

Introduction

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This collection brings together essays concerned with the military profession and professionalism in Denmark, Norway and Sweden – theoretical and empirical studies of professional value systems, professional roles, professional logics, professional development and professional education and training.

European militaries have changed, in some ways quite profoundly, since the end of the Cold War (Edmunds, 2006; King, 2011; Segal & Burke, 2012; Edmunds, Dawes, Higate, Jenkins, & Woodward, 2016). Notwithstanding their differences, the Scandinavian countries are often considered to be similar in social structure, history and culture and to enjoy significant similarities in relation to welfare and defence policies and their political and military institutions (Knudsen & Rothstein, 1994). The military profession and professionalism in these countries, that is, have developed in remarkably similar contexts of reform and change. This edited collection attends to these similarities while acknowledging some significant differences.

The programme for the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2021 has as one of its “fundamental theses” the proposition “we are stronger and wiser together than as individuals.” The shared aim is ambitious; together the Nordic countries will be the world’s most integrated and sustainable region (see the Nordic Council of Ministers’ website www.norgen.org). This perspective is one of many useful to the understanding and analysis of the formulation of the Nordic countries’ defence and security policies.

Denmark, Sweden and Norway have much in common in their geography, borders, labour, languages, welfare systems and, to a certain extent, culture. More, they are all relatively small states – a fact obliging them to manage scarce resources and to collaborate on matters benefitting from a united effort, such as joint purchases, research and the development of technology. They also share history (albeit a history experienced differently in each country: the Second World War is an example). With the end of the Cold War, the Scandinavian countries, geographically situated in a borderland and constituting an interdependent security region defined by the major fault line between Russia and NATO (Bengtsson, 2020, p. 102), have certain specific defence circumstances in common. Not surprisingly, they often agree on the security threat and the risk assessment for the region.

Despite these similarities, however, there are also differences. The Scandinavian countries chose different paths regarding strategic alliances and cooperation after the Second World War, with Denmark and Norway having a transatlantic orientation and Sweden choosing to remain outside NATO and to deepen its cooperation with Finland and the EU instead.

With its greater military contributions to international operations, Denmark sets itself apart from its northern neighbours. Between 1990 and 2018, the Danish parliament authorised troop deployments to 33 UN operations and 25 NATO operations. This Danish involvement in international operations represents “a sixfold increase over the period 1945–1989, when Denmark contributed to just 13 international military operations” (Mariager & Wivel, 2019, p. 4). While international missions were high on the agenda for the Norwegian and Swedish armed forces during this same period, they were not prioritised to the same extent. Rather, the strengthening of national defence forces and investment in a policy of civil–military “total defence” has been prioritised in recent years, a development explained by these countries’ geographical situation, with their long borders and proximity to Russia. Unlike its Swedish and Norwegian counterparts, the Danish government does not (yet) describe its defence policy in terms of total defence. The government’s current defence focus is on improving conventional forces to contribute to NATO’s collective defence efforts (Wither, 2020, p. 63).

The Military Professions in Scandinavia

The last decades have seen an upsurge of interest in the concept of *profession* within research on military organisation and military studies (Moskos, Williams & Segal, 2000; Evetts, 2003; Snider & Matthews 2005; Snider, 2015; Crosbie & Kleykamp, 2018; Finney & Mayfield, 2018). That the military itself has not

remained silent in this discussion is evident, for example, in the professional doctrine of the U.S. Army and Joint Force (U.S. Army, 2013) and the Australian review “Beyond Compliance” (Orme, 2011). Public inquiries following the long series of conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have led to productive reflection on questions of military professionalism (FOI, 2016; Bornholdt Andersen, Klingenberg Vistisen & Schøning, 2016; Mariager & Wivel, 2019). Much inquiry seems to be embedded in traditional conceptions and discussions of professions outlined by Parsons (1953), Weber (1978), Freidson (1986) and Abbott (1988), and more specifically by Huntington (1957), Janowitz (1960), Hackett (1962) and Westmoreland (1970), among others.

In a Scandinavian context, two notable dimensions to interest in the military profession should be noted. The first is a rekindled questioning of the core roles, tasks and responsibility of military professionals, affected both by new types of conflict and by the changing nature of military engagements; the second concerns growing uncertainties related to managerial reforms, budgetary demands and the ongoing restructuring of military organisations.

In Denmark, for instance, the purpose and the functioning of the armed forces as an institution of government have been debated in relation to the publication of the Danish War Inquiry (Mariager & Wivel, 2019), while a number of scandals involving breaches of traditional public administrative virtues and responsibilities, among them the misuse of power, nepotism and eligibility, have negatively spotlighted the military profession. The scandals, it is argued, have led to public mistrust in the Danish armed forces and for calls for transparency, openness and a redefinition of military servants. More recently, the role of military officers as public servants has seen discussion – including that of Chief of Defence, a role the Danish defence minister described in public interviews as the “head of agency,” thereby kindling an apparently unending discussion of the nature and balance of civil-military relations. Debate about the role of Chief of Defence is rooted, in part, in a larger restructuring of the Danish Armed Forces, most recently in 2014. This restructuring, and the many reorganisations and budgetary prioritisations following in its wake, has provoked considerable tensions – both for the individual professional and for the institution as a whole.

In contrast, the Swedish debate on defence is characterised by a positive tailwind in public opinion. Across partisan lines there is an agreement to sharply increase defence funding, while the armed forces enjoy increasing trust from the public when compared to previous years (Berndtsson, Bjereld and Ydén, 2020, p. 350). Instead of engaging in downsizing, the Swedish Armed Forces can now be expanded by the establishment of new regiments in different parts of the country, among other things. Personnel redundancy is a thing of the past; the challenge

now is recruitment and the filling of positions. In the spring of 2021, the Swedish Supreme Commander Micael Bydén was awarded “Manager of the Year” – an award presented to “highlight and reward good examples among Sweden’s managers and to spread their message about good leadership” (see www.chef.se).

Like Sweden, Norway has returned its focus from international missions to the defence of its home territory. New security policy assessments noting Russian influence operations, for example, have led to a debate on how defence should be designed to best meet expectations and needs. In the ongoing debate, the relevance of traditional national armed forces with the full range of land, air and naval power is questioned and new solutions suggesting a more internationally integrated framework have been presented (Norwegian Ministry of Defence, 2020).

The essays in this volume examine what characterises the development and transformation of the military profession in Scandinavia. We view ongoing reforms of military organisations as being implemented in response to new global security threats and new types of military operations, on one hand, and as an effect of transformations of the welfare state (including attempts to modernise and reform the public sector) on the other. The contributions here return often to the consequences for the military profession of existing in this context of separate but interrelated tendencies.

In line with other recent work on the subject, these essays argue that questions of profession must be raised closely in tandem with a consideration of the new forms taken by professions in their organisational and socio-political context (see also Ackroyd, 1996; 2016; Edmunds et al., 2016; Saks, 2016). The social transformations of the military profession and professionalism cannot be understood by reference solely to the military or to the relationship between soldiers and mission training, generals and command traditions, or to other internal forces obtaining within the military organisation. As the development of military institutions takes place within broader fields of social structure and power, it should be assumed that armed forces are reshaped by broader societal changes – a fact compelling attention when approaching questions of profession. In recent years, there have been a number of studies addressing not only the changing character of professions but the implicit changing character of professional organisation itself, seeing these two dimensions as interrelated and dynamic; the chapters below draw on these studies.

The Expeditionary Era and the Afghanistan Experience

Sweden, Norway and Denmark have all recently had a military presence in Afghanistan, and the character of defence organisation and of debates concerning defence in Scandinavia must be understood in the light of this history. While

military organisations in the region assumed a more visible public role following the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, they did not function as each nation's territorial defence but as an "expeditionary capability" with Swedish, Norwegian and Danish boots on the ground a long way from home. In each country, this was highlighted in different ways with various consequences. It can be said that none of the countries view their military mission in Afghanistan to be an unequivocal success; in many instances, the opposite is true. With its high level of commitment, and the attendant consequences, Denmark stands out from the other Scandinavian countries. During Denmark's involvement in Afghanistan between 2002 and 2014, it contributed the most troops, with 19,199 soldiers deployed, and suffered the most casualties with 214 wounded and 43 killed (Danish Defence, 2020). During the same period, Norway's troop contribution was approximately 9,000, with 10 killed (NOU, 2016, p. 10); Sweden's was just over 8,000, with 6 fatalities (SOU, 2017, p. 217).

The consequences of what was experienced in Afghanistan manifest themselves differently in each country, something also noticeable in the chapters below. It seems that in Norway and Denmark, a more heated discussion about war fighting and being part of a warrior culture has made its way into public debate. In Sweden, on the other hand, the discussion has been more about Afghanistan as a humanitarian rather than a military project. The Afghan missions have undoubtedly influenced internal military discourse and the ways in which soldiers perceive their professional identity – an issue developed in this collection by Randrup Pedersen, whose chapter problematises the "warriorisation of Danish military professions" (see chapter 4). These changes in professional self-understanding also inform Høiback's chapter, in which he relates how "a whole new breed of young officers returned home with completely different stories to tell to those of their older peers. The professionalism, the gravity and seriousness among the lower levels increased significantly" (see chapter 5). While this relationship has attracted some attention in Sweden, the attendant debate has not been as intense and public as in Norway and Denmark. In Swedish official terminology, for example, there is no concept of "war veteran," only "veteran" or "overseas veteran." This does not, however, prevent Swedish veterans from calling themselves war veterans (Victor Tillberg, Tillberg, Naeve-Bucher & Svartheden, 2020). The theme of the distinction between the military's internal discourse and the societal, external discourse on both the military profession and professionalism recurs throughout this volume.

The chapters in this book can be read against this general outline. Most of them have the military profession in the authors' home countries as their primary points of reference. They also share an understanding that transformation and change in the profession are deeply context-dependant. This illustrates an im-

portant point about known types of public sector professions: they continuously reflect on their professional development projects and negotiate their way between public interests and interests of the welfare state. These factors and organisational forms explain much about the systems of the profession under scrutiny (Ackroyd, 2016). Setting out from a number of different theoretical and practical perspectives, the chapters examine facts and phenomena relevant to the present and the future of the military profession. Together, the authors also embody a broad range of experience and viewpoints, from the military insider's perspective to the outsider's perspective rooted in political science, epistemology, sociology, ethnology, history and organisation theory.

Outline of the Collection

The remainder of this introduction outlines the contributors' work. Several chapters describe the ways in which change is driven in both the military organisation and the profession. The "expeditionary era experience," emerging from new conflict types and a changing context of military engagements, can be understood as a phenomenon with significant effects on military professions. Other influencing factors are the defence organisations' efforts to modernise the armed forces and to achieve greater public appeal. Slogans like "Come as you are" or "Everybody is needed in a strong defence" follow an international trend, which has greatly impacted both policy development and individual motivations to enlist. All the Scandinavian countries are making efforts to build modern, effective, inclusive and gender-neutral defence forces. Several areas of tension arise here – something also noticeable in the authors' different starting points.

One field of tension deals with policy work and how ideas of the professional are organised into discourses. In Joakim Berndtsson's chapter "Sweden and 'Our Military Profession': Building a Common Identity or Creating Friction?", Berndtsson describes the Swedish Armed Forces' attempt to develop a common military identity using a policy adopted in 2017 entitled *Vår militära profession: agerar när det krävs* – "our military profession – action when action is required" (Försvarsmakten, 2017). The policy, the first of its kind in Sweden, conveys a broad understanding of the military profession, including civilian employees, soldiers, sailors, NCOs and officers of all branches. The ambition is for the policy to create a common, organisation-wide understanding of the military profession that bridges the "civilian-military divide"; Berndtsson's study shows that this is not a simple task. The findings indicate a complex and potentially fraught relationship between policy-level conceptions and self-images among Swedish officers. The attempt by the Swedish Armed Forces to regulate and govern identity through a central

narrative appears to have generated resistance and friction. The Association of Swedish Officers clearly rejects the constitutive norms around membership of “our military profession,” a reluctance evident among Staff Programme officers as well. Even though the policy clearly distinguishes between “our military profession” and the “officer profession,” the move to create a collective identity is seen as distorting officers’ professional self-images founded on ideas about, and relational boundaries around, a unique expertise, a specific jurisdiction and distinct sources of status and legitimacy. Berndtsson finds that the all-inclusive concept of “our military profession” is not a strong, shared cognitive model or discourse around which members build professional self-images.

Another perspective on policy implementation is highlighted in Beate Sløk Andersson and Alma Persson’s chapter “Letting the Right Ones In: Gendered Boundary Work in the Military Profession.” The authors examine how a gender perspective is crucial when trying to understand the current redefinition of the military profession. With the Danish military as its empirical focal point, the chapter explores how perceptions of professionalism are embedded in the negotiation of women’s access and inclusion to military professions. The analysis takes as its point of departure the claim that, through certain historical processes, professions develop subtle cultural codes defining whether and how individuals are perceived to be suitable for membership. The chapter approaches the reluctance to see women as insiders to the military profession as an expression of *boundary work*, a term which builds on the research of the military scholar Kenneth T. MacLeish (2015), who argues that the divide between a military and civilian sphere is the product of a “constant policing, performing, and imagining of the boundaries between in and out” rather than an actual and tangible divide (MacLeish 2015, p. 17). Based on ethnographic fieldwork in the borders of the Danish military, the chapter thus unfolds certain mechanisms working to uphold boundaries around the profession founded on assumptions about gender while being gendered in their consequences. The authors conclude their study by stating that changes in gender dynamics within and around the military profession reflect changes in military work itself. The chapter illuminates how a gender lens can make visible unspoken and problematic ideas about the military profession and professionalism governing inclusion and recognition in the military profession.

In the chapter “Intergenerational Conflicts and Military Leadership: A Problem of Generations in Danish Military Education and Beyond,” Roelsgaard Obling’s study of an elite military education brings to light certain challenges in relation to soldiers’ experiences of war, professionalism and learning and a more general problem of generations. The chapter uses the notion of the “generational unit” (Mannheim, 1952) to understand the participants in the programme as a

particular analytical entity bound together by shared problems and conflicts. In sharp contrast to earlier periods, this group of military officers have practiced their profession in actual combat. The group is now progressing through the ranks of the organisational hierarchy, including managerial positions. Roelsgaard Obling points out a growing gap between the specialised experiential knowledge, values and interests of the generational unit and those of the older and younger generations in the military organisation. The chapter argues that, while dividing lines between generations in the Danish Armed Forces have always existed, those lines now appear as potential lines of internal conflict. Applying a generational perspective, the chapter offers a way to consider and to empirically explore social change and progress, presenting a way to analyse the processes of generation-related struggles and conflicts serving to shape and transform the organisations in which they occur.

In the chapter “Facing the Warrior – An Ethnographic Montage on Post-9/11 Warriorisation of Danish Military Professions,” Thomas Randrup Pedersen explores the rising “warriorisation” of the Danish military profession following 9/11 and analyses the reconfigurations of the military ethos, professional identity and professionalism bound up with Denmark’s military engagements in Afghanistan (2002–2014) and Iraq (2003–2011). Through the composition of an “ethnographic montage,” the chapter mixes fieldwork data with discursive material on the growing “warriorisation” within three spheres: the Danish Armed Forces at large, organisations supporting Danish war veterans, and popular cultural products that thematise recent military adventures. The author argues that the notion of “the warrior” is a cultural figure with both variations and different meanings in different contexts, together presenting different implications for the Danish military profession. Well after the conclusion of the last Danish combat operation in Helmand, it appears to be increasingly attractive to identify as a “warrior” – a notion laden with moral, emotional and masculine significance, opening “gaps,” or fields of tension, between inclusion and exclusion along normative lines such as virtuousness and wickedness, heroism and villainism, sacrifice and self-centredness, bravery and brutality, passion and frenzy, education and experience, competency and potency. Randrup Pedersen’s chapter questions the emergence of “the warrior” as a significant component of a military professional identity through a consideration of the trope as complex, contested and morally ambivalent. He concludes his study positing that the use of the “warrior” trope within the military profession must lead to critical self-reflection for both the individual soldier and the organisation at large.

In the chapter “The Multidimensional Transformation of the Norwegian Military Profession: From National Duty to Individual Rights,” Harald Høiback

investigates the development of the Norwegian military. Using a comparative historical lens, the chapter first describes the state of the Norwegian military profession in 1995 and 2020, respectively, before comparing the two in order to ascertain what has changed and what has remained the same. The investigation begins with concepts of expertise, responsibility and corporateness proposed by Huntington (1957). For Høiback, the Norwegian military of 1995 was big, “folksy,” and focused on territorial defence, a legacy from the country’s catastrophic military unpreparedness for the German invasion of 1940; analysing what has changed in recent decades, the chapter describes several simultaneous processes, from top-down to bottom-up and, finally, outside-in. By 2020, a rather large share of the members of the armed forces had acquired personal combat experience, and even more officers had gained experience from overseas operations in different capacities. Høiback observes that professionalism and seriousness on the lower levels increased significantly, which has resulted in more realistic and meticulous training. At the same time, however, on the strategic level, Høiback argues that the military has become de-militarised in the upper echelons of the institution’s hierarchy and that it is now just one of many subfields in the governmental administration. Here, the analysis is also relevant to contemporary Danish discussions about the political and military top brass and, more specifically, the relationship between them.

Lotta Victor Tillberg’s chapter “Mastering Both: The Planned and the Unforeseen” is an epistemological investigation of Swedish military professionalism based on research into Swedish military professional skills and interviews conducted with officers. In recent decades, military scholars have drawn attention to myriad unconventional challenges and demands placed on military commanders at all levels. Using a set of epistemological concepts, Victor Tillberg’s chapter presents an analytical framework that focuses on the types of knowledge that an officer needs in order to act professionally and to master the various demands made upon them. Two theoretical perspectives are borrowed from Ellström (1997): the concept of *competence-in-use* and a distinction between *theoretical/explicit knowledge* and *experience-based/implicit know-how* (Ellström 1997, p. 45). The investigation shows that as a consequence of changed tasks, role expansion and increasing demands, the officer’s ability to master both a public administration and a military logic is tested and that new forms of horizontal and vertical cooperation are required. This, in turn, creates problems and internal tensions. Dependencies change both within the organisation and in relation to the outside world and other actors. Victor Tillberg finds that this development calls for new explanatory models. The findings show that the officers place themselves in one of two different mental landscapes (topoi): some officers view themselves as “warrior-adminis-

trators” while others view themselves as “warriors, not administrators” – two distinct, often clashing, identities. By identifying a gap between officers’ perceptions of the two identified mental landscapes, Victor Tillberg calls for advancements of the forms of knowledge connected to officers’ competence-in-use, with a focus on the *doing*: the constant movement between theory and practice.

Karl Ydén’s chapter “Unpacking the ‘Military Profession’ Concept: Accounting for Variations in Military Organising” pays attention to how we understand the contemporary military profession in a Swedish context characterised by change – external, environmental changes (the post-Cold War internalisation of the Swedish armed forces, for example) and internal, educational changes (for example, the academisation of junior officers’ education and curriculum). The chapter first discusses which factors contribute to a new focus on the concept of a “military profession” in Sweden. Quotation marks are used here to show that it is misleading to understand military officers as belonging to a single profession. One plausible practical effect of insisting on one profession is an army-centric officer education. Arguing for professions (in contrast to *a* profession) includes recognising the considerable variety of contexts and competences within the military organisation, understood as a highly “complex organisation” (Perrow 1986) consisting of different officer categories with different skill sets and logics of action.

This conceptualisation brings with it some analytical challenges, however, including the matter of how the multifaceted nature of military organisation might be theorised and studied. To meet these challenges, Ydén develops a model of four logics, attending specifically to the differences and dynamics of the core tasks and functions of military organisations. The argument here is that, by collapsing the four logics (including peacetime logics and real-life counterparts), we easily dismiss the possibility of different legitimating strategies, skills systems and leadership activities existing side by side in the organisation, and the ways in which each logic needs to be taken into account when discussing the development of the military profession and a well-functioning, efficient organisation.

Morten Brænder’s chapter “The Military Profession Under Pressure” first considers historically important and theoretically distinct approaches to the military profession. Departing from a number of important theoretical differences and modes of analysis, the chapter then suggests a transition from understanding military professionals as managers of violence to understanding them as security experts – a change of focus calling for the pursuit of a wider security expertise perspective (see Eyal, 2013; Libel, 2019) rather than the perspective of a more limited, self-sustaining profession. This choice of approach may offer the benefit of helping us to widen our focus when studying the relation between the military or security sectors and society, enabling us to draw on expertise beyond the boundaries of the

military profession. The chapter also discusses an ongoing, and somewhat charged, debate about the “rotten” culture in the Danish armed forces and associated calls for reform, raising deep tensions between the military and civil society and in the military itself. The chapter further demonstrates how theories of professions and professionalisms are especially apt for analysing what Macdonald (1995) has referred to as the “regulative bargain” between profession and the state.

Vilhelm Stefan Holsting’s chapter “The Dynamics of Professional Values in Officership: A Study of 300 Years of Officer Performance Evaluation Systems” continues the theme of viewing the military profession as a profession defined by a process of constant adaption. The chapter offers a historical account of the changing values of officership, drawing empirically on Danish archives of 3000 written performance evaluations of individual officers from the three branches – army, navy and air force. The author views societal changes as catalysts for concomitant changes in military values, identifying how these values have transformed from the earliest performance evaluation reports in the 17th century to more recent reports in 2007. This transformation takes place not through a reluctant acceptance of civil values but “through a more active and engaged process, which reshapes professional functionality and legitimacy.” Applying Boltanski and Thevenot’s original work on orders of worth (2006), Holsting develops an analytical framework consisting of ten values that correspond to the performance evaluation reports. The author finds that the values embedded in the performance system adapt to new requirements (“agile,” “flexible,” “pro-active”) while still upholding classic military values (“polite,” “efficient,” “well-educated,” “obedient,” and so on). One of the peculiar qualities of the military profession is, then, its ability to absorb new values and narratives into deeply traditional structures and relationships.

In the chapter “Twisting the Pedagogy in Military Education: Experiences Drawn From a Problem-Based Teaching Approach at the Norwegian Defence University College,” Bandlitz, Sookermany and Isaksen deal explicitly with the new missions undertaken by military organisations and approach these changes as a call for adjustment of pedagogic methods in military training and education. The authors argue that there exists a gap between current pedagogical methods and the operational environment and thus identify a mismatch between the principles and skills in existing military education and the actual analytical skills and knowledge required to plan and execute military operations. The chapter describes a pilot project which employs “problem-based learning” at the Norwegian Defence College and finds, importantly, that problem-based learning principles such as extensive group work and self-directed learning may have a positive effect on the development of problem-solving skills and the cultivation of collaborative

skill sets. The chapter argues that these skills are especially valuable for the application of mission command and the planning and conduct of operations, which, the authors emphasise, are the cornerstones of the military profession.

Thus, well-known pedagogical methods from civil institutions of higher learning are here adapted and implemented in a military master's education to align learning outcomes with environmental demands. Academisation through the transformation of an existing educational program results in professionalisation rather than de-professionalisation. To be able to meet security demands in the 21st century, the authors argue that training and education of the officer corps must undergo a number of changes, not least in terms of implementing experimenting pedagogical methods.

Final Thoughts on the Future of the Military Profession

An underlying question running through the various chapters of this book is about the very existence of armed forces. Why does a country need a defence? What should it be used for? And how should it be designed? The chapters in this volume show that there are multiple approaches to these existential questions, and that each nation's way of addressing them differs, too. Military work is a professional activity often hidden away from public scrutiny, a fact which applies equally to military activities within national borders and during international operations. While a collection of essays like this cannot dissolve the boundary between those inside an organisation and those outside, it can certainly reduce the distance between them, increasing understanding. This is one of the aims driving the project.

In this collection, ten researchers with deep insight into and experience of the military have reflected on the position and challenges of the Scandinavian armed forces. One may, perhaps, expect to discover an overall claim to unity and coherence, or common answers to the pressing questions concerning the military profession, including that of the future social and political role for the armed forces and the models of military professionalism and efficiency appropriate to the Scandinavian context. But, as the reader will realise, a series of studies on the processes governing stability and change in the military profession cannot claim any more or less coherence than the very phenomena under investigation. The chapters in this collected edition demonstrate a number of competing directions and values, gaps and disconnections within the profession and between military organisations and the environment. We have preserved the heterogeneity of analyses, and the divergent results these analyses yield, to evince the diverse nature of the phenomena under study.

If an overall conclusion of this volume's contribution were to be offered,

however, it might be the following: when the traditional understanding of war and defence no longer applies to borders and territory, new forms of organising, training and leadership are required. Here, the ability to act collectively, not least through international joint military missions, has proven increasingly important. The ability to *cooperate* in a broad sense and on all levels, both between individuals, units and organisations, and between countries, is a crucial factor in the solution of tasks. At the time of writing, the need for a total defence solution is a basic strategic given in all of Scandinavian countries. This need exposes a series of horizontal and vertical challenges to which each nation is required to find answers; frictionless cooperation with the institutions of the surrounding society appears to become ever more important. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, specific challenges and vulnerabilities in the structures of society have become painfully obvious. This development also raises the question of public support, representativeness and legitimacy with regard to the armed forces of all the Scandinavian countries. The various contributions in this collection shed light on gaps, contradictions and issues of decoupling that the armed forces need to address if they are to continue to develop the military profession and professionalism.

What emerges, therefore, are only glimpses of the transformation of the military profession in Scandinavia. It seems that every new mode of analysis brings with it new ways of asking questions and of approaching the inquiry, thereby revealing new and unexplored sides of the topic. This also means that the inquiry does not end here; further attention needs to be paid to a series of questions within and across critical areas of the development of the military profession, including, but not limited to, the following:

First, the operational context of the profession is changing – a fact which places different challenges and demands on the military profession and the institution as a whole. How does the profession embrace a changed professional environment and the requirements (diversity, flexibility, contextual multiplicity) emerging from this? How does it extend its body of knowledge to meet new demands and challenges without losing its core strengths and values?

Second, when caught between mixed and often contradictory expectations, professionals often report increased stress and low work satisfaction. Senior officers warn of overstretched and under-resourced organisations; some services struggle to meet basic recruitment requirements. How do military institutions preserve a balance between continual change and an efficient organisation? Faced with public sector reforms and increased regulations, military professions confront administrative and political directives directly impacting their work. Are the military professions weakened in this process, as we see with professions elsewhere? And if so, to what degree?

Third, literature about post-bureaucracy and neo-bureaucracy highlights how classical bureaucratic structures and values blend with entrepreneurial or market-oriented structures and values (du Gay, 2008; Sturdy, Wright & Wylie, 2016; Lopdrup-Hjort and Roelsgaard Obling, 2019). How do new value systems and management ideologies influence the military profession and reconfigure leadership? Do the adjectives “volatile,” “agile,” “flexible” and “collective” truly characterise the military leader, or are they moral attributes imported from an abstract “outside-of-the-profession” value system?

Fourth, the Scandinavian welfare states will continue to rely on the military profession to safeguard national territory and to support strategic values and interests. With the rise of a total defence imperative, which (as mentioned above) constructs geopolitical reality in particular ways, the balancing of domestic tasks and operations abroad will be challenged. At the same time as the armed forces are expected to participate in large-scale civil emergency and crisis planning, they continue to be expected to be prepared for humanitarian missions abroad and for complex combat contexts. Questions related to how they are to succeed under these circumstances and how they should prioritise between various needs, not least economically, call for further investigation.

Finally, none of the chapters in this edition deal explicitly with challenges and changes related to technology. Communication, surveillance and transportation technologies change perceptions of distance and space, and new weapons systems and targeting devices add new dilemmas to the core tasks of the profession. This also raises some fundamental questions concerning the current and future definition of the military profession and the roles and functions it might assume.

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