

War Studies, Independent Thesis - Advanced Course (15 ECTS)

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Loyal Until Death – A Qualitative Study of Motivation Among Austrian Cadets and Officers	
<p><u>Abstract</u></p> <p>The civilian level of motivation to defend Austria in case of an invasion is shown to be rather low compared to other European countries, where only 15-30 % of the Austrian population say they are willing to defend the country. The use of civilian support in war has been shown as an important factor during the Russo-Ukrainian war, where thousands of volunteers joined the armed forces to defend their country. Using civilians as a part of the civil defense is also shown to have a powerful deterrent effect for a foreign invasion.</p> <p>This study contributes to an in-depth understanding how Austrian officers' and cadets' motivation is affected by the low civilian level of motivation to defend the nation. This was done by collecting qualitative data by doing semi-structured interviews with four officers and four cadets, seven men and one woman. The results from the interviews were later analysed with a textual analysis to identify common themes and patterns.</p> <p>The study shows that the motivation among the military personnel was not affected by a low civilian will to defend the country. A majority of the respondents also saw several risks with having a low support from the civil society. This could create challenges regarding securing personnel and maintaining a high moral among the troops during wartime.</p> <p><u>Keywords:</u> Military motivation, Herzberg's two factor theory, Civil military, National defense, resilience, Austria, civil defense</p>	

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1. Introduction

Austria has since the end of World War 2 been a state with strong neutrality laws, which not only forbids membership in military alliances, but also prohibits participation in foreign wars (Gärtner, 2022). Regardless of its military neutrality, the country has mandatory military service for male citizen above the age of 18, which allows its drafted citizens to choose between doing military service or alternative service (BMEIA, n.d.). The system of conscripts creates an important role in the Austrian defense system, both during and after the mandatory service. Citizens who completed their military services are placed in the ready reserves, where they maintain their role in the Austrian Armed Forces without performing any military tasks in their everyday life (Bundesheer, n.d.).

The country has between 30 and 40 thousand conscripts every year and about 15 thousand active service members (Statistics Austria, 2023, & BMLV, n.d.). Austria is geographically located in the middle of Europe, and it was previously bordering the Eastern Bloc and Soviet-aligned countries. Today, the nation is surrounded by other allied nations which are all members of both the European Union and NATO (except Switzerland). The landlocked nation is however only located 400 kilometers away from the Easternmost city in Ukraine, which currently has an ongoing war against Russia. Even though there is a war not far away from the Austrian borders, the majority of the Austrian population feel safe according to a survey (IMC Krems University of Applied Sciences, 2022). The survey did however also describe how 30% of the respondents were worried, or somewhat worried, that Russia also would invade Austria in the future. Regardless of Austria's strong neutrality policies, the country has condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine, implemented EU sanctions, and allowed weapon transports to Ukraine on its territory (Janik, 2023).

1.1 Research Problem

The country's long history of neutrality and disengagement from military conflicts might have shaped the general opinion among the people regarding defending their country. Crawford (2021) and Burk (2000) argue that citizens have many rights, but also responsibilities to defend one's democracy in case of a foreign invasion. The American-multinational analytic company, Gallup, Inc., conducted a large study in 2015 that showed that only 21% of the Austrians were willing to fight for their country (Gallup International, 2015). The same group, Gallup International Association (2024), conducted similar surveys in 2024 and interviewed about 1000 people. The study showed then that only 20% of the Austrian respondents were willing to fight and defend their country. Switzerland, in comparison, which also has remained neutral for decades and is surrounded by allies, showed that more than 40% were willing to defend their country. Another recent Austrian national survey asked 836 eligible voters between 16-84 years old if they were prepared to defend Austria with a weapon in their hand. Only 16% of the respondents answered that they were willing to defend their nation. Another 16% of the respondents answered rather yes, while 56% of the respondents answered no or rather no, and 12% were unsure (Der Pragmaticus, 2024). Almost 70% in the survey were worried or somewhat worried about the war in Ukraine, and 31 % were worried that Russia might attack Austria in case of a Russian victory in Ukraine. Another recent study that was done with help from the University of Innsbruck concluded that only 14 % of the respondents said that they were willing to defend Austria in case of an invasion (Austrian

Foreign Policy Panel Project, 2024). There is no doubt that there is a low civilian will to defend Austria in case of a foreign invasion.

Having a strong civilian will to defend the country has played an important role in the war in Ukraine and has contributed to strengthen the national resilience. Bartusevičius et al. (2023) describe how civilians supported the military by joining and helping with combat defense positions. Many Ukrainians also volunteered to support the standing army and thus play a major role in contributing to recruitment and logistic support. Worth to mention is that 62 % of the Ukrainian population responded that they were willing to defend their country in Gallup's survey in 2015. Boichak & McKernan (2024) also highlight the importance of an engaged citizenship to defend Ukraine during the Russian invasion. Citizen's engagement is essential for not only defending the nation against foreign invasion in terms of military action, but it also makes up the backbone of a nation's resistance and creates a functioning society during wartime.

In comparison, numerous defectors could be seen during the Syrian civil war during 2011 and onwards. Albrecht, Koehler & Ohl (2015) describe how thousands of Syrian conscripts, volunteers and military personnel fled the country during the Syrian civil war. One of the main reasons was an atmosphere of mistrust within the military, mostly related to the military hierarchy.

There is no doubt that the engagement of the civilian population plays an important role to not only to strengthen the military capabilities during war and conflict, but also to create a resilient and functioning society during wartime. There might however be risks when there is a low level of civilian engagement or will to defend the country. Both in terms of ensuring the manpower of vital military establishments and to keep up the morale amongst the units.

1.2 Literature Review

There have been several previous studies regarding military motivation and civilians' role during a foreign invasion. There is however limited in-depth information regarding what effect that the civilian morale has on military personnel's motivation. Several studies explored the different topics separately, but not how a low defense will among the population affects the morale of the military personnel. Previous studies also explore the importance and risks of using civilians for military purposes in war, this creates a theoretical contradiction of the phenomena. Civilians are needed for a country's defense, but it also includes numerous risks.

Previous studies have explored motivational factors that made soldiers serve in the military. Hellum, Nilsson & Östberg (2020) conducted a study of Swedish and Norwegian enlisted soldiers. During the study, Sweden was also free from military alliances, similar to Austria. Hellum, Nilsson & Östberg (2020) describe how there are several different themes that contribute as motivators why people enlist and continue a career in the military. Aside from duty and loyalty to one's country, several other themes could be identified. These were taking part in international missions, geographical locations/ benefits, and military service as a steppingstone. The study did, however, not investigate the relation between the civil society and military personnels' motivation to defend the country.

Other previous research has explored the military importance of bringing civilians to service, Ljungkvist & Ångström (2023) describe how civil defense plays a major role in the total

defense of one's country. Using civilian society to support the national defense creates a binding agreement, both socially and legally, with the military to support the country in case of war. Ljungkvist & Ångström (2023) further highlight how this is specially used for smaller states, as a deterrence strategy to mobilize the whole society in case of war. Ljungkvist & Ångström (2023) continue to describe how the entire society contributes to the national military strategy and creates a decentralized deterrence logic. It is also emphasized how this strategy can contribute to a higher level of social resilience and psychological defense. The contract between the civilian society and the government in democracies is also something that Levi (2022) discusses. The idea that a government defends and supports citizens in exchange for willingness to defend the country is a crucial aspect of a democracy. The obligations of civil society and government organs are bilateral and should, in the best world, work both ways if there is trust and loyalty. Nadeau (2015) also highlights the moral aspects of civilian responsibility during wartime. There is a collective responsibility among civilians to defend their country, but also by the military to defend its population in case of an invasion. There are also legal consequences for civilians who refuse to defend their country in case of wartime (Nadeau, 2015).

The theme of civil-military relations and what consequences it might have in war is also a phenomenon that Edmunds (2012) discusses. Edmunds (2012) describes how there is a complex relationship between the public, national defense, military, and the political leaders. The idea of using civil society as a part of a nations' defense planning might create risks in case of war. The method of securing manpower from the civilian society might be risky because of the uncertainty and unknown outcome of the war. The fundamental idea that the means justifies the end is something that might create great harm on civil society, and at the same time have a large impact on the country's future after the war. The division of responsibility in case of war between military and civil actors is something that might be very complex during war. The professional army might have to take on different assignments than the civilian reserves do. The lack of training among the civilians and the risk of "sacrificing" civilians is another complex issue that must be considered. Edmund (2012) also discusses the different factors that can make people feel motivated to go to war. The will to defend might differ if it is an attack on the own country or not. E.g., There was a great national interest to volunteer during 9/11 for the war in Afghanistan/Iraq, but less with the war in Libya.

Bryant, Pedlar & Schnurr (2022) also brings up the risks of using civilians in war and how they support the role of the military in Ukraine. Many civilians have formally joined the military and defended their nation as volunteers. This gives the civilian a sense of purpose during wartime, and at the same time contributes to the national defense. Similar to Edmunds (2012), Bryant, Pedlar & Schnurr (2022) also describe how civilians who join combat might be at risk when ending up in combat roles due to their lack of experience and training. This might also result in several psychological traumas. Another risk might be the sense of belonging when civilian recruits end up in units with a strong sense of togetherness. The lack of unit cohesion might affect both the longer serving personnel and the civilian volunteers.

Bryant, Pedlar & Schnurr (2022) continue to discuss the relationship with civilian volunteers and long serving military personnel in war. The mental well-being and motivation among the Ukrainian defense forces, and civilian volunteers is a complex issue. Individuals who were not fit for the screening tests pre-war now serve in the defense forces and might have a lower

capacity to manage the demands of combat. This shows that there are both pros and cons of using civilians to support the military force in the military.

The main highlights from the previous research focus on motivational factors and on the complex relationship between civilian and military personnel. The use of civilians plays a crucial role when contributing to a nation's defense, although disagreement regarding the risks of using civilians. Based on previous research, more empirical data is needed to show how the motivations among civilians affect the military personnel. My thesis will contribute to this by having in-depth interviews and providing more information about the complex relationship between civil-and military personnel.

1.3 Aim and research question.

Austria is a society that relies on its total defense and ready reserves in case of war time. There might however be consequences when the civilian engagement is low. The aim of this study is to investigate how a low civilian will to defend the country affects the motivation of cadets and officers in the Austrian defense forces. The aim of the study is also to investigate the potential risks and consequences that a low civilian engagement might have on the defense forces' organization during wartime.

Research questions:

1. *How is the Austrian military personnels' motivation affected by a low civilian will to defend their country?*
2. *How does Austrian military personnel feel/experience that a low civilian will can affect their work in a war/crisis?*

2 Theory

This thesis will use Herzberg's two-factor theory which explains how motivation affects individuals at their workplace and different factors that contribute to job satisfaction. The theory will also be used as an analytical framework to clarify the problem and as a tool to explain the result. Furthermore, the theory has previously been used as the basis for explaining motivational factors among military personnel during conscription and international deployment (Hellum, Nilsson & Östberg, 2020, Bodzy et al., 2011). Previous usage of this theory has also been linked to job meaningfulness in military context shown by different studies by Hiramoto (2023) and Baird Niven (1972).

A reason for choosing this theory is due to its wide recognition and long history of being applied to workplaces, employees, and management. The theory has passed the test of time as it has been frequently used and criticized since it was first published. The theory is also suitable when investigating motivation and people's well-being when performing tasks and duty. Using it in a military context might help understand the reasons behind military personnels' motivation and how this can be used to strengthen the Austrian national defense. There are several other theories about motivation, e.g. Maslow's hierarchy of needs, McClelland's theory of achievement motivation and Self-determination theory of Deci & Gagne, there is however not a general theory that is universally accepted about human behavior and motivation. Herzberg's two-factor theory is however suitable for investigating the factors that can be linked to workplace motivation in the military.

2.3 Herzberg's two-factor theory

There are several theories that have explored the phenomenon of motivation and how it is related to performing tasks at a workplace. One older, but well-established theory is Frederick Herzberg's theory of motivation that was first published in 1959 (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 2017). The study is anchored on the idea about different motivators that contribute and affect the attitude of employees. It also explains why some workers are more motivated than others, and reasons for being dissatisfied. The theory explains how there are specific factors that can contribute to why individuals are motivated to do things at their workplace and how it relates to increased productivity. Another important part of the theory is how there are demotivators that can contribute to why employees feel dissatisfied or unmotivated. The theory is divided into two parts, motivators and hygiene. The term hygiene is referred to in this theory as maintenance factors. These hygiene factors can demotivate employees from working optimally. The other part of the theory is called motivators, these are inner aspects that the worker experiences and are made up from factors that directly motivate individuals to work more.

Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman (2017) explain how there are different factors that contribute to satisfying experiences. These different satisfiers are strong determiners of job satisfaction and contribute to one's attitude towards the work. There are also dissatisfiers that can contribute to why employees feel dissatisfied at work. Herzberg mentions that removing the dissatisfier not automatically means that the employees become satisfied. The workers would instead not have any reason to feel dissatisfied. The satisfiers on the other hand, would be more challenging to secure as these would require more effort. Another important aspect of the theory is that lack of motivation will not automatically lead to dissatisfaction or reduced productivity. An employee can be unmotivated to perform his tasks, but still be satisfied with the job. Furthermore, employees will not be dissatisfied if the hygiene factors are present. These factors alone do not however make the employees motivated. The table below shows examples of different motivators and hygiene factors (Nelson, 1976).

Satisfiers /Motivators	Hygiene (Dissatisfiers if not present)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognition - Growth - Responsibility - Job challenge - Advancement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working conditions - Policies and administrative practices - Status - Job security - Personal life - Salary/benefits - Co-workers

Figure 1: A table showing Herzberg's different satisfiers and dissatisfiers based on Nelson (1976).

Recognition as a motivator can be understood as the aspect of being appreciated for one's work. This can be rewards or gratitude from colleagues or the management that will directly be used as a factor to increase the workers' motivation. Growth as a motivator can be

understood as the possibility of personal development or learning new skills. This will also allow the worker to take part in courses and training that can be used as a motivator for the employee.

Responsibilities can be understood as the feeling of working independently and to be trusted by the management. It can also be understood as being responsible for personnel or important tasks that will give the employee a sense of meaning and trust. Job challenge and advancement are two important factors that contribute to the motivation of the employee. Having various and challenging work tasks can allow the employee to have opportunities to learn and provide a sense of accomplishment (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 2017). An important conclusion of the theory is that there is no correlation between job dissatisfaction and satisfaction. The satisfiers and dissatisfiers are not dependent on each other and there might be motivation regardless of the satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Nelson, 1976).

The theory has been criticized throughout the years and does, however, contain limitations. One major limitation is the overlooking of the situational variables that might contribute to dissatisfaction or lack of motivation. Several factors in the environment can contribute to workers not feeling motivated. These factors can be everything from personal chemistry with managers to special circumstances that affect motivation. Another limitation is that an employee can be well committed to their job regardless of the motivational factors. Galanakis & Mitsakis (2022) describes how employees may also find their job satisfactory even though they dislike it. They can simply perform well without any of the satisfiers present. The theory has also been criticized that Herzberg automatically assumed that there is a relation between satisfaction and productivity. Herzberg did however only look at satisfaction and not productivity (Li, 2018).

3 Method

This study is done with a qualitative method that includes inductive reasoning. All the data has been collected through qualitative interviews with personnel working/studying at the Austrian Military academy. These interviews have generated themes and categories from military personnels' personal experience, opinions and feelings that make up the result part of the study.

4.1 Study design

The design of this study is a qualitative interview study which aims to explain certain social behavior by investigating individuals' perspective and experiences. People's thoughts and feelings are analyzed thematically to produce the needed data. This method is well suitable as it is intended to explore individuals' motivation and if they experience consequences or risks with the low civilian will to defend Austria. Bryman et al. (2021) explain that this method is especially suitable when studying complex topics and investigating deeper subjects in a confidential environment. Sofaer (1999) also describes how this design is suitable when exploring the complex phenomena and the context of social issues. The study is interpretive research, which is described by Bryman et al. (2021) as a way to understand reality through the meaning of individuals. This creates a subjective reality, and the knowledge is constructed by beliefs, experiences, and values.

The study is done with an inductive approach, this is described as a method when the research starts with a certain question followed by the collection of data (Bryman et al., 2021). This is

especially useful when the researcher aims to establish a link between the findings and certain research data (Thomas, 2006). Bryman et al. (2021) also explains how induction is used to link research and theory and how it is used to develop theories out of data or observations. Bryman et al. (2021) do however also argue that this might be very close to abduction, that implies that research is grounded from a theoretical understanding depending on different aspects that are forming people's worldview.

4.2 Data collection

The data in this research has been collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with 8 individuals, seven men and one woman. Four of the respondents were senior officers and four were cadets. Bryman et al. (2021) describe semi-structured interviews as a way of using predetermined open-ended questions that can contribute to more in-depth answers. Semi-structured interviews have also been used because of their unique way of being flexible and not allowing the interviewer to be forced to follow a fixed structure.

Bryman et al. (2021) also explains that semi-structured interviews are suitable when the researcher wants to address specific issues with a clear focus, rather than general ideas. One-on-one interviews were also chosen to avoid cadets to be influenced by higher officer's opinions and ideas. Another reason for doing one-on-one interviews was to avoid group thinking among the respondents and thus get more honest answers. As a part of a military exchange program in Austria, the interviews have been done through physical meetings at the Austrian military academy, Theresian Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt. It has therefore been of most convenience to conduct the interviews one-on-one with experienced personnel at the military academy. Another reason for choosing semi-structured interviews was to allow the researcher to both address the topic and allow space for the respondents to elaborate their answers.

The interview guide, see appendix 1, contains the interview framework that was used as a guide to ask the respondents. The guide starts with generic questions about the respondent's background and later becomes more specific and related to the thesis's research question.

4.3 Population and sampling

The criteria for choosing participants in the study was based on a purposive sampling. This is described by Bryman et al. (2021) as a way to sample participants in a strategic way and select respondents based on their experience or because of their expertise in a certain field. This also allows the researcher to identify differences and similarities across the sample. An advantage of this is the ability to choose the individuals that might be favorable for the research's specific problem. The respondents were chosen based on their previous long military experience and work with civilians. Many of the respondents had worked with civil-military questions and understood the relationship between the civil/military world. Cadets and officers were asked at the Theresian Military Academy to participate in the study voluntarily. Based on their experience, 8 people were chosen, four officers with a long background in the Austrian armed forces, and 4 cadets with various length of service. There was only one woman among the respondents. The different people will be labeled OF (Officer) 1-4 and CDT (Cadet) 1-4 in the result part.

Person	Label in the result	Experience
1 Officer	OF1	Worked with civilian organizations, border protection.
2 Officer	OF2	Work with civil authorities.
3 Officer	OF3	Work with crisis management and support to civil society.
4 Officer	OF4	Support society with crisis management.
5 Cadet	CDT1	
6 Cadet (female)	CDT2	Helped civilians with flooding, avalanches, pandemic.
7 Cadet	CDT3	Border control, covid crisis.
8 Cadet	CDT4	Border control, avalanches, floodings.

Figure 2. Summary of the respondents.

4.4 Data collection and analysis

The interviews were recorded and later transcribed from speech to text to make textual analysis easier. The conversations were analyzed thoroughly to find common themes and patterns. The method of coding the transcribed text into themes followed a 6-step process which is described by Bryman et al. (2021). The first step was to familiarize myself with the texts. The next step was the initial coding. Different relevant concepts were captured here to make it easier to generate themes. The third step was to identify general themes. This was done by elaborating the properties of the emerging themes, which later make connections between data. The themes were later reviewed in the fourth step and sub-themes were identified.

The found themes were later defined more thoroughly during the fifth step and different properties of the themes were later named. The final step is the result and the products for the report. These themes provided the evidencing substantial essence of the interviews and can be linked to wider literature.

The themes were then analyzed with a thematic analysis, which is described by Graneheim och Lundman (2004) to prove differences and similarities with categories and themes. Bryman et al. (2021) also describe how central themes and subthemes from the recurring motifs are used to make up the data. During the transcriptions, the interviews were translated from colloquial language to a written form of language that made it easier to analyze and use for coding.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Familiarizing with raw interview data	Initial coding	Identifying general themes
“Soldiers are living in barracks, and barracks are surrounded by high fences, and this is the problem because soldiers are part of society... and we have to take part of society”.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Isolation - Distance from civil society. - Civil-military relations - Military culture - Conscription - Unfamiliar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distance between military and civil society. - Civil society is unfamiliar with military culture. - Military isolation

Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
Reviewing themes	Defining and naming themes	Producing the report
	Lack of military understanding	

Figure 3. A summary of the coding method based on Bryman et al.'s (2021) model and example of how the coding was done.

4.5 Reliability, Validity and Replication.

Bryman et al. (2021) describe how reliability, validity and replication are the most important criteria when it comes to social research. These concepts are used to determine whether the study can be trustworthy or not. Reliability is a concept that might be specially difficult as the answers of the respondents might fluctuate depending on the current situation or environment. Other challenges for qualitative research might be replication. This might also fluctuate in similar studies in the future. The war in Ukraine and the individuals' own experience and motivation affects the given result in the study. One way to deal with this matter is to be transparent and detailed in how the study was designed. Describing data collection method, sampling, criteria and how the data was analyzed will make it easier for future research to replicate the study. The answers might however differ due to specific factors that affect the study at the time it is conducted. The third matter, validity, is described as the most important aspect. It explains how different conclusions can be drawn from the research. The measured

result of the study must be stable, and the internal validity refers to the relationship between variables. This is the result of the product of the study and how independent variables are responsible for the result. Furthermore, another important part of validity is external validity, this refers to the idea that the result of the study can be generalized beyond the research context. If the research is externally valid, the findings can be applied to other wider groups of people.

These three factors have been carefully taken into consideration when conducting the study. One method of securing validity, replication and reliability is to be transparent about the research. The exact method and design of the study is clearly presented, which will make it possible to replicate the study in future situations. The result may however differ, (Johannessen et al., 2020) describes how qualitative interview studies are dependent on context and people interviews. This will make it difficult to expect the same result if one replicates the study. The individuals' interviews can also be considered trustworthy. There are few reasons why they would provide a false answer during the interview.

4.6 Ethical considerations

There have been a number of ethical considerations in this thesis. The principles of human research have been considered and the respondents participated in the interviews voluntarily. The respondents were also informed about the research before deciding whether to participate in the study. They were informed that the interviews would be recorded and that they could choose not to participate in the study at any time. The personal collected information also followed the principles of GDPR and was treated accordingly. The respondents were anonymous throughout the study and cannot be identified. This is an important aspect of working with humans during a study. Bryman et al. (2021) also list a few important aspects that contribute to good ethical practice during a study. Are any participants harmed during the study? Is there lack of consent? Is there invasion of privacy? Is deception involved? These different aspects have been considered and been prevented through an information and consent form that the respondents were given before the interviews. The storage of data has also been considered and is kept in a locked space to prevent others accessing personal information about the respondents.

4 Result

This part of the study presents the result from the different interviews with officers and cadets in the Austrian armed forces. The result can be divided into three different themes that could be generated from the eight interviews. These themes are lack of military understanding, inner drive for motivation and national service.

4.1 Lack of military understanding

Many of the officers who had previously worked with civilian related matters experienced that people's attitude towards the military changed when there was a crisis. Three of the officers had worked with border protection during the Yugoslavia war and experienced that civil society was helpful when it was needed. The other officer's experience of working with civilian society was similar. People's engagement and motivation tended to increase if there was an emergency, both locally and domestically. This could also be seen during covid when the military forces helped to mitigate the effects of the crisis. The cadets also explained that they had a positive experience working with civilian people during a crisis.

“They (civilian) provided coffee and cakes, even though their houses were full of mud and water”. **CDT 2**

“When helping a community with a flooding, there was an old lady who thanked us for our help and service, and we got a bottle of white wine” **CDT4**

Many of the officers who had worked longer experienced that people’s attitudes were friendlier towards the military when there was a crisis, and when the public could see the result of the military work.

“When there is no crisis in the world, they dislike you... and if there is a crisis, the military is the best” **OF1.**

“Sometimes the civilian population is not so friendly in Austria. They are a little distant from us. They keep their distance for the first times and get more comfortable if they can learn more.” **OF3.**

“Before they know you, they keep a distance, but if they work with you for a longer time. It is not a big deal” **OF3.**

One cadet mentioned that he had no opinion about military related activity before he joined the armed forces and did his basic training. It was first after his basic training that he would get a better understanding of what function that the Austrian Armed Forces do and contribute to. An officer also mentioned that he experienced a distance between the military organizations and the civil society. Many of the civilians have limited insights into what the military is doing. He also described that many of the civilian people, especially younger people, had never encountered the military, even though Austria has a long history of conscripts. This created a lack of understanding of the military function and the tasks that the military does.

“During my military career, my motivation increased. Before my military service, I didn’t have an opinion” **CDT1.**

Many of the respondents mentioned that they experienced a distance between the military organization and the civil society. This was something that contributed to the lack of recognition among many of the respondents. One cadet also described how civilians sometimes visited regiments and military organizations on military events and open days, but did not experience that it contributed much to a better understanding.

“Soldiers are living in barracks, and barracks are surrounded by high fences, and this is the problem because soldiers are part of the society... and we have to take part of society” **OF4.**

“We have to prevent the military from being a close community. We have to deal with civilians, we are not able to isolate ourselves...” **OF2.**

“People come when we have open house at the barracks, they look, but it doesn’t affect their minds” **CDT 1**

People’s attitude towards the military would however change when they increased their knowledge and had more exposure to military culture. This could be seen when there was a

crisis, floods, or avalanches. One officer and a cadet also experienced that the friendliness towards the military changed throughout the country. People in the south tended to be more friendly towards the military than people from Vienna or the northwest part of the country.

“It depends on the region, if you are going more to the south or west, they are more military friendly. If you go to Vienna, North or East, they are not so familiar with military”. **OF1**

“There is a strong contrast between the rural and urban parts of Austria. In the rural parts, the military is perceived quite well, and people think highly of the military” **CDT3**

Civil society also had preconceived ideas about the military occupation. Many of the ideas came from media coverage about incidents that happened in the armed forces or how the organization uses tax money. One officer and cadet explained that they experienced that people in the society would not understand the need of a military force due to Austria's long history of neutrality. One officer mentioned the aspect of not seeing the benefits for the tax money. There has not been a war in Austria for almost a century and a large number of the population has never experienced conflicts. People might therefore have difficulties understanding the need to pay billions of euros every year for something that they do not see the result of.

“When there is something negative about the military, it's always the media reports about it to show the people” **CDT1.**

4.2 Inner drive for motivation

Many of the respondents said that they had joined the military for personal growth and a sense of purpose. Other reasons for joining were the economic benefits and chances for an adventurous career. Several of the respondents answered that they had joined the military when they first were conscripts and then continued their career automatically because they simply enjoyed it. The variation of tasks was also a reason for the respondents to work in the military. Several of the respondents also described that one of their motivators to continue to work in the military was for their love of their country and their pride in serving.

When asking if their motivation was affected by a low civilian motivation to defend Austria, all the respondents said that their motivation to defend Austria and serve in the military was unchanged and not affected by a low civilian motivation. Several of the respondents did not feel that a low civilian will to defend Austria in case of an invasion affected their personal motivation to serve their country or be willing to do their job if there was a war. One of the cadets answered that it motivated him even more to serve the country and protect the ones who could not protect themselves.

“My motivation comes from within and is not affected by other. I swore and oath to defend my country and I will do it if it is needed.” **OF1.**

“It is a challenge that the society has a low level of motivation. But overall, my motivation is not affected.” **OF2.**

“My motivation is high; it is my job and I’m a commander. People will follow me. If I don’t have a high motivation, how will I lead my people”. **CDT2.**

Many of the respondents, especially the officers, said that the daily motivation could fluctuate and change, depending on what work tasks they were doing. It was however no doubt that the motivation was high to defend Austria and had been so since the start of their career. The respondents did not feel that their work in the military was affected by a low civilian motivation. Many of the respondents answered that they had chosen this job just because of their high motivation to defend the nation.

“I teach the future officers and see myself as their role model...My motivation is high and not affected” **OF3.**

“If a soldier doesn’t have a high motivation to defend his country, who else will have it?” **CDT1.**

A few of the respondents felt it was unfair and it made them upset that few people were willing to defend the country. It did, however, not affect their personal motivation to defend the country if there was a war.

“I feel it is unfair. Austria is my home and it’s the place where my family and my friend lives and I would defend it” **CDT1.**

“I cannot understand it and it makes me a little angry. I can not understand why people are not ready to fight for their country.” **OF1.**

“It would not feel good to defend Austria without support. It is time to bring back loyalty to the country.” **CDT2.**

“I see a high risk of low morale among the troops and high risk of lack of support in terms of manpower, food, equipment.” **CDT3**

4.3 National service

A recurring theme was to make sure that the nation had enough personnel, both in war and peacetimes. Several of the respondents mentioned the importance of keeping military or alternative service and described how that contributed to fulfil the needs of the military organization. Another important aspect was the need for personnel to important civil functions if there would be a war. The current Austrian defense system and other occupational areas (emergency service, hospital social care...) relies heavily on that young people do their part of the social contract between the state and the individual.

“The society still has to work and function if there is a war, hospital, police stations, supermarkets.... These functions need to work if there is a war, and it will be difficult if people flee or don’t care.” **CDT1.**

Many of the respondents said that the current service system is good, they did however express that they wished more people to do service for the country. Everyone should contribute to society in one way or another.

“The system is good. But every Austrian citizen should do military service who is fit enough. People who are not fit enough should do alternative service. Every citizen should do some service for the society.” OF1.

When asked if they saw any risks or consequences if the organization could not get enough personnel, many of the respondents answered that the system relies on everyone doing their part. They also saw risks that there would not be enough personnel that could use the equipment (tanks, weapon systems, etc.). This would affect the unit’s ability to operate at its full capacity. One of the officers responded however that the low spendings on the military and lack of resources has followed the Austrian forces for years, and that they have learned to work with what they got. One officer also explained that there might be enough personnel, but not enough equipment to fight with. Flexible military leadership and the ability to bring theory to practice were two important aspects that he had experienced during his time in the Austrian Armed Forces. As long as there are enough people for recruitment, it is a possibility to assign them to low level military tasks and therefore solve the issue with low motivation.

“We have always had low levels of resources that have followed us. The problem would be material and resources, but the personnel will be on a high level.” OF2.

“There is a risk that the professional soldiers might work alone to solve the crisis.” OF3.

The possibility that individuals with low motivation would flee and leave Austria was also discussed. Several of the respondents said that there is a possibility that service-eligible men and women would leave the country. It would however be difficult to do so as there would be a small window of time before the borders would be closed. There would also be legal consequences for those individuals at the end of the war and they would be persecuted, as well as experiencing a social stigma for not defending the country. Many of the respondents said that civilian support was important, and one cadet expressed that soldiers might feel abandoned by the civilian side if there was a war.

“Civilian support is important, and the Austrian military can do a good job, but if the war take many years, we definitely need support from the civilian side.” CDT1.

“The feelings of soldiers might be devastating if no one helps, why are we standing here? what are we protecting?” CDT2.

“You can’t defend the country without the population. As a backbone, you need them for help, for service, for support, for everything.” CDT4

An interesting finding was that almost all of the respondents also wished to see women do mandatory military and alternative service, instead of voluntarily. They believed that it would help to secure the needs of personnel, both in the military and in civil society. One officer also thought that every citizen should do some form of service for the country. If the person was not fit for military service, he or she should do some alternative service that was suitable.

“Mandatory service should be for everyone, also women. Only having it for men is unfair and dividing the society.” CDT2.

“I think the mandatory service should be for everyone, not only guys... In terms of equality, it should be for both genders”. CDT3

5 Discussion

This part of the thesis will discuss the result from the previous part and link it to the theory of motivation. This part of the thesis will also discuss the used method, limitations and give examples on further research.

5.1 Result Discussion

The aim of the study was to investigate how a low civilian will to defend the country affected the motivation among personnel in the Austrian Armed Forces. The aim was also to investigate the potential risks or consequences that the military organization faces if there is a low civilian will to defend Austria.

The result from the interviews shows that military personnels' motivation was not affected by a low civilian will to defend Austria. The personnel in the Armed Forces felt that their motivation was high and had been so since they started their career. Many of the respondents experienced that it was a distance, both in knowledge and military practices, from civilian society. Another finding was the difficulty in ensuring that the military forces had enough staff. Many of the officers and cadets experienced that there currently was a staff shortage in peacetime. This would create even bigger consequences if there was a war. Mobilization, flexible leadership, and training would however resolve the issue. Nonetheless, many of the functions in the military would take a long time to learn and be trained for (tanks, pilots, and weapon systems etc.). Another insight from the interviews were respondents' opinion about female mandatory military and alternative service. Many of the respondents thought that females should be required to do military service to ensure the supply of staff in the Armed Forces.

5.1.1 Internal and external motivators.

All the respondents described that their motivation was unaffected by the low civilian will to defend Austria. They also explained that their will to defend Austria was high to a very high level. This result can be connected to Herzberg's different motivating factors. Several of the respondents described that their reason for choosing a military career was to the adventurous and diverse working tasks. Many of the respondents also said that they had the opportunity for advancement and challenges in the armed forces that would give them a variety of tasks for their daily job. The access of hygiene factors (salary, policies, working conditions, job security etc.) might be a reason why military personnel still feel motivated to defend the country or be dissatisfied. The finding can also be linked to one of the important aspects of Herzberg's theory regarding growth, challenges and advancement in the workplace that will make employees feel motivated. Many of the respondents mentioned that they had joined the military because of growth, adventure, and advancement. This might be a reason for the personnel to stay motivated. Similar results can be found in other studies that listed adventure and future careers as possible motivators (Grigorov, 2020, & Harrell et al., 2018). The variable of a low civilian engagement seemed to have little impact on the motivators of the

respondents as they were driven by internal and occupational motivators. (Grigorov, 2020, & Harrell et al., 2018).

5.1.2 Bridging the gap between military and civil society.

One interesting finding that can be linked to Herzberg's motivational factors was the variable of recognition. Several of the respondents mentioned the relationship between the civilian society's attitude towards the Austrian military forces. The military's recognition from the civilian's part can fluctuate depending on what tasks that the military accomplishes in society. If there are no visible results, the Armed Forces might seem not needed and the recognition of importance might be low. Many of the respondents also answered that they felt angry and resentful when hearing that one third of the Austrian citizens were willing to defend the country. This had surprisingly no impact on their own motivation, even though it was missing as a satisfier. The lack of recognition was however a concern among the respondents and a challenge, as it might contribute to low recruitment and financial support in the future. One of the challenges and risks that many of the respondents answered was that there would not be enough personnel in the Armed Forces, both in case of war and in the peace organization. The need of personnel and people willing to defend Austria, both in war and peacetime has an important impact on the organization's ability to do their tasks. Dealing with the recognition from civil society might be a difficult challenge for a country which has been neutral for decades. This might however be solvable by engaging more civilian personnel in military activity. Creating a better understanding about the military organization might be a way to increase the low engagement among the civil society by changing the mindset of the population and thus increase military recognition.

Andres et al. (2019) highlight this challenge in their study and explain how one of the biggest challenges of mixing military and civilian personnel was the lack of understanding each other's roles. Andres et al. (2019) further explains that this included everything from perspectives to organizational policies. It is further described that one way of changing this was to engage more civilian personnel in the military context. By doing so, it increased the military personnels' recognition among the civilian society. This might be a way to increase overall recognition from the public, which can lead to a higher level of satisfaction in the workplace. It might also be a way to create a better understanding from civil society about the military's role and purpose as an organization.

Public opinion about the military may have direct and indirect impact on the military organization. This may also affect the different factors that can contribute to motivation among the soldiers and officers. Toms, Weeks & Yarhi-Milo (2020) describes how the public opinion and civil society in democracies have the power to affect the military force, both economically and policy making. This decision-making can contribute to removing many of the satisfiers and create dissatisfiers that will affect the motivation among military personnel. This can also contribute to a sense of the military force not feeling needed and affect future soldiers' ability to be employed as military personnel. Kosonen & Mälkki (2022) discuss the importance of engaging citizens as a stronger support for national defense and how it has become an important public topic in Finland. Contributing to national defense has been considered as a duty to the state and contributes to credible deterrence force. Rogulis (2023) also describes how Lithuania engages the public to contribute to a stronger national defense. Engaging the public and private sectors can help build meaningful cooperation, strengthen capabilities, and mitigate the role of military for the civil defense.

The figure below shows how different motivators among the military can be affected and strengthened by increasing civilian engagement, thus creating a stronger will to defend society. The figure also shows how the different motivators are affected and can be improved by more engagement from the civilians.

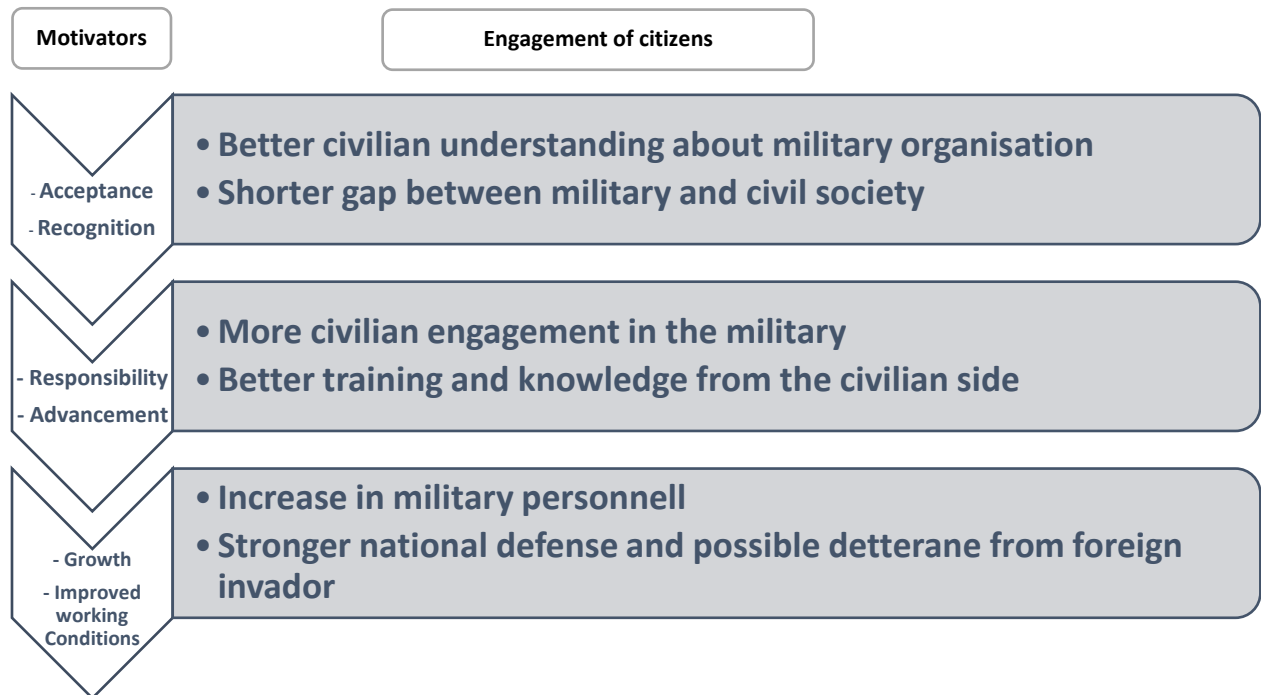


Figure 4. The long-term benefits of having a higher civilian engagement and its impact on motivation and national defense.

5.2 Theory and Method Discussion

Using interviews to get information about the level of motivation has been an efficient way of investigating the personal opinions and experiences of the respondents. It has however only been eight interviews and there is a chance that there are other officers and cadets with a much lower level of motivation that was not chosen for the study. Using another design might had been more beneficial to reach out to a larger sample size and investigate the overall level of motivation among military personnel. This, however, could not have given the deep insights and opinions about the risks and experiences that the respondents had. A quantitative survey design combined with qualitative interviews would have been the best option to investigate the phenomena of motivation among military personnel. This was, however, not possible due to the limited time and size of the study. Using a qualitative inductive approach and semi-structured interviews had however been a very efficient way of getting the needed answers for the study. The use of semi-structured interviews also allowed the respondents to give more information that was asked for and contributed to a larger understanding of the context and complexity of the low civilian will to defend.

One of the limitations in the study might be the on-going events that might have influenced the respondents. Bryman et al. (2021) describes how the method of qualitative interviews are influenced by events and variables that can shape the thoughts of the respondents. There is an on-going conflict not far away from Austrian borders that might have shaped the thoughts and ideas of the respondents. This might affect the replicability in future similar studies if the

political situation in Europe is different. Two of the national surveys from 2024 regarding the low civilian will to defend the country were also recently published in newspapers in Austria. This might have influenced the opinions among the respondents and created a bias.

There have been several limitations of this study that might have affected the outcome. One of the biggest limitations has been the language barriers during the interview. The respondents' native language is German, and they have conducted the interviews in English. Their ability to fully express themselves in English might have limited their level of details when answering the interview questions. Another limitation might be both researcher and participant bias. Both are members of a military organization and have a similar way of thinking when it comes to the will of defense and the military culture. The interviews were also done wearing uniforms and at a military academy. It is possible to argue that military personnel are expected to answer in a certain way while on duty. The answers might have been influenced and biased due to certain expectations of military personnel. However, all the respondents seemed honest with their answers and there is very little doubt that they did not share their personal opinions.

Another important limitation of the study is choosing respondents from the same place. All the respondents were chosen from the faculty and class at the Theresian Military Academy in Austria. The respondents know each other, and all the cadets are currently undergoing the same education/training. The answer might have been different if the respondents were chosen from different units that were spread out through Austria. This could have given the study more insight from different regions in Austria and more diversity of the respondents.

The use of Herzberg's two factor motivational theory has been useful for the purpose of investigating the different factors that motivate personnel. The theory has been used for many decades and has been tested thoroughly in various fields. The theory was initially made for motivation at the workplace and there might be a challenge to apply the theory in a military environment. The theory has however helped to generate a new approach to how military motivation can be affected by the impact of civil society. Understanding civilian engagement and how it affects the military organization is a relevant topic in many countries worldwide and should be further explored. The theory and the study have also helped to understand a fragment of the actions that need to be done to increase the mindset of national defense and create a stronger level of deterrence.

5.3 Importance for the military profession.

Both military and civilians are affected by war and there is no doubt that the civilian part of society plays a crucial role in defending a nation. A military force without mutual reliance and cooperation from the citizens is a force that will be on its own if there is a war. Investigating the motivators among military personnel and how it relates to civil society has given a great understanding of how to approach civil society and win the trust and engagement of the people. This is important for maintaining good relations and for the future recruitment of new personnel. This is also relevant when working with conscripts and the civil society to build strong affiliation that increases the reliance in crisis. Another important key of this study has been to understand the different motivators and how they affect the will to defend the nation. It is important to remind oneself to what one is fighting for and how military leaders can motivate others to do their best.

5.4 Further Research

This study has been limited, both in time and to a geographic location. The topic of military motivation and how it relates to civilians is a contribution that can be further explored. A future study would compare Austria with other European nations that have seen war in more recent days, and at the same time have a higher civilian motivation to defend the country (Ukraine, Kosovo, Serbia, Croatia etc.). This would give a different perspective of how military personnel's motivation is affected by civil society. This could also give an answer to whether or not civilian's motivation to defend the country changes during or after the war. Another approach can be to ask civilian people who are obligated to serve during war and investigate the factors why there is a low motivation to defend the country.

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7 Appendix

Interview Guide:

Introductory questions:

- Tell me about yourself, name, age, rank.
- Tell me briefly about your military background.
- What made you join the military academy / become an officer?
- Have you previously worked with military-civilian related work or worked closely with the civil society in Austria? If yes, how was your experience?

Key questions about motivation:

- What's your opinion about Austria's mandatory civil and military services?
- What is your experience with the civil society's attitude towards the military?
- How do you feel about that several studies (Gallup, 2015,2023 & Der Pragmaticus, 2024) show that there is a low civilian motivation (about 30%) to defend Austria in case of an invasion?
- Can you describe about your own level of motivation when it comes to defending Austria from an invasion?
- Do you experience that your own motivation is affected by the civilians' low will to defend? Why or why not?

Key questions about risks and consequences

- How do you feel about defending Austria with a low support from the civilian society?
- How do you think that a low civilian will to defend Austria will affect the Austrian Armed Forces work in if there was a war? Do you see any risks or consequences?
- Do you think that the civilians' motivation to defend Austria should be increased? Why or why not? How?

Conclusion

- Is there anything more you want to add to this interview?
- Are there any questions about the things we have been talking about?

Information and consent form for processing personal data associated with student essays

To process personal data, consent must be obtained that clearly and in a distinct way states what data will be collected and what it will be used for. This information and consent form explains how the personal data will be processed and contains contact details.

The personal data is processed with **your explicit consent**. Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. If you do not consent to the processing of personal data, you can do so without suffering negative consequences. It is possible to withdraw your consent at any time before the study is published. The collected data will then not be used in the study. It is, however, not possible to withdraw your consent when the study is finished and published.

How will the personal data be used?

The aim of the study is to investigate how a low will to defend one's country in case of an invasion affects the national military defense. Recent surveys have shown that about 20-30% of the Austrian population is ready to defend Austria in case of a military invasion. Austria is also a nation which is military non-aligned, and therefore rely on its civil protection. The importance of a strong will to defend one's nation was shown during the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, where civilian defense plays an important role in supporting the military. Thousands of Ukrainian civilians volunteered to help the national defense. I aim to find out how officers and cadets in the Austrian Defense Forces feel and experience about a low civilian will to defend the nation, and how this is affecting their work and motivation.

I intend to conduct qualitative semi-structured interviews with 7-10 individuals in the Austrian Defense Forces to answer my research question. The insights from the interviews will be used as the main empirical data in my final thesis, as a part of the Officer's Program at Sweden Defense University.

The interviews will be about the effects, risks, and motivational factors that a low will to defend the nation may have on Austria's national defense. This data will be needed in the thesis to get deep insights and individual experiences about military personnel's concerns and thoughts. Each interview will be about 40-50 minutes long and takes place during the month of April in 2024 at the military academy in Wiener Neustadt, Austria.

What personal data will be processed?

Personal data will be collected during the interview. This data includes name, age/birth date, military rank/position, voice recording and a signature. The collected data will be anonymized in the study by removing personally identifiable information about the respondents. It will not be possible to identify any of the respondents in the study. This will be done in order to protect the privacy and integrity of the respondents.

How is your personal data protected and stored?

The personal data and voice recordings from the respondents will be stored at a password protected computer and cell phone. The consent forms with signatures will be stored in a locked cabinet at the Theresian Military Academy. The interview transcripts will also be stored on a password protected computer. Personal data will be deleted when it is no longer needed for the purpose of the study. The information which includes name, age/birthdate, voice recording, and signature will be deleted when the study is completed and graded, 1st of July 2024. The transcribed interviews with the anonymous data will however be stored for 10 years according to Swedish Law. When the personal data is no longer needed for the purpose, it will be deleted.

Your rights

If you need to have incorrect information corrected, supplement with missing information (correction) or if you regret your consent (revocation), you can contact the responsible student and/or their supervisor in the first instance (see contact details below). You can also contact the SDU data protection officer at dataskyddsbud@fhs.se.

Contact details for responsible student(s) and supervisor

Advanced Course War Studies, Independent thesis. Officer's Program at Swedish Defense University

Supervisor: *Leena Vastapuu*

Student: *André McLellan*,

The personal data controllers are Swedish Defence University (SDU), tel. 08-553 425 00. Email registrator@fhs.se

[If you want to know more about how SDU as an authority handles personal data](#)

If you are not satisfied with how SDU handles your personal data, you always have the right to submit a complaint to the Swedish Data Protection Authority (IMY) via e-mail imy@imy.se or telephone +46 8-657 61 00.

By signing below, I confirm that I have read the above information and understand how my personal data may be processed. **I am aware that my participation is completely voluntary and that I can cancel my participation in the study without giving any reason.**

Place and date

Name clarification

Signature