bachelor’s and master’s level about Swedish management and leadership in an international business context, but only a handful of research and literature on the same subject in a military context are relevant to the research question posed.

Vikblad (2009) studied the effectiveness of DL during deployments abroad. He compared the DL model with the leadership models applied in Denmark and Israel. His conclusion was that Denmark, that uses a transformational leadership model, combined with individual coaching for
their officers, staff members and squad leaders, was the most efficient model for leaders on all levels during deployments. Although this study considered the level of efficiency of DL during deployment abroad, it did not examine the relationship to the aspect of national culture, nor the multicultural context in multinational organizations.

Febbraro (2008) has similarly studied the implication culture has on military organization and recommends a number of solutions to acquire a cross-cultural competence, the result being a more efficient military leader in a multicultural context. But this study does not focus on leadership models, although transformational leadership is mentioned as a recommended model for an “international leader”, however she has a more general focus on the subject.

1.4 Disposition
The first chapter introduces the reader to the subject and presents the objective of this thesis.

The second chapter describes the methodology applied in the study and the different parts that constitute the thesis. This methodology chapter is essential in order for the reader to understand how the structuring of this the thesis the perspective adopted.

The third chapter presents the theories behind the main topics of the thesis; leadership and national culture. Initially, each topic will be described from a more conceptualizing and general point of view and gradually narrow down to the specific theories that will be the subject of study later on.

The fourth chapter presents the results from the qualitative literature analysis and the interview study. Firstly, this work will define the levels of Sweden’s cultural dimensions, secondly, it will define the levels of DL cultural dimensions and, thirdly, it will present the results from the interview study. Additionally, Belgium’s cultural dimensions will also be presented.

The fifth chapter analyzes the results by comparing them to each other and to the theoretical framework.

The concluding chapter of this thesis answers the research question and gives suggestions for further research on this subject.
2. Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology applied in the study and the different parts that constitutes the thesis. This chapter is essential in order for the reader to understand the structure of the thesis and the perspectives adopted by the author.

2.1 Topic

As described in Figure 1, the concepts of leadership and national culture will initially be addressed separately and then culminate in a conclusion answering the research question. The link to find the relationship between the two respective concepts will be Hofstede’s (2010) theory of Cultural Dimensions.

Figure 1 Cultural Dimensions as a link

2.2 Methodological Approach

There are two main approaches to conduct research in the field of social science; quantitative approach and qualitative approach. Within these two approaches there are methods of collecting the material for the research; 1) asking people, 2) observing people, and 3) to observe physical
traces and result of activities performed by people. The latter consists primarily of written material such as literature, articles and diaries, but can also include items such as sound recordings, images, films and architecture (Esaiasson et al., 2009, p. 219).

Being simplistic, one could say that the quantitative method is counting and the qualitative method is interpreting. Although, quantitative studies includes some interpreting of data and qualitative studies may require some systematic work (Johannessen & Tufte, 2003, p. 126). The quantitative approach aims at answering the question of the frequency and/or space a category of interest appears in research data, also known as mechanical counting (Esaiasson et al., 2009, p. 224). In other words, a quantitative text analysis can be performed by counting the occurrences of a word or phrase in a text in order to distinguish the centrality of the text. By defining the interest points beforehand into variables, a quantitative analysis gives the possibility to analyse large amount of data. The results of a quantitative analysis will give you a broad and general knowledge of a subject.

In comparison, the qualitative method can provide a more specific analysis of the data. If the data is literature, for example, the qualitative method calls for detailed reading of specific parts of the text, the reading of the entire text and reading the text in the context it belongs to. It gives the researcher the opportunity to interpret the text and identify the parts of the text that are most important for the study.

2.3 Data Collection

The data collection of this thesis will consist partly of a qualitative literature analysis and partly of interviews with Swedish military officers currently working in multinational military organizations.

Firstly, the qualitative literature analysis will compare Sweden’s cultural dimensions with the DL concept to find a correlation between a national culture and a leadership model. Initially systematize the text by classifying (Esaiasson et al., 2009, p. 238) the components of the leadership model in terms of the dimensions of culture (Hofstede et al., 2010). This theory has been chosen as a basis because “it is the most prominent and most elaborated and the dimensions offer an understanding and measuring of national culture” (Handley and Levis, 2001 cited in Febbraro, 2008).
Each component of the DL model, discussed by Larsson (2003) will be classified on a scale from high to low on each of the dimensions of culture. The average score will determine the level of the model on each dimension. To create a context; the conventional leadership model will also be classified. Hence, a comparison can be made between the levels of national culture of Sweden and the levels of the DL model. The qualitative literature analysis will identify the specifics to determine the level of each component and ultimately the level of the whole model. For instance, how is “show individualized consideration” described in a individualistic/collectivistic perspective.

Secondly, in order to concretize the literature analysis, a series of interviews is conducted with three Swedish officers currently serving in a multinational military organization in Europe. The validity of the research will be diminished due to the relatively small number of interview candidates. But the empirical data that is collected will serve as a complement to the results from the literature analysis by showing in what way culture and leadership can affect each other. With that said; these individuals have been chosen because of their specific “international” background and experience, and according to the principle of centrality when choosing interview subjects (Esaiasson et al., 2009, p. 291). The aim of the interview study is to 1) discuss how/if they apply DL in their professional life, 2) if their leadership style is different “at home” versus in an international context and 3) how “typical Swedish behavior” is generally perceived in an international context.

The result of the collected data will be analyzed and together with the theoretical framework a conclusion will be presented in the final chapter.

2.4 Validity

The validity of this thesis can be viewed upon from two perspectives; firstly construct validity, which measures the validity of the theoretical framework and, secondly, result validity, which is the sum of construct validity and reliability (Esaiasson et al., 2009, p. 63).

The construct validity of this thesis primarily refers to the typology of Cultural Dimensions which has been used as a basis in other several studies, including in a military context. Validity problems increase with the distance between the theoretical definition and the operational indicator (Esaiasson et al., 2009, p. 65).
In this case, the construct validity is high due to the extensive research conducted previously using the theory as a operational indicator. The main criticism of the theory is the fact that it derived from a study conducted in the 1970s and the accuracy of the data can be called into question. Nevertheless, this thesis will, as a result, consider other theories that will complement and attempt to compensate for the theory’s shortcomings. The interviews, in particular, play the role of complementing the literature analysis.

The reliability of the study, too, could be questioned based on the level of accuracy. The levels of the single models will only be determined in relation to eachother and cannot be given an exact level or score. This way, the study will only give an indication of a model’s relationship to national culture, ultimately affecting the result validity.

2.5 Limitations and ethical considerations

A few limitations can be identified in the methodology of the thesis. Firstly, simply considering the relationship between Swedish national culture and the leadership model adopted by the SAF does not suffice to answer the research question to its full extent. More examples from different nations are needed to achieve higher result validity.

Secondly, as mentioned earlier, the use of Hofstede’s (2010) theory has been criticized for being obsolete since the original study was conducted more than 40 years ago. This would mean that the levels of the cultural dimension in Hofstede’s study might be inaccurate.

Thirdly, the issue regarding the reliability will affect the result validity, because the study cannot determine the exact level or score of a leadership model more than in relation to other models. Instead, the result will give an indication of a relationship.

For the ethical considerations, the interviewees and the organization they work for will remain anonymous in able to create an open and in-depth interview environment. In addition, no incentive has been offered to any of the interviewees in the research and each will have the opportunity to review their contribution before it is finalized.
3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter will present the theories behind the main topics of the thesis; leadership and national culture. Initially each topic will be described from a more conceptualizing and general perspective and then gradually narrow down to the specific theories that will be subject for the study later on.

3.1 Leadership

3.1.1 Definition

Leadership can be conceptualized in many ways and definitions of the concept of leadership are almost as many as the number of individuals who have tried to define it (Northouse, 2010, p. 2). Different perspectives on the subject of leadership have led to different ways of conceptualizing it. Research during the beginning of the 20th century was dominated by studies identifying personal traits among leaders. This personality perspective suggests that certain traits and characteristics that an individual possess is the definition of a leader. Therefore only certain individuals are born to lead. Similarly the skill perspective is viewed on the capabilities an individual has that make an effective leader (Northouse, 2010, p. 2). The difference lies in that skills can be acquired by any individual and not only a certain few. One can also define leadership as the focus of group processes where a leader is in center of the group and the activities derives from the will of the group.

Moreover, some define leadership as the power relationship aspect between leaders and followers. The Machiavellian leadership, from Machiavelli’s Il Principe from 1532, argues that the one who has the power has the right, and obligation, to use all available means to accomplish a goal without considering the suffering of citizens (Larsson & Kallenber, 2006, p. 31). “Is it better to be loved than feared?” (Machiavelli, 1532/1996, p. 117) Leadership has also been looked at as a transformational process that moves people to achieve more than it is usually expected from them (Northouse, 2010, p. 2).

Nevertheless, what is common between all of the perspectives is that leadership involves the influence of other people towards a goal. Northouse (2010, p. 3) defines leadership as “…a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.”
3.1.2 Leadership models – from a matter of traits to transformation

In the middle of the 20th century, the Ohio State University conducted a study aimed at how a leader acts when leading a group or organization (Northouse, 2010, p. 15), rather than looking at the traits of a leader that has been so popular to study (see Lewin & Lippit, 1938). The research found that leaders were grouped around two different behaviors; *initiating structure* and *consideration* (Stogdill, 1974). The initiating structure was behavior focusing on the task, for example organizing work, setting goals, delegating responsibilities etc. Consideration is behavior to create a hospitable working environment and generally building a good relationship between leaders and followers. These behaviors are viewed as distinct and independent and can be used dynamically to fit the situation. A criticism on this model is the lack of guidance on how to use these two behaviors for an effective leadership (Northouse, 2010, p. 26).

Consequently, the Situational Leadership model by Hersey and Blanchard (1969) goes further and points out that the competence and commitment of the followers is important. As the name indicates this leadership model focuses on leadership in situations. As in the previous model there are also two types of behaviors identified for the leader and consists of *directive* (task oriented) and *supportive* (relationship oriented) behavior. By determining the level of competence and commitment of followers there is a certain style of leadership that can be used.

Depending on the development level of the followers, the leader can adapt their leadership style to the situation, as the figure below show there are four distinct categories.

![Situational Leadership model](image)

*Figure 2 Situational Leadership model (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969)*
Even though the Situational Leadership model has formed the basis of a vast number of studies it is criticized mainly for two reasons. The first reason is that a group is seldom as homogenous as this model categorize it, the second reason is, that most leaders primarily have one dominant leadership style and few can shift their leadership styles in such a drastic way (Larsson & Kallenberg, 2006, p. 36).

Burns (1978) distinguished two different leadership styles, *transactional* and *transformational*. Transactional leadership focuses on the exchange between a leader and a follower, for example a teacher who gives a student a good grade in exchange for a well-written piece of work or an employer who pays an employee a salary, in exchange for the employee showing up for work.

Transformational leadership on the other hand is where a leader engages to create a connection and motivates the followers further thus helping them to develop to their highest potential in order to reach a goal (Northouse, 2010, p. 173).

Bass (1985) developed the Burn’s concept by paying more attention to the need of the followers and by adding the important element of charisma of a leader. Charismatic leadership, introduced by House (1976), is often described as being very similar to transformational leadership. A charismatic leader possess certain traits of personality that include being dominant, having strong desire to influence others, being self-confident and having a strong sense of one’s own moral values. These traits in turn affect followers, leading to the creation of faith in the leader’s ideology, affection towards the leader and an increase in follower potential.

Furthermore, Bass (1985) argues that transformational leadership motivates followers to do more than expected of them by raising the awareness of the value of specific goals, to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the group and to motivate followers to aim higher. He also argues that transactional and transformational are part of one single continuum rather than two independent continuums. This is more clearly illustrated in the Full Range of Leadership model (Bass & Aviolo, 1994), which consists of three parts; transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership.
Figure 3 Full Range of Leadership model *(Bass & Aviolo, 1994)*

Within the three parts of the Full Range of Leadership model are seven different facets (see figure 3). The highest facet, *idealized influence*, is synonymous with charisma. It describes a leader who acts as a strong role model that their followers strive to emulate. Such leaders live to a very high moral standard and a strict ethical code of conduct, providing followers with their vision and goal. The three following facets, after idealized influence, are inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration which fall under the transformational leadership part of the model (Northouse, 2010, p. 176).

Contingent reward is one of the two facets of transactional leadership in the Full Range of Leadership model. Transactional leadership constitutes the exchange process between leader and follower to the benefit of both parties; agreement between the two parties is essential. The second facet, ”management-by-exception”, includes more negative reinforcement, giving constructive criticism and negative feedback.

Lastly, laissez-faire leadership is a non-leadership style meaning that no consideration or decisions are taken. Using the laissez-faire leadership style, a leader does not communicate with their followers and lacks long-term vision for the organization. The Full Range of Leadership model is viewed as a linear relation between the efforts put into the leadership and the performance of the followers, where idealized influence is the most desirable outcome.

Criticism of the transformational leadership perspective in general is the notion that leadership is treated as a personality trait rather than a behavior that can be taught. It is viewed as undemocratic and is said to be open to abuse, exemplified by its emphasis on charisma. Adolf Hitler is a much-touted example of an individual who utilized charismatic leadership. Rather than
focusing on the leader, however, the models are supposed to focus on the leader-group dynamic and the shared leadership process (Northouse, 2010, p. 188).

### 3.1.3 Developmental Leadership

The concept of charisma is especially interesting when considering the Swedish adaptation of the Developmental Leadership (DL) model. This model is heavily based on the Transformational leadership and the Full Range of Leadership model, but with some alteration. The focus on charisma, for instance, is considered unsuitable for Scandinavian leadership culture because it connotes elitism and a glorification of the leader (Larsson et al., 2003). A democratic leader must not be associated with such, which is self-evident for a Scandinavian leader. In addition, the English word “transformational” is difficult to translate into Swedish. This limitation has led to the use of “developmental” instead, in Swedish *utvecklande*, which translated means both developing and developmental.

DL has three components; 1) to act as an exemplary model, 2) show individualized consideration and 3) demonstrate inspiration and motivation. In comparison with Transformational Leadership model (Bass, 1985); to act as an exemplary model is very similar to being a charismatic leader or the highest facet in the Full Range of Leadership model, idealized influence. The facet intellectual stimulations, however, that is present in the same model has been dropped, leaving individualized consideration and finally inspiration and motivation (Larsson et al., 2003).

The first component, act as an *exemplary model*, is derived from a set of three basic values; openness, result and responsibility, all of which members of the SAF adhere to (Swedish Armed Forces Headquarters, 2013). Other behaviors include being a role model and taking responsibility for your actions. That being said, the model can also be considered as a state of mind rather than merely a simple instructive leadership behavior (Larsson et al., 2003).

The second component, *individualized consideration*, consists of two factors. The first is support, both in terms of emotional and practical support, for guidance or education. It is important that the leader pays interest in the individual follower, not only professionally but also personally. The second factor is confrontation, it is equally important to face a bad behavior directly, giving constructive criticism whilst paying attention to what is best for the individual (Larsson et al., 2003).
The third and final component, *inspiration and motivation*, refers to encouraging participation by delegation of responsibility and involving the group in the long term goals. Moreover, this component promotes creativity by encouraging new ideas and questioning present structures and policies (Larsson et al., 2003).

Nevertheless, to understand this model fully it must be viewed in its full context. Just as the Full Range of Leadership model the DL model sits atop a hierarchical scale directly above *Conventional Leadership*. Similar to transactional leadership, conventional leadership is founded on the exchange process between leader and follower. It is also divided into different facets, where the top two facets are seen as positive procedures whereas the bottom two facets are negative procedures.

![Figure 4 Developmental Leadership model (Larsson, et al., 2003)](image)

The first of the facets that are seen as positive is demand and reward, where agreement is sought between leader and follower to benefit both, and the second is control, where the leader takes necessary measures to get the job done. The two positive facets of conventional leadership and DL are the preferred styles of leadership to be used, depending on the situation. (Larsson & Kallenberg, 2006).

In contrast, the two bottom facets are demand and reward and control, but where a negative reinforcement style is employed such as “if, but only if, rewards” and an over-controlling style with minimal trust accorded to the followers (Larsson et al., 2003).

Last comes the Laissez-faire leadership, which is the same as in transactional leadership.
3.1.4 A Swedish Model

DL was developed by a study group at the Swedish National Defence College. In 2002, the SAF realized that they needed a new leadership model with an academic legitimacy for the evaluation and developmental process of personnel. The previous model only involved an atheoretical top-down evaluation. Consequently, higher ranking personnel was not evaluated and there was ambiguity as to what was considered “good” or “bad” resulting in unreliable ratings (Larsson et al., 2003).

Figure 5 A Swedish model (Larsson, et al., 2003)

The questions the study group asked were:

1) What are the essential building blocks of leadership and

2) How do they relate to each other?

As figure 5 illustrates it consists of three main areas; Leader Characteristics, Contextual Characteristics and Leadership Styles. The leader characteristics that have been identified are divided in two facets, basic prerequisites and desirable competencies. The basic prerequisites affect development of desirable competencies; the better the basic prerequisites are, the better the desirable competencies become (Larsson & Kallenberg, 2006, p. 39).
Leadership is also affected by external factors where the contextual characteristics enter into play. This applies the military environment in particular where stress and uncertainty are common (Larsson & Kallenberg, 2006, p. 43).

Alvesson and Kärreman (2010) criticize the model arguing the relevance of a general model in such a specific environment. Considering that the “military environment” ranges from a typical office environment to leading a platoon in combat, one could ask how a model deriving from a political, commercial and administrative context could be fitted into the military. Moreover, the link between the abstract theory and practices in the DL model is unclear.

What is also unclear is the purpose of the model; is it to instruct leaders? Is it a social integrative mechanism to create a cohesive leadership culture in the SAF? Is it part of a sales promotion for the model itself? Stating that officers in the SAF use this model, and because the military are associated with being knowledgeable about leadership, it promotes the perception that it must be applicable in any type of organization. On the contrary, Alvesson and Kärreman (2010) stress that many officers are not even aware of the model, or, at least, do not consciously apply it to their style of leadership.

The last point brings us back to the beginning of the chapter, to the definition of the concept of leadership and how it can be conceptualized in a variety of ways. Another criticism questions why the SAF would have one explicit leadership model. If it is to create a cohesive leadership culture, one could ask from where it derived from.

### 3.2. Understanding Culture

#### 2.2.1 Definition

In everyday speech, culture can be referred to as civilizations or a “refinement of the mind” such as education, art and literature. The US Department of Defense’s official definition of culture is: “a feature of the terrain that has been constructed by man [sic]. Included are such items as roads, buildings, and canals; boundary lines; and, in a broad sense, all names and legends on a map” (Department of Defense 2006 cited in Selmeski, 2007). This is a narrow and domain-specific definition of culture. However, culture is a very general concept and the definition varies depending on the use and the domain in which it is observed.
Culture in a broader sense is what Hofstede (2010) denominates as “mental software”. He defines and studies culture through the way people are thinking, speaking and feeling. Culture also includes features of every-day human life such as greetings, eating, showing feelings, making love and maintaining body hygiene. It is important to acknowledge the distinction between culture in the narrow sense, described above, and culture as a deeper awareness (Selmeski, 2007). Hofstede (2010 p. 6) defines it as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from others”. By using terminology such as “programming of the mind”, Hofstede draws parallels between culture and the components of a computer; the software of a computer is the culture of a person, hence the name of his book “Software of the Mind” (2010).

Moreover, Hofstede (2010) argues that culture is learned, not inherited. Culture should be distinguished from human nature on one side, and from an individual’s personality on the other (see Figure 6).

![Figure 6 Cultural Pyramid](Hofstede et al., 2010)

Additionally, he argues that the whole concept of values and culture is intangible and that mental programs are constructs. “A construct is a product of our imagination, supposed to help our understanding. Constructs do not “exist” in an absolute sense: We define them into existence.” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 14)

**3.2.2 Onion diagram**

How cultural differences manifest themselves can be described by Hofstede’s onion model (Figure 7), four layers that symbolize one total concept.
Symbols in the context of the onion diagram are words, gestures, pictures or objects that carry a particular meaning, which is culturally implicit. The words of any language or jargon belong in this category, as do fashion, hairstyles, Coca-Cola, flags. New symbols are easily developed and old ones disappear (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 9).

Heroes are persons, alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics which are highly prized in a culture, and who thus serve as role models for behavior (ibid.), for instance Nelson Mandela in South Africa or a Pippi Longstocking in Sweden.

Rituals are collective activities that are, within a culture, considered as socially essential; they are therefore carried out for their own sake. Ways of greeting and paying respect to others, social and religious ceremonies are all good examples of rituals.

Symbols, heroes, rituals can be defined together by the term “practices”. The deepest layer, the core, of culture is formed by values. Values are deeply rooted and are affected by the experiences that were exposed to us before we were conscious of them. They deal with broad tendencies to prefer some things over others such as evil vs. good, dirty vs. clean, ugly vs. beautiful, unnatural vs. natural, abnormal vs. normal, irrational vs. rational and paradoxical vs. logical (ibid.).

Trompenaars (2000) claims that there are different levels of culture in terms of the different contexts culture can appear in, for example, national culture. Culture can also define the behavior of an organization. Groups within an organization can also create their own culture which is

Figure 7 Onion diagram (Hofstede et al., 2010)
described as a “professional culture”. The following part of the chapter will discuss these three layers of culture.

3.3 National Culture

3.3.1 Definition

The concept of nations is something relatively new. One way of describing nations would be as political units with strong integrated institutions such as a common language, common mass media, a national political system, a national army, a national education system and a national market for services and products (Hofstede et al., 2010). Although, nations should not be viewed homogenous with societies, as within many nations, there can be several cultural societies that were not considered when borders were drawn. Most African nations, especially, consist of several different tribes dispersed between colonies by the technologically advanced countries of Western Europe. “Societies are historically, organically developed forms of social organization.” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 21)

Moreover, d’Iribarne (2009) argues that because “shared meaning [is] leading to common behavior” is the definition of culture, shared among a small-size group or community, it is difficult to regard an entire country to have one single culture. Using an interpretative approach implies there are diverse number of behavior within one single country.

Regional, ethnic and religious differences within a nation create sub-cultures. One must also regard social class, gender and differences between generations. As an example, Hedlund (2008) described the tense cooperation between Sweden and Ireland in Liberia as a matter of differences regarding social class as much as national culture. But the distinction between nationalities, the passport that you carry, is a feasible measure of classification. In everyday speech, it is common to hear that something is “typically American” or “typically French” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 21). One can dig deeper of course and find correlations in national cultural values among available theories. Weber (1978) suggests how capitalism, and how it evolved in Western Europe, is based on rationalism derived from the protestant ascetic ethics that tells people salvation can be found if you live your life working restlessly and systematically.

But a study comparing national culture does not necessarily consider the different sub-cultures within a nation; however it does show tendencies of differences between nations. Nonetheless, it
is reasonable to assert that something is shared within a national culture and it is this “something”, and how it differs between nations, which should be studied (d'Iribarne, 2009).

3.3.2 Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions
Hofstede (1980) has made an attempt to classify national culture and in 1980 he introduced a new paradigm to the field of social science. Since then, the theory has been integrated into many disciplines dealing with culture including sociology, psychology and management (Hofstede, 2002). The quantitative study of the multinational corporation IBM and their regional subsidiaries included employees in over 50 nations. The study consisted of survey data concerning the values of people and it revealed common problems. However, the solutions differed from country to country. The various problem areas were identified and later on named cultural dimensions, and include:

1) Social inequality, including the relationship with authority;
2) The relationship between the individual and the group;
3) Concepts of masculinity and femininity: the social implications of having been born as a boy or a girl;
4) Ways of dealing with uncertainty, relating to the control of aggression and the expression of emotions.

Thus the different dimensions have been named power distance, collectivism versus individualism, masculinity versus femininity and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Power distance refers to beliefs in a society about the unequal distribution of power and status and their acceptance of this inequality. In countries with a high power distance culture, individuals with higher positions or titles have significant power and people in these cultures tend to accept such centralized power, which implies that they depend on their superiors for direction since they are less likely to take part in the decision-making process. On the other hand, in countries with a low power distance culture, people assume to be involved in decision-making, and do not accept centralized decisions and power easily. Indeed, employee participation is a component of lower distance culture.

According to Hofstede (2010), individualistic cultures constitute a society where commitments are movable and everyone is more likely to look out for themselves and their family. On the other
hand, in collectivistic cultures, people are incorporated at birth into heavily cohesive in-groups, and loyalty to the group is life-long. In other words, people think in terms of “we” in collectivist cultures while people think in terms of “me” in individualist cultures.

Masculinity refers to societies where social gender roles are clearly distinguishable. Masculine cultures value assertiveness and place an emphasis to material success, while feminine cultures value modesty, tenderness and quality of life, at home as well as in the workplace.

Uncertainty avoidance is the “extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations” (Hofstede et al., 2010 p. 191). In cultures with high uncertainty avoidance; organizations and individuals are used to doing things using a traditional approach and are likely to resist new technologies because of the possible risks attached. On the contrary, in countries with a low uncertainty avoidance culture, there is less need to predict things and a lesser dependence on rules. This implies that such a culture is more trusting and people are more disposed to adopt and implement new technologies in their work.

A fifth dimension, long-term orientation, was later added. Closely related to the teachings of Confucius, it can be interpreted as dealing with society’s search for virtue, the extent to which a society shows a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historical short-term point of view. However, this dimension will not be included in the analysis of this thesis as it was not part of the original study. Fang (2003), in the same vein, is critical of the additional fifth dimension, questioning its relevance and that the two ends of the spectrum are unclear and contradictory.

Hofstede’s theory has been questioned, typically in terms of surveys not being a suitable way of measuring cultural differences and nations not being the best entities for studying cultures. Consequently, Hofstede could respond his critiques. Regarding the methodology the reply was that it is not supposed to be the only way, but suggests a perspective (Hofstede, 2002). Nations, as we mentioned earlier, constitute a feasible and straightforward way to measure differences. Other critical viewpoints have been that one company and its subsidiaries cannot provide information of a nation’s culture and since the study was conducted in the 1970s it is now out of date.
3.3.3 Culture according to Trompenaars

Trompenaars (2000) has also defined culture in the form of dimensions and also suggests that cultures distinguish themselves from each other by the ways in which they solve problems. From these solutions, he has identified seven different dimensions of culture. These are universalism vs. particularism, individualism vs. communitarianism, neutral vs. affective, specific vs. diffuse, achievement vs. ascription, sequential vs. synchronic and internal vs. external control.

Many of these dimensions describe similar behaviors as Hofstede’s theory does, for example individualism vs. communitarianism; do people see themselves primarily as individuals or as part of a group in the community who contributes for a shared cause? Or achievement vs. ascription; the view on how status is attained. In an achievement culture, individuals obtain status based on their performance, achievements and records, whereas in an ascription culture, they obtain their status by birth, family, gender or age.

Trompenaars also includes dimensions of culture that describe behavior, for example, specific vs. diffuse which describes the individual’s involvement of their personal matters in to their professional work sphere. “Specific” cultures separate work from private life. On the other hand, in “diffuse” cultures, people share their private life when entering their work environment. This could be compared to Hofstede’s power distance, but it is more specific and adds a deeper dimension to people’s behavior.

Trompenaars’ seven dimensions theory shows that people may react differently to universal problems depending on their culture. Moreover, national culture generally, has an impact on management, which is reflected in the basic beliefs and behaviors of the country’s individuals.

3.4 Organizational and military culture

Organizations are defined by the people working in them and one can therefor trace back through organizational culture to national culture. The dimension of power distance, for instance, directly correlates to a flat organization or a hierarchical organization. Hofstede (2010) has made an attempt applying his model with Mintzberg’s (1983) organizational structures including two of his dimensions; power distance, reflecting centralization, and uncertainty avoidance, reflecting formalization. He argues that with this data you can determine a nation’s preferred organizational structure.
Hofstede’s (2010) conclusion was that, as an example, Sweden with its low levels of uncertainty avoidance and low power distance would prefer an “adhocracy” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 314). This is characterized by a tendency to bring experts together to create an environment for problem-solving in smoothly functioning ad-hoc project groups. This type of structure tends to group the experts who are specialized in specific subjects in smaller and functional units which make standardized practice difficult to apply. This means that the preferred coordinating mechanism is mutual adjustment (Karlöf & Lövingsson, 2005, p. 218). An example of an adhocracy structure is a construction project where several specialized units are assembled to create a project or, in a military context, a task force where different types of units temporarily join forces for a specific mission.

In comparison, Belgium, with a high level of uncertainty avoidance and a high level of power distance would prefer a “machine bureaucracy” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 314). This structure is characterized by standardization of work processes. This means a large operating core (people who do the work) carrying out simple and routine tasks that seldom require advanced training. Instead, the important part is the techno structure (people in staff roles supplying ideas) that standardizes the work, often led by a centralized power for decision making. Examples of machine bureaucracy are found in national postal services and most car manufacturing plants (Karlöf & Lövingsson, 2005, p. 217).

Hofstede’s attempt to incorporate Mintzberg’s organizational structures with cultural dimensions, suggests that national culture may have an effect on preference of organizational structure, but what if organizations of different nations, with different preferences, need to work together?

3.4.1 Examples of multinational military cooperation

An empirical study by Soeters (2006) shows that there are certain complications during times of international military cooperation. This study consists of three separate cases of cooperation in Afghanistan. Firstly, there is the German-Dutch cooperation in Kabul. Even though the German and the Dutch armed forces had cooperated in operations previously, the first combined deployment was to Kosovo 1999, and studies had demonstrated that mutual respect was shown (Soeters et al., 2008), the deployment to Kabul in 2002 was not as successful. In short, the Dutch soldiers felt uncomfortable with the German dominance in personnel, material resources and command. Previous deployments had sought balance between the two nations, but political
decisions changed that balance during their deployment to Afghanistan. The Dutch soldiers isolated themselves in the camp and the isolation grew into complaints on matters regarding unfairness with regards to housing conditions and supplies, supposedly differing between the German and Dutch. In 2003, the Dutch ended the cooperation due to new commitment in Iraq and a bi-national operation between these nations has not reoccurred since then.

Secondly was a study on the multinational cooperation at Kabul Airport. As a large majority of ISAF’s resources had to be supplied by air, NATO tasked almost all NATO air forces to man and run the airport. The operational tasks at the airport were assigned to a unit from each nation, for example, force protection to the Belgians, medical service to the Spanish, and air transport to the Turkish units and so on. No single nation dominated in number and the command rotated every six months to a commander from different nation. The running of the airport is said to have been smooth, although with some language issues and differences in national rules and regulations. One incident occurred when the new Turkish commander would relieve the current Icelandic commander. Rumors on base were that new alcohol rules were to apply and that female soldiers could not leave their premises after a certain time. When the new commander arrived none of these rumored measures was implemented and business continued as usual.

Third was a study of the Canadian-Belgian cooperation in Kabul. The unit was a tri-national battle group consisting of Belgian Airborne, Norwegian reconnaissance and Hungarian infantry troops. The battle group was based in the Canadian Camp Julien where Canadian troops were dominant in number. The commander of the battle group was quite satisfied with the unit as regards operations in the field, but was less so with life on the base. The difference in working styles between the Belgian and the Canadian were significant. The Canadians were characterized by a high level of discipline and strict rules. Collective punishment was not an unusual phenomenon even if only one person had committed the offence. Also, rank-segregated messes were not familiar among the Belgian troops as they were used to having an all ranks bar where privates and colonels could sit together after hours. The rough, aggressive climate within the Canadian outfit also contrasted to the relaxed and laid-back style of Belgian troops. The Belgian troops also believed they were treated in a condescending manner by their Canadian counterpart.

Even though the first and third examples reflect a clearer picture of tensions between national troops, the second also demonstrates that all intercultural cooperation entails problems of one
kind or another. Soeters (et al., 2006) recommends three approaches to this problem. If one party clearly dominates another, and the minority is willing to consider its own cultural identity as not being very important, it would be sensible to assimilate into the dominating party. Most often the dominating party expects this to happen. An example of assimilation is among a multinational air force that use the same (mostly American) technology, resulting in an American cultural dominance (Soeters, Popete, & Page, 2006).

If the smaller party is not willing to give up its cultural identity and rejects the other group practices, separation can beneficial. The German-Dutch example of cooperation shows that when they were reassigned and given responsibility of their own geographical area, it was a relief for the Dutch troops.

However, in the sense of achieving a cross-cultural competence between different nations, the ultimate goal should be mutual accommodation. This would lead to a true integration and would involve the acceptance by dominant and smaller parties to find a new and common way of working. Ideally, there should be a balance in numbers and no dominating party, such in the case of Kabul Airport.

Soeters (1997) carried out a different study using Hofstede’s theory as a basis, and even replicated it using Hofstede’s standardized method and instruments (Hofstede, 1980), on 13 military academies from different countries. The results were that cultural differences between the different academies occurred just as well as it had been shown in the original study between civilian counterparts. However, the result possibly showed the existence of an international military culture. This military culture is more collectivistic, shows higher power distance and less masculinity (less salary driven) than the civilian working culture (Soeter, 1997). Consequently military personnel from different nations often can work together with relatively few problems (Soeters & Manigart, 2008).

### 3.4.2 National styles

National styles of dealing with conflict can also be discussed and Soeters (2006), again, compares the differences referring to Hofstede’s theory. He argues that countries with high levels in the dimension of masculinity, like the UK and the US, have a higher defense spending percentage of
their GDP. They also tend to resolve international conflicts using military force. Falkland Islands and Northern Ireland is brought up as examples for the British.

In comparison, a conflict between Sweden and Finland in the 1920s about a small island situated between them caused a huge clash. The countries, both rated with very low levels in the masculinity dimension, ended the conflict the diplomatic way, hence the correlation between masculinity and how to deal with conflicts (Soeters, Popete, & Page, 2006, p. 14). This does not mean that national culture determines an outcome with the certainty of the laws of natural science. But as a study of social science the profile of national culture has the character of probability, therefore it cannot be ignored (Elster 1993 cited in Soeters 2006 p.14).

Moreover, one could identify clusters of nations that have similar cultures, for example the former British colonies, including UK, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and a Latin cluster with France, Italy and Spain (Soeters, Popete, & Page, 2006, p.7).

### 3.4.3 Multinational leadership

Febbraro (2008) discuss the leadership competencies a commander in a multinational unit would need. She stresses that the focus should not be on creating a *unity of command*, which would be difficult because a doctrinal unity in multinational cooperation is hard to achieve. Instead the focus should be on *unity of effort* towards common goals. However, there will be, as previously stated, differences between nations in cooperation, meaning a multinational leader must build consensus regarding the common goals and objectives in order to create effective leadership (Febbraro, 2008, p 51).

Moreover, the multinational leader has to have an array of skills, knowledge and competence because of the complexity of working in a multicultural context, as opposed to a uni-cultural context when only working with a unit of your own nationality. On top of that, a social intellect as well as a cross-cultural competence is desirable (Febbraro, 2008). Shamir and Ben-Ari (2000) suggest that aspects of transformational leadership would be required for this sort of leadership. One such aspect would be the factor of individual consideration, respecting differences of cultural needs, and intellectual stimulation by challenging other people’s perceptions about other cultures and encourage a new point of view. Further on they mention that the existing leadership models may not suffice for the challenges military commanders in a multicultural context meet
Moreover, they argue that a new model is necessary to develop in order to provide guidelines for recruitment and education of future military leaders.

3.4.4 Cross-Cultural Competence

Selmeski (2007) has introduced the concept Cross-Cultural Competence (3C), described as a skill all military personnel require in a cross-cultural context. Though it can seem to be a very complex concept, it is easiest understood when it is absent, a sort of cross-cultural incompetence. The objective of implementing 3C in the military is: “The ability to quickly and accurately comprehend, then appropriately and effectively engage individuals from distinct cultural backgrounds to achieve the desired effect.” This objective should be attained “despite not having an in-depth knowledge of other culture and even though fundamental aspects of the other culture may contradict one’s own taken-for-granted assumptions/deeply-held beliefs” (Selmeski, 2007, p. 12).

Reaching the aim here will not merely be done by attending language courses and briefings about the country you are about to deploy to, but will require several years of education and experience. Although recognizing examples of cross-cultural incompetence is useful (the don'ts in do’s and don’ts), it must also be complemented with the conceptual and applied understanding of what 3C is. Besides gaining a competence that is effective in a multicultural context in the military, one would also achieve self-development (Selmeski, 2007).

Febbraro (2008, p. 66) also recommends intercultural training to gain cross-cultural competence. One of the suggestions is through language and cultural training prior to a deployment for all personnel. By applying those subjects in exercises where situations of cultural matters occur, it will help overcome the initial stress and confusion that they might face in reality.

Another recommendation is to attain global leadership skills by using the global training model (Graen and Hui, 1999). This would train military leaders to acquire certain skills, for example third-culture skill, enabling them to create a common culture between two, or more, different cultures, perhaps an international military culture (Soeters J. L., 1997). Another skill is transcultural skill development which means that one can grow beyond his own cultural socialization and understand different cultures with minimal bias (Febbraro 2008, p.66).
3.5 Summary of the theoretical part

To summarize, several theories and concepts have been discussed in the above, in order to provide the reader with a background on the concept of leadership, national culture and also the cultural effects in a military context.

Initially, the concept of leadership was introduced with the various applicable perspectives to define it. Then the different leadership theories from a trait perspective to transformational leadership were discussed. The different models have in one way or another influenced the development and implementation of DL in the SAF.

Subsequently, the concept of culture was introduced in order for the reader to have a comprehension of the several notions that it implies. Then, the thesis has introduced how the topic of culture can affect organizations. Also how it affects the military context by giving some examples of its complication in military cooperation. One study revealed a tendency of a common international military culture based on the way the cultural dimensions differed between the study conducted with civilian personnel and the one conducted with military personnel. A different study argues the importance of a cross-cultural competence in order to become an effective military leader in a multicultural context.

With this knowledge basis as a starting point, the next step will be to apply the theories in the attempt to find the relationship between national culture and leadership models.
4 Results

This chapter will present the results from the qualitative literature analysis and the interview study in three steps. First, define the levels of Sweden’s cultural dimensions, second, define the levels of DL cultural dimensions and, third, present the results from the interview study. Additionally, Belgium’s cultural dimensions will also be presented.

4.1 Developmental Leadership

4.1.1 Sweden’s Cultural Dimensions

According to Hofstede’s (2010) study, Sweden has the following scores on the dimensions of culture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Dimensions</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power Distance</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualistic</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Cultural Dimensions of Sweden (Hofstede et al., 2010)

On the dimension of power distance Sweden scores 31 of a maximum score of 100, a relatively low score which means that the Swedish style is characterized by being independent, applying a flat organization, leaders are accessible, leadership is coaching which also facilitate and empower their followers. Power is decentralized and leaders count on the experience of their team members. Followers expect to be consulted. Control is disliked and attitude towards superiors is informal and on first name basis. Communication is direct and participative.

Next, Sweden is an individualistic society with a score of 71 on this dimension. This means there is a high preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take
care of themselves and their immediate families only. In individualistic societies the followers relationship is a contract based on mutual advantage, hiring and promotion decisions are supposed to be based on merit only, management is the management of individuals.

Sweden scores 5 on the masculinity dimension and is therefore the most feminine society in the study. In feminine countries it is important to keep the family life/work balance and you make sure that all are included. An effective leader is supportive to the followers and decision making is achieved through involvement. Leaders strive for consensus and people value equality, solidarity and quality in their working lives. Conflicts are resolved by compromise and negotiation and Swedes are known for their long discussions until consensus has been reached. Incentives such as free time and flexible work hours and place are favored.

On the last dimension, Sweden scores 29 and thus has a low preference for avoiding uncertainty. Low scores in these societies maintain a more relaxed attitude in which practice counts more than principles and deviance from the norm is more easily tolerated. People believe there should be no more rules than necessary and if they are vague or do not work they should be abandoned or changed. Schedules are flexible, hard work is undertaken when necessary but not for its own sake, precision and punctuality do not come naturally, innovation is not seen as threatening.

4.1.2 Cultural Dimensions of Developmental Leadership
The three components of DL model are 1) act as an exemplary model, 2) show individualized consideration and 3) demonstrate inspiration and motivation (Larsson, et al., 2003). By determining the score each component has in each dimension the combined score will decide the level of the model in whole in a diagram. The components are classified in three scores; low, medium and high. The level of the model will later be compared to the cultural dimensions of Sweden.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Leadership</th>
<th>Power Distance</th>
<th>Individualism</th>
<th>Masculinity</th>
<th>Uncertainty avoidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exemplary model</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized consideration</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration and motivation</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Cultural Dimensions of DL
Conventional Leadership (Top two facets) | Power Distance | Individualism | Masculinity | Uncertainty avoidance
---|---|---|---|---
Demand and reward | Medium | Medium | Low | High
Control | High | Medium | Medium | High

Table 3 Cultural Dimensions of Conventional Leadership, top two facets

Conventional Leadership (Bottom two facets) | Power Distance | Individualism | Masculinity | Uncertainty avoidance
---|---|---|---|---
Demand and reward | High | Low | High | High
Control | High | Low | High | High

Table 4 Cultural Dimensions of Conventional Leadership, bottom two facets

Larsson (2003) argues that the concept of charisma did not fit well in the Scandinavian culture and thus the model had to be adjusted from the original Transformational Leadership model. He argues that the term charisma glorifies the person which is undemocratic and is associated to elitism. Although, deliberately perceiving yourself as an exemplary model is creating a hierarchical distance between you as a leader and followers. It has therefore been given a medium level. But generally DL advocates minimizing the distance between leaders and followers. Individualized consideration exemplifies a small power distance dimension. Also inspiration and motivation promotes participation in creating long-term goal, giving it a low level of power distance.

On the contrary, Conventional Leadership, especially the negative reinforcing style (the bottom two facets), exemplifies a larger power distance with its more controlling and hierarchical leadership style. But the positive (top two) facets are, on the other hand, more closely related to DL, but still, gets a high score on this dimension, although not as high as the bottom two facets.

All the components DL are designed to empower the individual, both leader and follower, in order to be effective. In one sense, a group of effective individuals creates an effective organization, but the key word is still “individual”. Hence the model has been given a high level on individualism.

Opposite, conventional leadership is about reaching the goals for the good of the organization. The followers work to attain the goal because they have to, or benefit something from it, rather
than working to attain the goal because they want to. In the bottom two facets, the will of the individual is not considered; instead the group is seen as one organism. The top two facets also have the goal primarily in mind but consider the will of the followers and base the process on agreement as well.

As for masculinity, both individualized consideration and demonstrate inspiration and motivation characterizes of contributing to a personnel oriented approach rather than a result oriented approach. Hence the low score for these two characteristics. Exemplary model can be compared to the feminine characteristic of creating a good cooperation within the organization. But it can also be compared to the masculine counterpart of assertiveness. Assertiveness by “a high degree of what you think, what you say, and what you do…” (Larsson, et al., 2003, p. 19). Therefore, it has been given a medium score but overall this dimension has a low level.

Also, assertiveness is the kind of behavior you would have to master when applying a leadership using the bottom two facets, although not in a positive way. Over-controlling and corrective behavior is typical masculine attributes, as is goal-oriented. Nonetheless, goal-orientation should not be considered as a negative attribute, with the top two facets way of including the followers in the decisions it creates an environment less dominated by the attention to goal attainment but also by consensus.

Similarly to the previous dimension, uncertainty avoidance also scores a low level for DL, because the three characteristics are formulated to give consideration to followers to be involved in the whole leadership process. In inspiration and motivation one of the facets is to promote creativity which includes encouraging new ideas and questioning the present structure. This could be interpreted to not being afraid of the unknown. Exemplary model talks about being consistent and to take responsibility of the decisions you make. That would also entail that a leader sometimes has to take a leap of faith in order to inspire his or her followers. The same goes for individualized consideration where confronting is emphasized on giving constructive criticism in order to improve the individual follower.

One of the bottom two facets’ key words is over-control. This factor is to avoid unexpected outcomes of the result. The top two facets have the same objective, although not as much. Still,
the agreement is based on the goal the leader proposes. Therefore all facets have been given a high level in this dimension.

Overall DL has low levels on all dimensions except individualism which has a very high level, opposed to the two different types of conventional leadership which show a different result. The bottom two facets even show opposite results where all dimensions are at a high except individualism that is very low.

Table 5 Cultural Dimensions of leadership models

Before the analysis the thesis will first present the results from the interview study and also present the cultural dimensions of Belgium to enable a different perspective on the analysis.

4.1.3 Swedish Officers on Leadership

The interviewees are high ranking officers of the SAF and all currently working in a multinational military organization. The interviews consisted of five themes, which in turn contained several sub-questions.

The first theme, *background*, was to identify their view of themselves in terms of national culture and their military background. The interviewees had more than 10 years of working experience abroad in their military career and most of them on an operational level in staff environment. That would mean a close multinational and multicultural cooperation with many different
nations, although mostly European. The backgrounds of two of them are quite similar; they come from very small societies in the countryside of Sweden. They both had a childhood that taught them the value of hard work and one even called his upbringing “Lutheran”. They come from working class families and had “a typical Swedish” childhood.

The second theme was leadership ideals and when describing their view on the ideal leader many attributes were brought up, for instance; hardworking, participative, experienced, not afraid to make decisions and take responsibility of them, acting like a role model, communicative, but overall the common attribute is understanding people and empathy.

Certainly, becoming an ideal leader is what they would ultimately like to accomplish, they do mention though that their own leadership style has changed over the years. One of them mentioned how he had a more direct and micro-managing leadership style in the beginning of his career but has evolved to a more delegating and coaching leader as he matured as a person. Another experienced a similar transformation but said that he would incorporate attributes from leaders and colleagues who he admired to create his own personal leadership style.

When the subject of DL was brought up they knew what it was but never actually comes across it more than during the annual personnel evaluation when they worked in Sweden. They certainly do not consciously use it to inspire their own leadership style.

The third theme was leadership in international context and their experience of it. They all agree that there are many differences between working in Sweden and abroad. One interviewee says that in Sweden the boss’s door is always open, but not always the case in other countries. Although it varies between nationalities and background, a Spanish commander had applied a very strict hierarchy but another Spanish commander was opposite and applied a flatter organizational structure. He has noticed that, generally, people who has a lot of experience and been on several deployments, like the British, have a more open leadership style. For instance, the second Spanish commander who had a background with the paratroopers and also several British officers he worked with.

Another difference is the expectance of task delivery. In Sweden the work is to benefit the individual and one interviewee continues, ”Swedes expect a certain amount of freedom of execution and even though we don’t admit it, we are very individualistic”. Opposed to in the
United States where work is for the benefit of the leader and his objective. An example that one of the interviewees mentioned was that in the US, the employees always show up to work in the morning before the boss and leaves work in the evening after the boss, just in case the boss needs to give last minute instructions to someone.

Also, the differences in written communication are noticeable because Sweden has a cold and apathetic language in the written form in comparison to for example Arabic and French. Because of that people formulate their words differently in English texts.

In general, the climate in a multinational military organization is harsher and more hierarchical than in Sweden which they are not used to. Also, Swedes get along easier with people from the Nordic countries and most Western European countries, but a bit more complicated to work with people from Eastern European countries.

The fourth theme was to identify how Swedish behavior compares to other nations in terms of the cultural dimension. Swedes have greater difficulties being controlled and supervised, sometimes even takes offence when they are subjected to it. Their individualistic character desires freedom and finds it problematic to adapt between mission command tactics and command guidance, expressed using military terms of tactics.

In term of individualism/collectivism they brought up the way other nations gave direct instructions to the officers posted in multinational organizations. This entails having a nationalistic dimension which includes a loyalty to their country and sometimes even having a separate agenda. Sweden does not have that, one say it is because of naivety and a second voice claims it is because Sweden has too little experience in multinational cooperation.

When the subject about the relation between work and family life was discussed, again the example to American comes up and one interviewee said “Americans live to work, Europeans work to live”. This shows tendencies of Sweden leaning towards a feministic society. He also mentioned that many for Swedish officers it used to be “just a job” and not an ideological calling to serve the country. This was especially visible in 2009 when all personnel in the SAF had to sign a contract saying that they could be sent on deployment, and if you didn’t sign it you would be signing your resignation instead. Many were skeptic to sign even thought they were military officers “serving their country”.
Moreover, when it comes to issues of the future, the French, for instance, apply a more top-down leadership and rarely include their planning process to others. The commander will present the plan when it is done. Sweden has a more participative approach where they include junior officers and NCOs. Here one can identify that the uncertainty avoidance is quite low.

Lastly, the fifth and final theme, *international leadership*, only consisted of one question; is there an effective international leadership style? The answers was similar to the first question on ideal leadership but included the importance of communication and adaptability. Language is important, both verbal and in written. Adaptability doesn’t mean that you need to change style according to the environment but you have to possess a certain finesse and feeling for differences in environments, cultures and organizations.

### 4.2 A Belgian perspective

#### 4.2.1 Belgium’s cultural dimensions

Belgium is divided into the French speaking Walloons in the south and Dutch speaking Flemish in the north. Hofstede (2010) has therefore divided the two groups illustrated in the figure below.

![Cultural Dimensions of Belgium](chart.png)

Table 6 Cultural Dimensions of Belgium (Hofstede et al., 2010)

Both groups score above 60 in power distance which is relatively high. It is therefore a society in which inequalities are more accepted than in Sweden. Hierarchy is preferred in which the
superiors may have privileges and are often inaccessible. The power is centralized and the attitude between leaders and followers is formal. The way information is controlled is also associated with power, therefore unequally distributed. Control is normal, even expected, and considered as formal.

In the individualism dimension both groups’ score is above 70 making it an individualistic country similar to Sweden. People can voice their opinion towards authorities but a less direct style is preferred than amongst peers, in contrast to Sweden where the flat organization contributes to a more open environment.

Masculinity is the dimension that separates the two internal groups the most. They show a difference in the masculinity levels where the Flemish is at 43 and the Walloons at 60. This partly explains the difficulties between the two groups. For the Flemish it is a necessity to establish consensus, typical for a more feminine culture (Hofstede, 2013).

At scores above 90 for both groups, Belgium’s average in uncertainty avoidance dimension is one of the highest in the study. Certainty is often reached through academic work and concepts that can respond for the need of detail, context, and background. Teachings and trainings are more inductive. In management structure, rules and security are welcome and if lacking, it creates stress. Therefore planning is a necessity when change on the other hand is considered stressful.

Belgium’s cultural dimensions show differences of scores between the two groups on every dimension, although only marginally in three of them, the biggest difference is in the masculinity dimension. But as mentioned earlier, one of the theory’s biggest critiques is the fact that it was conducted more than 40 years ago and a lot has happened since.

4.2.2 A Belgian Leadership Model

The Belgian Armed Forces does not explicitly have a specific leadership model for education, development and evaluation according to LtCol. Dominiek Saelens, teacher in the leadership department in the Royal Military Academy in Brussels. The education there teaches the cadets several leadership models and theories, such as Situational Leadership model (Hershey and Blanchard, 1969) and Competing Values Framework by Quinn (1983), which has a situational approach as well. But transformational leadership is also taught where the focus points are inspiring and empowering the soldier.
Furthermore, LtCol Saelens also mentions the importance of the values of the academy; discipline, initiative, courage, respect and honor. Many of these values derive from the official mission statement from the Chief of Defense (CHOD) where the same words appear including integrity, duty, responsibility, diversity and so on.

These values are meant to guide the cadets for a future in their profession but whether or not they apply it in their leadership could potentially be subject of further research.
5. Analysis

This chapter will analyze the results by discussing each dimension and comparing them. The columns have been converted into lines so it is graphically visible to find a correlation between national culture and leadership model.

5.1 Is Developmental Leadership “Swedish”?

Table 7 Comparison between DL and Sweden

In the dimension of power distance, both Sweden and DL has been rated at a low level. The interviews clearly indicate that Swedes feel they have to adapt to a harsher and more hierarchical environment when working outside of Sweden. Those statements suggest a lower power distance among Swedes and confirm Hofstede (2010). Although, according to Soeters (1997) there was an indication of an international military culture which suggested a higher level of power distance. Soeters (1997) study also suggested that higher level of collectivism is a common denominator among militaries which in Sweden’s case would mean a lower correlation to DL. But without that consideration the levels of Sweden and DL in this dimension are very similar. The interviewees mentioned Swedish personnel’s’ lack of a national dimension of loyalty when posted in a multinational organization. While all other nations get instructed to favor national interests first, Sweden does not, they claimed. This example might only illustrate an organizational naivety but
might also be an individualistic trait linked to Weber’s (1978) protestant ethics. The dominating religious belief in Sweden is Christian Protestantism since the reformation in the 16th century. The virtue of hard work in order to find salvation has been a part of the Swedish national identity for centuries. Although Sweden is one of Europe’s most secularized countries today (Billiet, Maddens, & Frognier, 2006, p. 920), it has one of Europe’s highest GDP per capita, along with Norway who share a similar culture.

The Scandinavian countries share a common unwritten rule called “the law of Jante” which was introduced by Aksel Sandemose (1933). This law of conduct counsels people not to lift themselves above others. Additionally, there is a word in the Swedish language called “lagom”, which means not too much, not too little, not too noticeable, everything in moderation, just right.

But this state of mind of being moderate is contradictory to Sweden’s high level of individualism. If Swedes are so concerned about how other people perceive their personal success, why did they score such a high level in this dimension? Sweden has a very developed welfare system due to a long history of a social democratic politics. This includes free education and health care, long parental leave and unemployment benefit systems. This could be interpreted as a feminine trait.

Incidentally, both Sweden and DL leaps down to a very low level on the masculinity dimension. Soeters (1997) suggests that his study shows a general decline in masculinity and Sweden with the lowest score on masculinity could almost not go any lower. The interviews also confirm that Swedes, in comparison to others, are not as career oriented. The example “Americans live to work, Europeans work to live” illustrate the perceived difference to Americans. Although this example generalizes Europeans, Sweden’s welfare system provides a safety net which means that no one has to dedicate their entire life to work in order to have a descent standard of living. Even one of the interviewees said that he “rather come early to work and leave early to spend time with my children, than working until 9 every night”. The latter was quite usual in his work place. Even though this could be a single occurrence it still show a tendency of leaning towards a feminine society.

Lastly, although Sweden’s level on uncertainty avoidance rises slightly from the previous dimension, it is still quite low and correlates to DL. These results match the answers from the interviewees claiming that, compared to others; Swedes are more likely to include their junior
officers and NCOs in the planning process to create a participative environment. Including your subordinates can be interpreted to empowerment of your followers and letting them be part of planning the long-term goals and promote innovation.

Overall the pattern of the lines in figure 7 show a similarity between Sweden’s dimensions and DL, where the only high level is the dimension of individualism, the rest has been given a low level. The results from the interviews also correlate with Sweden’s national dimensions which would mean that the result validity is high.

5.2 What is a Belgian leadership model?

In comparison, Belgium’s (French speaking part) levels are illustrated in the figure below. They have been given a level ranging from medium to high over the board and do not correlate with DL in a comparison. Even if you would consider Soeters (1997) theory and adjust the dimensions more to a common international military culture, it would still not be a close correlation between Belgium and DL.

Table 8 Comparison between DL and Belgium

Instead the levels show a closer relation to the top two facets of conventional leadership as it is graphically illustrated in table 9. With “Soeterean” adjustment, it would correlate even higher. Then again, the levels could in reality show a different result as the data must be deemed
unreliable in the case of Belgium’s cultural dimensions levels. As a common national culture cannot be determined with Hofstede’s study, one can only speculate based on the results at hand. In the previous chapter when presenting the result of Belgium’s cultural dimensions, it was suitable to identify and present both the Flemish’ and the Walloons’ cultural dimensions. But the consequence is also that a single cohesive unity cannot be distinguished and the concept of a national culture will be irrelevant.

![Graph: Comparison between Conventional Leadership and Belgium](image)

Table 9 Comparison between Conventional Leadership and Belgium

The language issue was not the only the reason for a culturally divided nation, historically the other two main cleavages were religion and class. But secularization and desideologization processes in Belgium in the 1950s made the language issue dominant and still affect the political system (Resteigne & Manigart, 2009). With separate media and educational system it organically creates a divergence between the two regions. Relatively few Flemish or Walloons look for jobs in the other regions because it is rather unfamiliar to them. This alienation in turn leads to decreased regional interoperability (Billiet, Maddens, & Frogniér, 2006).

Their identification to their own region has always been stronger than to the state of Belgium, although studies show that it is gradually changing (Billiet, Maddens, & Frogniér, 2006).
According to Hofstede (2010, p. 104) the Belgian culture houses a contradiction; although highly individualistic, they also score a high level on power distance. The two dimensions normally have a negative correlation; if power distance is high, individualism is low and vice versa. This specific combination creates a tension in this culture. France has the same combination and d’Iribarne describes the French principle of organizing “the rationale of honor” (d’Iribarne, 1989 cited in Hofstede, 2010 p. 104). It means that everybody has a rank in society determined by tradition rather than belonging to a group. Therefore, the leader is advised to establish a second level of communication, having a personal contact with everybody in the structure, allowing to give the impression that “everybody is important” in the organization, although unequal (Hofstede, 2013).

To summarize, Sweden has a closer correlation to DL than Belgium in terms of cultural dimensions. On the other hand, Belgium’s dimensions are more correlated to the top two facets of conventional leadership. The reasons why it has resulted this way has been discussed relating to matters ranging from religion to linguistics. The next chapter will conclude the thesis by returning the focus to the initial research question.
6. Conclusion

This final chapter will conclude this thesis by answering the research questions based on the analysis and the theoretical framework. Also, further research will be recommended.

6.1 Is there a relationship?

As previously stated, the aim of the thesis was to discuss the influence of national culture in leadership within military organizations and also explore the effectiveness a specific leadership model has in an international context. Consequently the research question is what is the relationship between national culture and leadership models in military organizations?

This thesis has discussed and visualized a relationship between Sweden’s national culture and DL model using Hofstede’s theory of cultural dimensions as basis. It shows a high correlation between the ways the components of DL are described and Sweden’s characteristics which are measured in Hofstede’s extensive study, the latter also complemented by recent empirical data collected for the purpose of this thesis. The relevance to military organizations is that DL is used by the SAF, although not implemented to a degree where Swedish officers consciously apply it to their leadership style. If the purpose of DL is meant to act as a social integrative mechanism to create a cohesive leadership style, as suggested by Alvesson & Kärreman (2010), it has indeed failed. However, according to the interview study, the interesting fact regarding in this respect is that the description of an ideal leader in many ways coincide with several of the components of DL. In fact, combined with the visual relationship presented in figure 7 it does confirm a high correlation between national culture and leadership model. In other words, Sweden’s national culture matches the culture of DL in terms of cultural dimensions.

To put it in a larger context, Belgium’s national dimensions were also compared to DL and the immediate reflection is a difference in cultural dimensional levels and low correlation. A deeper look into Belgium’s national culture shows a divergence of cultures between Dutch-speaking Flemish in the north and French-speaking Walloons in the south. The previous chapter found a higher correlation between the cultural dimensions of the French-speaking part with the top two facets of conventional leadership. But nevertheless, the data can be considered questionable due to its current validity. Firstly, Hofstede’s theory is based on a study made more than 40 years ago and can thus be questioned for its accuracy in today’s modern society and, secondly, Belgium as
a culturally divided nation cannot be examined, in the way Sweden can, as a single cohesive
cultural force and is therefore subject for irrelevance in this case. But this divergence can
answer the question of why Belgium does not apply a unified leadership model in the armed
forces.

The question of why a nation’s armed forces should have a single leadership model is again
relevant to ask. However, in this particular research the selection in the interview study is small,
still, the view on leadership clearly reflect similarities with DL in spite of the lack of conscious
knowledge of the actual model. But how would it look like in Belgium? Would a single model
unify a culturally diverse officers’ cadre into a cohesive leadership style or would it be passed on
as “another theory” and business would go on as usual? Or is there in reality already a cohesive
leadership style that is implicitly taught and applied based on the values of the Belgian armed
forces?

In a military context, if you would consider Soeters (1997) adjustments on three of the
dimensions to coincide with a potentially common international military culture, the correlation
would decrease between Sweden and DL. However, the degree to which it would decrease is
unclear; since his study only identified that the change on the dimensions towards the civilian
counterpart in fact occurred, but not towards a specific or common level. The fact could be that
the differences in cultural dimensions remain between these nations and that there is no change in
that respect. But the change in Sweden’s case, whether it is large or small, does indeed cause a
decrease in correlation which means that, in theory, the DL model is more suitable in a civilian
context.

As Shamir & Ben-Ari (2000) suggest, aspects of transformational leadership is required for an
international leadership style. The component *individualized consideration* mean respects for
inequalities and consequently that would be appropriate when working in a multicultural context.
As this component is also part of DL it is appropriate to assume that it applies for DL as well.
Febbraro (2008) described that it is difficult to adapt a unity of command when dealing with a
multinational and multicultural cooperation, instead one should focus on unity of effort towards a
common goal. Also, the conclusion from the interviews of an international leadership style is the
ability to adapt; to acquire a feeling for cultural differences.
Lastly, this type of cross-cultural competence, as Selmeski (2007) named it, is something that you acquire over a long time through experience and education, both practical training and conceptual. Experience was also one of the attributes an ideal leader should have, according to one of the interviewees. He also mentioned the difference of leadership style between a leader with many years of experience in multicultural cooperation and one with less experience, and continues, that an experienced military commander adapts a flatter organizational structure, which is the preferred structure for a Swede.

6.2 Suggestion for further research

The Belgian perspective was very limited and constitutes an interesting subject for further investigation and for identifying a suitable leadership model that would correlate with a Belgian national culture. Of course, a hurdle to pass here is to first try to define, if possible and as discussed previously, a common cultural platform that would accept a single leadership model.

Belgium was a difficult country to study in this case due to the internal cultural differences. A more appropriate country for a study of this nature, would be a country with a single cohesive national culture, if it exists, that show opposite levels of cultural dimensions compared to Sweden. If an interview study with officers from such country could be conducted, this data could confirm an application of a leadership style which mirrors the bottom two facets of conventional leadership, as presented in chapter 5.

Another suggestion is to update Hofstede’s research with current data on cultural dimension. As mentioned as one of the limitations of this thesis that the data are inaccurate could be conducted to quiet the critics. Also the methodology of this thesis was relatively simplified, using the original data as a basis and complemented with a few interviews. A more extensive interview study would increase the result validity.
Reference list


