How pressure for change challenge military organizational characteristics

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ABSTRACT
This article elaborates on how structural, normative and functional pressures for change may challenge military organizational characteristics. We problematize theoretically and exemplify empirically what consequences these pressures can have on military organizational characteristics, arguing that they constitute major challenges for managing in particular normative pressures for change. The empirical examples suggest that bureaucratic, hierarchical, narcissistic and greedy traits of the organization are challenged by normative pressures such as value changes and normalization. Another source of challenge is professionalization processes. Structural challenges, on the other hand, are managed by the organization and do not seem to inhibit the workings of organizational characteristics. The plausibility probe conducted questions the sustainability of military organizational characteristics in their traditional disguise, in particular due to legitimacy concerns. It is suggested that future research should be directed towards analyzing how military organizations manage pressure for change and whether their characteristics are questioned.

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Introduction
The aim of this article is to explore how structural, normative and functional pressures for change challenge traditional military organizational characteristics. Organizational characteristics are important for how pressure for change are managed in the organization, and we propose that certain elements of the military organizational characteristics inhibit particular forms of pressure for change. States and public opinions expect military organizations to adapt to pressures for change in the same manner as other organizations (Moskos et al. 2000, Norheim-Martinsen 2016). Our concern is that if military organizations hold on to traditional characteristics that are not compatible with the demands posed, they risk failing to achieve their goals and losing legitimacy both externally and internally.

Too often during the last decades, research (including our own) on military organizations have been focusing on adaptation of military organizations to various transformation processes (Moskos et al. 2000, Forster 2006, Szvircsev and Leuprecht 2010, King 2011,
Bergström et al. 2014, Farrell et al. 2014, Holmberg and Hallenberg 2017). This literature does not, however, question how the military organization is viewed and conceptualized in terms of its basic characteristics. We problematize military organizational characteristics theoretically, and relate these to different pressures for change with the help of empirical examples from the Swedish armed forces. In this way, we are able to enhance our understanding of the challenges the military are facing today and in the future. The research design could be termed a plausibility probe that expose the inconsistency of traditional military organizational characteristics with 21st century demands. We do not claim that our results are applicable in every military organization in the Western world – and recognize that there are large national differences. However, we do argue that military organizations are perceived in research (which will be developed below) to hold similar traits. If this understanding is accepted, then the results may be very valuable for research on, in particular, the civil-military relations of the coming decades.

In our research, we have started to direct interest towards the implications of military organizational characteristics that are out of tune with societal developments. We have analyzed in more detail the strategies of leaders within the military organization in managing pressures for change and the fragmentation of the military organization in the context of 21st century transformations (Alvinius, Holmberg and Johansson, 2019). We have also been studying the #Metoo movement as a public expression of internal resistance towards the military (Alvinius and Holmberg, 2019). In order to elaborate on how military organizational characteristics relate to different pressures for change, we need to identify these pressures. The concept of transformation in the security and defence field have been understood in a broad manner, incorporating different trends and major reforms that can be said to incorporate some kind of pressures for change. We draw on the literature relating to security and defence transformation since the end of the Cold War, and choose to sort this literature in three broad categories of pressures for change: structural, normative and functional (see further below). The sorting of pressures for change into categories is something of a superficial exercise, but no one familiar with this literature will be surprised, and we consider the categorization justified as the aim is not to point to casual relations, but to problematize the relationship between the processes and military organizational characteristics.

In the following, we first present the method and material used in this study. Second, our starting point, the military organizational characteristics are identified. Third, three forms of pressures for change are constructed based on the literature on security and defence transformation as developed during the last decades. We discuss how structural, normative and functional pressures for change could be related to organizational characteristics. In the results section, we start by presenting our findings in a table (for the sake of overview) and proceed by discussing empirical examples supporting the arguments made. Finally, conclusions and suggestions for future research are developed.

**Method and material**

Our analysis departs from assumptions about military organizational characteristics that are considered to be relatively stable. By military organizational characteristics we mean features that according to the literature are common in military organizations.
These are not unique to the military. However, the combination of features that are commonly associated with the military make it relevant to talk about military organizational characteristics. These characteristics are outlined in the next section.

What we focus on is how these characteristics can be supposed to relate to pressures for change. Previous research are used to identify different types of pressure for change, which are then problematized in relation to military organizational characteristics and empirical examples. We do not argue that military organizational characteristics cannot change, indeed, based on our results we argue that military organizational characteristics should change, but this process is likely to be both difficult and take time. However, this is not the subject of this article.

The empirical illustrations used in this article draws on experiences from the Swedish context and the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF). We use interview data to elaborate on the relationship between pressures for change and military organizational characteristics. The empirical data is not seen as “evidence”, but as tools in a form of plausibility probe (Kaarbo and Beasley 1999, p. 375) where they serve as illustrations that can generate research questions, spur renewed empirical application and theorizing in the future. The security and defence sector in Sweden was comparatively isolated during the 20th century, due to this country’s policy of military non-alignment and the limited international interactions of the military organization that followed from this policy. However, the Swedish security and defence sector have been through major changes during the last decades (Holmberg 2015). The Swedish Armed Forces have therefore experienced major challenges and demands (Pettersson 2011, Bergström et al. 2014). We argue that it is therefore a suitable example for a problematization of how military organizational characteristics are being challenged.

In the literature, we identify seven transformation processes that could imply pressures for change upon military organizational characteristics. We argue that these are well known to students of the security and defence sector. This literature is summarized later in this article. The seven transformation processes were presented to the interviewees in the form of leaflets with short explanations (in parenthesis below). For analytical purposes, we later choose to narrow down seven transformation processes to three.

- Globalization/Internationalization (active use of military means; demands for interoperability; harmonization with other countries)
- New norms in relation to the use of military force (responsibility to protect other than the territory; broadened use of military means)
- Technological development (specialization; increased costs for defence equipment; war at a distance)
- Professionalization (specialization; academization; demands for legitimacy)
- Value changes (individualism; focus on post-material values – self-fulfilment rather than food on the table)
- Social acceleration (great information flows; perceived increase in daily pace and demands, reactive actions dominate)
- Normalization (less exclusivity for the military organization, the same demands are posed on military organizations as on other organizations)
We asked the interviewees to reflect upon the transformation processes with the help of the following questions:

1. Which of these transformation processes do you consider affect the Swedish Armed Forces?
2. Which transformation processes do you consider most important? Why?
3. How do you foresee that the Swedish Armed Forces are affected by these (the ones pointed out as most important)?
4. What/Which expressions do you think that this has had in the organization?
5. What possibilities and limitations do you foresee as a consequence?

Interviews were conducted with 10 officers at the level of majors (from different branches of the military), studying the Officer’s Advanced Programme at the Swedish Defence University in 2017. The majors are in the midst of their military careers and possess good knowledge of the workings of the military organization. The idea was that they would offer insights that were well grounded, yet reflective and critical. The officers volunteered to be interviewed and thus pose a convenience sample. The interviews were half-structured, and divided into two parts. In the first part, where data directed towards another article were collected, open questions were asked regarding the interview persons’ perception of the Swedish Armed Forces as an organization and the daily challenges that he or she experienced. In the second part, the pre-defined transformation processes listed above were presented and the related questions discussed.

All interviews were transcribed and the transcripts were read and re-read in order to identify meaningful statements that helped us to analytically explore the military organizational characteristics’ relationship to the transformation processes. This qualitative content analysis identified what the problem was that the respondent saw, and which of the transformation processes it related to. We also categorized the respondent’s own assessments of the severity of the problem, in an attempt to learn more about how the organization is perceived to manage the challenge. Here we distinguished between difficult (to which we relate answers that talks about the transformation process as being hard to manage, and/or in relation to which resistance remains in the military organization), manageable (to which we relate answers that talk about the organization adapting after initial resistance), not challenged (to which we can, from our answers, identify no particular pressure), or strengthened (cases where the answers suggest that pressure converges with what we think of as a characteristic and may strengthen it). However, in the material we could not identify any clear examples of military organizational characteristics being strengthened as a result of transformation processes. The results are presented in a table, which are supported by empirical illustrations in the results-section.

**Military organizational characteristics**

The literature on military organizations have identified a number of characteristics that are associated with these organizations. In the following, we list these characteristics and convey our understanding of how they can be identified in the empirical material.
Military organizations have been found to be bureaucratic and hierarchical (Alvinius 2013). These are the traditional, basic features of the modern, administrative state as it grew during the 20th century. A bureaucratic state authority functions through a web of regulations and formalities, and relations are, in the ideal, impersonal. Military organizations of the Western-world are characterized by specific rules, structure, predictability, rationality, stability, distribution of responsibility, mandate and sphere of authority. This structure determines what the military does in terms of peacetime and wartime activities. During peacetime military organizations are focused on education and training at long-term military compounds or bases, where officers live on-site, ships or camps. This kind of organization can be described as a total organization (Goffman 1961).

A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time together lead an enclosed formally administered round of life (Goffman 1961, p. 11).

References made to bureaucratic characteristics picture an organization structured by regulations.

Hierarchies are considered important tools for bureaucracies to function ideally. With respect to militaries, hierarchies are also seen as a mechanism for discipline and order. We consider it a characteristic that is commonly associated with the military organization. The military, ruled by political power, is in the literature considered a “uniformed” entity signaling rank, authority, competences, status, and exclusivity (Soeters et al. 2006). Hierarchy contributes to avoiding resistance and various forms of subversive activities within the organization, and therefore it can be seen as a tool for internal control of the military. This characteristic become visible in the empirical material when references to order, discipline and supervisory relationships are made.

Another related feature is that military organizations are considered to be meritocratic (Castilla and Benard 2010). Meritocracy goes hand in hand with and supports the organizational feature hierarchy, as the organization promotes the individual that is considered to contribute to the goals of the organization at any given point in time. Ydén (2008) has shown how two contradictory logics within the military, that of conflict (war) and that of cooperation (peace), creates tensions within military organizations. In times of transformation, meritocratic systems can be the subject of such tensions – as it becomes necessary to change the criteria of what individual behavior should be promoted within the organization. Meritocracy can be identified for example through references to perceptions of how an officer should be behaving, and what career paths are considered successful.

Additional features, that are more “cultural”- they refer to norms rather than structures or forms of organizations – are first the presence of a narcissistic view of the organization’s role, and second, a greedy relationship towards members of the organization (Alvinius et al. 2016, 2018). Narcissism as a characteristic conveyed to an organization, means that within the organization there is a culture, or habit, of perceiving oneself as particularly important and more worthy of attention than other organizations. This feature has been associated with the military organization (Abrahamsson 1972), and can be identified in the discourse of both the institution as
such and its members, for instance if criticism is denied and the role of the military is overestimated (not put in context).

An organization characterized by *greed* demands more from its members than is the norm, for instance in a working-context. A classic example is that military organizations demand from their members that they should be prepared to sacrifice their life as part of their mission within the organization. Greedy organizations can also control their members in other ways, such as through emotion control and high demands upon accessibility and working-hours (Coser 1974). These characteristics become visible through the narratives of the respondents, in their stories about how work-life is and should be according to the organizational culture.

The organizational characteristics listed above are the starting point for the analysis in this article. They are manifest, assumed and extant in the military organization (compare Brown in Du Gay and Vikkelso 2012, p. 138). In all, the dominant characteristics associated with the military organization suggest that an instrumental view of the military organization is prevailing (compare Pfeffer and Salancik 2003, p. 23). Much research on military organizations have focused on situations of pressure, where the instrumental role of the military is often at the forefront, and even accepted as a precondition for action (Anderson 1970, Dessler 1976, Donaldson 2001, Kirschenbaum 2004, Alvinius 2012). However, pressure for change are likely to relate more to peacetime contexts, in which military organizational characteristics are less problematized. Therefore, whether the military organization is requisite – meaning able to manage this situation, is uncertain (on requisite organization see Brown in Du Gay and Vikkelso 2012, p. 138).

**Pressure for change and challenges to military organizational characteristics**

Du Gay and Vikkelso claims that the organizational change literature treat the concept of change as something absolutist and abstract. The focus has been on what organizations need to do in order to manage change, rather than examining in detail the empirical landscape of change management (Du Gay and Vikkelso 2012, p. 132). In recent decades, various fields of research have begun to address mainly external pressure for change in military organizations. Although the literature identify consequences of these pressures for change in particular settings of military organizations, the challenges they pose to military organizational characteristics have not been elaborated. Neither has the utility of traditional military organizational characteristics for the armed forces of the 21st century been debated thoroughly. Here, this article makes a contribution.

The transformation processes identified by the literature in relation to the security and defence sector can be sorted in three main categories: structural, normative and functional. Globalization and internationalization are considered a structural pressure for change with its origin in power relations between states. Changed views regarding the use of force, value changes and normalization are categorized as normative pressure for change with their origins in norms at the societal, state and inter-state level. Technical development, professionalization and social acceleration are categorized as constituting pressures for change that operates mainly at the functional or practical
level. They concern how things are done. Below, we reiterate what the literature have found to be the main conclusions regarding these transformation processes in the area of security and defence.

**Structural pressure for change**

The end of superpower rivalry in the 1990s led to changes in the international power balance and threat perceptions. As a consequence, the Western world witnessed increased internationalization in the field of security and defence. Internationalization had a number of features that have had a lasting impact on the armed forces of most Western states. First of all, the state was increasingly seen as dependent upon increased international cooperation for achieving security and defence (Mérand 2008, Haaland Matláry 2009). This meant that policies, strategies and doctrines in this field were Europeanized or internationalized – often in the framework of regional organizations such as the EU or NATO (Eriksson 2006, Rieker 2006). This implied new processes of coordination and standardization that went directly to the core of the military organization.

Second, the use of military means was extended beyond the state territory – that is, new interactions between military organizations from different states – from the level of the field to the headquarters (King 2011). The broadened political use of military power was due to changed threat perceptions and understandings regarding how to achieve security. Military organizations were used in a broader manner than when their task was only to protect national territory. This was challenging for the military organizations, and the individuals within them (Johansson 1997, Weibull 2012, Holmberg and Hallenberg 2017).

Potential challenges to military organizational characteristics from globalization and internationalization relates to new tasks in the international domain, which diminish the space of the military as a total institution. This may affect the bureaucracy and the system of hierarchy since new interactions develops which may alter the division of power within the organization. This can challenge the system of meritocracy, as new tasks and experiences need to be assessed and valued within the organization. The increased pressure upon the organization may spur narcissism as the whole organization or parts of it either embrace or resist the new roles and tasks that follow from internationalization.

**Normative pressure for change**

In the 1990s, the international community developed new discourses regarding their obligation to use military force. The discussions related first to the concept of humanitarian intervention, which later developed into the “Responsibility to Protect”. According to this view, a state that does not manage to protect its citizens have lost its capacity to protect its citizens and therefore the international community may override the non-intervention principle in order to fulfil this function. Underlying this discourse was the spread of a broadened security concept, which recognized other reference objects of security than states (Katzenstein 1996, Finnemore 2003).
This meant that states used military means more frequently within the framework of the international community – the era of liberal interventionism started. International organizations such as the UN, NATO and the EU became important legitimizing arenas for this development (Coleman 2007). In this context, use of military means significantly broadened, and military organizations had to adapt to new rationalizations, tasks and fields of operations (Forster 2006, King 2011). However, in particular the great powers still acted independently outside of this institutionalized framework. In the 2010s, the normative debate regarding the use of force have been increasingly concerned with consequences of the technical development – and in particular the use of autonomous weapons (Evangelista and Shue 2014, Aaronson et al. 2015, Carvin and Williams 2015).

Potential challenges to military organizational characteristics due to normative pressure for change relates to the process of comprehending and relating to the new norms and how these are assessed by the public. The narcissistic trait of the organization can create difficulties to embrace new norms and result in failure to incorporate them into the military organizations’ framework. Either there is a sense of redirection from the old towards something new that is experienced as positive, or it may be experienced as a threat to the traditional role and the negative worldview of the organization, which does not recognize a role as do-gooder. When military action is framed in a (humanitarian) normative context, it may also raise the stakes of both individuals and organizations involved. To fail may have immediate, devastating consequences.

Individualization is an essential feature of modernity which means that people increasingly come to reflect upon their own life, identity and their own will (Rosa 2013, p. 226–227). Inglehart have shown that the values of Western populations, youth in particular, have moved from being occupied with materialist concerns – securing food and shelter – towards post-materialist concerns of self-fulfillment (Inglehart 2008). These developments inevitably have consequences for military organizations. Apt (2010, p. 76–77) argues that military organizations loses the competition for the young workforce, since its character does not fit with the non-hierarchical, post-materialistic and critical worldview of this part of the population. If the social rewards of joining the army is not present, this constitutes a challenge for the military (Levy 2013). This is a question of the legitimacy of the military organization.

Potential challenges to military organizations due to value changes has to do with the challenge highlighted by Apt (2010); if the military organization fails to recognize value changes among the segment of the population that it is supposed to attract it is not successful in its recruitment. If the military organization are allowed to continue demanding excessive costs from its personnel and fail to perceive larger societal trends when it comes to norms, the consequences will also be lack of attraction as an employer. The narcissistic and greedy character of military organizations are thus challenged.

In the 2000s, Moskos et al. (2000) introduced the concept of the postmodern military, which recognized that military organizations’ exclusivity were questioned. Military organizations were increasingly subject to the same norms as the wider society; for instance regarding gender equality and the rights of homosexuals. In recent years, researchers have begun to re-direct attention towards the various expressions and consequences of what could be termed a demand for normalization of military
organizations (Deverell et al. 2015, Holmberg 2015, Alvinius et al. 2016, Norheim-Martinsen 2016, Olsson et al. 2016). This literature point to new administrative demands, relating in particular to: economic management, norms regarding equality, equal treatment, the labor market, communication and information. Taken together, the 21st century requirements on military organizations challenge the exclusivity that the military organizations may have been used to (Abrahamsson, 1972). These requirements need to be comprehended and managed within the military organizations if they are to retain their legitimacy.

Norheim-Martinsen (2016) argues that the process of normalization is usually overlooked in the literature regarding security and defence transformation. It challenges the view that military organizations are exclusive in several ways. According to his argument, the hierarchical character traditionally conceived of as a character of the military organization is exaggerated, and the sharp distinction between soldiers and officers is beginning to fade in the context of modern armies. The military is no longer as separate from the society as it used to be, and the divisions between civilian and military that have for a long time been the norm are becoming blurred due to new tasks (Norheim-Martinsen 2016, p. 321). The total institution is challenged.

Potential challenges to military organizational characteristics due to processes of normalization are most likely very similar to those discussed above in relation to value changes. Narcissism and greed risk resulting in failure to comprehend and manage new requirements – and will result in decreasing legitimacy and loss of attraction.

**Functional pressure for change**

Technological innovation and development have played a great role in thinking about war and strategy, in particular in the USA (Carvin and Williams 2015). However, with the threat of total annihilation that came with the development of nuclear weapons during the Cold War, technology have increasingly been used to make war more specialized and detailed in the field, rather than total. Political forces and civilian strategists played a role in this process of trying to gain control over the military and its technology (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 109ff).

Thus, during the end of the 20th century technology was seen as a means to gain control over the battlefield and over battle – making it more limited. This process used to be termed a “revolution in military affairs” in the 1980s and 1990s. However, Carvin & Williams argue that technology did not manage to limit wars as much as imagined. Other developments also proved to be important, as the war on terror testified. In addition, the ambition to keep up with the technological development should not be underestimated as a driving force for Western military organizations. It can also be seen as a question of organizational prestige and an issue of isomorphism, closely connected to internationalization (Pretorius 2008).

The technological development could be expected to fit quite well with the military characteristics outlined above. Potential challenges might, however, be that technological development is expensive and may make the organization more specialized – something that can challenge bureaucratic, meritocratic and narcissistic traits. The challenge of specialization was foreseen already by Janowitz in the early Huntington-Janowitz debate regarding the extent of the civilian control of the military (see Ydén 2008). Additional
complexities for civilian control in line with this one is the diffuse boundary between war and peace.

During the last half of the 20th century, Western military organizations, like many other public and private organizations in the knowledge society, started processes of professionalization. They can be seen as an effort of organizations to remain exclusive and retain the privileges traditionally associated with them. Professionalization were spurred by the social changes that came with the post-industrial society and with technical development, which demanded specialization (Moskos et al. 2000, Forster 2006, Szvircsev and Leuprecht 2010, Brante et al. 2015). Professionalization processes are, however, in many respects paradoxical in relation to other societal processes characteristic of modernization, since they direct organizations away from demands for normalization and non-hierarchical structures. One such aspect is the outsourcing of military contracts to private companies (Forster 2006, p. 221). Features that suggest that professionalization have affected military organizations are in particular the shift away from conscription to professional armies and the emphasis upon education (Moskos et al. 2000, Szvircsev and Leuprecht 2010).

It could be expected that professionalization fits quite well with the traditional characteristics of military organizations, and can be seen to strengthen these. However, it also implies that the military organization have to specialize and recognize that some general tasks must be conducted by civilians. Likewise, focus on education and academic developments constitutes an interaction with another profession, which may be threatening. Paradoxically, professionalization appear to be contradicted by processes of normalization, which demands that the military organization recognize that the surrounding world sets up criteria and norms regarding for instance work and family.

Finally, a theory of modernity is presented. Indeed, it may be what underlies our understanding of (almost constant) change in the security and defence sector. Hartmus Rosa, sociologist and political scientist, has argued that the temporal dimension is important, and that modernity is characterized by three forms of social acceleration: technical acceleration, the acceleration of social change and the acceleration of the pace of life. All have connections with globalization (Rosa 2013, p. 71–79, 214). At least two of these processes were driven by the growth of the modern state, and the military played an important part in it. The military institution spurred technical innovation and contributed in structuring the lives of a large part of the populations of the modern states: young men set for conscription – and possibly a military career (Rosa 2013, p. 195–199).

However, at the end of the 20th century, both the state and the military became caught up in processes of social acceleration that could not be controlled. Rosa argues that the move from modernity to post-modernity is beginning to constrain the state and the military in ways that make them loose the control that the processes of acceleration once gave them. Rosa writes:

“… today one must expect from the dynamization of warfare the forthright inversion of the relations of classical modernity, namely, the demilitarization of war, the decline of the monopoly of violence, and the “outbreak of civil wars” […]” (Rosa 2013, p. 202)

Social acceleration have thus contributed to increasing globalization, fluidity and loss of political control – a state that may be called post-modernism (Rosa 2013). This places
high demands upon the individual: as the world is constantly moving, it becomes difficult to develop an identity – the choices are endless and fluid (Rosa 2013, chapter 10). In this situation, even the organization of politics is challenged by the acceleration of time – which does not adapt to the demands of political processes. Politics is perceived to be hindering development, reacting to events rather than steering them (Rosa 2013, p. 260).

The potential challenges to military organizational characteristics due to social acceleration are numerous and complex. For instance, certain individuals may feel attracted to the military’s hierarchical structure and the ease of not having to make their own choices. However, this poses a danger to the organization, as it may end up with individuals that do not adhere to societal developments (compare the discussion in Germany regarding the possible loss of innere führung – risk of unethical soldiers). The fluidity of society and its effects upon individuals may hinder the narcissistic and greedy characteristics of the organization to function, as unpredictability spread. Feelings of frustration in relation to the inability of a large organization to adapt and to achieve goals may be difficult to manage.

**Empirical examples**

Table 1 summarizes the analysis of the respondents’ reflections upon the role of transformation processes for the military organization. Below, the challenges to military organizational characteristics are discussed and illustrated with empirical examples.

**Challenges from structural pressures for change**

The pressure for change that follow from globalization and internationalization was rather straight on and easy for the organization to relate to in the form of familiar tools such as strategies, doctrines and tasks. In spite of initial resistance, internationalization processes were embraced by many military organizations, including the SAF (Eriksson, 2006). The respondents’ reflections concerns the extent of the process of harmonization spurred by internationalization – some believe that the military organization may have changed too much, or at least more than was necessary (Interview 1). This could be interpreted as internationalization being managed as a bureaucratic challenge. Still, the respondents do not talk about internationalization as a problem, which indicates that

| Table 1. Challenges to military organizational characteristics sorted by pressures for change. |
|---------------------------------------------|
| Pressures for change | Bureaucratic | Hierarchic | Meritocratic | Narcissistic | Greedy |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|-------------|--------|
| Structural -internationalization | Manageable | Manageable |              |             |        |
| Normative |              |            |              |             |        |
| -normative views regarding the use of force | Manageable | Difficult | Difficult | Manageable |        |
| -value changes | Difficult | Difficult | Difficult | Difficult | Difficult |
| -normalization | Manageable | Manageable |              |             |        |
| Functional |              |            |              |             |        |
| -technical development | Difficult |            |              |             |        |
| -professionalization | Difficult |            |              |             |        |
| -social acceleration | Difficult |            |              | Manageable |        |
|                       | Difficult |            |              | Manageable | Difficult |
the military organization – bureaucratic as it is traditionally conceived – were able to internalize this pressure for change rather smoothly after all.

One reflection frames internationalization in terms of worldviews (Interview 2), something which can be related to the division in Sweden between the two strategic cultures of the national and the international (Angstrom 2010). A consequence of this is that individuals within the military organization have different worldviews and frames of reference depending on what time they entered the organization and what strategic culture were in vogue at the time. This can create dissonances between generations within the organization, in particular if different experiences – for instance of international service – are rewarded differently. At this point internationalization starts to challenge the meritocracy of the military organization, and eventually possibly hierarchies within the organization.

**Challenges from normative pressure for change**

In relation to normative pressure for change regarding the use of force the interviewees make different associations. Some respondents relate this to the liberal interventionism of the 2000s. These find the changing norms rather uncomplicated, the armed forces are seen to have a clear role with respect to the use of force, and decisions regarding the use of force are considered to have legitimacy (Interview 3). It is known in previous research, however, that there were resistance towards this role in the military organization at the time (Eriksson, 2006, Petersson 2011). Most likely, both the bureaucratic and narcissistic characteristic of the military organization were challenged, but managed to internalize the new role with time.

Other respondents make associations to more recent events and problems in the national context. Here, the armed forces are seen to face challenges with regard to the use of force in the so-called “grey areas” of warfare, as well as in relation to terrorism (in the first instance a task for the police in Sweden). The military organization is described to be uncertain of its role in this context. To some extent, there are also completely new tasks in this context, such as cyber warfare. (Interview 1 & 4) This development is different to the one discussed above since there is more uncertainty involved, and the direction is not as clear. On the other hand, the military organization is probably eager to be able to manage "grey areas” since these are framed in relation to defence of the territory and as warfare. In particular cyber-related tasks demand competences that are technical rather than physical, something which may challenge the traditional view of the soldier and the profession (compare post-heroic warfare). Overall, however, we initially view these issues as manageable bureaucratic challenges.

With respect to value changes, the respondents are united in their view that individualization is a strong trend that affects the military organization in the daily work (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7). They note that people (both soldiers at the primary education levels and higher up in the hierarchy of officers) are more focused upon themselves than they were 10 years ago. People want self-fulfillment, which make them quit if the job does not suit them – or just because they want to try another job. They also separate between work and private time, so they do not accept to work overtime to any large extent. The first period of contact with the armed forces, up to 6 months, is considered a delicate period which determines whether the person stays or not. The
respondents perceive that many do not embrace the collective ethos of the military organization, but some may come to do it later in their career. The idea of a life-long workplace seem to be gone, however. There is also less interest in the bigger picture (the role of the armed forces), people are more concerned with their own work. We view this as clear, difficult challenges to narcissism and greed within the military. Also, systems of meritocracy may be challenged as motivational factors change.

The respondents develop their own thoughts about what individualization means for the armed forces and how the military organization needs to adapt in order to manage this trend. One observation is that the personnel turnover increases. This is a pattern that does not correspond to previous experiences and expectations, and therefore it complicates planning. It is a challenge to bureaucracy. The armed forces used to be concerned over how to get people to quit, now they are concerned about how to get people to stay. Respondents argue that the military organization needs to make room for personal development. Furthermore, it needs to adjust to a new reality where people does not work overtime (here the line between work and private has been reestablished). It need to be prepared to manage social media and try to establish a line between work and private (which are perceived to have deteriorated in youth culture when it comes to expressions in social media). The military organization need to communicate its mission clearly to a broadening variety of co-workers, in particular to conscripts, following the decision in 2017 to reinstate partial conscription. One respondent believes that the reintroduced focus upon national defence might allow the armed forces to place higher demands on its personnel.

The reflections above indicate that there are major challenges to the greedy and narcissistic traits of the organization, as individualization make it more difficult to control members of the organization. This challenges the self-image of the military. Individualization challenges the established systems of hierarchies and meritocracy that the military organization is built upon, and which has been considered an important pillar of its persistence. The room for organizational narcissism and greed becomes limited as people within the organization are not impressed by the self-aggrandizement or submit to the demands that the military organization places upon them. Individualism thus challenges the total institution-character of military organizations in a fundamental way. Traits such as personnel turnover and a fragmentation of the collective values that used to characterize the military organization might create uncertainty and conflict among the personnel, which further weakens these traits within the organization. It seems that this type of immaterial pressure for change poses many challenges to the armed forces, which can be hard for the organization to pick up – since they confront the roots of the traditional characteristic of the military organization.

Processes of normalization are felt by most of the respondents (Interviews 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10). The officers experience that the military organization has lost exclusivity, and that management-tasks have increased. The military organization adapts to laws concerning for instance work-place security, human rights (equality etc.) and the environment. There are different views upon the forces at work. Some respondents point out that the SAF chooses to adapt, others that it is a necessity to adapt (here the narcissistic character are illuminated in the discourse of the respondents). One respondent points out that normalization is
connected to a growing number of civilian personnel (the civilian personnel have adapted
the military organization to “normal” rules and regulations).

There is discussion among the respondents about the consequences of normalization
that suggest that the character of the total institution is challenged; that normalization
reduces the operational capacity of the military organization, that it will be difficult to
uphold regulations outside peace-time, that it is not a core task of the military
organization to manage regulations of this kind and that it both reduces and increases
legitimacy to adapt. In relation to the the 2015 defence decision – which re-oriented the
defence from internationalization back towards national, territorial defence – several
respondents feel that the pressure for normalization has been balanced, that the military
organization has regained some of its exclusivity.

It is clear that normalization severely challenges the view of the military organization
as exclusive and prioritized. The narcissistic trait is damaged, and officers feel frustrated
about how to manage this situation. Regulations also hinders greedy organizational
behavior. However, normalization feeds the bureaucratic characteristic of the military
organization. The military organization may experience difficulties in its role as threat-
perception analyst, as the worst-case situation may become more and more distant
when focus is upon adapting to normalization. This is reflected in the officers’ thoughts
about what happens in a crisis or war-time situation. These situations seem to become
more and more abstract and the day-to-day organization of activities are sometimes
seen as contradictory to the “core task” of the military.

**Challenges from functional pressures for change**

Technical developments challenges military organizations as they develop fast, and
makes them difficult for bureaucracies to manage. Technological development requires
large resources and priorities both at the political and the military level, which chal-
 lenges hierarchies and spurs the organization into internal competition. Weapons and
defence materiel acquisitions is also a question of prestige, which may have implications
on all traits of the military organization. Respondents point out that it implies high
costs, uncertain acquisition processes and planning challenges (Interview 1 & 10). Thus,
this pressure for change is demanding to bureaucracies – in particular, the pace of
technical development may be a challenge to bureaucratic organizations, which are
inert. New arenas of warfare, such as cyber, complicates this picture further (Interview 7
& 10). On the other hand, technical development is visible and material – and the
consequences of this transformation can be predicted and assessed once known.
Therefore, it may be channeled into a known process of management within the
military organization – in a way that immaterial pressures for change may not.

One interviewee sees the process of technical development as inevitable (Interview 1).
Here, we might suspect a close association to prestige which corresponds to narcissism as
a character, as well as the negative worldview which insists that the military organization
need to keep up with adversaries in order not to become disadvantaged by the technical
transformation processes. It is, however, pointed out that technical development may raise
a false sense of safety – in the theater of operations; technology may be of little help against
the enemy’s simple technology (Interview 5). Military organizations built on technological
advantage therefore need to be cautious, the respondent argues.
Further demands come with the specialization that technical development implies. This creates problems in relation to personnel supply and internal competition for personnel (Interview 2). It is also noted that military organizations have moved from leading technical development towards following civilian technical development, making necessary adjustments (Interview 6). This loss of control on the part of military organizations is not valued by the respondents, it could be seen as a loss of prestige and exclusivity – and a bureaucratic challenge.

With regard to professionalization, the respondents are quite united in their answers and reflections. They experience that processes of professionalization actually fragments and challenge the unity of the officer corps and the soldiers below them. (Interviews 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10) Their role is seen to become more abstract. Specialization and academization are described as difficult processes and are seen to hollow out the common frames of reference and the unity that used to be present within the military organization. A number of problems and challenges are identified: it becomes difficult to experience unity within the military organization as more and more interest is focused towards the specific task of the individual; the risk for conflict between different groups or between generations increases; and some tasks are taken away and given to civilians. The respondents do not, however, make much of a connection between professionalization and legitimacy. Who the military organization is appear to matter less than what it does (Interview 1). This appears to be a classical narcissistic interpretation of the military organizations’ instrumental role in society, where goal fulfilment is most important.

Professionalization spurs frustration. The respondents seem to some extent to accept and understand the development and the reasons behind it, but some of them appear angry and unsatisfied with what is happening. They do not seem to want to view the development as internally driven, but rather as something that is “forced” upon the military organization – uncertain by whom. Professionalization seems to be a complex, painful process which relates to several of the other transformation processes; the technical development, internationalization and normalization. Short-term it challenges the traditional, narcissistic military organization, which sees itself as grandiose and self-evident, without need to adapt to external developments. Long-term it has the potential to challenge hierarchies and place demands upon systems of meritocracy in order for these to adapt to new realities within the organization.

Finally, social acceleration is recognized by most respondents as an important transformation process (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 & 10). The pace of work are perceived to increase, there are high demands upon availability and the information flow is high. This situation demands a lot of energy, both from the individual and the organization. The officers experience stress and uncertainty regarding priorities. The focus is seen to be moving from quality towards fast results, which is considered frustrating. The military organization is seen to have difficulties managing changes fast enough. Sometimes a few individuals have to make decisions very quickly. Another consequence that the respondents point to is the external information management – a function that were not present ten years ago. Social media and news have to be constantly managed. There is also a potential threat in the information arena. With the demands to speed and information, no respect is granted the exclusivity of the military organization, nor is there room for placing higher demands upon the personnel – which is already under high pressure. Even the bureaucratic demands may have to stand aside if the pace of transformation in the organization is high.
In this kind of situation the personnel may experience lack of motivation, stress and uncertainty, which indirectly challenges hierarchies and meritocratic systems.

**Conclusions and further research**

The plausibility probe suggest that among the three pressures for change identified, the normative pressure for change may pose the most comprehensive challenge to military organizational characteristics. Both structural and functional pressures for change demand attention and challenge the bureaucratic character of the armed forces, but they are eventually managed within the main framework of the organization. Normative pressures for change, however, are problematic for most of the traits that traditionally characterize the military organization. Difficulties increase as the normative pressures for change are abstract, immaterial and usually not carried by a specific change agent. On the other hand, most respondents recognize the challenges, which means that they can be addressed if the military organization chooses to do so. Narcissistic and greedy characteristics are, however, likely to inhibit such developments in the current state of affairs – the organization will resist change. This is evident from much of the reasoning of the respondents. But, with generational change, the characteristic of the military organization is likely to transform gradually. This process may be painful and deserves further research with a focus upon the individual and the organization.

Immaterial pressures for change are more difficult for the military organization to manage than material pressure for change. In addition, the normative pressures for change discussed are “external” to the military organization; their origins are international and societal. The respondents reflect a largely static view of the organization and through their answers resistance towards pressure for change may be detected. These views and perceptions influence how pressures for change are met within the military organization. Also here, students of military organizations need to understand how these processes can be facilitated in order for the organization not to lose legitimacy.

An additional feature of the normative pressures for change is the temporal dimension: these developments are likely to be slow and “invisible” transformation processes, that are difficult for the military organization to detect. Narcissistic organizations may view pressures for change as optional and refuse to adapt. Organizational research should pay much more attention to the workings of central state institutions and functions of the state – which are regarded as crucial for democracy to survive.

The implications of pressure for change for military organizational characteristics are severe. Perhaps the most worrying consequence of the misfit between traditional characteristics and normative pressures for change is lack of legitimacy – both social and political. The most obvious indication of reduced legitimacy is reduced attraction of the military professions, both at the level of soldiers and officers. The legitimacy of the military organization in society deserves attention in many areas of research; political science and sociology to begin with.

The examples discussed in this article mainly comes from the Swedish context. It could be argued that the Swedish example has many similarities with West European states. Military organizations in other national contexts may experience other types of demands. Within the scope of this article, however, we are not able to make comparisons between
challenges to military organizational characteristics in different countries. It might be a task for further research.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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