

8. The Military Profession under Pressure

Morten Brønder

On 23 May, the Danish Minister of Defence, Trine Bramsen of the centre-left Social Democrats, announced a thorough shake-up of the Danish Armed Forces (Svendsen, 2020). The initiative followed a number of scandals involving the misuse of power, the fraudulent appropriation of public money and nepotism that had haunted the ministry; the minister's reaction thus seemed to align with recurring accusations in media and political discussions about the "rotten" or "sick" culture in the Danish Armed Forces (Boel, 2020; Hildebrandt, 2020).

The case, raising questions both about the character of a military culture described as "rotten" and the ways in which a conflict between the political establishment and the military community can be meaningfully analysed, is illustrative for the topic of this chapter. To answer these questions, I will use the study of military professions. I will do so by first introducing the two main approaches to such a study, the classical functionalist and the neo-Weberian, and then by showing the forms a critique of the military might take following each of these approaches. Finally, I will advocate an inclusive approach, and argue that instead of describing the relation between the political domain and the military professions in terms of insurmountable opposites, we should focus on understanding why such dichotomies prevail; if we regard a particular world view as inherently incompatible with our own even before we start examining it, we enter the field of study blinkered. The overall questions I seek to answer in the following are, firstly, "What is a mil-

itary profession?” and secondly “How can we study military professions?” When addressing these questions, it is worth noting that I concede – in line with recent contributions to this field of research (Segal & de Angelis, 2009; Libel, 2019) – that instead of talking about a military profession in the singular, we should instead recognise that there exists a plurality of professions, and, moreover, that our approach to the study of any one of these may not adequately fit the study of them all.

What are the Military Professions?

Professions are occupations. Sam Sarkesian and Robert E. Conner (2006, pp. 21ff) identify six specific characteristics differentiating professions from occupations of other kinds; in the case of the military professions, we might interpret these thus:

1. The military profession is founded on expert knowledge.
2. Members of the military profession acquire that knowledge through an educational system set in place for that purpose.
3. The military profession has a social function, and the members fulfil that function without expecting specific benefits.
4. The profession has set norms defining the conduct of professionals and defining its relation to society at large.
5. The profession is set within an institutional framework.
6. The profession has its own system of assessing the quality of professional conduct and recruitment of new members to the professions.

Obviously, the criteria in this list remain quite abstract. It is worth noticing, however, that the list includes both actual characteristics, focusing on how professions are different (the first and fourth items, for instance) and processes set in place to maintain that differentiation (the second and sixth). This accords with the notably influential definition of Freidson (1999), which also highlights both characteristics (a monopoly of theoretical and practical knowledge) on the one hand, and procedures (access to the profession) on the other. In the following, I will address the origins and significance of these two main aspects in the study of the military profession. In other words, I will first focus on the actual characteristics, often referred to as the profession’s expertise – a notion associated with the functionalist approach. Following that, I will focus on the perceived characteristics in place to secure the profession’s position through what is referred to as processes of *social closure* – a notion associated with the neo-Weberian approach.

Professions – The Functionalist Approach

Most descriptions of the study of the military profession start in the late 1950s with the publication of Samuel P. Huntington's *The Soldier and the State* (1957) and Morris Janowitz's *The Professional Soldier* (1960). There are many good reasons for this; first and foremost, these two books addressed the overall question "What characterises military professionalism?" in a systematic fashion, and with a precision, previously unseen. (Rones, 2015). Accepting this as the starting point for the study of the military profession, however, it is easy to overlook two other important facts. First, although these two publications were unique with regard to the methodical nature of their inquiry, we should not underestimate the importance of other relevant studies of the nature of military professionalism. Secondly, when looking at what is perhaps the most important example of these other studies – Samuel A. Stouffer and colleagues' 1949 *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II* published in the wake of the Second World War – it becomes clear that Huntington and Janowitz presuppose a very particular, exclusive, notion of what a profession is and is not.

Huntington (1957) and Janowitz (1960) describe the military profession in the singular. In their view, the officer corps constitutes the backbone of the armed forces – a notion that seems to have been adopted by the military establishment in the United States (U.S. Army, 2010; Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2012; Li, Krueger, Hanser, Naber & LaValley, 2017). Even if we accept this – if we assume, for example, that a highly specialised theoretical knowledge is one of the hallmarks of a true profession – we should still recognise that this has important consequences for what we see, and, perhaps more importantly, what we do *not* see. Thus, leaving out the enlisted men in general, and the NCO-corps in particular, deprives us of an important, and potentially very different, perspective on military professions (Segal & de Angelis, 2009).

The unilateral focus on the officer corps is due to the fact that Huntington and Janowitz were writing at the height of structural functionalism (Segal & de Angelis 2009). Structural functionalism is often ascribed to one of the most influential sociologists of that time, Talcott Parsons, according to whom professions play a role, fulfilling a function, in society at large (Møller, 2019). This is of course true of all occupations and can be seen to result from the general distribution of labour in complex societies. Unlike other occupations, however, Parsons (1954) – and with him Janowitz and, especially, Huntington – claim that professions fulfil their functions in a particular way. And by doing so, professions are crucial in ensuring that the societal whole is larger than the sum of its parts.

Professional Norms as Social Glue

Unlike other occupations, a profession is characterised by a specialised theoretical knowledge and, perhaps most importantly, a set of ethical norms concerning how that knowledge should translate into practice. The most obvious example is the Hippocratic Oath taken by physicians, a clear demonstration of the twofold purpose of such norms. By stating that the purpose of the profession is to serve the greater good, these norms guard society against the danger of both public and private vices: physicians owe their allegiance to the profession and, through that, to society rather than to any particular government or its policies; accordingly, they are expected to refuse to pursue partisan interests violating the common good with reference to that oath. And they are likewise bound by the standards of the oath as individuals: they may use their knowledge for the benefit of their own career, but only within the confines set by the norms of their profession. As long as they stick to these norms, individual rewards may be won to the benefit of all. If they violate them for the sake of personal profit, however, they can no longer be regarded as true members of the profession (Parsons, 1954). Something very similar can be said in regard to the officer. When we talk about military ethics, we tend to refer to *jus in bello* standards applying specifically to the conduct of war (Walzer, 2000). Yet, like physicians, officers have also been seen traditionally as gatekeepers of social norms. The most well-known example of such a norm is probably Article 133 of the US Uniform Code of Military Justice, addressing “Conduct unbecoming of an officer and a gentleman” (UCMJ). While what is included in such “conduct” varies, the statement nevertheless clearly illustrates that the standards an officer is expected to follow exceeds those of the commission in itself. In that light, it is not surprising that becoming an officer requires more than just military training. It implies education, or what Germans refer to as *Bildung* (Jansen, Brænder & Moelker, 2019). And for that reason, members of traditional professions such as physicians, priests, judges and officers command a respect that goes beyond that of the mere occupational function they fulfil.

To return to Huntington and Janowitz, it is for this reason that both focus on the officer rather than the enlisted majority, and why Huntington emphasises that officers should be role models to the society they serve: “The expertise of the officer imposes upon him a special social responsibility. The employment of his expertise promiscuously for his own advantage would wreck the fabric of society. As with the practice of medicine, society insists that the management of violence be utilized only for socially approved purposes” (Huntington, 1957, p. 14). The keyword in the quote above is “expertise.” The expertise is specific. It implies a clearly defined domain or jurisdiction, a high degree of theoretical knowledge

and a very nuanced practical knowledge. Thus seen, the expertise also concerns both the ability to transform theoretical insights into concrete actions and the professional's awareness of certain norms, ensuring that things are done in accordance with professional standards.

Profession and Society: A Delicate Interdependency

Following the description above, professions and modern society are fundamentally interdependent. Providing norms that tie society together, the profession plays a crucial role in maintaining that society – but society is itself a prerequisite for the functioning of the profession. The maintenance of the professions' knowledge, practise and values depends on the existence of a stable social order within which they can function.

It is, however, worth remembering that the works of Huntington and Janowitz were written in light of the fact that the apparently concordant relationship between professions and society at large – between Huntington's *Soldier* and *State* – was drastically changing in the late 1950s. Written shortly before the start of the Vietnam War, the two works came to represent opposite positions in regard to preserving the draft, an institution finally abandoned in 1973 when the war was itself coming to an end. Huntington and Janowitz, then, did not merely describe the state of things; they also suggested, in light of ongoing changes, the future shape of the relationship between the armed forces and society.

One reason why the balance between the soldier and the state shifted in the late 1950 – perhaps, indeed, why such change is apparently continual – is that the relationship between the military professions and society is fundamentally ambivalent. On the one hand, as we have seen, society and its professions are mutually dependent; on the other, their overall purposes or functions can also be seen as mutually exclusive. This relation between professions and society at large is subject to constant rivalry. Each profession adheres to its own values. It can only fulfil its purpose at the expense of the values characterising other professions and society at large.

Nowhere is this ambivalence more visible than in the relation between the armed forces and the state. “The war made the state, and the state made war” (Tilly, 1975, p. 42). Historically seen, the modern state is a product of armed conflicts. Its core characteristics – organised taxes, healthcare, education, social welfare, transports and communication infrastructure, and its organisational bureaucracy – can all be ascribed to processes of optimisation, developed in fierce competition with other states and with other social entities such as the Church, the nobility and trade organisations (Elias 1969; Mann, 1986–2012). Likewise,

modern military institutions have found their form and organisation within the framework of the state. This means that it is difficult to conceive of conflicts in ways other than as the monopolised and organised form of violence, vested in the power of state-controlled military institutions. The state is defined by its monopoly on violence (Weber, 1919, p. 4). Part of that monopoly is delegated to the military profession, the officer corps overseeing the “management of violence,” which, according to Huntington (1957), is the function of the military profession.

The State and the Professions: The Challenge of Striking a New Balance

Over time, the balance between state and profession may shift and must, therefore, be renegotiated (Gibson & Snider, 1999; Snider, 2000; Snider, Oh, & Toner, 2009; Sarkesian & Connor, 2006). And if the relation has become very asymmetrical – if the military gains too much power, for example (Gibson & Snider, 1999) – that process is not always straightforward. This can happen if society and military become over-integrated or if the military gains too high a degree of autonomy; in this case the military will directly control state institutions. It can also happen if the military holds a *de facto* knowledge monopoly, in which case the state depends on military expertise to make strategic decisions only the military establishment can accomplish. While we may often associate the dominance of the military profession with authoritarian regimes, the threats related to the knowledge monopoly of the armed forces have been recognised in Western democracies at least since President Eisenhower’s farewell address in 1961, in which he highlighted the problems of the power vested in the “military-industrial complex.”

The balance can also shift the other way, in favour of society; in this case, governing institutions no longer recognise, or do not prioritise, the needs of the armed forces. 30 years ago, Charles Krauthammer famously stated: “American pre-eminence is based on the fact that it is the only country with the military, diplomatic, military and economic assets to be a decisive player in any conflict in whatever part of the world it chooses to involve itself” (Krauthammer, 1991, p. 24). This statement is still true – at least in comparison to its Western allies; the proportion of GDP allocated to military expenditure is very low in the EU region, for instance. There is probably more than one reason for this. Everything spent on military equipment and personnel is money that cannot be spent on more popular issues such as welfare, education or health. Moreover, EU countries may currently have little incentive to invest large sums in military institutions: the extremely strong economic position of the Union ensures that non-European companies have a strong incentive to comply with EU rules in order to gain access to the single market. In this way, EU rules become the gold standard for foreign companies – a fact that

enables the Union to push through European policies far more effectively than it would through more direct means (Bradford 2020).

The Conflict between the Political Establishment and the Armed Forces: A Functionalist Interpretation

From a functionalist point of view, we can understand the tension between the political establishment and the armed forces in Denmark as a concrete example of the conflict of interests lurking between the state and the military professions. The state pursues an economic logic, according to which money cannot be spent twice; when managing state-founded institutions, therefore, the state needs to ensure that it gets value for money and that each institution works as efficiently as possible. The armed forces, on the other hand, seek to fulfil the purpose of the military professions – that is, the management of violence (if we look specifically at the officer corps), and countering external threats (if we look at the professions in general). Traditionally, the military profession's (or professions') main criterion for success has been effective security, not economic efficiency. But security does not have a price tag. It costs what it costs. As long as the state cannot ignore the prevalence of threats, it must also prioritise security and may have to overlook procedures not complying with its other considerations. When, however, the economic logic becomes all-pervasive and security issues less urgent, cracking down on such apparently aberrant professional practises becomes a way to increase state control.

Norms and their Loss

We have seen how functionalists understand professional norms to bind society together. The notion that there is a close relationship between the maintenance of society and the sustaining and prevailing norms can be ascribed to the founder of functionalism, Émile Durkheim.

Durkheim highlighted that individuals can, especially in times of rapid social change, encounter situations they experience as anomic, characterised by a total loss of social norms. Former standards no longer apply, and new standards are not yet in place to replace them. Social transitions challenge prevailing norms (Durkheim, 1964). With this in mind, we can also understand how professional norms are subject to social change – which is useful in explaining the conflict between the political establishment and the military professions.

When Huntington (1957) aligns the officer with the physician, he does so

because they both adhere to norms that differentiate their conduct from that of other occupations. Members of the classical professions – physicians, priests and judges – apply their expertise on domains associated with life and death. The same can be said of the officer, who through his virtuous management of violence ensures the survival of society by visiting death on its enemies. Norms are crucial in regard to the role all true professions play in society at large. We expect high standards from professionals. Moreover, norms are also crucial when members of the profession act as professionals: expertise is not just a matter of knowing what your goals are, or knowing how to reach them, but knowing how to reach them correctly. It is perhaps for this reason that a focus on norms constitutes the dominant view in studies of the military professions, either heralding how norms help in maintaining high professional standards or bemoaning how the loss of normative or ethical standards has led to the decay of the military profession (Snider, Nagl, & Pfaff, 1999; Rockwood, 2005; Kohn, 2009; Snider, Oh, & Toner, 2009; Snider, 2000, 2008; Box, 2012; Clark, 2016; Crosbie & Kleykamp, 2018).

The military professions are distinguished by the legitimising of the transgression of norms that we would elsewhere regard as part and parcel of social order – the prohibition of killing and the obligation of self-preservation. As with the economic costs, this unique characteristic can be maintained as long as the overall function of the military professions – to protect society against external threats – prevails. When this is no longer the case, however, outsiders will find it increasingly difficult to accept such exceptions; instead of being seen as heroes or martyrs, soldiers then will be viewed as perpetrators or victims. They will find themselves lost between the norms of society and the norms of the profession, and their ability to cope with criticism from the outside will depend on the support they can expect from the inside.

The Neo-Weberian Approach

Although Huntington and Janowitz both studied military professionalism, beginning with similar functionalist principles and focusing similarly on the officer corps, they did not reach the same conclusions about the profession's role in society. For Huntington (1957), the military should provide an *example* for society; in accordance with the functionalist idea of differentiation described above. In other words, he saw military professionalism as a bulwark against the threats of individualism and political partisanship. Janowitz (1960), conversely, emphasised that the military should *resemble* society; this way it would be precluded from becoming a state within the state. The difference can be ascribed to the two authors' different disciplinary starting points (Rukavishnikov & Pugh, 2006), or, with reference

to Durkheim, be seen as their subscribing to different views of solidarity – “social glue.” Janowitz (1960) advocates a *mechanic* view, according to which social cohesion is guaranteed by similarity; Huntington (1957) advocates an *organic* view, according to which social cohesion is guaranteed by difference. Accordingly, the different conclusions reached by Janowitz and Huntington reflect fundamentally different perspectives on the relation between society at large and the social sub-systems we know as professions. This is important because, as we shall see below, the neo-Weberian approach to the sociology of professions focuses precisely on how that relation is maintained.

From Social Structure to Social Actor

Whereas functionalism can be ascribed to Durkheim, Weberianism is ultimately derived from another founder of the discipline of sociology, Max Weber. When analysing the role of professions, this means that we now turn our focus from the structural level to that of the actor, and from the actual to the perceived differences between the characteristics defining professions, and to the mechanisms maintaining such perceptions.

This shift of focus is important for two reasons. First, structural explanations sometimes resort to the ecological fallacy – the incorrect extrapolation of results from one set to another. As this error is licensed by a failure to recognise important and subtle details, we are less likely to commit it if we keep a keen eye on the context – as, indeed, an actor perspective encourages us to do. Secondly, an actor perspective affords us a qualitatively different way of explaining observed patterns and opens a venue for explanations that would not arise had we pursued a wholly structural approach.

To illustrate the latter, remember that the conflict between state and profession is, as we have seen above, the result of clashing functionalist interests, where the state’s focus on economics stands in the way of the military profession’s focus on security. A conflict of interests may still arise, however, even in situations where military funding is available. Thus, in spite of the fact that the former U.S. Defence Secretary Robert S. McNamara constantly increased military spending and that his successor Melvin R. Laird cut defence budgets significantly, the top brass detested the former and embraced the latter. According to James Q. Wilson (1989), this was because McNamara tried to micromanage the professions while Laird allowed the military to decide itself where to make cuts. While funding is an important element in the conflict of interests between the profession and the state, the most important struggle is, then, the struggle for professional autonomy. This is the struggle in focus in the neo-Weberian approach.

Where the key concept in the functionalist approach is *expertise*, with its theoretical, practical and ethical implications, the corresponding key concept in the neo-Weberian approach is *social closure* (Abbott, 1988; Wedeen, 2002). Social closure defines the mechanism set in place to ensure that a profession can retain its status. This certainly does not mean that expertise is irrelevant. As mentioned above, the six defining traits of the military profession identified by Sarkesian and Connor (2006) address both the characteristics serving to differentiate the profession and the procedures set in place to facilitate that differentiation.

The point is that the building blocks of expertise – knowledge, practice and ethics – only become relevant when they are used as social markers to set a profession apart; in other words, what counts in the relationship between professions and society are not only the actual differences or the actual autonomy of the profession, but how these differences are perceived by the social actors. For this reason, what now comes into focus is identity, including the establishment of binary us/them-relations, motivation and, especially, the ways in which actual or imaginary differences are articulated.

From Institution to Occupation

Traditionally, the study of military professions has focused more on expertise than on social closure, and in some instances has even rejected the relevance of a neo-Weberian approach altogether (Aselius, 2011). However, one of the most influential analytical frameworks in military sociology – the distinction made by Charles C. Moskos (1977) between what he describes as members of, respectively, an institution and an occupation (the I/O model) – can be seen as entailing some of the key elements characterising the neo-Weberian approach, and, as we shall see below, it has certainly been used in the process of establishing social closure.

In the wake of the cancellation of the draft in America, Moskos predicted that the military profession would now leave what he describes as the *institutional* model and instead move towards an *occupational* model (1977). Institutions are professions. Members of institutions are driven by what we would refer to as intrinsic motivation – a calling (Ryan & Deci 2000). They serve because they perceive their work to be its own reward. Members of occupations, on the contrary, are driven by what we would refer to as extrinsic motivation – they serve because of what the work will return in remuneration or privilege. Ultimately, the efforts afforded by members of an occupation are the result of a utilitarian cost benefit-analysis.

Often, the difference between institution and occupation is depicted as a qualitative difference, or, as referred to above, as an insurmountable leap. Giuseppe Caforio (1988), for instance, reiterates Moskos's model, openly differenti-

ating between the “professional” and the “manager,” an interpretation that has later been repeated by Marina Nuciari (1994) and Don M. Snider (2015). And, as mentioned in the introduction, when politicians vent their frustrations about the “sick” or “rotten” culture of the military, they also seem to see the two sets of values – the values of the institution and the values of the occupation, respectively – as mutually exclusive. The problem is of course that a view based on absolutes inevitably implies the negation of its opposite. Seen from the perspective of the political establishment, if the culture of the military institution is sick or rotten, the obvious implication is that society should be freed from it. From the perspective of the military the reverse is true: Management is incompatible with true professionalism. This is a view, however, that leads us to forget that soldiers are also managers. Not only in the sense that they are “managers of violence,” but because military leaders – above a certain level, at least – spend most of their time leading organisations, just like managers elsewhere in the public sector.

Although Moskos’ (1977) framework is extremely useful as an analytical model, the notion that the military professions will dissolve into mere occupations is very unlikely. Not simply because it would fundamentally challenge soldiers’ self-understanding (soldiers fighting for extrinsic reasons alone are what we normally refer to as mercenaries); but also because it can be rejected empirically. There is no reason to doubt that the motivation of soldiers changes over time. In his Vietnam War study of 1971, Moskos underlined how observations made during the Second World War no longer applied. More recent studies have highlighted the importance of other motivational aspects in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, among them abstract knowledge or self-realisation (Wong, Kolditz, Millen & Potter, 2003; Brænder, 2016). And studies examining Moskos’s I/O model have shown that instead of completely abandoning the institutional elements, the professional soldier is better described as a “pragmatic professional,” driven both by his or her calling and by other motives (Segal, 1986; Woodruff, Kelty & Segal, 2006), and that the hallmark of the contemporary officer is his or her ability to shift between different leadership domains (Brænder & Holting, 2020).

The Conflict between the Political Establishment and the Armed Forces: A Neo-Weberian Interpretation

Keeping in mind the above reservations concerning false dichotomies, a neo-Weberian interpretation affords us an alternative perspective on the conflict between the political establishment and the military professions to that offered by a functionalist approach. Neo-Weberians would not focus unequivocally on the clash between different functions, but on the struggle for autonomy. For instance, when

the state implements reforms to ensure it has the formal power to decide who can access the ranks of a profession, professions will counter that move by putting in place informal mechanisms to guarantee that, in practice, the profession can remain in control. While such mechanisms may be less visible, they are often just as effective as formal barriers. The most famous example of such a process is probably that identified in Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of French elite academies (Bourdieu & Passron, 1964). Here, we discover that some students have an exclusive knowledge about what really counts in higher education – and that they will fare much better than those without it. These privileged students are the “true inheritors,” young people whose parents also attended elite academies. From their early childhood, they have been given the ability to decode the system. Hence, they outperform students who may have the same talent on paper, but who lack the social skills setting the privileged students apart.

Similar processes where the profession “pushes back” to ensure that it retains control may also be observed in the armed forces, following state initiatives to “liberalise” military academies by dictating access criteria or requiring third-party accreditation of military educations, for instance. While such studies are yet to be conducted in Scandinavia, to my knowledge, Marenne M. Jansen (2019) focuses on precisely such processes in a context not too far removed in her recently defended dissertation on officer education in the Netherlands.

Unintended Consequences

Above, I have shown how the neo-Weberian approach can be used to study the professions' quest for autonomy. Turning our attention to analyses conducted by Weber himself, however, we may be able to shed some light on how the tension between the political and the military domains can be understood as an unintended consequence of a process of transition initially set in motion to align the values of the military with the managerial ideals of the political establishment.

A concrete example of the move from institution to occupation in the Danish Armed Forces can be found in the shift from an internal selection system to an application system in filling military positions. When military personnel enjoyed the full privileges of public servants (“tjenestemænd”) with extended rights in terms of job security, a serviceman could be marked out for a position, for anywhere and at any time. Today, servicemen apply for their jobs through the military's human resources department and they do so in competition with other applications. This was the result of a managerial reform in the armed forces following the Parliamentary Defence Settlement of 2012 (Forsvarsministeriet, 2012; Forsvarets Personeltjeneste, 2013). The reform was meant to ensure that positions

were distributed fairly, that the best people were found for the right jobs, and that personal connections would not give anyone a head start in their military career. We should not forget that managerialism in this respect is inherently democratic; professions, conversely, rely on an inherently aristocratic logic according to which the knowledge and insights that define them are exclusive, and that true expertise is only available to a chosen few. Understood thus, the managerial approach is adopted with the intention of quashing such privileges.

Ironically, however, the most spectacular scandals visiting the Danish Armed Forces took place after this reform was instituted. It appears likely that this did not happen in spite of, but as an unintended result of, this reform.

Conceptually, a celebrated description of an archetypical unintended consequence can be found in Weber's seminal *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 2000). In this collection of essays, Weber argues that the Calvinist notion of predestination, initially conceived as a rejection of principles concerning the consequences and nature of deeds in Catholic theology, unintentionally led to an increased focus on success in worldly life among Calvinists. As a result, capitalism became especially strong in Calvinist areas.

Likewise, when looking at the conflict between the state and military professions we can also see the breakdown of norms implied when military culture is described as inherently "rotten" or "sick" as an unintended consequence of the very processes that – ironically – were set in motion by the political establishment to democratise military institutions. To follow that argument, we should keep in mind that the shift from an institutional to an occupational logic is also a shift from one mindset to another. It is a shift from a deontological ethic to a utilitarian one, from duties to rewards. Personnel serving in the institutional model weigh obligations against privileges. Personnel serving in the occupational model weigh costs against benefits. This is important because this shift fundamentally changes the nature of the relationship between employer and employee. Weighing obligations against privileges constitutes a both/and-relation. You can be expected to sacrifice everything – it is your duty – because the institution has already given you everything you have, all your privileges. Weighing costs against benefits prioritises an either/or-relation instead. There is a threshold. Beyond that, once the costs exceed the benefits, you will not feel obliged to put in the extra efforts needed to make things work.

In short, it could be argued that while the intention of the managerial human resources reform was to democratise military career paths through equal opportunities, it ended up altering the mindset of the personnel, unintentionally giving incentives to cut corners – instead of pursuing the norms of the profession, they became the architects of their own future. Thus public virtues became private vices.

What To Keep In Mind When Studying Military Professions

Above, I have offered two ways of using the study of military professions to examine the relation between armed forces and society. As mentioned in the introduction, this does not mean that the relation or the tension currently prevailing in Denmark cannot be studied using other approaches. And it should not be seen as an unqualified rejection of the voices contesting the usefulness of a military professions approach altogether.

Inspired by Gil Eyal (2013), Tamir Libel has recently argued that instead of studying the sociology of the military profession, we should instead focus on the sociology of security expertise (Libel, 2019). It is clearly a proposal with very great potential. Instead of only focusing on institutions intrinsically bound to a particular constellation of society, we can allow ourselves to look at the actual “tasks and problems” initially identified by Andrew Abbott (1988) as a core purpose in the sociology of professions. Thus, we can study the actual “management of violence” without having to regard the historically contingent organisation of the armed forces as an obvious point of departure. Following this argument, I can propose at least five ways in which this can widen our perspective. These are presented, in brief, in table 1 below.¹

Case	Tasks and problems that can be included by pursuing a (security) expertise perspective	
The officer corps	How is security expertise executed when officers work in management or staff functions far away from the conduct of war?	
Uniformed personnel	How is security expertise executed on the ground?	
Armed forces personnel (technicians, administrative staff, canteen staff, cleaning staff)	How is security expertise executed by civilian technicians employed by the armed forces?	
Personnel in other state sanctioned organisations commissioned with the management of violence (police officers, firemen, paramedics)	How is security expertise executed by police officers in riot control functions?	

¹ The list is probably not exhaustive, and I hope readers will supplement it.

Case	Tasks and problems that can be included by pursuing a (security) expertise perspective	
Personnel (or individuals) managing violence in non-state organisations (<i>Legitimate organisations:</i> private military and security companies) (<i>Illegitimate organisations:</i> rebels, criminal groups)	How is security expertise executed by private military contractors in war zones?	

Table 1: How a sociology of security expertise can widen our study of the management of violence.

A quick glance at the table should illustrate the potential for widening our perspective by decoupling an expertise approach from a professions approach. These clear analytical advantages aside, I will however, follow Mike Saks (2016) in this critique of Eyal's proposal (2013), and emphasise that we – by completely giving up the notion of professions – run the risk of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Granted, we should not confine our study of the military profession to an ideal settled in a very different time and under very different conditions. After all, in terms of military organisation, social values, geo-strategic threats and technological developments the world today is very different from the world in 1957, when Huntington wrote *The Soldier and the State*.

Although we can study security expertise independently of the military profession, however, this does not imply that we should not study the profession at all. Nor does the fact that this decoupling enables us to fruitfully study security expertise independently of the military professions imply that security expertise exists independently of military professionalism. This is the reason why I follow the neo-Weberian Mike Saks (2016) in stating that a unilateral focus on expertise makes it too easy to overlook other prevailing, and therefore relevant, conditions. If we give up the notion of social closure, we run the risk of overlooking the circumstance that in spite of all changes, classical virtues and norms can be tenacious. After all, we still find the tokens of the military – uniforms, organisational structure, tactics, jargon, and codes of conduct – in brands of security expertise far beyond the borders of the profession. Thus, when studying how such other branches of security expertise set themselves apart, the continuous signification of such tokens in other settings constitutes an obvious point of departure.

I do not argue, then, that we should abandon the notion of expertise, as it helps us broaden our analytical perspectives; my argument is simply that such a

notion should not stand alone. In table 1, above, I listed five ways in which a turn towards a sociology of expertise may help us widen our focus in the study of the relation between military (or security) and society. In table two, below, I add a new column to this list. This column points out five tasks and problems each related to a social closure perspective, each emphasising the importance of keeping the enduring nature of professional norms and ideals in mind (applicable also when studying expertise beyond the boundaries of the military professions.)

Case	Tasks and problems that can be included by pursuing a (security) expertise perspective	Tasks and problems that can be included by pursuing a social closure perspective
The officer corps	How is security expertise executed when officers work in management or staff functions far away from the conduct of war?	How do military managers articulate their work tasks as uniquely military?
Uniformed personnel	How is security expertise executed on the ground?	How is the traditional military hierarchy challenged when enlisted personnel and Non-Commissioned Officers have more practical experience than their superior officers?
Armed forces personnel (technicians, administrative staff, canteen staff, cleaning staff)	How is security expertise executed by civilian technicians employed by the armed forces?	Do technical personnel encounter the prevalence of traditional military norms barrier when working as a side-by-side with uniformed personnel?
Personnel in other state sanctioned organisations commissioned with the management of violence (police officers, firemen, paramedics)	How is security expertise executed by police officers in riot control functions?	Does the implementation of military tactics in paramilitary police units contribute to the escalation of police violence?
Personnel (or individuals) managing violence in non-state organisations (<i>Legitimate organisations:</i> private military and security companies (<i>Illegitimate organisations:</i> rebels, criminal groups)	How is security expertise executed by private military contractors in war zones?	Is the death of a private military contractor recognised as a military sacrifice?

Table 2: How a sociology of security expertise can widen our study of the management of violence. And how a social closure perspective may still be important.

Table 2 illustrates that, in the analysis of any case, your approach decides the nature of your perspective at the outset. This can be neatly illustrated from a recent example from the Danish military (relevant to row two in the table above, if we expand the perspective to uniformed personnel in general rather than officers alone). The soldiers who participated in the very fighting-intense deployment of soldiers to Helmand between 2006 and 2014 gained experience that will always set them apart from other members of the armed forces. When they served as NCOs and junior officers, they were more experienced and more highly decorated than their superior officers – a status that cannot solely be seen as a matter of “expertise.”

The takeaway is this: studying the military profession, one should choose one’s perspective with caution. While, as noted in the introduction, I advocate entering the field with an open mind, it should be emphasised that this does not mean that the different perspectives are necessarily compatible. What you discern using one approach may be invisible when using another.

Conclusion

At the outset, I asked two questions: What is a military profession? And how can the military professions be studied?

There is no single military profession; there are a number of them. And, historically seen, it makes little sense to refer to military professions as social entities. The genesis of military institutions and the association of one particular group within these institutions, the officer corps, is bound to a particular type of society. Traditionally, military professions have been analysed using either a functionalist perspective, focusing on the characteristics setting the profession apart, or a neo-Weberian perspective, focusing on the procedures in place to maintain that distinction. As the characteristics can also be found in other contexts, it makes sense to also focus on these more generally. Before abandoning a professions approach altogether, we should keep in mind that social closure and unintended consequences not only ensure the continuous existence of the military profession, but also mean that professional norms may also prevail outside the confines of the military institutions.

So, how should we analyse military professions? Overall, I would argue that this should be done with an open mind, so that one is aware of both the strengths and the limitations of the chosen approach. More specifically, when setting out to conduct such a study, one should consider the three questions below:

What aspects of military professionalism do you want to study? Are you focusing solely on the characteristics of military expertise (knowledge, practice and ethics), on procedures of social closure, or on something completely different?

Regardless of the choice, the field would clearly benefit if we seek to explain the reasons informing our focus.

Who are you studying when you study the military profession – and how is the study to be conducted? (The tables above highlight the breadth of potential cases. It makes a big difference, however, if we centre on our own perceptions or on the perceptions of others; on performance measures; whether our sources are objective or subjective; whether we conduct surveys, interviews or document analyses.)

Why do you study the military profession? Explain the bigger picture. Professional status and professional identities continue to undergo significant change and constant renegotiation. Make it clear to your reader and, not least, to yourself what general trend your chosen case exemplifies.

- Abbott, A. (1988). *The system of professions: An essay on the division of expert labor*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Aselius, G. (2011). The military profession in change – the case of Sweden (review). *Statsvetenskaplig Tidskrift*, 113(1), 153–159.
- Boel, E. (2020, June 6). Forsvarsministeren har ikke formået at lave en troværdig oprydning i Forsvaret [The Minister of Defence has not managed to make a credible clean-up in the Danish military]. *Ræson*. Retrieved from <https://www.raeson.dk/2020/erik-boel-forsvarsministeren-har-ikke-formaet-at-lave-en-trovaerdig-oprydning-i-forsvaret/>
- Bourdieu, P., & Passron, J.-C. (1964). *Les héritiers: les étudiants et la culture* [The heirs: students and culture]. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Box, J. E. (2012). *Toxic leadership in the military profession*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College.
- Bradford, A. (2020). *The Brussels effect – How the European Union rules the world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brænder, M. (2016). Adrenalin junkies: Why soldiers return from war wanting more. *Armed Forces & Society*, 42(1), 3–25. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X15569296>
- Brænder, M., & Holsting, V.S. (2020). The power of experience? Innovative and authoritative leadership values among Danish army cadets. *Armed Forces & Society*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X20951435>
- Caforio, G. (1988). The military profession: Theories of change. *Armed Forces & Society*, 15(1), 55–69. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X8801500104>
- Clark, B. (2016, January 31). *Moral underpinnings of the military profession*. *The Calhoun Review*. Retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2725608
- Crosbie, T., & Kleykamp, M. (2018). Fault lines of the American military profession. *Armed Forces & Society*, 44(3), 521–543. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X17715437>
- Durkheim, E. (1964). *The division of labour in society*. New York: Free Press.
- Elias, N. (1969). *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation: Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen* [On the process of civilization: Sociogenetic and psychogenetic studies]. Frankfurt a.M: Suhrkamp.
- Eyal, G. (2013). For a sociology of expertise: The social origins of the autism epidemic. *American Journal of Sociology*, 118(4), 893–907. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/668448>
- Forsvarets Personeltjeneste (2013). “Forsvaret ændrer HR-service.” *Forsvarsavisen* 2 (1): 18–19.
- Forsvarsministeriet (2012). Aftale på forsvarsområdet 2013–2017 [Parliamentary defence settlement]. November 2012. <https://fmn.dk/da/nyheder/2012/2012/aftale-pa-forsvarsområdet-2013-2017/>
- Friedson, E. (1999). Theory of professionalism: Method and substance. *International Review of Sociology*, 9(1), 117–129. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03906701.1999.9971301>
- Gibson, C. P., & Snider, D. M. (1999). Civil-military relations and the potential to influence: A look at the national security decision-making process. *Armed Forces & Society*, 25(2), 193–218. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X9902500202>
- Hildebrandt, S. (2020, June 1). Det, vi får belyst i medierne om forsvaret, er en syg kultur [The sick culture of the armed forces revealed in the media]. *Jyllands-Posten*. Retrieved from <https://jyllands-posten.dk/debat/breve/ECE12177427/det-vi-faar-belyst-i-medierne-om-forsvaret-er-en-syg-kultur/>
- Huntington, S. P. (1957). *The Soldier and the state*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Janowitz, M. (1960). *The professional soldier: A social and political portrait*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Jansen, M. M. (2019). *Educating for military realities* (PhD dissertation, Radboud Universiteit, Nijmegen).
- Jansen, M. M., Brænder, M., & Moelker, R. (2019). What sets the officer apart? Dutch and Danish educational reforms leading to the habitus of the thinking soldier. In W. Klinkert, M. Bollen, M. Jansen, H. de Jong, E. H. Kramer, L. Vos (Eds.), *Educating officers: the thinking soldier – the NLDA*

References

- and the Bologna Declaration. *NL ARMS, Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies* (pp. 337–353). The Hague: Springer, 2019.
- Joint Chiefs of Staff (2012). *America's military – A profession of arms*. White paper. Retrieved from <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/aprofessionofarms.pdf>
- Kohn, R. H. (2009). Tarnished brass: is the U.S. military profession in decline? *World Affairs*, 171(4), 73–83.
- Krauthammer, C. (1991). The unipolar moment. *Foreign Affairs*, 70(1), 23–33. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/20044692>
- Li, J. J., Krueger, T. C., Hanser, L. M., Naber, A. M., & LaValley, J. B. (2017). *Enhancing professionalism in the U.S. Air Force*. Retrieved from RAND Corporation website https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1721.html.
- Libel, T. (2019). From the sociology of the (military) profession to the sociology of (security) expertise: The case of European national defence universities. *Defence Studies*, 19(1), 62–84. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2018.1562910>
- Mann, M. (1986–2012). *The sources of social power* (Vols. I–IV). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moskos, C. C. (1971). Vietnam: Why men fight. In E. Z. Friedenberg (Ed.), *The anti-American generation* (pp. 217–237). Boston, MA: Transaction Books.
- Moskos, C. C. (1977). From institution to occupation: Trends in military organization. *Armed Forces & Society*, 4(1), 41–50.
- Møller, M. Ø. (2019). Professioner [Professions]. In A. Blok & C. Bagge Laustsen (Eds.), *Sociologiens problem – en grundbog* (pp. 281–300). København: Hans Reitzels Forlag
- Nuciari, M. (1994). Rethinking the military profession: Models of change compared. *Current Sociology*, 42(3), 7–21. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/001139294042003003>
- Parsons, T. (1954). The professions and social structure. In *Essays in sociological theory* (pp. 34–49). New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Rockwood, L. P. (2005). *Walking away from Nuremberg: Just war and the doctrine of command responsibility in the American military profession*. (PhD dissertation, University of Florida, Florida).
- Rones, N. (2015). *The Struggle over military identity – A multi-sited ethnography on gender, fitness and “the right attitudes” in the military profession/field*. (PhD dissertation, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Oslo).
- Rukavishnikov, V. O., & Pugh, M. (2006). Civil military relations. In G. Caforio (Ed.), *Handbook of the sociology of the military* (pp. 131–149). New York, NY: Springer.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(1), 54–67. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.1020>
- Saks, M. (2016). A review of theories of professions, organizations and society: The case for neo-Weberianism, neo-institutionalism and eclecticism. *Journal of Professions and Organization*, 3(2), 170–187. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/jow005>
- Sarkesian, S., & Connor, R. (2006). *The US military profession into the 21st century: War, peace and politics*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis
- Segal, D. (1986). Measuring the institutional/occupational change thesis. *Armed Forces & Society*, 12(3), 351–376. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X8601200302>
- Segal, D. R., & de Angelis, K. (2009). Changing conceptions of the military as a profession. In S. C. Nielsen & D. M. Snider (Eds.), *American civil-military relations: The soldier and the state in a new era* (pp. 194–212). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Snider, D. M., Nagl, J. A., & Pfaff, T. (1999). *Army professionalism, the military ethic, and officership in the 21st*

- century. Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College (1999). Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep11214>
- Snider, D.M. (2000). America's postmodern military. *World Policy Journal*, 17(1), 47–54. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1215/07402775-2000-2007>
- Snider, D.M. (2008). Dissent and strategic leadership of the military professions. *Orbis*, 52(2), 256–277. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2008.01.006>
- Snider, D. M. (2015). Will army 2025 be a military profession? *Parameters*, 45(4), 39–51.
- Snider, D. M., Oh, P., & Toner, K. (2009). *The army's professional military ethic in an era of persistent conflict*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College.
- Stouffer, S. A. (Ed.) (1949). *Studies in social psychology in World War II* (Vols. I–IV). Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press
- Svendsen, J. (2020, May 23). Nu vil forsvarsministeren ryste sit system [Now the Minister of Defence wants to shake up her system]. *Politiken*. Retrieved from <https://politiken.dk/indland/art7795946/Nu-vil-forsvarsministeren-ryste-sit-system>
- Tilly, C. (1975). Reflections on the history of European state-making. In C. Tilly (Ed.), *The formation of national states in Western Europe* (pp. 3–83). Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), 10 U.S.C § 933, article 13. Retrieved from: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10/933>
- US Army (2010). The profession of arms [White paper]. Retrieved from <https://www.milsci.ucsb.edu/sites/default/files/sitefiles/resources/The%20Profession%20of%20Arms.pdf>
- Walzer, M. (2000). *Just and unjust wars: A moral argument with historical illustrations*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Weber, M. (1919). *Politik als Beruf* [Politics as a profession]. München: Duncker & Humblot
- Weber, M. (2000). *Die protestantische Ethik und der "Geist" des Kapitalismus* [Protestant ethics and the "spirit" of capitalism]. Weinheim: Beltz.
- Wedeen, K. A (2002). Why do some occupations pay more than others? Social closure and earnings inequality in the United States. *American Journal of Sociology*, 108(1), 55–101. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/344121>
- Wilson, J. Q (1989). *Bureaucracy: What government agencies do and why they do it*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Wong, L., Kolditz, T. A., Millen R.A., & Potter, T. M. (2003). *Why they fight – combat motivation in the Iraq War*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College.
- Woodruff, T., Kelty, R., & Segal, D.R. (2006). Propensity to serve and motivation to enlist among american combat soldiers. *Armed Forces & Society*, 32(3), 353–366. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/02F0095327X05283040>