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## Historical Framing Factors and Early Steps of Military Psychology

Sweden is the country on earth with the longest unbroken period of peace (since 1814). This includes staying out of the two world wars of the last century. Although Sweden has contributed to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions since the 1950s, it is still a non-aligned country. However, since the Balkan conflicts in the early 1990s, Swedish military forces have been frequently engaged in multinational peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations. Swedish officers have also been regular participants in international military exercises and high-level command headquarters.

The political decision to stay non-aligned led to a necessity to be one's own master. Conscription, which was compulsory for men, was abolished in 2010. If fully mobilized, Sweden with a population of about nine million at that time could have fielded a force of about

800,000 men. Among these, mobilized civilians were expected to man some 95% of all commanding positions.

The new post-Cold War era, following the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, has seen a dramatic change in the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF). An all-voluntary force has replaced the conscription system (which formally is "resting" and can be resumed again if necessary). If fully mobilized, the present armed forces consist of about 30,000 well trained and equipped soldiers ready to take part in multinational operations and another 30,000 being prepared to defend the homeland.

The early steps of military psychology need to be seen against this background. The conscription system called for a selection system that could be used on a large scale. Intelligence testing began in the 1940s. Teams of medical staff, military officers and psychologists travelled around the country to assess all 18-year-old men.

In 1955, the Military Psychological Institute was established. The main field of military psychology was selection. Intelligence and aptitude tests were developed and refined. Military psychologists were also involved in constructing manuals for interview-based assessment of leadership capacity and mental stability in conscripts. In the late 1960s, the mobile assessment system was replaced with regional enlistment offices with permanently employed psychologists.

In 1974, the Military Psychological Institute was incorporated into the Swedish National

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Defence Research Institute, and formed the Department of Behavioural Sciences. Within this new department, psychology was integrated with educational science and sociology. This organizational change also came to be a milestone regarding tasks and positions of psychologists in the Swedish defence. Three clusters emerged: one continuing working with conscript assessment within the Swedish Defence Recruitment Agency (SDRA), one working with human factors, special selection and mental health, respectively, within the SAF, and finally one involved in research and teaching at the Swedish National Defence Research Institute. These three clusters still remain and are presented in more detail in the following section.

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## **Kinds of Psychologists Currently Employed**

In this core section of the chapter, we present the three organizational settings described above. The goal is to present the kind of tasks and positions that currently fall under the umbrella of military psychology.

## **The Swedish Defence Recruitment Agency**

On 1 January 2011, the National Service Administration (NSA) became the SDRA. The change of the name was made when the Swedish Parliament decided that the supply of personnel for the Swedish defence should be voluntary instead of being based on national service. The main mission of the SDRA is to conduct selection tests of applicants to the SAF and other agencies within the security sector, e.g., applicants to the Police Academy, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, the Swedish Customs and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency.

The SDRA has about 110 employees, e.g., psychologists (approximately 20), medical officers (approx. 5), nurses (approx. 16), IT personnel (approx. 20), administrators of the war organizations, economists and information offi-

cers. It is a non-profit organization, funded with grants and charges for commissions (which the SDRA conducts for other authorities and organizations within the total defence).

The SDRA administers applications for the basic training of the SAF and manages parts of the selection process. Information is collected on an annual basis about the personnel circumstances of Swedish 18-year-old youths by use of a web-based biodata form. The information is used to decide which individuals should enrol and possibly serve if national service is reinstated again. SDRA conducts reporting on the staff of the total defence and maintains a register of those with war posts.

The psychologists at the SDRA conduct testing and perform evaluations of those who apply for a position as a soldier or sailor in the Swedish defence. They are also involved with applicants for the special forces and the military officer profession. For soldier and sailor applicants, the first step is a computerized cognitive test, which was developed at the agency. Here, a score of 4 or higher on a 9-point general intelligence scale is necessary. This is followed by a semi-structured interview, lasting for approximately 1 h, with one of the psychologists. Ratings are made in relation to a number of aspects regarded as important in order to manage a soldier or sailor position. Composite evaluations of psychological functioning ability are made on a 9-point scale. A score of 4 or higher is a necessary condition for employment. Applicants with a score of 5 or higher on the cognitive ability test are also evaluated on leadership capacity.

On behalf of the security service of the SAF, a security evaluation of each applicant is also made by the psychologists. This is partly integrated in the interview. Assessments are made of the applicant's loyalty, trustworthiness and vulnerability.

The psychologists at the SDRA have a strong influence on the outcome of the selection process. Low scores on the psychological variables cannot be compensated, for instance, by excellent values on the physical tests. In order to maximize the reliability and validity of the psychological assessments, regular evaluation exercises are performed by the psychologists.

## The Swedish Armed Forces

The SAF is one of the nation's largest government agencies. The task is to be responsible for Sweden's military defence. There are approximately 35 psychologist positions within the SAF. The different work areas are presented below.

**Special Selection Department** The oldest branch of military psychology is the Special Selection Department (SSD) and its origins trace back to 1944 when psychological selection of military aircraft pilots began in Sweden. The SSD has over the years become engaged in several other areas of the SAF, such as selection of Army and Navy personnel, as well as selection of regular officers.

The positions in the SAF that are identified as requiring psychological selection are mostly positions that have high demands for cognitive functioning and/or integrity and/or involving higher risks to personnel. Examples of these positions are fixed/rotary wing pilots, aircrew, flight leaders, meteorologists, UAV-pilots and operators, boat drivers, rangers and intelligence personnel.

The SSD is the centre of psychological selection competence in the SAF. Its primary function is to ensure that personnel in key positions within the SAF have got the necessary abilities and skills to function well in their respective positions. Its tasks involve supporting eligible units, functions or positions with psychological selection as well as providing resources to conduct psychological selection of officers.

**Aviation psychologists** A number of psychologists in the SAF have a military background as pilots. Their overall mission is to improve aviation security in the SAF. Tasks include supervision/guidance of commanders on aviation security issues, participation in selection processes and settings, taking part in incident examinations and providing family support.

**Joint Operations Command** Psychologists at the Joint Operations Command, J1, focus on mil-

itary psychological factors within international and national operational settings (deployment psychology), including continuous development and adjustments of organizational methods and requirements. An example is advising the Chief of Joint Operations regarding military psychology and specific areas that need to be considered during different phases of deployment.

Typical tasks for the psychologists are the following. During the pre-deployment phase: education, threat assessment, risk analyses, etc., during the deployment phase: methods for sustaining resilience and maximum operability, monitoring ongoing operations, monitoring the personnel and assessing areas that need to develop, and during the post-deployment phase reinforcing the deployment psychology perspective into different aspects of the organization and processes, cooperating with veteran affairs and ensuring adequate methods of assessment and support.

**Military healthcare centre: The SAF in-house occupational healthcare centre** According to Swedish Law on The Work Environment (Sveriges Riksdag, 1977, Act 1977:1166), occupational health service is arranged as an independent part of the in-house activities of the SAF. Multidisciplinary collaboration is often required to solve complex problems. Therefore, several professional groups are involved and contribute to a holistic view on work environment, organization, productivity and individual health. Activities at the individual, group and organizational levels are performed within the areas health promotion, health prevention, medical care and rehabilitation. A strength of the in-house occupational health service is good knowledge of the military environment and military tasks.

**Veteran Affairs** The SAF defines anyone who has been an employee in the Forces abroad or at home, armed or unarmed, as a veteran. In Sweden, there are more than 100,000 Foreign Service veterans, many of them have done more than one International Mission. The Parliament controls and coordinates a well-established veteran policy.

According to Swedish Law on The SAF Personnel in International Military Operations (Sveriges Riksdag, 2010, Act 2010:449), SAF has the responsibility to actively assess its personnel post-international military operations deployments. The assessment must be conducted through personal contact and needs to go on for 5 years after the person redeployed to Sweden. The responsibility for post-deployment monitoring and rehabilitation lies on the local units.

As we all know very well, the work carried out by the SAF does not only affect our employees, but also their family members and friends. Family members often have questions concerning the period before, during and after employment or a posting. In order to support a family member, the SAF offers contact through special contact persons, information meetings, cooperation with non-profit organizations and information brochures.

### The Swedish Defence University

Following some reorganizations after 1974 when the former Military Psychological Institute was incorporated into the Swedish National Defence Research Institute, this organizational unit nowadays constitutes the Leadership Center at the Swedish Defence University. In 2008, this university was transferred from the Ministry of Defence to the Ministry of Education. This means that it is now formally equivalent with other Swedish universities and colleges.

Being part of the ordinary university system means that there are now two groups of customers with different needs. On the one hand, the academic tradition with number of peer-reviewed publications, citations, etc., is a driving force. On the other hand, the SAF and civilian crisis management system still want practically useful research results.

Another change concerns the educational background of the employees. Until the mid-1990s, almost everybody was a registered psychologist. Now the picture has changed. The new generation of employees have psychology as their main subject and they do take their doctor-

ates in psychology. But they are typically not registered psychologist and they do not identify with the label "military psychologist". Currently there are only four of us left, out of about 15 employees, at the Leadership Center who are registered psychologists.

Three broad areas of psychological teaching and research can be identified as results of these changes. The first is research on military recruitment and selection. A practical example is the development of an adaptive intelligence test (Carlstedt, 2001) which is used by the SDR (see above). Since the introduction of an all-voluntary force in 2010, the focus has changed to research on how the military can attract, and even more important, retain young men and women.

A second area is leadership under stressful conditions. A new theoretical model labelled Developmental leadership (Larsson et al., 2003) was officially declared as *the* leadership model of the SAF in 2003 (and it still is). This model could be described as an integration between the models transformational leadership (Bass, 1998) and authentic leadership (Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005). A complementary model of indirect leadership at higher organizational levels has also been developed (Larsson & Eid, 2012). A number of studies have been conducted on military leadership in connection with multinational missions and on civilian crises management agencies. Recent study topics include destructive leadership, emotions in leadership and moral stress. Most of this research is also being transformed to theoretical and practical leadership courses.

The third major research area can be summed up by the label "risk and crisis". The majority of studies have been conducted in civilian crisis management contexts, but there is also a growing trend with military risk research. A typical research question concerns the balance between risk taking and safety. A number of antecedent conditions from the individual to the societal level have been explored (see, e.g., Enander, Lajksjö, & Tedfeldt, 2010). Also in this area, much of the research is being transformed to civilian and military educational settings.

## Future Directions

The organizational division described above has led to psychologists working with different kinds of tasks in a variety of positions. A consequence of this, in turn, is that military psychology as a concept and source of common identification, no longer plays an important role. However, different aspects of *psychology* still play, and will in all likelihood continue to play, an important part of the Swedish military and civilian defence organization.

A relevant, but hard to predict, factor regarding the future of psychology in the Swedish defence is the political development in the Northern European Region. An illustration of this is that, after more than 20 years of downsizing, there is now a political consensus in Sweden that the defence sector, and the armed forces in particular, need more resources.

Selection, leadership, psychological fitness and stress management are all predictable evergreens. This applies to research-based methodological development as well as to hands-on work with selection, occupational health, academic teaching and research. In the footsteps of globalization and current security-oriented trends, we venture to guess that these stable foundations will be broadened to incorporate more aspects related to moral stress, cultural competence and terrorism.

Finally, we foresee more cross-disciplinary integration. Psychological aspects are increasingly being integrated with war science in the Swedish officer education from the lowest to the highest level. Civil-military dual use of psychological competence will probably also expand as

a consequence of the increased integration of these sectors in society at large. Thus, we have come a long way from seeming to be an isolated group, to becoming a well-established and respected part of the modern society.

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