Strategic Colonels

The Discretion of Swedish Force Commanders
in Afghanistan 2006–2013

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Abstract
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This dissertation examines the role of military officers as policy implementers by investigating the discretion of Swedish force commanders in the multinational military campaign in Afghanistan between 2006 and 2013. By developing an analytical framework that takes both an outside-in and an inside-out perspective, and that encompasses both the objective implications that structural factors project on force commanders as well as their subjective perceptions of those structural factors, and applying that framework to a range of official documents as well as unique interview data, the thesis describes the discretion that force commanders have had in interpreting, choosing and shaping their mission and concept of operations.

The findings show that Swedish force commanders in the Afghanistan campaign have had considerable discretion in interpreting and framing the principal's overarching mission, the mission of their own force, as well as their force's concept of operations. Their discretion can be understood as a combination of structurally induced freedom to make choices, the force commanders' perceptions of that freedom and their inclination to use it.

Circumstances regarding structural factors such as duality of command, passive authority of superiors, non-specific tasks and ambiguous implications of allocated resources has created this discretion and rendered force commanders disproportionately influential in the policy implementation process. Although this influence can be regarded as a manifestation of modern management ideals such as *Auftragstaktik* and mission command in the military, or management by objectives in government and business, it can also be regarded as a downwards passing of the buck where strategic implementation decisions trickle down to the level of force commanders in the field, making them "strategic colonels".

Keywords: military strategy; policy implementation; discretion; Afghanistan; NATO; ISAF; force commander; military operations

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For those who walk the walk

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This project grew out of a puzzling experience in 2009 when the war in Afghanistan seemed to escalate. Despite my military background and experience from multinational peacekeeping I could not make sense of the news reports about the Swedish provincial reconstruction team in northern Afghanistan. Over the years it had become evidently clear that the campaign was not as trivial as it was commonly depicted. In the Swedish political discourse it was portrayed as yet another peace keeping mission, which was aimed at helping the Afghans get back on its feet after the Taliban's reign of terror. Swedish soldiers drove around the rural countryside in white jeeps, drank tea with village elders and mullahs, promoted local development projects, preferably the drilling of wells and building of schools, and occasionally captured warlord-like criminals. Actually, it didn't seem that different from what I had experienced in Kosovo a few years earlier. But in 2009 and 2010, it became clear that Swedish troops were not only exposed to rather sophisticated ambushes on a regular basis, but were also involved in regular combat operations, particularly related to their defense of a so called combat outpost that they had seized and were holding in the troubled area known as "West of Mazar-e Sharif". I failed to make sense of this so I decided to make it the topic of my research.

At the onset, I had an idealistic notion of an anthropological study that would investigate the Afghans' view of our idea that we could "win hearts and minds". Soon though, I was told that this was a near impossible ambition for a Caucasian, supposedly Christian male during a predominantly Western occupation of a Muslim country, the argument being that I, given my identity in combination with the (believed) character of rural Afghans, had limited prospects of developing sufficient rapport. So, in order to save my invested effort I simply switched sides and redirected my attention to the interveners and developed the current research idea.

During this journey I have interviewed more than 130 individuals, military and civilian, both in Sweden and in Afghanistan and had conversations with countless others. Although I have used only a portion of the interviews directly as data, every person I have talked to have undoubtedly helped me to gain a thick understanding of the conflict, the campaign, the force and its members and their reasoning. Often, for example, when my role has become known, soldiers at Camp Northern Lights have spontaneously approached me to share their stories, often regarding their experiences at the infamous

Part I

No public policy issue is more controversial than the use of military force.

Haass, 1999

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Since the beginning of 2002, Sweden has had troops deployed in Afghanistan. What started out as a relatively delimited effort, with a small special operations force for a few months, culminated in 2011 with a mechanized battalion-sized force with hundreds of troops with their own fort and "battle space ownership" in four Afghan provinces equaling the size of West Virginia or a medium sized European country, before it was again reduced to a handful of trainers and mentors in 2014.

There are at least two views on what the Swedish force has been doing in Afghanistan over the years. The view that has dominated the political debate in Sweden during the time period is that Sweden, together with other countries, has helped the Afghan government to regain control of its territory. This view, which has undoubtedly influenced national political decision-making, describes a two-way causal relationship between the provision of "security" and socioeconomic development, a dynamic that has often been illustrated with examples of Afghan girls being able to go to school, well drillings in remote rural villages, and the winning of the "hearts and minds" of the local population. This narrative, if you will, has helped to legitimize the use of both military and non-military assets in Afghanistan.

The other view is that Sweden has been engaged in or drawn into a war. For several years, political decision-makers and administrative officials spoke of the Afghanistan campaign as a traditional peacekeeping operation. Then in 2009 and 2010, Swedish troops were found to be engaged in combat-like situations to an extent that the Swedish military had not experienced since the 1960s in The Congo. The competing view of a traditional peacekeeping operation that was meant to provide security for the Afghan people became more and more difficult to maintain, and from an outside perspective the policy decisions no longer seemed to correlate with their implementation on the ground, and vice versa.

This apparent gap between political decisions at the national level and military practice at the local level has been a challenge for politicians, practitioners, scholars and the general public alike. An idealistic and perhaps naïve expectation is that the political decision-makers in general have a good understanding of the problem at hand, an appropriate response to it and a firm grip on how it is implemented, and that the administration, including the military, loyally and effectively turns these policies into effective and efficient actions on the ground in a traceable and transparent way. The appear-

ance of an implementation gap, however, suggested there was some anomaly along the way.

This raises two theoretically and empirically important questions: how does the military implement policy, and what discretion do military commanders at the lower organizational levels have in that implementation process?

As it turns out, we know rather little about this. Several academic fields could serve as a starting point for addressing this pressing issue. For a political scientist it is perhaps most obvious to first turn to the field of policy implementation. Traditionally, implementation studies have applied a top-down approach, placing the main analytical focus on political elites and central government agencies. During the past few decades the traditionalists have been challenged by bottom-up approaches that look at the role of so-called street-level bureaucrats as they turn policy into actual practice on the ground. However, implementation studies generally pay little attention to the military as a policy-implementing bureaucracy. Trends are similar in the field of strategic studies. The main focus here is *the strategic*, that is the elite level of politics and warfighting where ministers and generals reside, or *strategies,* meaning the logical constructs of those elite actors that are supposed to implement political goals with military (and other) means. However, less attention is paid to strategy in the sense of the military bureaucracy's *implementation* of political goals. The study of civil military relations places its main focus on the elite level as well. It also pays considerably more attention to the state's *control* of the military, i.e. its efforts to keep it in check, than the state's *direction* of the military, i.e. its efforts to make it do what is desired. War studies, on the other hand, traditionally pays considerable attention to the levels below the elites. The historical study of operations for example analyzes military campaigns on the ground in depth and from a wide range of perspectives, and other sub-disciplines such as military psychology and military sociology also delve deep into the dynamics on the ground, though seldom or never with a political perspective.

Perhaps as a reaction to this, research that gives attention to what local actors do in conflict and war has surged in recent years. Thus, not only rebels and terrorists but also regular military forces have begun to attract academic interest. Scholars within this growing strain pay new and much needed attention to military actors at the local level, offering new perspectives on and insight into the political role of these street-level, or battlefield, bureaucrats.

In this thesis I attempt to add to this growing field by studying Swedish force commanders as policy implementers in the Afghanistan campaign[1]

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[1] I deliberately call the international community's military engagement in Afghanistan since 2001 a campaign for the purpose of objectivity. Since neither politicians nor academics can agree on what constitutes a war, I steer clear of that conceptual minefield by using the doctrinal concept of a campaign.

with *a focus on their discretion* as decision-makers near the end of the policy chain. Force commanders are those officers who command a clearly delimited force that a country has contributed to a multinational operation. In the case of Sweden and Afghanistan, and of many other countries that contribute to the campaign, the force is a so-called Provincial Reconstruction Team, or PRT, a relatively new type of unit with a few hundred personnel that is responsible for operational activities within one or more Afghan provinces. It belongs to ISAF, or the International Security Assistance Force, a multinational, UN mandated, military force under NATO command that operates throughout Afghanistan. The force commanders in this study are a succession of Swedish colonels who have deployed semi-annually with a temporary or standing unit to man ISAF's PRT in Mazar-e Sharif in northern Afghanistan. These force commanders are the senior Swedish military representatives in Afghanistan and they are responsible for the force under their command, and what that force does to achieve the principal's mission as formulated by the international community, in the provinces of Balkh, Jowzjan, Sar-e Pul and Samangan. Therefore, the discretion with which they make decisions regarding the force's mission and concept of operations is a crucial component in the implementation of both national and international policy.

In this study, the concept of discretion is understood as a structurally induced, individually perceived freedom to choose among courses of actions. This definition is based on a theoretical discussion that argues that discretion can best be understood as a result of the interplay between the outside-in influence from structural factors and the individual's inside-out perception of those factors, a stance that implies an analysis divided into two parts.

Thus, the first and main aim of this thesis is to *further our understanding of military units as political entities* in general and military commanders as political agents in particular. This is attempted by applying experiences from bottom-up implementation research to a military set of cases and, as a consequence, by introducing lower-level military units and their personnel as a new category of cases to an existing field of research within political science. The second aim is to *analyze the Swedish force in Afghanistan campaign* in a scientific and structured manner. Scholarly research on the Swedish Armed Forces operation in northern Afghanistan has been scarce and has not equaled the often heated national debate it has stirred or the considerable effort it has caused. In fact, the national debate has been largely uninformed in that regard, and the need for scientific inquiry is both considerable and overdue. And the third aim, which is a necessary consequence of this approach, is *to theoretically develop the concept of discretion.* As the literature review and the theoretical discussion will reveal, the concept of discretion is somewhat inadequately defined at both a theoretical and operational level, and in order to construct a useful analytical framework I attempt to contextualize individual discretion by applying the combined outside-in and

inside-out perspectives, something that to the best of my knowledge has not been done before. I also adopt a recent approach within public policy research that studies the discretion of the managers and not only workers in street-level bureaucracies, thereby emphasizing the role of military commanders as policy implementers.

To achieve these aims I let the following main research question drive the investigation:

> What discretion has Swedish force commanders had in turning top-down direction into action on the ground in Afghanistan?

In order to answer this question I identify a set of theoretically derived structural factors to analyze the top-down influence on force commanders and the discretion that it objectively creates as well as the force commanders' perceptions of that influence and their experiences of discretion. I apply this analytical strategy on the issues of the formulation and understanding of the mission, i.e. what is to be achieved by force commanders and their force, and the understanding and formulation of their concept of operations, i.e. how the mission is to be accomplished.

The outside-in analysis relies mainly on official documents found along the policy chain, including Government proposition bills and appropriation directives, national and multinational operation plans and orders, as well as other written and oral data from other sources that can enhance the mapping of how political and military will has been projected upon force commanders.

The inside-out analysis relies mainly on interviews with the force commanders. Their accounts are triangulated against other data from other sources such as the forces' own plans and orders, their after action reports, observations, as well as interviews with other members of their force and the Swedish Armed Forces Headquarters.

The main finding of this thesis is that the organizational setting of Swedish force commanders and the outside-in influence it has projected upon them, have created discretion[2] that has permitted them, and in some cases even forced them, to interpret and frame their mission and shape or choose their force's concept of operations. Also, to a notable extent, they have been free to frame the principal's overarching mission. This has been the conse-

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[2] It should be clarified that the term discretion does not imply the military concept of freedom of action. In Swedish, discretion is sometimes understood as the Swedish military concept of *handlingsfrihet*. This is a very central concept in Swedish military thinking; it is actually one of eleven fundamental principles of warfare (along with initiative, surprise, mustering of strength, to name a few) according to Swedish military doctrine. In practice it entails what Clausewitz calls the *strategic reserve*, i.e. a dedicated part of the force that is held "in readiness for emergencies" (1976, 210), which for a rifle company commander may mean keeping one platoon in the rear. A better translation of discretion would be *handlingsutrymme*, i.e. freedom of action in a more general sense.

quence of four factors: a duality of command in combination with relatively passive authority of the superiors which has pushed discretionary power down to the force commanders, non-specific formulation of both the principals' and the force's mission, and a multi-capable set of resources with ambiguous purpose which has forced them to interpret, concretize and prioritize . Thus, within certain inevitable constraints, such as laws and geography, force commanders have been granted greater discretion than can be expected.

Also, their individual perceptions of the implications of structural factors have created a prominent sense among them of being granted discretionary leeway. With few exceptions, they have perceived the dual chain of command as passive and the tasking as non-specific. They have also interpreted their allocated resources in different ways, which has entailed different mission understandings and variation in operational conduct over time.

To summarize, together the structural implications and individual perceptions have generally rendered force commanders free to interpret their principal's mission, to frame their force's mission and to shape their force's concept of operations. And within this discretional space they have made individual interpretations and choices, sometimes similar and sometimes different than their predecessors', a dynamic which has altered policy implementation on the ground in an almost unpredictable way. Force commanders' influence on operations, and subsequently their influence over policy implementation, has thus been considerable.

Based on the three-fold aim of this thesis, and as a consequence of the nature of the findings, this thesis makes several contributions. First, it demonstrates benefits of combining public policy analysis with the military policy field. Even though the military is unique in some considerable aspects, it is still a part of the state's administration that bears many resemblances to other parts of it. Also, the military represents a large part of a nation state's budget and has the mandate and the ability to wield great power in its name which warrants close attention. Therefore, to study the military in a similar way as other public policy fields are studied will not only further our understanding of the military but our understanding of the state as well. This contribution is discussed further in chapter 2.

Second, the results of the study contribute to our knowledge of Sweden's military participation in the Afghanistan campaign in two different ways. The first way is by providing new, and hitherto unique, data extracted from Swedish military commanders. The results from the most central interviews of the study constitute a first account of how an entire line of successive commanders have reasoned about their mission in Afghanistan and gone about achieving it. This contribution is presented in chapter 7. And the second way is by providing a comprehensive compilation and analysis of policy steering documents regarding the Swedish military operations in the Afghanistan campaign. The analysis of these documents yields a new view of how a

deployed military force is instructed. This is presented in chapter 6. Taken together, these empirical contributions provide an increased understanding of Sweden's participation in NATO's operation in Afghanistan, both from a perspective of policy-steering and from a perspective of policy implementation. And at a higher level of abstraction they increase our understanding of Swedish governance as it pertains to the military, and Sweden's use of military force as a policy instrument. This is further discussed in chapter 8. Furthermore, both of these empirical contributions add to the historical writing of Sweden's involvement in Afghanistan in the beginning of the 21st century. In the wake of the West's scheduled withdrawal from Afghanistan, and Sweden's ongoing shift towards territorial defense in the face of increased Russian power projection, there is a clear risk that experiences from the Afghanistan campaign will be neglected and forgotten. The results of this thesis will aid in documenting such experiences.

And third, despite the pronounced empirical nature of this thesis, it also makes a few theoretical and methodological contributions. The first is by elucidating certain aspects of the street-level bureaucracy by developing the concept of discretion as a consequence of the interplay between the outside-in influence from structural factors and the individual's inside-out perception of those factors, operationalizing that notion and applying it in empirical analysis. It also contributes by adopting previous research's focus on *managers* in the street-level bureaucracy in order to shed light on military commanders as policy implementers. This contribution is presented in chapters 3 and 4.

This thesis is divided into two parts. Part I serves as a run-up by problematizing how force commanders in Afghanistan devise and conduct purposeful operations to implement policy decisions and strategy. It goes on to discuss various ways to approach the puzzle scientifically by reviewing several bodies of literature and zooming in on an ontology that combines both an outside-in and an inside-out perspective on discretion. It also presents an analysis schema that incorporates both perspectives in the analysis of discretion in strategic decision making. Part I concludes with a methodological discussion focusing on case selection and data collection and the application of the analysis schema, and also sketches a horizon of expectations.

Part II constitutes the empirical contribution of the thesis. Its first chapter provides context by giving a brief historical background to the Swedish force and a brief description of its organization and operations. The next two chapters present the results from the outside-in and inside-out analysis of structural factors before the last chapter concludes by summarizing and discussing the results from several perspectives.

Chapter 2 – Previous research

Policy, therefore, is interwoven with the whole action of war, and must exercise a continuous influence upon it, as far as the nature of the forces liberated by it will permit

Clausewitz, 1997

Introduction

I tend to look at military deployments abroad as a chain of actors and events that originates at a political center in a national capital and terminates in some concrete military activity, for example a group of soldiers driving a vehicle through a village in Afghanistan or a sailor operating a 57 mm cannon on a ship in the Gulf of Aden. And it's hard not to, because that group of soldiers and that gunner are there as a result of a series of interconnected decisions that runs from a government, through an administration, or bureaucracy if you will, down to the vehicle and the ship. This chain or path may be long or short, it may be crooked and bent along the way, and perhaps even apparently broken here and there, but the political and administrative decisions that place soldiers, sailors and airmen in crisis or war situations, as well as the quasi-casual connections between those decisions, are in evidence in one shape or another. Phrased metaphorically, these "front line state agents are bound by a long tether of hierarchical relationships" (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003, 10) but as outsiders we seldom see this tether. A well-known example of such a chain that often appears in the media is the relationships between the U.S. commander in chief in the White House, the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon, Central Command (or USCENTCOM[3]) in Tampa, Florida, the Commander of ISAF in Afghanistan, and ultimately the myriad of American forces throughout the country. Arguably, that chain contains several layers of decision-makers who affect the ultimate outcome in different ways and in varying degree, and in order to make sense of what goes on in the field, particularly if it seems incongruent with the policy deci-

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[3] United States Central Command, one of nine unified commands, is responsible for U.S. military operations in the "central" area of responsibility, roughly equivalent to the Middle East. Please see www.centcom.mil.

sions made in the capital, trying to understand the decision-making chain that turns policy decisions into military (and other) action seems warranted.

But the notion of a policy chain is obsolete and somewhat unpopular in academia, particularly within the discipline of public policy and implementation research. Critics argue that it is descriptively inaccurate since policy seldom follows a clear and straight path from political decision-makers through implementers to citizens, and that it is not causal since there are no "identifiable forces" that drive the process from one stage to another. Instead, the policy process and policy implementation should, according to critics, be viewed as something more complex and multidimensional, such as a network, coalitions of advocates, or a set of parallel "streams." However, the critics also acknowledge that the stages model or chain model does have some advantages, besides the fact that it captures a widespread understanding of public policy, for example that it transcends institutions and divides policy problems into manageable segments (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier, 1993, 2-4, John, 2012, 19-20, Wieble, 2014, 7-9). I would also argue that it is a relevant analytical tool given that public administrations to a significant degree are designed to promote or at least suggest such a chain of events and actors, the military being one of the most obvious examples perhaps, with its infamous chain of command. Acknowledging that public policy is too complex to be understood as a linear chain of decisions, actors and events, I still contend that the chain metaphor is useful in certain aspects, not least as an ideal model to be used in comparative analysis of real-life cases.

Contemplating the Swedish military participation in Afghanistan in the early 21st century with the chain model as a lens leads to some pertinent and interesting observations. As the sporadic attacks on Swedish troops began to escalate in 2008 and culminate in 2009-2010, the Swedish policy for Afghanistan, as it was framed in government bills, official statements and debates, seemed more and more distant from the image of its implementation as it was portrayed by the mounting reports from the field. While political decision-makers and administrative officials spoke of the provision of security, well-drillings in rural villages and facilitating schooling for young Afghan girls, Swedish troops appeared to get caught up in combat-like situations to an extent not seen since the UN operation in Congo in the 1960s. Simply put, the appearance of implementation did not seem to correlate with the appearance of policy.

Furthermore, about that time, military practitioners, scholars and others began to speak about "winning hearts and minds" as a way to defeat the "insurgents" and thereby provide security. This was a novel approach from the standpoint of Swedish military doctrine, and the way Swedish officers operationalized this was not obviously clear, particularly in the light of the increased fighting. Reasonably, military decision-makers at various levels of the policy chain had to apply considerable deliberation and thought to figure out what to do in order to "provide security" and to "win hearts and minds,"

and the actual reasoning behind the operationalization was not evident and visible in the public debate. The type of military units that were deployed to Afghanistan at the time, i.e. light or mechanized infantry, had particular skills and competences, such as seizing terrain, defending seized terrain, and destroying enemy forces, skills that seemed rather useless for "winning hearts and minds," and the ways these tools were applied in this new doctrinal framework to achieve policy goals were not clear. In short, implementation was not made evident and a way to reveal it would be to investigate policy as it trickled down the policy chain.

In order to understand the military as policy implementers we need to study the military as policy implementers. This may seem obvious, but in fact it is not. On the contrary, our understanding of the military as political actors and policy implementers is hampered by gaps in the literature that are caused by two interacting limitations of previous research: A) the military is seldom studied as a political entity and B) if it is, the analytical focus is primarily placed at the elite level.

The first problem, that the military is seldom the subject of political analysis, can be traced to two interrelated issues: the scientific study of the political rarely looks at the military as a case, and the scientific study of the military rarely includes the political. Political science in general and implementation studies in particular relatively seldom pay attention to the military. Not only does this deprive us of theoretical and analytical tools to understand the military as political actors; it also risks ignoring an arguably important part of the state as a case in political science. Furthermore, the scientific study of the military seldom regards military actors as political agents. War studies tend to focus on other aspects of military life, such as sociology and psychology, and research on military operations tends to be more historical and technical in nature than political. Even though research about the military contributes to our understanding of the military as organizations it does not help us understand military actors as political agents.

The second problem is that research that does study political aspects of the military tends to focus on the elite level. Subtopics of political science and war studies, such as civil–military relations, strategic studies, international relations and political psychology, all place their main theoretical and empirical emphasis on decision-making and decisions of political and military leaders such as president, ministers and generals. This focus on elite levels delimits our understanding of the military as policy implementers to a very select group of actors that operate far from where policy decisions are turned into actual action. But if one believes that a fuller understanding of the military's implementation of political decisions requires studying *all* aspects of it, and not only elite-level decision-making, then this prioritization is a problem.

In short then, taken together these two gaps conspire, involuntarily perhaps, to create a state in which military actors at the local level in conflict

and war lack scholarly attention and where their role as political actors is understudied. Thus, what I propose in this thesis is that if we are to further our understanding of the military, in general and particularly at the local level, as political actors and policy implementers, we need to bring the scientific study of the political and the military as an object of study together as well as broaden the scope to include more than the elite levels.

In this chapter I review literature on previous research to address the stated aims of this thesis. Thus, I begin by reviewing literature to support the claim above that the military is too seldom studied from a political perspective. Then, I survey previous research regarding the Swedish participation in the Afghanistan campaign before I turn to the literature on discretion in street-level bureaucracies and its feasibility as a way to study military commanders as political agents. Throughout the chapter I draw conclusions regarding possible contributions that can be made by filling identified research gaps.

Understanding military actors as political actors

I contend that in order to further our understanding of military actors as political actors, for example military commanders and soldiers as policy implementers, we need to study them as such. To the extent that this has been done, previous research has largely been limited to the elite levels, as a survey of several bodies of literature reveals.

Puzzles of the relationship between the political and the military are regularly studied with a top-down perspective, and often with a focus on the elite levels and outside factors. Military effectiveness and ineffectiveness for instance is often explained by "the political nature of the state, strategic doctrine, military culture and history, the nature of the enemy, geography, training and equipment" and so forth (Egnell, 2009, 7). A less common, and indeed "overlooked factor" is civil–military relations. As an analytical construct, civil–military relations are, however, located at "an overarching level in the causal chain." On the one hand, this does indeed render it causally powerful in the sense that decisions at the higher levels of an organization may impact several or all levels below it (Ibid., 8). Thus, searching for causes at the top so to speak may be quite tempting and indeed warranted. On the other hand, it also marks off all the other points of decision-making on the way down the policy chain. In the case of military operations this is not surprising if we assume that A) the military is responsive and obedient in the civil–military relations interface, which is the highest military virtue according to Huntington (Burk, 2009), and that B) the military organization is built on the idea of top-down direction and disciplined obedience, as both Huntington and Weber have noted (Ibid.). With such assumptions the military bureaucracy is predictable, and we can expect little or only limited discretion

throughout the organization. However, this simplistic model of the military is hardly up to date, particularly in a time when growing professionalism grants even the military professionals some leeway in transforming orders into action, applying both competence and sound judgement (Ibid.). Thus, the military use of discretion does not necessarily imply disobedience.

Yet, even though the study of civil–military relations is a diversifying and interdisciplinary field it maintains a predominantly elite focus. One track that emerged after Samuel Huntington's influential *The Soldier and the State* in 1960 was indeed sociological in nature but focused more on the military's relations to society than the military as a policy-implementing organization (Feaver, 1999, 211-212). Also, any attention given to the role of discretion within the military treats discretion as a cause, or perhaps expression, of insubordination (Feaver, 1999, 233) rather than a cause of choice in implementation, which perhaps is an expression of political scientists' general lack of interest in the military or civil–military-relations scholars' focus on the democratic control over the military. And finally, civil–military relations focus more on the potential meddling of politicians in military affairs, i.e. top-down, rather than the military's meddling in political affairs, and, again, if they do approach it, they do so from a perspective of insubordination (Feaver, 1999, 234-235) rather than professional, intellectual creativity on behalf of military bureaucrats seeking to implement policy. Nielsen finds this focus on civilian control surprising given that the literature mainly regards the United States and other countries where military coups are unlikely and because research on civil-military relations' effect on military effectiveness is sparse (Nielsen, 2002, 62, 73).

Strategic studies also hold a predominantly elite focus. Strategy is ontologically closely related to civil–military relations in that it can be regarded as a bridge between "the aims and ends of policy and the ways and means of military action" (Cimbala, 2012, 6). Yet, even though such bridges between ends and ways arguably occur all along the implementation chain, strategy and strategic studies are usually associated with the so-called strategic level of warfare, i.e. the national or international levels, and tend to neglect "operational military issues" (Baylis and Wirtz, 2002, 5), i.e. what the military does, how it does it, and, by implication, why it does it. Thus, while strategic studies rest firmly on the notion that politics and military matters are intimately related, indeed to an extent where "politics permeates all levels of military action" (Moran, 2002, 18), the conduct of war, i.e. the implementation of strategies and policies, is left out to other fields of research such as "military science" (Betts, 1997, 9) that do not make the same ontological connection necessarily. The obvious risk here is that only superior–subordinate relations and decision-making at the elite level are regarded as political in nature, while superior–subordinate relations and decision-making at lower levels in the military bureaucracy are regarded as more technical than political. This is hazardous, considering the clearly political nature of

using armed force to shape social relations on the ground, which is arguably the core business of deployed military forces. An example that lies very close to the subject matter in this thesis is Auerswald and Saideman's study of why units from different NATO member states have behaved so differently in the Afghanistan campaign. They study national control over contributed forces in ISAF (as opposed to the control exercised in the multinational chain of command) and claim that the nature of the national political system determines a country's issuing of so called caveats (national limitations on the multinational commander's use of the force contribution), "red cards" that the national force commander can evoke to object orders from his multinational superior, national requirements on their force commanders to call home for mission approval, and national firing of force commanders that step outside of nationally defined boundaries (Auerswald and Saideman 2014, 5ff). According to them, the nature of the national decision-making process best explains national control and force conduct. Typically, parliamentary coalitions tend to plae more restrictions on their deployed forces and their force commanders while presidential systems and single party governments allow more leeway (Ibid., 13-14).

In other strands of political science research, the lower links in the military implementation chain are also largely left out. In political psychology for instance, where foreign-policy decision-making, frequently relating to the use of military force, is the main focus of analytical attention, the personality and identity of strategic, political decision-makers, i.e. presidents, prime ministers and occasional generals, are studied (Cottam, 2004, 17). And in the same field, bureaucratic politics actually descends from the strategic level to investigate how politically induced rivalry and conflict within government agencies affects policy implementation (e.g. Halperin et al., 2006). However, the discretion of decision-makers at the street level is not a unit of analysis.

Overall, the military is conspicuously absent in public-policy research. This may be seen as a shortcoming, given the particular role of the military in the modern state, its significant part of many states' budgets, and its unprecedented capacity to exercise organized and legally sanctioned violence against members of other states. As Hill puts it "it does seem inappropriate to try to generalize about the policy process without any mention of this very important aspect" (Hill, 2009, 119). Thus, introducing the military as a case in implementation studies, particularly at levels below the elites, would contribute to furthering our understanding of the military and its members as political actors as well as our understanding of the implementation of the state's policies in general.

The roots of contemporary public-policy implementation research can be found in Pressman and Wildavsky's classic *Implementation: How great expectations in Washington are dashed in Oakland* (1974), where they showed

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how political decisions are never implemented as intended due to the risks embedded in the large number of decisions that have to be made before the citizens receive the intended service. This was of course well known, but what the authors did was to reveal the political aspects of public administration that until then had been regarded as apolitical. This can be said to be the beginning of the traditional and sometimes normative *top-down approach* that postulates a governing decision-maker and a docile implementer. The antithesis of the top-down approach emerged with the *bottom-up challenge* in the early 1980s with Michael Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucrats, which we will return to shortly. The bottom-up approach contends that the actual content of policy is created in a decentralized manner when the government officials at the lowest levels make decisions in their interaction with the policy-takers. Finally, a third stream has emerged, probably as a reaction to the top-down versus bottom-up debate, in the so-called *network perspective*, where implementation goes beyond the vertical dimension and is described as processes of negotiation between various types of actors in society. Today, all three viewpoints can be considered valid and are regarded as three different methodological rather than theoretical perspectives that are available, depending on the particular research problem (Hill and Hupe, 2009, 44-56, Lundquist, 1987, Sabatier, 1986, 37, Sannerstedt, 2001, 18-25, Winter, 2003, 132-135).

Michael Lipsky's street-level bureaucracy theory was a pioneering part of the bottom-up approach to implementation studies, which during the 1970s and 1980s began to challenge the dominant top-down approach of the post-World War II era (Hill and Hupe, 2009, 51). Police officers, teachers and welfare workers are often named as typical street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1971, 391, Lipsky, 2010, 3). Also, police work is a common empirical case in street-level studies (Jermier and Berkes, 1979, Lewis and Ramakrishnan, 2007, Maher and Dixon, 1999, Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003), as is welfare and social work (Evans, 2010, Evans and Harris, 2004, Halliday et al., 2009, Hjörne et al., 2010, Sandfort, 2000) as well as teaching (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003). Many other cases of front line government work also fall into the street-level bureaucracy research domain, for example nursing (Bergen and While, 2005, Walker and Gilson, 2004), lawyering (Tremblay, 1992) and immigrant-processing (Winter, 2002).

Lipsky's theory can be described as comprising two parts. First, the theory identifies a number of actors that are central to the street-level bureaucracy. The main actor is the *street-level bureaucrat*, who in her work provides government service in the form of rewards or sanctions to another central actor, the policy *client*, or citizen. The third central actor is the street-level bureaucrat's *manager*. Second, a number of interrelated factors and concepts characterize the agency of these actors as well as the relationships between them. The central concepts of the theory are working conditions, discretion, and coping mechanisms. The *working conditions* of street-level bureaucrats

are characterized by vague and ambiguous top-down direction and inade-quate resources, on one hand, and unlimited bottom-up demands, on the other. If nothing else, these two opposing forces quite bluntly imply the tension that street-level bureaucrats experience between managers and clients. To be able to perform their job under such circumstances, street-level bureaucrats require a significant amount of *discretion*. In fact, the defining aspect of a street-level bureaucrat is discretion. Discretion is seen as a problem to the bureau, which tries to curtail it through managerialism, thereby creating tension between managers and street-level bureaucrats. Also, to handle the tension and dilemmas of the working conditions, street-level bureaucrats develop *coping mechanisms* to make reasonable sense of their jobs and their relations to managers and clients. These coping mechanisms affect their agency vis-à-vis the clients and thereby affect policy output. This street-level dynamic is the reason for policy implementation deficits in street-level bureaucracies (Evans and Harris, 2004, Hudson, 1989, Lipsky, 2010).

Instinctively, applying a similar research strategy to the study of the lower levels of the military seems fruitful and even warranted and to the best of my knowledge this has not been done before. The feasibility of such an approach is discussed further at the end of this chapter.

Beyond public policy research, other bodies of literature has studied the lower levels of the military but largely without clear political or policy implementation perspectives. After the cold war, a growing strain of research has afforded much-needed attention to the politics of war at the local level in general. As the threat of, and focus on, nuclear wars diminished after the fall of the Soviet Union, attention to the experience of irregular warfare and "new wars" grew (Honig and Käihkö, 2012, Kaldor, 2012, 1-2, Smith, 2005, x-xii, Van Creveld, 1991, 2, 6). Parallel to this shift in focus from old to new and large to small, the local became more salient in the debates about war. Even before the fall of the Soviet Union, war appeared to become increasingly more mediated than before, for policy-makers, academics and the general public. Not only did the new media networks have the ability to broadcast globally, they also had the ability to gain access to local events in real time. Hence, many of the military interventions of the 1990s became televised infotainment for audiences throughout the world. This gave cause to the so-called CNN effect, a notion of how single, relatively delimited events in small, remote places could have instant strategic effects by short-circuiting the traditional reporting channels from the field to the supreme commanders and thereby altering foreign policy (Bahador, 2007, Robinson, 2005). Beyond such dramatic news effects, the mediated war of the new millennium also provided a new insight into, and interest in, the ground level of warfare in general, particularly after the events of September 11, 2001. The military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq have been publicly depicted in an unprecedented manner through documentaries, soldier blogs, published

diaries of soldiers and commanders, and photos and videos uploaded to social networking sites by soldiers, terrorist groups and private citizens alike, significantly elevating public consciousness about events on the ground (e.g. Mortensen, 2015).

This development also brought to the fore the significance of the actors on the ground and their actions (e.g. Ruffa et al., 2013). In an influential article in 1999, U.S. Marine Corps General Charles Krulak created the *strategic corporal*. In his depiction of the new type of war and warfare (labeled The Three Block War), immense complexity at the local level placed new and enormous challenges and responsibilities on those individuals operating at the tip of the spear:

> The inescapable lessons of Somalia and of other recent operations, whether humanitarian assistance, peace-keeping, or traditional warfighting, is that their outcome may hinge on decisions made by small unit leaders, and by actions taken at the *lowest* level (Krulak, 1999, emphasis in original).

More recently, General David Petraeus, then commander of ISAF in Afghanistan, notes that

> Remember that it is those at tactical levels – the so-called "strategic sergeants" and "strategic captains" – who turn big ideas in counterinsurgency operations into reality on the ground (Honig and Käihkö, 2012).

Even though one could argue that decisions and actions at the lowest levels of war have always had effects on the outcomes at both tactical and strategic level in some sense, the emergence of Krulak's strategic corporal Petraeus' strategic sergeants and captains have undoubtedly illuminated the role of the local in warfare in the new millennium.

Furthermore, the last decades' transformation of force structures and deployments has created a new role for lower-level commanders. The allied force structure in Western Europe in the 1960s, the so-called NATO "layer cake" consisted of eight national army corps, each consisting of about 60,000 troops, positioned along NATOs eastern border in Germany (King, 2011, 40-41). In such a scenario, the role of colonels and majors were more embedded than autonomous in nature since they, as commanders, were marshalled in larger national force structures. In stark contrast, the NATO deployment in Afghanistan was structured on brigades and battalions (of thousands or hundreds of troops) in a multinational context, radically changing the role of lower-level commanders as they gained relatively greater autonomy vis-à-vis the overall force structure (Ibid., 43). Honig and Kaihkö even argue that the ability to make strategy has slipped down from politicians and generals to the field commanders, giving rise to the "Strategic Colonel" (Honig and Käihkö, 2012).

As state-building efforts intensified in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, international actors grew aware of the importance of local actors and the meaning of "local ownership" as a condition for stability. However, their respective understandings of the concepts tended to diverge, resulting in "inconsistent international strategies for building peace" (Jarstad and Olsson, 2011). And even though academic attention to local actors of war has been on the rise during the Iraq and Afghanistan era, those actors still tend to be black boxed[4] and studied with an outside-in rather than inside-out perspective. This has been particularly evident in the surging counterinsurgency literature. Counterinsurgency, or COIN as it has come to be called in its contemporary guise, is, simply put, a strategy for winning the unanticipated insurrections that have emerged in the wake of international intervention in the two countries. The new and old COIN idea postulates that a conflict of insurrection can be won by the counterinsurgents (i.e. the interveners and the host government) by protecting the local population and winning their support, thereby undermining the so-called center of gravity of the insurgents, an argument that incidentally mimics the ideas of traditional insurgency thinkers like Mao Tse-Tung (Kilcullen, 2010, Tse-tung, 2007, United States. Dept. of the Army et al., 2007).

The COIN idea was so successfully advocated by a small group of academic officers that it effectively turned the U.S. army's view on contemporary warfare on its head for a time (e.g. Dixon, 2012, Kaplan, 2013, Ricks, 2009). But even though it quickly attracted severe and substantive criticism, mainly regarding its logical foundations (e.g. Bennett, 2007, Dixon, 2009, Ucko and Egnell, 2013), its simplistic models of the parties of a conflict (Fitzsimmons, 2008, Fitzsimmons, 2013) and its inability to explain its own failure (King, 2010) and now appears to have been sent off into the military-academic corner, it inevitably turned an almost unprecedented amount of attention to the local dynamics between the population, the insurgents, and the counterinsurgents and also managed to plant the idea that the shaping of the relationships between those parties was the key to winning the wars.

What the COIN advocates failed to do though was to flip the prevailing outside-in perspective on its head. Overall, research on the behavior of belligerents most often applies an outside-in rather than an inside-out perspective. Arguably, this is because much social-science practice stipulates that "to explain an event or state of affairs is to find another which caused it" (Hollis and Smith, 1991, 2-3). This is a valid position, but in order to *understand* we need to assume the actors' view. There is of course a risk associat-

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[4] A computer system analysis term that denotes treating a unit of analysis, e.g. a computer, as a closed box and disregarding its content and inner workings and instead concentrating on its system setting. The opposite white box approach denotes "opening the box" and looking inside it. The concepts are similar to Hollis and Smith's outside-in and inside-out perspectives in social science (Hollis, M. and S. Smith (1991). *Explaining and understanding international relations*. Oxford, Clarendon.).

ed with taking actors' own explanations of their actions too seriously, given the human inclination to rationalize and euphemize. However, it is a relevant starting point for inquiry, or at least a relevant complement to other approaches, not least because it may qualify the conclusions we make about their decision and actions based on the analysis of exogenous factors:

> We must know how the actors defined the issues and the alternatives, what they believed about the situation and each other, what they aimed to achieve, and how. Only then can we ask more pointed questions about their clarity of vision, their underlying reasons and the true meaning of episodes (Ibid., 82).

A growing literature on rebels and insurgents has come a relatively long way in furthering our understanding of the inner workings of one of the belligerents. Writers like Ahmed Rashid (2010) and Antonio Giustozzi (2007) for example have provided far more complex and far thicker descriptions of the Afghan insurgents than the counterinsurgency writers have. The wider civil-war literature also provides more sophisticated research on rebels, insurgents and local populations. However, civil-war grassroots research is still rare and often relies on "official or elite sources" (Metelits, 2010, 8), which is perhaps not unexpected given the potential dangers of conducting such research. Nevertheless, in studying insurgent behavior in Colombia, Kenya, Sudan, Turkey and Iraq, Metelits interviewed insurgent leaders and their cadres as well as civilians and politicians in the field. Her findings, that insurgents' treatment of local populations is related to the insurgents' *perceptions* of rivalry (Ibid., 11), is thus an important and substantiated complement to previous theories of rebel and insurgent behavior that are based on models of the economic man. A similar study of the Colombian FARC guerilla suggests that the sense of belonging is a far stronger motive for enrollment than ideology and greed, a finding that severely challenges such research approaches that "black-boxes the behavior of rebel groups" (Jonsson, 2014, 232, 5). Söderström (2011) has also opened up the rebel box by interviewing Liberian ex-combatants in reintegration programs in order to understand their role as political actors after the conflict. And Wood (2003) has plunged into the fuzzy relationship between insurgents and the local population in order to understand what motivates local support and collective action. In an almost anthropological manner, Wood investigates the variance in rural civilian support to the insurgents in El Salvador (developing the concept of support by introducing tiered categories ranging from none to joining the insurgents), identifying factors far beyond utility-maximizing (which was nonetheless one factor) for example the well-being of others (e.g. sympathy and empathy), and the evolving political culture of the insurgents. Like Metelits and Söderström, Wood investigates these actors from the inside, by "comparing life-histories, values, and beliefs" of participating and nonparticipating civilians, claiming that

the puzzle of collective action depends on emotional processes, moral perception, and shifting political culture as well as on the emergence of insurgent social network and widening political opportunity (Ibid., 20).

When it comes to the study of the third main actor at the local level, the foreign intervener, there is a small but growing strand of research that does stress various aspects of the employed forces in the study of peace operations. However, many of them still place their analytical focus on macro-level and structural factors, for example *force structure*, i.e. "the specific mixture of materiel and personnel that comprises a military's war-making capabilities" as a main determinant of the outcome of contemporary conflicts (Lyall and Wilson, 2009, 102). But even if the macro perspective is strong, there are many promising attempts to take an inside look at the interveners in conflicts. In a manner bearing similarity to Wood's, Autesserre (2010) studies peacekeepers, in the broader sense of the term, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Like others who advocate the inside-out perspective, Autesserre also expresses criticism of the peacekeeping literature for delimiting explanations for peacekeeping failure to factors at the macro level. Contextual constraints, such as high levels of violence or a high presence of so-called spoilers, which impair peacekeepers actions, as well as their own conflicting interests, are the dominant explanations for peacekeeping failure in existing studies, she argues. And although they help account for the effectiveness of international involvement they

> provide us with little theoretical understanding of whether, how, or why the existing constraints and interests lead international actors to prioritize certain peacebuilding strategies, such as the organization of elections, over others, such as local conflict resolution (Ibid., 16).

Autesserre abandons the macro level and immerses herself in the culture of the complex web of peacekeeping organizations. This culture, she argues, "shapes the international understanding of the causes of violence and of the interveners' role, thus allowing for certain actions while precluding others" (Ibid., 23). Fortna also regrets that the peacekeeping literature fails to provide an understanding of how peacekeeping "works on the ground":

> Identifying explicit causal links between the presence or absence of peacekeepers and the stability of peace has not been the main goal of existing studies (Fortna, 2008, 16, 79).

Peacekeeping research, according to Fortna, is "surprisingly underdeveloped theoretically," and she identifies aspects of causality that have been more or less neglected in previous research. Even though the literature suggests a number of causal mechanisms between peacekeeping behavior and peacekeeping effectiveness, it fails to demonstrate how they operate causally. And

in order to elevate our understanding of peacekeeping effectiveness, we need to separate the question of what peacekeepers do from the question of how their behavior affects the behavior of the peacekept (Ibid., 3-4, 80). In my reading, Fortna suggests further inside-out research on the both peacekeepers and the peacekept. Without entering the realm of these actors we cannot understand why peacekeepers do what they do and why the peacekept react as they do. And without this insight, the "policy tool" that is peacekeeping will remain "poorly understood" (Ibid., 16).

Yet another strand of research has directed attention to a concept specifically associated with the increased interest in the local – local ownership and legitimacy. Supported by original data from in-depth interviews with Afghan citizens and U.S. soldiers, Karlborg argues that while the belief that the local legitimacy of the local population has grown strong in scholarly and academic debate, the knowledge of how local actors understand this concept remains limited, both among those groups of actors that strive to earn legitimacy and among those groups that are supposed to confer it (Karlborg, 2013, Karlborg, 2015a, Karlborg, 2015b).

What these scholars either imply or explicitly claim is that black-boxing actors of war prevents us from understanding the inherent human and social mechanisms that explain *how* contextual or other exogenous factors affect behavior (cf. Elster 1998 and Gerring 2004, 348). Macro-level factors do not explain their own causality by themselves. We need to peer into the groups of human beings, and ultimately at the single human mind, in order to understand how poverty or insecurity or identity or beliefs shape human behavior. And it seems reasonable that this approach would apply to local populations, insurgents, terrorists, civilian peacekeepers and professional militaries alike.

Let me turn then to four rather different examples that, in the same spirit as many of the examples just mentioned, train the searchlight on the third ground-level actor – the intervening military force. The first looks at intervening peacekeepers' behavior from the rather unusual perspective of the intervened. Pouligny points out one of the major shortcomings of the counterinsurgency conjecture, namely the way in which peace operations "have been experienced by the different elements of the societies concerned." Pouligny conveys startling accounts of civilians' interpretations of standard military practices that severely problematize some military preconceptions, and rationalizations I would say, about the effects of their operations. One of the most striking examples is an incident at a church in a rural village in Haiti in 1995. The military UN patrol is out to "show the flag" (a common task among peacekeepers) and take up post with their five vehicles, with the machine guns manned, near the church which they see as the center of the village. Four soldiers enter a house adjacent to the church in search for a minister to talk to, and the commander summons a group of villagers for the same purpose. However, the language barrier renders it impossible. The

patrol enters their vehicles and leaves. The villagers give a very different account of the incident. The foreigners arrived in vehicles at high speed and heavily armed. There was great fear since the Haitian soldiers usually arrived in the same manner. They were afraid that the foreigners were there to capture the minister (Pouligny, 2006, 42).

She also describes the vagueness of the mandates of the peacekeepers as well as their absence of any uniform methodology and criteria for action, which in theory leaves room for as many interpretations as there are members of the mission (Ibid., 1, 119). However, I believe that Pouligny overlooks some aspects of formal organizations, particularly the military, when she suggests that they "improvise" in the absence of a clear mandate. Improvisation implies almost random behavior, but it could instead be suggested that a military unit with no clear mandate resorts to standardized behavior rather than to improvisation under such circumstances.

The second example also looks at peacekeeper behavior but from another perspective. Larsdotter attempts to explain variance in peacekeeping outcome by variance in peacekeeper behavior. She distinguishes between "minimum force" (often associated with British forces) and "show of force" (often associated with U.S. forces). The latter is often referred to by officers and soldiers as "robust" and Larsdotter categorizes cases by measuring factors such as amount of and type of heavy equipment, numerical strength, and forceful conduct and so on. She then tests whether minimum force induces what the peacekeeping literature refers to as consent at the tactical level (by the local population) and what the counterinsurgency literature refers to as "hearts and minds" or simply "support." Her cases are the German and the (at the time) British PRTs in northern Afghanistan. Even though the theoretical definition of the dependent variable and its operationalization (number of attacks) can be questioned, the study identifies the conduct of the British PRT in Mazar-e- Sharif as minimum force and the conduct of the German PRT in Kunduz as show of force, finding that German forces operate in larger numbers in the field, more often using armored vehicles and heavy weaponry, interacting less with the local population than the British did (Larsdotter, 2008, 352-356, 363). The claim that certain nations' military forces behave in a particular way leaves an important issue unresolved. Why do they behave differently?

As has been mentioned, macro-level factors dominate the literature, but as some of the examples here show, other ways of investigating military behavior are emerging, involving, for example, the introduction of the concept of culture. In the counterinsurgency literature, a particular British culture rooted in the experiences from Malaya and Belfast is often brought forth, which could explain why British and German forces behave differently under the same international mandate. However, after the British redirected their efforts in Afghanistan from the relatively calm north to the more problematic south, each successive British commander chose a new and different tactical

approach than his predecessor did, altering the force's behavior with each six-month rotation (Farrell, 2010), suggesting that a national military culture is too coarse of an explanatory factor and that there may be many military cultures within a nation's military. This brings us to the third example.

Drawing from, and extending on, Biddle (2006), and criticizing the dominant structural approaches of the field, Ruffa argues that the outcome of military operations, e.g. the success and failure of peacekeeping operations, hinges on *force employment*, i.e. what the military force does or "all practical activities conducted at the tactical level" (Ruffa, 2011, 11, 19), which coincides with Larsdotter's term military behavior. Ruffa further argues that force employment in turn hinges on the culture of the military units in question, i.e. not on a national military culture but "on the military culture of a particular unit in the field" (Ibid., 12-13. Cf. Ingesson, 2016). She thereby addresses the issue that I raised above and opens up for variance between behaviors of military forces from the same nation. However, this approach leaves yet another issue unresolved. If a nation assembles a deployed force from different units, as, for example, Sweden has done throughout the campaign to a varying degree, a composite culture ought to emerge rendering predictions about behavior based on unit culture somewhat problematic as well.

Also, the cultural approach implies a logic of appropriateness. In fact, one could argue that culture is also a form of structural explanation that oversees the agency of the members of the military force in question. It implies that a commander and his staff from a particular type of unit cannot oversee their cultural heritage and apply a logic of consequence that aims at accomplishing the inherent tasks of the mandate instead of following the rules of behavior that their culture guide them into. In other words, despite the fact that the cultural approach attempts to open up the box of the military forces more than structural approaches do, it still does not seem to acknowledge the agency of the soldiers and officers that inhabit these organizations.

Ruffa (2013) has attempted to address this very issue by investigating how forces from four different nations constructed their operational environments with regards to how they perceived the threat level, how they constructed the enemy, how they adapted the organization to new missions, and how they understood reference documents, e.g. operations orders. Even though the results are aggregate and collective, the data still display differences at the individual level through the accounts from single respondents. These accounts, however, are more empirical illustrations than structured analyses of certain individuals, e.g. soldiers or different types of commanders.

Finally, in a study on how deployed military forces adapt their tactics to operational challenges, Russell also applies an inside-out perspective aimed at the local level. Using both interviews with force commanders as well as secondary data for triangulation, Russell describes how, in the absence of

doctrinal directives from the higher levels of the military establishment, deployed task forces, largely based on the respective force commanders' own experiences, introduced and applied counterinsurgency tactics to tackle the rising insurrection in the Anbar Province in Iraq after the 2003 invasion:

> The tactical approach to COIN taken by 3-6[5] in western Iraq was informed by Alford's[6] experiences in fighting irregular war and by the battalion's previous experiences conducting counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan from April through December of 2004" (Russell, 2011, 65).

And his successor, Lieutenant Colonel Nick Marano of 1st Battalion, 7th Marine regiment (1-7) picked up the baton and expanded the COIN campaign that the 3-6 had initiated based on his previous experiences from Fallujah (Ibid., 67-68). Thus, an operational continuity emerged from force commanders' common tactical experiences rather than top-down policy direction, and indeed "despite the absence of governing joint military COIN doctrine" (Ibid., 191). However, Russell's theoretical approach is "military innovation, organizational theory and organizational learning" (Ibid., 204) rather than policy implementation which means that his analysis does not apply policy implementation concepts. Yet, Russell's approach clearly demonstrates the autonomy of deployed units as well as force commanders' roles in using that autonomy to shape the force's operations.

I commend these efforts as they search the local for explanations of phenomena at the local level of war and because they attempt to approach the local at all. However, I do believe that we can take one step further, partly by asking the actors directly about their behavior (acknowledging that Russell does just that), their beliefs and how they negotiate all the influences identified in these studies, and partly by applying established public policy concepts in the analysis in order to increase our understanding of them as political actors and policy implementers. Thus, my proposition is to approach deployed military units from a public policy perspective. I will expand on this notion in the last part of this chapter.

Previous research on Sweden's participation in the Afghanistan campaign

Political, public and scholarly interest in the local dynamics of conflict and war appear to have surged since the turn of the millennium. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, scientific research, journalistic reports, documentaries, tweets, blogs posts,

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[5] 3rd Marine Battalion, 6th Marine regiment
[6] 3-6's force commander Lieutenant Colonel Dale Alford

YouTube videos, and popular cultural movies and TV shows have portrayed the situation of people engaged on the ground, often of deployed, Western soldiers and officers. Beyond the rather distanced type of research accounted for above, TV documentaries such as Sebastian Junger's *Restrepo* (Hetherington and Junger, 2010) and Janus Pederssen's *Armadillo* (Pedersen, 2010) and bestselling books such as Thomas Rathsack's *Jæger* (Rathsack and Drejer, 2009) and Chris Kyle's *American Sniper* (Kyle et al., 2012) have more widely spread very explicit and often unflattering accounts of the inner workings of the deployed Western forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Swedish force has also been the subject of a series of TV documentaries[7] that have contributed to reveal the almost diametrically different perceptions of reality that have existed.

However, scientific research on Sweden's participation in the Afghanistan campaign, particularly regarding its political aspects, is rather scarce. One ambitious contribution is Agrell's book on Sweden's participation in the Afghanistan campaign between 2001 and 2014 (Agrell, 2013). It describes the Afghanistan campaign and Sweden's participation in it from three different perspectives, the global/regional, the Swedish national (political and military), and that of the deployed Swedish force. To the extent that Agrell attempts to explain Swedish military behavior in Afghanistan, he too draws conclusions with an outside-in approach. He supports his conjectures about force conduct based on reasoning rather than empirical investigation and also fails to critically scrutinize the force commanders' after-action reports on which he bases much of his arguments (Johnsson, 2013). With regards to how force commanders have reasoned about how to turn policy and strategy into action on the ground, the study raises more new questions than it answers. Another significant and recent contribution is a multidiscipline anthology edited by Arita Holmberg and Jan Hallenberg. Although it has a system level focus with Sweden as an international actor and an ambition to contribute theoretically to the field of security policy change, it covers diverse topics such as Swedish strategy, the legal aspects of use of force, tactical adaptation, military technology, leadership and gender issues (Holmberg and Hallenberg 2017). And at the individual level of analysis, Ralph Sundberg has studied how participation in the Afghanistan campaign has affected the political psychology of Swedish soldiers over two rotations (Sundberg 2015).

Other limited studies have addressed particular aspects of the Swedish force. One example is a study of intelligence and CIMIC[8] information exchange at the Swedish force which builds on interviews with six staff members at the PRT between 2009 and 2011 that elicit respondents' opinions

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[7] For example *Fredstyrkan* (The Peace Force) from 2008 which followed FS13 in 2007, and *Krig för fred* (War for Peace) from 2011 which followed FS19 in 2010.
[8] Civil Military Cooperation.

about the subject matter (Norén, 2011). CIMIC is also the subject of a report from 2004 which describes Swedish CIMIC activities in ISAF during the years 2002-2004, including the Swedish force (based on 11 interviews) which at that time was relatively small (Asplund and Wahlberg, 2004). Another study describes information exchange between civilian and military actors in the field and national ministries based on 17 interviews, six of which constitute "civilian advisors and military commanders in Afghanistan" during 2007 (Fors and Larsson, 2007). Also, a study of one of Sweden's rapid reaction units that served together with the force in Afghanistan (and in Kosovo) used surveys to investigate soldiers' and officers' attitudes towards and expectations regarding their training, readiness and deployments (Jonsson et al., 2007). Regrettably, these studies on the Swedish force in Afghanistan either lack political perspectives or lack theoretical grounding in political science literature.

Actually, the perhaps nearest miss is a journalistic report by Johanne Hildebrandt. In her book *Warrior*[9] she assumes a true street-level perspective by following Swedish soldiers and officers in the field during the troubled year of 2010. The text effectively contrasts the abstract international and national political debate about the Afghanistan campaign with the fierce reality on the ground (Hildebrandt, 2011) but does not, quite naturally, problematize this observation theoretically.

At the very end of this project, a special investigation on Sweden's engagement in Afghanistan released its report. The mission of the investigation was to "describe, analyze and evaluate the collective Swedish engagement based on the stated considerations and goals" with a special focus on activities in Northern Afghanistan between 2006 and 2014 with the purpose of "learning lessons for future international missions" (Utrikesdepartementet 2015). Besides providing a background to the conflict in Afghanistan and the international community's engagement since 2001 it investigated Sweden's political goals for its participation, the political coordination of the diplomatic, developmental, and military means to achieve those goals, and the output. Regarding the latter, the special investigator found that neither the Swedish military contribution, nor that of ISAF as a whole, managed to assist the Afghan authorities in upholding security and stability in the country, either by its own operations or by building the capacity of the Afghan security forces. It did, however, contribute to establish Sweden's credibility and capability as a participant in multinational military operations (Regeringskansliet 2017, 26-27). Given the very broad scope of the investigation and its focus on achievement of political goals it is not surprising that it has not probed the military engagement to the extent that I call for here. It does provide a comprehensive historical account of the military participation as well as a description of the Swedish force's efforts to create security and support

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[9] *Krigare* in Swedish

the Afghan security forces and their effects, similar to that of Agrell, but the report offers little that helps us understand how force commanders have deliberated over their mission and how to solve it. The main finding regarding the military engagement is that

> The Swedish military units in Afghanistan appear to have conducted themselves in a correct manner and to have solved their mission to the best of their ability as a part of ISAF. The Swedish support has been an appreciated contribution to the international military engagement. However, the development of the security situation in the PRT-provinces under Swedish leadership is has been discouraging (Regeringskansliet 2017, 98)

Also, the investigation relied mainly on external, secondary sources. Therefore, this thesis might contribute to fill a gap that the special investigation does not. I will return to the special investigation in the final chapter when I discuss the findings in a broader context.

Thus, there is still a considerable empirical gap to be filled in the case of Sweden's participation in the Afghanistan campaign, not only from a perspective of accumulated, historical knowledge but also from a perspective of scientific inquiry that can add to the literatures on policy implementation and the war in Afghanistan.

Studying implementation at the street level

In this thesis I investigate the discretion of commanders in a deployed military force in order to understand them as policy implementers, and to the best of my knowledge this has not been done before. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I draw from the body of literature on so called street-level bureaucracies, which, when being considered as a viable approach, displays two conceptual shortcomings that are not specifically related to the military as a new case of street-level bureaucracy but that I regard as general in nature. One pertains to the definitions and operationalizations of the core concept of discretion while the other pertains to the theoretical role of managers in the street-level bureaucracy.

Unlike other bureaucrats, who do not interact with clients face to face in their daily work, street-level workers exercise considerable discretion in their relation with the clients. Discretion in this context is understood as the extent of freedom a worker can exercise in a specific situation and context. Typical examples are policemen and teachers who use discretion in everyday decisions that directly affect the lives of citizens. For example, they categorize clients as criminals, law-abiding citizens, and good or bad students,

which determines the government service that these citizens receive (Evans, 2010, 2, Lipsky, 2010, 13). Naturally, these decisions cannot be made by the legislature but have to be made in the meeting with the citizens. The reasons for this are that street-level bureaucrats work in "situations too complicated to reduce to programmatic formats" and that the situations have human dimensions that "call for sensitive observation and judgment" on the part of the street-level workers (Lipsky, 2010, 15). The consequence of this is that government organizations *need* a certain degree of discretion at the street-level to get things done (Hudson, 1989, 45). However, this view is not unanimous. In the social work literature for example, discretion is seen as a problem. Critics of social worker discretion questioned the view of street-level workers as committed and altruistic and instead feared their bringing self-interest to work and having professional collusion with certain dominant forces in society. The debate on social work over the last twenty years has focused on the decline of discretion and the rise of managers and managerialism (Evans, 2010, 2-3).

At a more general level, this view can be regarded as a part of a "prevailing narrative" of the democratic state that expects equal treatment for all citizens "under law and predictable procedures." Deviations from such practices are called "discretionary decision-making" (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003). Managerialism is claimed to curtail discretion by increased control over workers (Evans and Harris, 2004, 873). However, as a response to managerialism, a new stream of literature has developed which, inspired by Lipsky's work, claims that social work discretion continues to be significant, and questions the impact of managerialism on workers' discretion (Evans, 2010, 3). This ongoing debate keeps Lipsky's theory alive more than thirty years after its introduction.

Similar to Lipsky's control is Herbert Simon's concept of *coordination*, which refers to managers' direction of multiple subordinates to achieve division of labor, which is a foundation of organization. Simon calls this *vertical specialization*, i.e. the division of decision-making tasks between supervisory and operative personnel, or managers and workers in Lipsky's terms. Hence, supervisors' control over operatives does not aim to limit their discretion but to divide labor between themselves and the subordinates (Simon, 1997, 8).

Even though discretion is the defining characteristic of street-level bureaucrats according to Lipsky, far from all empirical studies of such bureaucrats investigate discretion. Instead, other concepts of Lipsky's theory are often addressed, e.g. working conditions and the resulting tradeoffs and coping mechanisms of street-level bureaucrats. For example, Halliday et. al. studied inter-professional work and relations by investigated how Scottish social workers (one professional group) write so called social inquiry reports for judges (another professional group) who pass sentences, and how they shape these reports to gain esteem vis-à-vis the other professional group

(Halliday et al., 2009, 406-407). And other studies do not use central street-level bureaucracy concepts at all. Walker and Gilson for example studied the beliefs and perceptions that nurses - labeled street-level bureaucrats – held about the policies they implement (Walker and Gilson, 2004) while Kaler and Watkins simply used the term street-level bureaucrat to point out a class of actors (e.g. family planners in rural Kenya) to study aspects that are unrelated to the street-level bureaucracy theory per se, e.g. how they "use their job as a means to achieve their own personal goals" (Kaler and Cotts Watkins, 2001).

And the studies that actually investigate discretion of street-level bureaucrats seldom explain how. First, as I elaborate on in the next chapter, theoretical definitions are many and often rather non-specific. As Evans notes "Discretion is a difficult idea to pin down" (Evans 2010, 2) and finding god examples in the literature is indeed tough. This would be less of an issue if operational definitions were more precise, but such precise operational definitions are also hard to find in the literature. Most often, operational definitions are simply omitted. In one example, the researchers observed and interviewed municipal eldercare managers as they treated and responded to enquires and applications from elderly people. In the absence of an operational analytical framework their approach was "empirically oriented" and thus the "analysis evolved" from open to more focused as the collected data was analyzed and the researchers "looked for themes that could give the concepts of discretion and power their import in the care managers' decision process" (Dunér and Nordström, 2006, 432), which suggests a form of inductive analysis of discretion. Also, a certain class of studies investigates how street-level bureaucrats deal with and use their discretion and thus how discretion affects policy implementation (Ibid., 68, 74, Loyens and Maesschalck, 2010) With such an approach, acts of discretion and not discretion itself, needs to be operationalized.

I will return to this issue in the next chapter, but suffice it to say here that there appears to be room for a contribution, both regarding theoretical and operational definitions of the concept of discretion.

Lipsky generally uses the terms *street-level bureaucrats* and *managers* to vertically differentiate two categories of actors (Lipsky, 2010, 18ff). A problem with this typology is that if street-level bureaucrats are the workers who interact with the clients, then manager can refer to any bureaucrat at any level in the hierarchy above the worker. However, many bureaucracies have many different types of managers at various levels in the bureaucratic hierarchy, which makes it potentially problematic to bundle them into one category. If we take the police as an example, street-level bureaucrats are, in Lipsky's view, the police officers that ride patrol cars, walk the beat and interact with citizens and intervene in their lives. In Lipsky's typology, the managers are every manager in the police bureaucracy above the patrolling

officer. Reasonably, these cannot unproblematically be placed in the same category, at least not if we want to ascribe attributes to them in the way Lipsky does. For instance, from a perspective of street-level bureaucracy, managers in the sense of police commanders who work close to the patrolling officers in the precincts and at the stations have little in common with police commanders and other managers who work at higher levels in their respective law enforcement organization. Similarly in a nonfederal case like Sweden, managers could, up to recently when the police was nationalized, be found at one of the twenty-one county Police Authorities as well as the central National Police Board (The Swedish Police, 2011). Similar structures can be found in most other fields of street-level bureaucracy research, such as schools versus school administrations, hospitals versus healthcare administrations, and social welfare offices versus welfare administrations. And they are also typical of western military organizations deployed abroad, particularly in Afghanistan due to the PRT structure, but also elsewhere. A nationally deployed military contingent, for example a warship, a combat brigade team or a PRT, contains both workers and managers beyond the various types of managers that can be found in their respective national military bureaucracies as well as in the multinational staffs that direct them. In order to understand the role of managers in street-level bureaucracies, as opposed to managers in the above-street-level administration, we need to separate these layers of managers. This issue will be addressed in the next chapter.

Untangling the agents within the street-level bureaucracy addresses several critical responses to Lipsky's conception of managers. For Lipsky, managers play a central role in street-level bureaucracy, not least because of their complicated relationship with the street-level workers. The main issue is that managers have interests that pertain to the organization's productivity, effectiveness, and "achieving results consistent with agency objectives," while street-level workers have more individual interests such as improving their own working conditions (Lipsky, 2010, 18-19). However, for Lipsky, managers, both as an object of observation as well as an object of analysis, are treated as a black box, a constant with certain attributes but without an inner logic of its own. In Evans' words, Lipsky "brackets off managers from critical analysis, treating them simply as a homogenous group." The consequence of this stance is that he accredits the explanation of the gap between what policy says and how policy is enacted to street-level workers, effectively leaving the role of managers, apart from their relationship with street-level workers, out of the equation (Evans, 2011). Simon, who is not critiquing Lipsky but nevertheless discusses the same theoretical issue, also points out that it is the front-line workers who actually carry out an organization's objectives. However, he also acknowledges that "the persons above this lowest or operative level in the administrative hierarchy are not mere surplus baggage and that they too must have an essential role to play in the accomplishment of the agency's objectives." Interestingly, and with particular sig-

nificance to this study, he exemplifies this point by saying that "even though, as far as physical cause and effect are concerned, it is the machine gunner and not the major who fights battles, the major is likely to have a greater influence upon the outcome of a battle than any single machine gunner" (Simon, 1997, 2). This observation is a compelling argument for not only looking at the military in terms of street-level bureaucracy but also for including managers as a white box in the analysis. Riccucci would also like to see more analytical attention paid to managers. Her conceptual framework, which builds on Lipsky, considers the role and attributes of managers to a much larger extent, and also more thoroughly analyzes their influence on street-level workers (Riccucci, 2005, 5-9). Another contribution of Riccucci, which addresses a shortcoming of Lipsky's account, is that she introduces concepts such as work norms, customs, culture and beliefs of street-level workers. Quite surprisingly, however, she does not do the same for their managers, despite her focus shift towards them. She, like Lipsky, assumes that front-line managers are the loyal agents of their agencies who, in contrast to their subordinate street-level workers, do not have individual interests or biases. Instead of asking what the beliefs and norms of managers are, she asks how managers can affect the beliefs and norms of street-level workers. This is unfortunate, at least if we wish to include actors other than street-level workers in the analysis of policy output. As Halperin has said about bureaucracies, actors at every level of the policy chain "see the world in very different ways. Each wants the government to do different things, and each struggles to secure the decisions and actions that he or she thinks best" (Halperin et al., 2006, 4).

Hence, there are two problems with the concept of discretion in the implementation literature that deserve attention. The first problem is that it is so coarsely defined that it is not analytically operational without considerable development. This cannot be blamed on Lipsky alone since most of those who have applied his theory in analysis have either failed to elucidate and operationalize the concept, or failed to account for it. Discretion appears to be such a conventional concept that it does not require theoretical or operational definition. Lipsky himself contends that discretion is something that street-level bureaucrats enjoy due to the nature of their work. It is simply a trait that lacks further ontological elaboration. Furthermore, he fails to discuss, or avoids discussing, whether other street-level actors (i.e. managers) have discretion. Hence, the origin, character and effect of the discretion of different categories of street-level actors remain concealed. Regarding managers, Lipsky mentions in passing that managers may adapt and change policy but emphasizes "their role as obedient and committed implementers of policy." Furthermore, if managers tweak policies, they do it in favor of the preferred policy direction and not for individual reasons, as the street-level bureaucrats do (Evans, 2010, 25). This means that two categories of street-

level actors have very different incentives and drivers, and that while work-ers are personal-gain maximizers managers are policy maximizers. I believe that to be a debatable claim. And furthermore, discretion in the street-level bureaucracy occurs "in a context of conflict between front line workers and managers: between a desire for top-down control and local opposition to it" (Evans, 2011, 370).

The second problem is that discretion as a phenomenon is almost exclu-sively allocated to the lowest echelon of the street-level bureaucracy, e.g. teachers, social workers and police patrolmen. But if we accept Simon's claim that (several layers of) managers' decision-making influence workers' decision-making and action, we also acknowledge that the discretion of managers is at least as significant to policy implementation as workers' dis-cretion is. The scholarly fascination with the bureaucrats at the very end of the government's reach is understandable, but in order to understand the mechanisms of policy implementation at that level of bureaucracy I believe that it will be fruitful to broaden the horizon a tad.

In light of the identified shortcomings of the literature on the political as-pects of deployed military units, I find parts of the theories on street-level bureaucracies promising as a complement. Therefore, I will address the is-sues raised here regarding discretion and categories of street-level actors in the next chapter.

Summary

To summarize, the study of local actors in war, particularly the military, has not received any close attention until fairly recently. The role of foreign (and domestic) military interveners in civil war-like conflicts has mainly been seen from an outside-in perspective that claims to explain their behavior but that defeats the prospects of understanding them and their members as politi-cal agents. And research that has placed the analytical focus inside such or-ganizations has studied them and their members as social agents rather than political ones. Recent research has begun to address this shortcoming by introducing concepts such as organizational culture into the analysis. How-ever, cultural approaches risk becoming deterministic, even structural, which deprives military personnel of their agency. Thus, there is still a need for complementary ways to analytically approach these agents in order to under-stand *how* culture and other structural conditions affect behavior. Further-more, research on military actors seldom incorporates *both* a holistic outside-in *and* an individualistic inside-out perspective at the same time. This sug-gests an approach that combines the structural situation of military com-manders *and* their understanding of it. I argue that if we attempt to map the structural milieus of commanders, be it organizational structures, collective norms, or political steering, and investigate how they as individuals perceive

and respond to that milieu as they make political decisions, we have a better chance of understanding how they make decisions and what discretion they have in making them. Thus, there is a contribution to be made here to the study of military organizations as political entities, but there also appears to be a need to look more closely at the promising concepts and methods. And finally, by studying the Swedish military force in Afghanistan, substantial empirical contributions can be made.

Chapter 3 – Theory

Introduction

This is an empirical and descriptive study rather than a theoretical and explanatory one. Hence, the main theoretical requirement is to provide suitable, theoretically grounded concepts for capturing and describing the matter at hand. This chapter thus aims at identifying and discussing relevant concepts for the analysis of the discretion of force commanders so that an analysis scheme can be constructed.

In the following I discuss three major conceptual topics that are relevant for the research problem and the upcoming analysis. The first pertains to the organizational position of force commanders as managers rather than street-level workers in Lipsky's conceptualization. The distinction between workers and managers in the street-level bureaucracy literature is often sketchy, and an attempt to elucidate this is warranted, if only to be able to positon this type of research in the policy-implementation literature. The second topic is the most central one here: discretion. I will begin that discussion by briefly pointing out the distinction between discretion and autonomy, two terms that appear to sometimes be used interchangeably in the literature on professionalism as well as civil–military relations. Then I will engage in an ontological discussion on the concept and also discuss its intimate relationship with the concept of decision-making. And the third topic is the matter of drawing analytical concepts from the literature for the investigation of the discretion managers/force commanders and I will conclude the chapter by arranging those concepts in an analysis schema to be used in the upcoming empirical analysis.

Managers

Previously I highlighted the problems associated with treating agents of the street-level bureaucracy as one category. Here, I attempt to address this issue by untangling them, with the purpose of chiseling out my unit of analysis, the manager.

Lipsky defines *street-level bureaucrats* as those

> public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work

and he, consequently, defines *street-level bureaucracies* as those

> public service agencies that employ a substantial number of street-level bureaucrats in proportion to their work force (Lipsky, 2010, 3)

Without providing operative measures for the variables "substantial discretion" and "substantial number" it becomes somewhat difficult to determine which vocations and professions qualify as street-level bureaucrats and which agencies are street-level bureaucracies. Nevertheless, Lipsky names

> teachers, police officers and other law enforcement personnel, social workers, judges public lawyers and other court officers, health workers, and many other public employees who grant access to government programs and provide services within them (Ibid.)

as street-level bureaucrats. From this, one could perhaps infer that the whole police administration and the whole school administration are street-level bureaucracies, but given Lipsky's attention to the street-level of government business and the interaction with citizens as a characterizing aspect of street-level work, we can assume that street-level bureaucracies should be understood as those peripheral parts of the administrations where the workers reside. Thus, street-level bureaucracies can be understood as those (relatively) independent organizations that operate at the edge of government, e.g. schools, police precincts, social offices, courts, hospitals and many others. Whether the workers (and their managers) have discretion or not, or what the nature of that discretion is, is an empirical question, I argue. Given the almost kaleidoscopic variance in government agency organization, determining and delimiting these organizations and their agents may be a daunting task, and perhaps not even a meaningful one. But as Evans points out, Lipsky's theory should be seen as, and indeed was intended as "a tentative framework" and a useful "starting point for analysis" (Evans, 2010, 22). For the purposes of this study it is meaningful to consider the military task force, i.e., "the military force that is sent to a particular place to deal with a problem" (Merriam-Webster.com, 2016) as a street-level bureaucracy. In Afghanistan, the provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) are the typical type of task force, clearly delimited units, mainly from one country, with their own areas of operations under the same superior command, much like a hospital, school or police precinct.

These street-level bureaucracies contain both workers and managers. As has been mentioned, Lipsky's notion of managers is indistinct. Evans suggests that managers are not as predictable as Lipsky implies and that they deserve closer theoretical and analytical attention. In particular, the possible

discretion of managers, and their ability to make "strategic compromises" is left out in Lipsky's model (Evans, 2010, 17, 21, 25).

Also, recent research has made "the striking insight" that discretion, which is a defining characteristic of street-level bureaucrats, is not only observed at the immediate street-level of these bureaucracies, but also at many levels above, that "first-line managers are street-level bureaucrats in their own right" and that the traditional view of street-level bureaucracies "needs to be replaced by a recognition that there is often a 'nested', Russian doll-like, system of layers of discretion" (Hupe et al., 2015, 325-326). This implies that "following Tony Evans' suggestion, it is now time for the community of street-level bureaucracy researchers to investigate with more sustained effort the role, function and discretionary behaviors of middle-range managers, like school directors, group leaders in welfare departments and others" (Ibid.).

Given their hierarchical proximity to street-level bureaucrats, and considering the possibility of shared professional identity and fellowship between the two categories, Evans can be understood as suggesting the bringing together of managers and workers as two interrelated categories of agents within the street-level bureaucracy. His use of terms suggests two distinct categories: *front-line managers* and *workers*, a typology that also positions managers within the street-level bureaucracy vis-à-vis managers further up in the administration.

Riccucci envisions a similar typology. She equates street-level bureaucrats with *front-line workers,* defined as those who have face-to-face interaction with clients, and through the concept of front-line management she suggests a level of managers within the street-level bureaucracy (Riccucci, 2005, 9). Similarly, Wilson uses two categories of the police department. His front-line worker is the police patrolman, as opposed to the police administrator who decides what "the patrolman ought to do" and tries to get him "to do it" (Wilson, 1973). The study of local variance in police behavior requires analysis of both the police patrolmen and the police administrators, implying a local level of management that influences local street-level bureaucracy behavior and that accounts for variance between local police departments.

Drawing from these scholars I suggest applying Evans' typology of actors in the street-level bureaucracy with the following terminological clarifications:
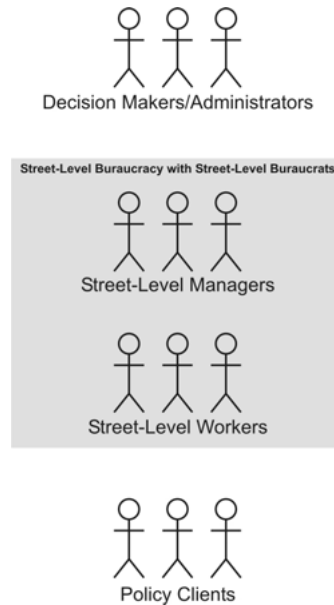
Figure 1. Leveled typology of actors at the street-level

This model clearly identifies two distinct agents within the street-level bureaucracy: street-level managers and street-level workers. Logically, these two categories should be classified as street-level bureaucrats. Drawing from Simon (1997, 2) then, these categories could be defined accordingly:

Street-level workers are those street-level bureaucrats that make discretionary decisions and act mainly by actions directed directly towards policy clients.

Street-level managers are those street-level bureaucrats that make discretionary decisions and act mainly by influencing other managers and/or workers.

The benefit of this model is increased categorical clarity. Even though previous research suggests this type of model, it is not explicitly defined. Differences between workers and managers are indicated but seldom explored. Furthermore, and consequently, categorical clarity facilitates analytical distinction. By using either one or both of two distinct categories, the analyst can separate managers' discretion and/or decision-making from that of workers and also discuss the relationship between them (even though that is not the purpose here). For example, this would enable the separation of manager discretion form worker discretion as independent variables in explaining street-level bureaucracy output.

A shortcoming of the model is that it does not further distinguish between different managers in the street-level bureaucracy. This may not be a problem in so-called flat street-level bureaucracies. In a relatively small school for example, there may be only one front-line manager (the principal) and several front-line workers (the teachers), while larger street-level bureaucracies will have several layers of front-line managers as a result of organizational specialization. A sizable hospital for example will have departments for medicine, surgery, obstetrics and gynecology and pediatrics among others (Sultz and Young, 2011, 82) which implies managers on at least two levels (hospital and department). The same applies to military units which are typically organized by three or more divisions at every hierarchical level. Yet, the model still applies since it allows for adaptation to multi-tier street-level bureaucracy simply by identifying several layers of managers. The generic character of the manager-subordinate molecule model facilitates such a construction.

Discretion

Professional autonomy versus professionals' discretion

To begin, it is necessary to briefly discuss the distinction between professional autonomy and professional discretion, both in order to determine the demarcation of this study and to define my use of the term discretion vis-à-vis other related terms that occur in the literature, particularly autonomy. Unfortunately, the terms autonomy and discretion are sometimes used interchangeably to signify a profession's freedom or independence vis-à-vis its principals (i.e. the state or the politicians), as well as the professional's freedom within the profession. This is the case in general within the literature on professionalism and also particularly the case with the military in the literature on civil–military relations.

In Samuel Huntington's influential theory of objective control, "the essence of objective civilian control is the recognition of autonomous military professionalism" and indeed "the maximizing of military professionalism" (Huntington, 1957, 83), or put somewhat differently: the key to the state's control over the military is professionalism, and the key to professionalism is military autonomy (Feaver, 2003, 7). According to Huntington, three things define a profession. The first is the possession if some unique expertise, i.e. some "specialized knowledge and skill in a significant field of human endeavor" which for the military could be the "management of violence." The second is responsibility for performing a service required by society, which for the military is a sense of responsibility to only utilize organized violence for "socially approved purposes." And the third is corporateness, i.e. "a sense of organic unity and consciousness of themselves as a group apart

from laymen," which in the case of the military implies, for example, restricted entry to the profession, particular training and socialization of its members, and a bureaucratic order that ties the professionals together and delimits their contacts with non-professionals (Huntington, 1957, 1-7).

Freidson expands this definition by stipulating that professionalism also includes autonomous control over such professional traits. Thus, a profession is only a profession (and not merely a vocation) if it *controls* its body of knowledge, its division of labor, its labor market, its training programs and its socialization. This privileged control over itself constitutes the basis of a profession's *discretion* according to Freidson (Freidson, 2001, 17-18, 32, 34, 59-60, 81-82) and can be seen as an extension of Huntington's autonomy. Thus, that which Huntington terms autonomy, Freidson calls discretion. Yet, what in both cases is referred to is the *collective freedom* of a profession in its relation to the state regarding its inner affairs, a freedom and privilege which according to Huntington's theory will prevent the military from meddling in the political sphere and thus create civilian control over it (Huntington, 1957, 83).

However, this body of literature speaks not only of the profession's freedom vis-à-vis its outside but also of the internal freedom of its professionals, i.e. with respect to "their professional judgements and decision-making" (Evetts, 2002, 341). This is the same conception found in the street-level bureaucracy literature. There the term discretion is clearly dedicated to the concept of the single bureaucrat's freedom to make independent choices. What is referred to in this context is an *individual freedom* of a professional (or non-professional) to make choices in his work situation, regardless of a collective (professional or bureaucratic) freedom vis-à-vis the state.

For the purposes of this study, where the primary interest lies in the single military professional's freedom to make choices in his work situation rather than the military collective's freedom to manage itself as a profession and/or bureaucracy, it is necessary to take a terminological stand. A simple way would be to use the term professional autonomy to denote the collective freedom of a profession and the term professional discretion to denote the individual freedom of a professional. However, I fear that such an attempt would only be to fan the fire.

In my view, the term autonomy has a strong historical connection to Huntington. His theory on civil–military relations deals with the military as a collective more than military men as individuals. Hence, autonomy in his theoretical context refers to a collective freedom, which is not the primary interest in this study. Discretion, on the other hand, is more frequently used in the literature to denote individual freedom and is therefore the appropriate term for this study.

The strange case of Dr. Decision-Making and Mr. Discretion

Decision-making and discretion are like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, like two personalities living within the same body. In much of the literature one can even get the impression that one is apparently good while the other is evil, although the attributes will vary depending on who you read. In the literature, the close relation between discretion and decision-making is rather clear, as when Davis defines discretion as occurring "whenever the effective limits on his [the public's official's] power leave him free to make a choice among possible courses of action or inaction" (quoted in Evans, 2011, 370), or extremely explicitly as when Smith argues that "Discretion is a part of decision-making." A "non-discretionary decision" is "hardly a decision at all" (Smith, 1981, 47).

In this subsection I begin by discussing the two concepts separately. This will not be entirely possible due to the nature of their relationship, but I will refrain from making a more deliberate synthesis until the end of the subchapter.

The term discretion has many meanings.[10] Gilbert Smith doubts that one common definition is helpful since the notion of discretion is not the same for "different personnel, on different occasion, under different situational constraints, in different ways, for different purposes and to different effects" (Smith, 1981, 60). He also questions the concept's use in research since it risks becoming "a residual category for unexplained variance" and that research therefore should focus on finding and exploring "those factors which explain why and how particular decisions are taken" (Smith, 1981, 60). I agree, but I don't believe that the quest for pinpointing discretion should be abandoned.

Popular definitions denote an agent's right, a freedom, latitude, or power to make individual choices and decisions within certain bounds (*Merriam-webster online dictionary*, 2013). Such definitions are sometimes ambiguous and slightly unclear. Thus, it is hard to determine whether discretion denotes the freedom to make choices, i.e. the autonomy vis-à-vis another agent (who would otherwise make those choices) or whether it instead presupposes such a delegation and instead denotes the amount of freedom the agent has to choose, as in the number of alternative choices that are available. One could argue that discretion in the first sense is dichotomous. An agent is either free

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[10] Molander and Grimen capture the essence of this debate by distinguishing between *empirical discretion*, that of making judgments about the properties of objects, and *structural discretion*, a space for making choices and decisions based on such judgments. Here I will concentrate on structural discretion, acknowledging that it may or must presuppose discretion in the empirical sense. For this discussion see Molander, A. and H. Grimen (2010). Understanding professional discretion. In: Svensson, L.G. and J. Evetts (eds.) *Sociology of professions. Continental and anglo-saxon traditions.* Göteborg: Diadalos.Molander and Grimen 2010, 168ff.

or not free to make decisions. Discretion in the other sense, however, is or-
dinal. Per definition, discretion presumes at least two alternative choices
(otherwise there is no choosing involved), but as the number of available
choices increases so does discretion, one could argue.

In public-policy literature, discretion involves "the freedom to make deci-
sions in a work role" and as a topic it is "concerned with the extent of free-
dom a worker can exercise in a specific context and the factors that give rise
to this freedom in that context" (Evans, 2010). This idea of structurally in-
duced individual freedom can be traced all the way back to Thomas Hobbes'
Leviathan where discretion was describes as " the subject's liberty of choice
when the sovereign (e.g. a king) has not prescribed a rule about what to
do"(Molander and Grimen, 2010, 167). Analogously, Molander and Grimen
observe that discretion represents what "is normally called *negative free-
dom*" (emphasis in original), which "provides actors with an *area of choice
and action*, consisting of alternatives that are neither forbidden nor pre-
scribed (my emphasis). This is concisely formulated in this way:

> Discretion can thus be understood as a restricted and protected space, where a
> liberty to judge, decide and act is provided. To have discretion is to possess
> such a space (ibid.169).

Davis also emphasizes the structural conditioning of discretion by claiming
that

> a public official has discretion whenever the effective limits of his power
> leave him free to make a choice among possible courses of action or inaction
> (Adler and Asquith, 1981, 9) .

These two quotes define discretion rather differently: as a structural space
versus an agent's capability. Roine Johansson makes a similar distinction by
using two different Swedish words for discretion in the same text: *handlings-
frihet*, which literally means freedom of action, and *handlingsutrymme*
which literally means scope for action (Johansson, 2007, 19, 35). In fact, this
distinction may offer a solution to this ambiguity problem: discretion may be
defined as a combination of an agent's freedom to choose and his number of
options.

   Discretion must be seen as an individual property, something that is asso-
ciated with a particular agent. Even though discretion is structurally induced,
it should not be seen as a part of the structure but as a possession of an agent,
since the discretion would be irrelevant without an agent.

   The first thing that the structure creates, thus being the constituting attrib-
ute of discretion, is the freedom to choose. That is a matter of power and
authority and is independent of the operational scope, i.e. the number of

choices available. However, a freedom to choose implies available options since the freedom will become meaningless with only one option, but we can still think of a structurally granted freedom independently of the number of options. The second aspect of discretion is the optional scope or the number of available options. Logically, discretion would occur with two or more options, otherwise there would be no scope.

If we summarize, the matter of discretion involves an agent who makes decisions and the freedom to make those decisions can be defined as an optional scope which can be large or small. The following matrix can help us determine discretion:

Figure 2. Discretion as interplay between actors' freedom and optional scope

Thus, if an agent is free to choose, regardless of scope, and if she has scope, then she has discretion, and the amount of discretion can be assessed by measuring the scope.

In discussing the range of the discretion I will offer a hypothetical example relevant to this thesis. A certain village in a district in northern Afghanistan is perceived as hostile and problematic by the deployed multinational peacekeeping force. Patrolling units of that force has been subjected to attacks with small arms fire and improvised explosive devices (roadside bombs) when they have patrolled the road passing the village. The force perceives two options for dealing with the village. One is to contain the problem and not engage the population directly, a course of action that will reduce risks but not solve the perceived problem. The other is to engage the village non-violently and establish a physical and continuous presence in the village by establishing an outpost that the force mans around the clock. This course of action will entail a higher risk for the soldiers involved but is believed to have a chance of solving or at least moderate the problem.

Now, the optional scope is clear. There are two alternatives perceived by the force. In this case it is the company commander, an army major, who decides whether to contain or engage the "threat," which means that he has discretion in both senses of the term: he has the mandate/authority to make the choice and he has more than one alternative to choose from. However,

the soldiers and junior officers who will either drive past the village or live in it have no freedom to choose. Hence, even though there are two alternatives in the optional scope, and even though they are the ones who will be affected by the decision, they have no authority to choose and, consequently, no discretion. The power then, lies with the discretion-holder, i.e. the company commander.

However, within the confinements of the company commander's decision, there may still be discretion for the executers of the decision, particularly if the deciding commander has not specified exactly how it is to be executed but only what is to be achieved. This is a common steering technique in both military and civilian organizations that falls under labels such as mission command (JCS, 2013a, v-15), *Auftragstaktik* or management by objectives. Hence, the platoon or squad leader who will be in charge of establishing and manning the outpost in the village, will probably also enjoy discretion in choosing how to accomplish that. He may for instance choose between spending most of the time inside the outpost and only leave it to respond to emergencies in the village, or he may choose a more active conduct that includes patrolling the village and engaging in dialogue with key leaders. This distribution of discretion along the vertical axis of the organization suggests that discretion is in a sense a matter of power. To delegate freedom to choose creates discretion and also instills the power to shape action, and in effect affect the policy that is actually implemented.

With this brief discussion we can conclude by saying that discretion is a capacity that one either possesses or not, and that discretion, if possessed, may be quantified or assessed by investigating the optional scope. We may also conclude that discretion can be indicated either by identifying freedom to make choices or by identifying scope.

If discretion is a freedom to choose among available courses of action, then discretion is intimately related to decision-making. Indeed, the two concepts may be regarded as inseparable. Thus, discretion may best be studied in the context of decision-making.

In a military street-level bureaucracy decision-making can be described at three different organizational levels. Hunt's extended multilevel leadership model builds on Jaques' theory of stratified systems and differentiates leadership across organizational levels describing how variation in tasks, variations in individual capability and variation in organizational culture shapes different types of leadership at different levels in the military organization (Wong et al., 2003, 660-661). Similarly, we can think of decision-making and discretion across organizational levels. Allow me to start form the bottom.

At the bottom of the military street-level bureaucracy, decision-making has the aforementioned on-the-spot character. The police patrolman is an illustrative example who has to make calls of judgment with a limited

amount of time to decide both whether to intervene and how to intervene in a particular situation (Wilson, 1973, 7). Soldiers, and officers, in Afghanistan face similar decision-making situations when conducting patrols or when searching compounds for contraband. In *in extremis* situations, when lives are at high risk (Dixon, 2014), for example combat, decision-making can be assumed to be particularly acute. The training of both police and soldiers incorporate templates and standard operating procedures to facilitate such decision-making. A rather refined example of such a template is the so-called OODA[11] loop which describes the on-the-spot decision-making of fighter pilots, but which has been adopted elsewhere both within and outside of the military (Boyd, 1987).

In the middle of the military street-level bureaucracy we can speak of decision-making as a form of collective problem-solving. In fact, given previous definitions on decision-making, this highly institutionalized practice, usually referred to as military planning (Jensen, 2009), is not decision-making *per se* but rather the preparation for decision-making. However, the military planning procedures are such an integrated part of military command and such models are often referred to as "military decision-making processes" (Thunholm, 2004) that it requires integration into this model. In larger military units this practice is conducted by a staff that follow some process model such as NATO's *Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive* (NATO, 2010) which is basically a handbook for military operational planning. In smaller military units, condensed versions of such planning procedures are developed and used, for example the *Planning Under Time pressure* model (Thunholm, 2004). This in-the-middle type of decision-making, which per definition is merely a process of decision-making support, earns far more attention in the military profession than the other two. In formal training, e.g. the officer training courses at the Swedish Defence University, in major staff exercises, such as the annual Command Joint Staff Exercise in Enköping, and indeed in real operations, the practice of collective, uniform, problem-solving is constantly reinforced in the military profession.

At the top of the military street-level bureaucracy, decision-making is very different in character. Even though the commander of a military unit may find himself in similar on-the-spot situations, he has, in his leader capacity, other more abstract decisions to make. I argue that with his responsibility as the unit's leader his most fundamental decisions pertain to overall sense-making and direction (Weick et al., 2005), i.e. to make clear to both himself and his unit what the overall purpose of the operational activities is, what the unit's specific mission is, and in what way the unit is to go about achieving that mission. Too often, in my opinion, analytical attention to this intellectual aspects of military leadership is disrupted by references to intan-

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[11] Observe, Orient, Decide, Act

gible things like "military genius" (Clausewitz et al., 1976, 100) or the "art" of warfare, strategy and operations (e.g. Rekkedal et al., 2004).

This organizational ordering of different types of decision-making is deliberately simplified. Many of the members of such an organization may be involved in many different types of decision-making, but the simplistic model serves the purpose of pointing out differences, and in particular to point out one specific type of decision-making that is closely associated with command, which I zoom in on in the following.

Organizations, just like individuals, make both routine and critical decisions. Routine decisions are not necessarily unimportant but refer to the "solution of day-to-day problems" rather than to strategic issues. Such "static adaptation" is what makes large organizations "run themselves."

But in order to prosper, organizations are also in need of "dynamic adaptation" which refers to "the area of character-defining commitments, which affects the organization's capacity to control its own future behavior." Selznick associates this latter type of decision-making with (institutional) leadership:

> it is the function of the leader-statesman – whether of a nation or a private association – to define the ends of group existence, to design an enterprise distinctively adapted to these ends, and to see that the design becomes reality (Selznick, 1984, 31-37).

Selznick uses the terms "policy" and "administration" to further distinguish between these different modes of organizational decision-making (Ibid. 56). The dynamic adaptation, then, even for an organization that "largely runs itself" emanates from the organization's confrontation with the essential questions: "What shall we *do*? What shall we *be*?" (Selznick, 1984, 65, emphasis in original) These are truly strategic issues that shape the course of an organization and to make such choices is called *strategic decision-making* (Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992).

Even if such issues may be of relevance to many members of an organization, they are the responsibility of the organization's leader. According to Selznick, the "functions of institutional leadership" are:

> […] [t]he definition of institutional mission and role […] The institutional embodiment of purpose […] The defence of institutional integrity [...]The ordering of internal conflict […] (Ibid. 62-63)

Of these tasks, the first is arguably the most strategic. Defining the ends of group existence, its mission and role not only determines all other aspects of the organization, such as its composition and operation, but also positions the organization on a strategic playing field, so to speak. Defining the ends of existence implies placing the organization in a larger context, an act that

is strategic since it determines the organization's path of life. As an extreme but illustrative example, an organization that identifies itself as a religious terror organization will follow a much different path of life than an organization that defines itself as a nationalist separatist organization. Not only will these two organizations attract different types of members with different types of motivations and skills, but they will also be treated very differently by outside actors. Since the 9/11 attacks in 2001, for instance, some armed groups in the Maghreb have redefined themselves from having been nationalist separatist groups to become religious terror groups of the al-Qaeda movement, while other groups have basically maintained the national separatist identity. And even though both classes of organizations may be rather similar in many respects, despite differences in rhetoric and sometimes in practice, the two organization types will attract different attention from national governments, attract different attention from other nations' governments, and will be acted on based on different legal frameworks, both nationally and internationally. Hence, how an organization chooses to define the ends of its existence and its mission and role is of strategic relevance to that organization.

Even though multiple members of an organization may be involved in shaping such decisions, leaders formally make them. Selznick's rationalistic, top-down model is an ideal, an almost naïve notion that presumes a blank sheet. In reality, most leaders manage existing organizations whose ends of existence may rather be seen as a result of the organization's "aggregate of action taken rather than by any formulation in words." However, the aggregate of action may also be seen as "a residuum of the decisions relative to purpose and environment, resulting in closer and closer approximations of the concrete acts" suggesting a sort of chicken-or-the-egg relationship between the two concepts (Barnard, 1968, 231). Nevertheless, in order to lead, leaders ideally strive to establish precedence of strategic decision over organizational action. So even if top-down strategic leadership is an ideal model, it serves as a useful benchmark for analysis just in that capacity. If leaders are expected, based on societal norms, to first decide on an organization's *raison d'être* before designing, commanding and controlling its operations, then leaders can be expected to at least be aware of and contemplate such norms, and to some extent also to follow them. Therefore, leaders can be studied, compared and analyzed against a backdrop of such an ideal model.

Another shortcoming of Selznick's argument is that the responsibility for strategic decision-making is exclusively allocated to the very top leader of an organization. This claim has merit as long as we view an organization as a monolith, but if we view an organization as a Simonean hierarchy of goals, and by implication as a hierarchy of decision making entities, they can, arguably, be viewed as a composite of many and often different sub-organizations. A hospital for instance can be viewed as a monolith where

only the hospital director seals with essential and strategic issues. But a hospital can also be viewed as a compound of many organizations, such as the hospital direction, a surgery department, an intensive-care department, a test department and so on. Even if they all are under the strategic supervision of the hospital leadership, they may all face different essential issues of their own depending on the character of the hospital's leadership. This is for example the case if the hospital practices management by objectives, leaving some degree of discretion to the specialists of the sub-units. Hence, we can expect leaders at different levels of a large and complex organization to also face strategic issues and subsequent strategic decision-making.

Drawing from these ideal models of strategic decision-making in organizations I postulate that leaders face three specific strategic decisions: determining the purpose of the organization and its business (which can be seen as exogenous to the organization in focus given that it is defined by a principal), determining the ends of the organization's business, and determining the means for achieving them:
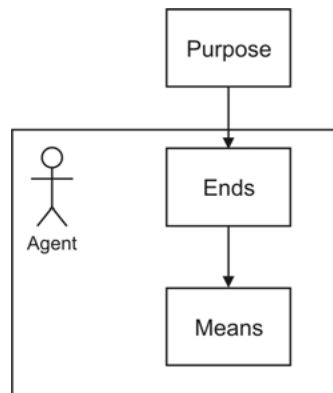
Figure 3. Leaders' strategic decisions

I also argue that this generic model applies to any leader at any level in an organization to some extent, and that, consequently, strategic decision-making is something subjective that occurs in many places within an organization and not merely at the chief executive level.

Coupled with Elliot Jaques concept of the "manager-subordinate molecule," this decision-making model allows for the analysis of decision-making at any level in a multi-tier organization. According to Jaques, the roles of managers and subordinates and the vertical relationship between them are what bureaucratic hierarchy depends upon, and indeed "among the most important of all two-person relationships in industrial societies." Central to this notion is the manager's accountability for the work of his subordinate, an accountability which makes the manager dependent upon the subordinate. Also central is the manager's authority, or "quantity of authority to

which he is legitimately entitled in relation to his subordinate" (Jaques, 1976, 63-64). These are the forces that maintain the relationship.

Authority in an organization may be proliferated through vertical extension, i.e. by establishing multiple levels of management manifested as a chain of manager–subordinate relationships. In this way, any given agent-in-focus along the chain can be viewed in the same way, i.e. as a manager to one or several subordinates *and* as a subordinate to a manager (Ibid., 65):
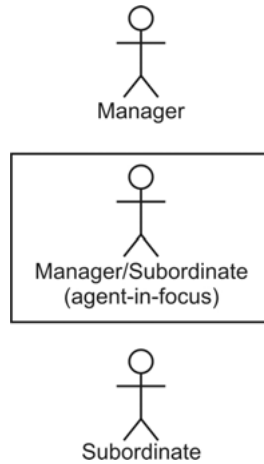
Figure 4. Authoritative relationships between managers and subordinates

Superimposing the purpose-ends-means model on Jaques' molecule suggests that each agent along the chain has to establish purpose by interpreting his manager's ends and means, determining his ends, and defining his means and imposing them on his subordinate as tasks. With such a view of generic, multileveled decision-makers, we aid the analysis of strategic decision-making at any given managerial level in the organization, facilitating the understanding of any given agent. But we also aid the analysis of vertical consistency by providing a means to relate managers' imposed tasks to subordinates' interpreted purpose.

Re-connecting to previous discussions, discretion may be seen as a resultant of the quantity of authority and accountability in the manager–subordinate relationship. However, strong authority does not automatically imply low discretion, as for example Lipsky claims, since strong authority can co-exist with delegation. Arguably, a manager may exercise authority by defining clear tasks by so-called mission command, but delegate the discretion to choose ways to achieve them. In such a scenario, which is desirable in contemporary management doctrines, authority and accountability can be maintained without limiting the discretion of the subordinate.

Like managers and leaders in general, military commanders also face strategic issues and decisions. Thunholm has called this the *battlefield decision problem*. Each military commander at each level, faces the same challenge: How to accomplish the assigned task from the superior commander? This in turn contains two sub-problems: *define[12] the problem* and *solve the problem*. To some extent, the issued task will aid in defining the problem but the commander still has to "interpret, accept, and represent" it with the purpose of making plain what is to be achieved (Thunholm, 2000, 1).

Before I proceed, I feel pressed to review the military profession's view on commanders. Two features characterize military organizations in the contemporary Western world: structured, organized decision-making (as mentioned above) and decisive action. Obviously, the hierarchical and functional structure of military organizations require some robust decision-making system in order to work, and so rational, traceable, and logical decision-making methodology permeates the military professional culture, manifested in doctrine and training as well as practice. Decision-making even has its very own place in military doctrine. In the U.S. doctrine, for example, decision-making is described in one of its six sub-capstone publications named *JP 5-0 Joint operation planning*.

Then there is the ideal of the decisive decision-maker. Swedish military training and socialization instill certain values regarding the behavior of officers and soldiers. Many of them are codified in doctrine, i.e. written, normative documents that are used for training and reference. A good way of illustrating those values is by referring to a pivotal book in this context – the Swedish Army Tactical Field Manual commonly known as AR2 (Försvarsmakten, 1995) . Besides describing the enemy and explaining army tactics (as they were seen in the mid-1990s) it postulates the military's principles for good command and also projects qualities of the good officer.

First, a central, almost dogmatic, principle of command and control in the Swedish military is *Auftragstaktik[13],* or mission command in English. In this nineteenth century German system of command "the commander devised the mission (*Auftrag*) but left the methods and means of achieving it to the officer on the spot"(Citino, 2004, 330).

The Swedish field manual states that:

> Mission command is the foundation of command. Initiative at all levels shall be encouraged and supported. The commanders intent and the purpose of combat shall be known among subordinates (Försvarsmakten, 1995, 76)

and that:

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[12] Thunholm wrote "find the problem" (hitta problemet) but I believe he would translate it as "define."

[13] *uppdragstaktik* in Swedish

> Mission command presupposes that subordinates are aware of the superior commander's concept of operations[14]. Then they can act independently in his spirit, even when the original plan cannot be pursued or when the commander's ability to influence the operation is restricted or inhibited (ibid., Försvarsmakten, 1995, 78)

This implies that a subordinate commander is (reluctantly) prepared to deal with a vague mission, and that he will interpret his superior's intent and act according to his best ability anyway. The field manual encourages this:

> If a commander has not been given an order he will assume a mission in the spirit of his superior's battle plan. The latter will be informed about the assumed mission as soon as possible (ibid., Försvarsmakten, 1995, 77).

These seminal paragraphs, and their normative significance, are well known to Swedish officers.

Second, the field manual stresses the importance of defining a mission before choosing and devising a plan for action. Not only is "mission analysis" the first point of contemporary military planning models, it is also the very first sentence of the Swedish field manual:

> In every situation, define WHAT IS TO BE ACHIEVED (ibid., 8, emphasis in original).

"The mission's meaning"[15] is a frequently recurring phrase among the military officers in this study, as well as in the whole profession.

And third, the importance of taking action is fundamental. The following sentence, which is known well outside of military circle, clearly stipulates how important it is for an officer to be active rather than passive:

> Irresoluteness and omission to act burdens a commander more than mistakes regarding choice of means[16](Krigsmakten, 1963).

In fact, one could argue that making decisions is the *essence* of command. Thus, military doctrine clearly projects a professional norm of the commanders as a decisive decision-maker.

After this brief deviation I now continue to discuss military commanders' strategic decision-making. In this thesis I intend to study three strategic deci-

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[14] *stridsplan* in Swedish

[15] *Uppdragets innebörd* in Swedish. In this context the word innebörd translates best to meaning or perhaps *connotation*.

[16] My translation of "Obeslutsamhet och uraktlåtenhet att handla ligger en chef mera till last än misstag i fråga om val av medel". The sentence reoccurs in each edition of the field manual albeit in less obsolete language. However, the word uraktlåtenhet (e.g. omission) is still associated with the 1963 formulation of the field manual.

sions that commanders make. The first is to determine what Barnard calls the "ultimate" end, i.e. the larger or overarching purpose of the agent's "immediate" end. In this thesis the "ultimate" end will be termed *the principal's mission*. I use this term to signify the exogenous (to the agent's own organization) purpose that the agent perceives as the overarching purpose of his own unit. In public policy terms this may be the political goal or change in citizen behavior that a particular policy program is supposed to achieve. In military terms it may be the political or strategic goal of a whole campaign, in which a single commander is responsible for one delimited part, or it may just be the mission that his own superior commander is tasked with. Technically speaking, commanders do not need the principal's mission to execute their own mission, but it will be useful if they operate in a milieu of *Auftragstaktik*.

The second and perhaps more pressing strategic decision is the determination of the "immediate" end, or one's own end. In public policy this may be the own program's end or the own organization's end. In military terms it is often called "mission" or "task" and signifies the meaning of the principal's issued order as it pertains to the agent. Put quite simply, it is what the commanders are supposed to achieve. In this thesis this concept will be termed *the force's mission.*

The third decision, then, is to determine the means and ways to that "immediate" end, i.e. how that end is to be achieved. In the military, means can be said to be troops, materiel, and tactics[17], i.e. people, things and activities. The way these components are used to reach the end is the unit's *concept of operations* which is the term that will be used here. For one particular (but ambiguous) end, different concepts of operations may be conceivable. If for example the end of a military campaign is "a safe and secure environment"[18], a military commander can chose to operate in different ways, for example, by patrolling in a non-provoking way in troubled areas, by patrolling aggressively in troubled areas, or by staying in camp (off the streets) and do nothing. These courses of action will result in different outcomes in different contexts, but they are all conceivable courses of action. In summary, the strategic decisions that military commanders have to make are to determine:

- The principal's mission
- The force's mission, and
- The (force's) concept of operations.

In military thinking, as Thunholm argued, this trinity of strategic decisions runs from the highest to the lowest level of abstraction. Carl von Clausewitz,

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[17] There will be numerous of other ways to define military means, but these terms are sufficient for the present argument

[18] "SASE" is a rather common ends statement, for example that of NATO's force in Kosovo after the Kosovo War.

a bona fide icon in Western military theory, defines war itself in such terms. In his work *On War* he thus differentiates between the political purpose of war, the object of war (to destroy the enemy forces, to occupy the country, and to break the enemy's will to fight) and the means of war (force, or more specifically combat)[19] (Clausewitz et al., 1976, 90, 95). The responsibility of the military general is the ends and means, or the actual warfighting, but since Clausewitz claims that war is merely a means to a political end, and that a means can never be isolated from its purpose, war has to be regarded as a political instrument (Clausewitz et al., 1976). The implication of this is that the general must be aware of the political purpose in order to define the military ends and means.

Military discretion may be seen as inconceivable. From an outside position, the management of organized violence in the name of the state may be seen as incompatible with individual discretion and instead assume professional attributes that curtail such discretion to ensure as close to deterministic implementation of policy as possible. Furthermore, attributes of the military culture, such as hierarchical control and discipline, may seem irreconcilable with individual discretion.

But regardless of the possibility of such beliefs, we have reason to keep an open analytical mind. Not only is it obvious that even military activity cannot be managed in detail from the top down. "What side of the tree to go," as military officers often express it, is a typical decision that has to be made on scene and on-the-spot. But also officers at higher levels, who deal with more abstract matters than choosing a path on the ground, have choices to make, with more or less discretion. As an illustration for the upcoming analysis, it may be appropriate to illustrate the possibility of military commander's discretion with an account from one of the U.S. generals that commanded ISAF in Afghanistan. This is a passage from the memoirs of Stanley McChrystal, the commander of ISAF who tried to implement the COIN concept and who will figure later in the analysis:

> The story I will tell of my command there is from my perspective. It will describe the evolution of *my understanding* of the challenges we faced in Afghanistan, the mission *I believed* I'd been given, and the strategy *I felt* could succeed (McChrystal, 2013, 277, emphasis by author).

This quote clearly indicates that individual conceptions, beliefs and assessments play an important part in the operative deliberations of a senior ranking officer, deliberations that imply significant discretion on his part when deciding on both principal's mission, own force's mission and concept of operations. Thus, if the commander of ISAF feels that he as discretion to

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[19] Although different interpretations can be made depending on different readings of *On War*.

shape NATO's campaign in Afghanistan, and commanders on the ground feel that they have discretion to choose a path of maneuver, then we can reasonably assume that commanders at levels between them may also experience discretion.

Organizational influence on individual decision-makers

As previously mentioned, the study of leaders is rather seldom related to contextual matters, e.g. organizational culture. And as has also been discussed, discretion, as a natural part of decision-making, can be seen as structurally induced and hence requires some sort of contextual analysis to be understood in that regard. To be clear, this is not a structure-agency study that investigates the primacy of either social structure or agency. Rather, as has been described, it is an outside-in/inside-out study that investigates one conceptual phenomenon from two different perspectives, but to facilitate such an approach it is fruitful to investigate structural theory in order to identify a set of concepts or variables that can capture the outside-in influence on force commanders as well as their inside-out perception of that influence.

Social structure is a very wide concept and includes a myriad of possible structural factors that influence individual behavior from the outside. Given the Simonean vertical chain of individual decision-makers presupposed in this thesis, and given the attention to commanders as decision-makers in such a structural institution, it makes sense to focus on structural factors that relate to that institution in this analysis. In this thesis I am interested in decision-makers' discretion, and drawing from Simon who argues that discretion and influence can be seen as communicating vessels in this institutional setting, focus can be placed on factors that describe the influence on strategic decision-makers. With this perspective, two factors stand out as particularly relevant in understanding discretion in strategic decision-making: *authority*, i.e. the nature of the relationship of power between the decision-maker and his superior, and *mandate,* i.e. the steering of the decision-makers by the superior. These factors harmonize with the two aspects of discretion discussed earlier: the decision-makers' freedom vis-à-vis his principal and the discretional scope he operates within.

Authority and influence

The vertical relationship between a superior and a subordinate, e.g. a chain of command or policy implementation chain, is a power relationship[20]. In

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[20] This conception if power, attributed to Robert Dahl and classical pluralism and sometimes called "the first face of power," is considered one dimensional and relatively simple but quite

Simon's terminology the power is called *authority* and constitutes one characteristic of the relationship between a superior and a subordinate. Authority is not given by the mere establishment of manager-subordinate molecules in an organization but rather is a consequence of the behavior of the parties involved. This in turn depends on their attitudes toward one another, i.e. the superior's "expectation of obedience" and, more importantly, the subordinate's "willingness to obey. Regardless of the superior's authoritativeness, authority hinges on the subordinate's decision to comply or not (Simon, 1997, 179-180). Simon does not elaborate on what affects this choice which acts as the criterion for decision, but we can assume a number of factors such as the subordinate's predisposition to obey (depending on personal traits and/or shared culture for instance) or the subordinate's subjective view of the superior for example. As an illustration, a citizen's personality as well as ideological beliefs about the legitimacy of the police's interference in the private sphere will influence her willingness to obey the police in various situations. Thus, the level and nature of authority can be assessed, or at least characterized, by investigating the superior's authoritativeness and the subordinate's submissiveness. With such a model, authority occurs in a relationship with an authoritative superior and a submissive subordinate but not in a relationship with a non-authoritative superior and a non-submissive subordinate for example.

Authority in Simon's definition can be compared with the potential difference (voltage) between two poles in Ohm's Law, i.e. the tension between two objects as a result of their difference in position. With a similar analogy, the current, i.e. that which flows between the poles (amps), is represented by his concept of *influence*. The attitude between a superior and a subordinate may well generate authority in the relationship but if the superior does not tell the subordinate to do anything, the superior will generate no influence on the subordinate's actions.

Influence may take different shapes according to Simon. Of less coercive nature are suggestion and persuasion, but the tool of influence that we commonly associate with chains of command, implementation, and policy steering is command (Ibid., 180). Of course, in organizations, persuasion and suggestion are normally not formally sanctioned methods of influence (even though they are part of contemporary leadership ideology), which opens up for other actors than the formal, or appointed, superior to influence a subordinate's decision-making. And such influence is not necessarily confined only to intentional and active behavior of outside actors, but might also be the result of the subordinate's own search for influence, perhaps in the absence of clear command.

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sufficient for the analysis of power distribution in decision-making. Hay, C. (2002). *Political analysis: A critical introduction*. Basingstoke, Palgrave.

Furthermore, there is a relationship between influence and discretion. If the superior has complete influence over the subordinate's decisions and actions (Simon uses the example of an officer and his soldiers on a marching ground) then the subordinate's discretion is virtually nonexistent. This is fairly uncommon in government administration though. Generally, the behavior (decision-making and influence measures) of the superior leaves some discretion to the subordinate, for example by telling the subordinate what to do but not how to do it. Thus, the superior can attempt to shape the subordinates discretion by designing command. It follows that less level of influence leaves more discretion and vice versa which implies a linear relationship between the concepts.

Simon proposes that the scope of influence can be determined by investigating how much of a decision of a subordinate that was determined by her superior and how much was determined by herself (Ibid., 180, 307-310). Even though this theoretical model, and the method, may be both too coarse and too simplistic, the principle is still attractive in beginning to understand the discretion in making strategic and other decisions. If nothing else, it can direct us in the search for factors that do influence decision-making in contexts where we have little knowledge of such matters.

Mandate

Simon suggests that the content of a command is what shapes influence and discretion in a relationship of authority. However, beyond the what and the how he does not elaborate on the particular aspects of a command that contribute to that shaping. For this purpose Montjoy and O'Toole's concept of *mandate* is useful. To them, implementation is decisions that are made in order to carry out a policy, and an organization's decisions are affected by what they call external mandates that both constrain and enable the organization, just as Simon's concept of influence does (Montjoy and O'Toole, 1979, 465).

Typically in government, a legislative body or a government department requires an agency to undertake a program and supplies funds for it to do so. This understanding of an external mandate implies two distinct characteristics of a mandate with different influential effects. The first is the mandate's *specificity*, i.e. the issue of whether the expression of the "expected administrative actions" is specific or vague. The parallel to Lipsky's conception of street-level bureaucrats' discretion is obvious: when the superior/manager is not clear in his top-down direction and command, the subordinate/street-level worker gains discretion. There is also a parallel to the military notion of Auftragstaktik where a superior can grant a subordinate discretion by formulating a mission but not stating how it is to be achieved.

The second characteristic of the mandate is *resources*. If the superior provides resources with the task, resources that are required for its accomplish-

ment and that the subordinate does not possess, the subordinate has a fair chance of carrying it out as intended. However, if sufficient resources (which may be a subjective matter) are not provided then the possible courses of action are reduced and discretion of the subordinate is diminished (Ibid., 466). Combined, these dichotomies create a number of combinations which entail different levels of discretion:

| | | Description of expected activity | |
		Vague	Specific
Provision of resources	Yes	A	B
	No	C	D

Figure 5. Characteristics of mandates (Montjoy and O'Toole, 1979, 466).

Fields A and D constitute the most distinct combinations. Field A shows that when the specificity is low (vague) and resources are provided, the discretion of the subordinate is high since both the resources and the vagueness expand the number of alternative courses of actions. In contrast, field D shows that when specificity is high and provided resources are scarce, discretion is low, since the specificity in the description of the expected activity as well as the lack of resources narrow down the number of alternative courses of actions.

What Montjoy and O'Toole do not mention is that the resources may carry implications regarding the subordinate's decisions and courses of actions which also influence discretion. For example, if the task is vague but the provided resources imply a particular course of action, discretion of the subordinate is still delimited. If for example a legislative body tasks the law enforcement administration to reduce organized crime and provides funding that is earmarked for research, the law enforcement administration may not feel free to use the funds to employ more investigators instead of more researchers. Thus, not only the extent of the resources but also their qualities matter for discretion. We can therefore speak of resources and their effect on discretion in terms of both quantity and quality.

It can be assumed that the *quantity* of the resources provided in the mandate will affect the number, and perhaps even the character, of alternative courses of action. In a multinational military operation, the number of troops for instance will have a significant effect on how a commander designs his concept of operations. It can also be assumed that the *quality* of the resources provided in the mandate will make some, but not other, courses of action possible. Again, in a multinational military operation, the type of

transportation provided will not only determine a deployed forces geographical reach (helicopters will make it possible to operate further away from the camp than wheeled vehicles will for example) but also the type of operations it can perform, and perhaps even is expected to perform. The provision of armored vehicles for example, not only enables a force to operate in more hostile environments but may also suggest that it does. And analogously, the non-provision of armed vehicles not only prohibits a force to operate in hostile environments but may also be a signal for a more unobtrusive conduct.

Analytical schema

To synthesize these theoretical discussions, an analytical schema can now be constructed. I begin by stipulating four analytical concepts:

- Superior-subordinate molecule
- Authority
- Task specificity
- Resources

As can be noted, the concept of authority as discussed earlier has been separated into two analytical categories. The first is the organizational relationship of the agent and his superior which is termed a *superior–subordinate molecule* drawing from Elliot Jaques's idea of the manager–subordinate molecule. This category pertains to the organization of authority rather than the character of it and facilitates an apparently simplistic though necessary analytical step, i.e. to position the agent organizationally before proceeding with the following analytical steps. But it also tells us something about the nature of the relationship, particularly whether it constitutes unity or duality of command, which has implications for the superior's influence over the subordinate. This will be discussed further below. And the second category is the actual *authority* of that relationship, i.e. the power aspect of it regardless of who or how many the superiors are. Furthermore, the concept of mandate has also been separated into two analytical categories, *task specificity* and *resources*, as has been discussed above.

Superior–subordinate molecule

The superior–subordinate molecule is analyzed to determine the agent's vertical relations in the organization in order to facilitate the determination of the nature of such relations as they pertain to discretion. The general questions that drive the analysis of the superior–subordinate molecule are:

- what is the agent's position?
- who is the agent's superior?
- how does this affect discretion?

This category can assume one of two values: unity of command or duality of command. The "normal" state implied in Jaques' theory is what in military terms is called *unity of command* (e.g. JCS, 2013a) i.e. each subordinate (commander) has one and only one superior (commander) while each superior is likely to have more than one subordinate. The opposite of this state is termed *duality of command* which means that a subordinate has more than one superior.

Unity of command is assumed to decrease the subordinate's discretion while duality of command is assumed to increase the subordinate's discretion.

Authority

The analysis of authority pertains to the authoritative character of the relationship between the agent and his superior and how it relates to discretion. The general questions that drive the analysis of authority are:

- to what extent does the superior attempt to exercise power over the subordinate?
- To what extent does the subordinate perceive and react to such attempts?
- how may this affect discretion?

This category can also assume one of two main values: *active* or *passive* authority on the part of the superior, which can be said to represent two opposing leadership styles. An active authority will be identified when a superior actively and overtly attempts to project and/or exercise authoritative control over the subordinate. Indicators are the active issuing of mandatory orders and instructions, and persistent efforts to follow up on subordinates' obedience. A passive authority, on the other hand, will be identified when there is a lack of active attempts to exercise such authoritative control.

Active authority is assumed to decrease the subordinate's discretion while passive authority is assumed to increase the subordinate's discretion.

Task specificity

The analysis of task specificity pertains to explicitness of the mandate from superior to subordinate and how it relates to discretion. The general questions that drive the analysis of task specificity are:

- are tasks specific or non-specific?
- how does this affect discretion?

The compound construct of task specificity draws from the concepts of *Auftragstaktik* or management by objectives and its antithesis of *Befehlstaktik* or order oriented command (Jarymowycz, 2008, 83-84, Vedung, 1997, 28) and their implications for the "what" and the "how" of a given task. Un-

der management by objectives, a superior emphasizes what the subordinate is to achieve rather than how he is to achieve it, thereby delegating certain initiative to the subordinate. In order oriented command, on the other hand, the superior emphasizes and focuses on the how by instructing the subordinate on how he is supposed to operate without necessarily declaring a clear what. Thus, the what and the how can theoretically be classified as specific or non-specific and drawing from this, task specificity can, theoretically, assume four different combinations of values:

Figure 6. Possible relationships between the level of specificity for how and what

- A *specific what* in combination with a *non-specific how* indicates a task specificity where the subordinate is given a type of bounded discretion to accomplish the superior's stated goals. This is the type of task specificity that we associate with *Auftragstaktik* or management by objectives.
- A *specific what* in combination with a *specific how* would be one expression of order oriented command that indicates a task specificity where the subordinate's discretion is significantly curtailed.
- A *non-specific* what in combination with a *specific how* would constitute an exaggerated form of order oriented command (where the subordinate is not believed to benefit from an understanding of the how) and that also indicates a task specificity where the subordinate's discretion is also significantly curtailed.
- A *non-specific* what in combination with a *non-specific how* would constitute an almost unrealistic type of command philosophy (hence the lack of a proper term in the matrix above) and indicate a total lack of task specificity and hence entail near total discretion of the subordinate.

Thus, to classify task specificity entails two actions: classifying the specificity of the what and the specificity of the how.

In determining whether the what and the how is specific or non-specific I propose the following operationalizations:

The **what** of a task can be categorized as **specific** if it:

- The stated task or mission is *relevant to the operational level of abstraction* of the recipient, or
- An unambiguous purpose or end state that is relevant to the operational level of abstraction *of the sender* is the stated.

Under both these circumstances a force commander can, in the spirit of *Auftragstaktik,* derive a meaningful what that he is to achieve at his level.

Analogously, the **what** of a task can be categorized as **non-specific** if:

- The stated task or mission is *not* relevant to the operational level of abstraction of the recipient,
- The number of tasks reasonably exceeds the abilities of the agent forcing him to choose or prioritize among them, or
- An ambiguous purpose or end state, relevant to any operational level of abstraction is the stated.

Such circumstances violate the spirit of *Auftragstaktik* and make it problematic to derive a meaningful what.

To illustrate these operationalizations, an example of a non-specific what would be "to provide security". Such a task does not stipulate what the meaning of security is or who the object of security is and thus leaves room for discretion. An example of a specific what would be "to protect the villages from armed attacks". Here the meaning of security is more specific, as are the intended objects. And even though a military commander finds the what of the second task more specific, it still gives him discretion in choosing a way to accomplish it, which I will exemplify below.

The **how** of a task can be categorized as **specific** if:

- The stated task suggests or stipulates a particular concept of operations, relevant to the operational level of the recipient, for the accomplishment of the mission or the mission's purpose.

and the **how** of a task can be categorized as **non-specific** if it:

- does *not* suggest or stipulate a particular concept of operations for the accomplishment of the mission or the mission's purpose, or
- suggest or stipulates an *ambiguous* concept of operations for the accomplishment of the mission or the mission's purpose, or
- suggest or stipulates a concept of operations that *is not relevant to the operational level* of the recipient.

Thus, tasks that do not imply a particular concept of operations for the subordinate are coded as non-specific while tasks that *do* imply or stipulate a particular concept of operations for the subordinate are coded as specific

from the perspective of the subordinate. To illustrate with the previous example, a specific how could be "establish checkpoints at the entrances of the village" which would leave very little discretion to the force commander, while a non-specific how would refrain from stating a solution at all, which would allow the commander to choose between defensive and offensive measures, for example to establish checkpoints and conduct patrols in the village or to engage the enemy in their own strongholds to eliminate the threat. Another example of a non-specific how would be an ambiguous one or one at a higher level of abstraction, for example "conduct peace keeping operations", a how that could include virtually anything.

Implications of allocated resources

Allocated resources are analyzed to determine any implications for mission understanding and execution, i.e. inherent signals that may point out certain whys and hows. The general questions that drive the analysis of allocated resources are:

- what defining resources are allocated?
- how do they delimit and/or enable force mission and conduct?
- how do they suggest particular mission or concept of operations?
- how does this affect discretion?

A simple and rather common way to understand military resources is in terms of hardware. The news media, for example, are inclined to use this approach when they compare the strength of opposing military forces in an international conflict and when they predict the outcome of the clash between them. Politicians are also inclined to speak in terms of the number of troops, aircraft and tanks when they discuss military capability and political goals. Scholars, on the other hand, incorporate far more complex and abstract factors when they theorize about military capability and military power, for example national factors such as culture, gross national product, industrial base and human capital (Brooks, 2007) or even more abstract factors such as "force employment," i.e. the pattern of how modern states use their military forces on the battle field and in war (Biddle, 2006).

A practical middle road is to use the same set of factors that many armed forces use to define military capability for the purposes of development, preparation and procurement. These are factors that signify how a military unit is organized, what skills its personnel hold, what equipment they use and how they are trained to operate. In the 1990s the U.S. Marine Corps' Combat Development Command used the acronym DOTES to circle these factors, denoting doctrine, organization, training and education, equipment and support (USMC, 1998). The Swedish Armed Forces, as well other related Swedish agencies, has used a similar set of factors to describe command and control systems in particular and military capabilities in general: person-

nel, organization, method (or doctrine), and technology (or materiel) (Försvarsmakten, 2014), sometimes abbreviated in the acronym POMT. These terms are not explicitly defined in official print, but we can make an attempt to define them broadly here. Thus, *personnel* can be understood as the quality and skills of the individual members of a force. This can imply professional specialties such as infantry (foot soldiers) or armor (tanks), as well as signify differences in competence between for example conscripts and professionals. *Organization* can be understood as the way the force is structured. This may pertain to force size, e.g. battalion (~500) versus brigade (~5000), as well as force type, e.g. an infantry versus a special operations unit. *Doctrine* can be understood as the normative body of knowledge that governs how a force operates, i.e. what it does and how it does it. Every military unit, and indeed any human organization in general, has an inherent doctrine that is shaped by its history. Thus without a superior's assignment of a particular doctrine for a particular deployment, a force can always fall back on its inherent doctrine. And finally *equipment* (or materiel or technology) can be understood as the material resources that a force holds. A peacekeeping force may for example be equipped with so-called soft-skin vehicles or armored vehicles which may suggest one type of mission and conduct, or more robust armored personnel carriers which suggests a different mission and conduct.

The potential variance of these factors' values helps to objectively define a force's capabilities. However, they also carry certain connotations such as particular types of mission, tasks and concept of operations. For example, if a country deploys a battalion-sized unit of conscripts, organized in small squads that are trained for surveillance and equipped with soft-skin vehicles and light weapons for self-defense to a post conflict zone, one could reasonably assume – without reading the operational order – which the force's mission was to observe a peace settlement. However, if the nation deploys a professional armor battalion equipped with tanks and infantry fighting vehicles to a post-conflict zone, one could conclude that its mission is to protect other actors and to be prepared to fend off enemy attacks. And if such a force is deployed to a hot conflict zone one could conclude that its mission is to fight enemy forces.

Multinational military operations are often sorted into categories such as peacekeeping, peace enforcement, peacebuilding and military operations depending on their character in terms of host-nation consent, impartiality, use of force and type of equipment (Diehl and Balas, 2014, 3-11). For example, peacekeeping forces are often, or traditionally at least, deployed under host-nation consent with an impartial posture and lightly equipped for self-defense, while a peace enforcement force can be deployed without host-nation consent, take a partial posture and be heavily equipped for combat. Thus, the type of equipment of an actual deployed force, or rather its allocated resources overall, can be seen as an indicator of the type of operation it is

involved in and can, consequently, imply both mission and concept of operations.

If we depart from the international community's post-World War II experiences of multinational operations, and assume the rhetoric perspective of the resource-allocating principal, we can stipulate three values within the category of implications of allocated resources: peacekeeping, warfighting and multipurpose[21] (Diehl and Balas, 2014, 6).

Peacekeeping signifies a (relatively) lower ambition in terms of the ability to use force since it assumes that hostilities have ended. The lower ambition is manifested in limitations regarding for example fire power and protection and sometimes non-professional (e.g. conscript) personnel to some degree, and mandates that generally only reach the level of self-defense. Most operations that Sweden has participated in fall into this category. Typical examples of traditional peacekeeping are the UN operations in Gaza and Sinai between 1956 and 1967, Cyprus between 1964 and 1993 and Lebanon between 1980 and 1994.

Warfighting, or military operations[22], signifies operations at the other end of the spectrum. Compared to peacekeeping, this type of operation has a high ambition which is manifested in larger troop size, heavier equipment, more qualified warfighting system such as artillery and air defense and more extensive mandates. Two typical examples from the post-Cold War period are the allied invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and Iraq in 2003. Sweden has not participated in warfighting of this type in modern time.

And the third value is *multipurpose* which can be seen as a hybrid between the first two. This category implies a more robust force structure that is capable of both peacekeeping and warfighting (with the supplement of critical combat elements such as artillery and anti-aircraft protection), and an example would be the operations in Bosnia after 1993.

Thus, a force structure that signals peacekeeping is assumed to decrease the subordinate's discretion both by connoting a peacekeeping mission character and by delimiting the concepts of operations through limited resources. Consequently, a force structure that signals warfighting may also decrease the subordinate's discretion to a certain concept of operations, while a multipurpose force structure can increase a subordinate's discretion by connoting and allowing several concepts of operations along the spectrum between peacekeeping and warfighting.

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[21] Deihl and Balas distinguish between "traditional peacekeeping" and "military operations" but I choose to use the terms peacekeeping and warfighting here and add the hybrid category of multipurpose for added distinction.
[22] Deihl and Balas distinguish between "traditional peacekeeping" and "military operations" but I choose to use the terms peacekeeping and warfighting here for added distinction

Discretion

The main analytical task in this study is to analyze and describe force commanders' discretion. This is done in two ways. One is to analytically deduce, based on theoretical assumptions, whether structural factors affect agents' discretion positively or negatively, and the other is to interrogate the agents on their perceptions of structural influences and their own experiences regarding discretion.

For the analytical deduction of structurally induced discretion I depart from the analytical schema. In the sections above I have made theoretical assumptions about the effects on discretion of each value within each analytical category. These assumptions are summarized in the following table:

Table 1. *Analytical constructs and their effect on agents' discretion*

Category	Value	Effect on discretion
Superior-Subordinate Molecule	Unity of command	Decreases
	Duality of command	Increases
Authority	Active	Decreases
	Passive	Increases
Task Specificity	Specific What/Specific How	Decreases
	Specific What/Non-Specific How	Increases
	Non-Specific What/Specific How	Decreases
	Non-Specific What/Non-Specific How	Increases
Implications of Allocated Resources	Peacekeeping	Decreases
	Warfighting	Decreases
	Multi-purpose	Increases

These assumptions will be used in the formulation of expectations in the next section and the outside-in analysis in chapter 6.

For the direct interrogation of the force commanders I will use an extended analytical strategy. First, I will apply the analytical in the inside-out analysis the same way as in the outside-in analysis thus eliciting force commanders' perceptions of structural factors and their implications for them. Then I will also attempt to determine their *perceived* discretion using four different indicators. I assume that the force commanders have perceived and/or experienced discretion if:

1. they explicitly say so using expressions such as "I was free to.." or "I had discretion to…" or similar,
2. they imply it by using suggestive expressions regarding their decision making such "so I chose to…" or "I chose another way…" or similar,

3. I can interpret utterances as expressions of perceived discretion for example "while he did X, I would have done Y…", or "I thought about doing it differently…" or similar, or

4. I can make other observations of decisions or actions that suggest discretion, e.g. variations in operational behavior between successive force commanders under otherwise similar circumstances. Even though the operational context of the force commanders has evolved over time, it has done so in a fairly linear fashion without severe interruptions. Thus, changes in choices or behaviors between successive force commanders that cannot be derived from contextual changes will be used to indicate discretion.

I rank the strength of these indicators from top to bottom. Thus, an explicit utterance of perceived discretion is analytically stronger than an interpreted act.

Expected outcome

Before applying this analytical schema in empirical analysis it is relevant to sketch out a horizon of expectations. In order to set aside any fore-knowledge, prejudices and premature conclusions, I attempt to sketch this horizon by drawing on previous research and professional ideals. The purpose of this is to establish a point of reference in order to be able to say something relevant about the empirical results. And even though the aim here is not to measure the outcome, normative statements can still be made about implementation by comparing what is observed with what is expected. An established discrepancy between expected and observed makes it possible to make a normative judgment and declare an implementation gap or implementation deficit (Hill and Hupe, 2009, 11). Now, the purpose of this thesis is descriptive and not normative, but it would almost be a waste of effort to avoid or neglect the latter if the results point in such a direction. I believe this is warranted in light of the apparent gap between policy goals and military practice noted in the Introduction.

Now, how can we know what to expect? In the introduction I gave expression to an outsider's idealistic and perhaps naïve view of perfect implementation from the political top to the bureaucratic bottom. In order to qualify that view I intend to mold a more substantiated horizon of expectations based on both research, i.e. what we can expect based on scholarly knowledge of the relevant aspects of military organizations, and professional norms, i.e. shared military beliefs that inform behavior (cf. Farrell, 2007). This will also serve to contrast any less formalized intra-professional beliefs of how "things usually are" in multinational operations. To formulate expec-

tations, then, I first draw matter from relevant literature, but as has been indicated earlier in the literary review, the supply is somewhat limited regarding the particularities that I intend to study here. The most relevant body of research is a field within war studies on the so called *principles of war*. And by supplementing it with matter from the military's own accumulated knowledge and norms, mainly inscribed in doctrine, reasonable expectations can be deduced.

It is noticeable that regardless if we follow research or professional norms the outcome is very similar. The reason for this is that they are so intimately intertwined that they appear to mutually reinforce each other. For centuries, military thinkers have intellectually kneaded the foundational principles that guide the conduct of war and collated them into doctrine which is used in military organizations' training, socialization and practice. And on the other hand, military scholars have studied this doctrine, training, socialization and practice and developed theories about these principles, theories which are in turn used in military education (Alger, 1982, xvi, Ångström and Widén, 2015, 79-82), thus reconstructing them in the military profession as well as in the academy. According to Ångström and Widén this close relationship between theory and practice is not surprising, nor is it unique to the case of the military. In this field and others, practice is almost bound to be "theory-laden" as theory is bound to be "practice-laden", and explanatory theory and normative practice could therefore "be understood as two sides of the same coin" (Ångström and Widén, 2015, 80-83). Hence, reviewing scholarly research and professional norms yield very similar results.

The principles of war can be traced, albeit under different terms, all the way back to Sun Tzu but can be said to have their contemporary intellectual roots in the Age of Enlightenment. However, it was not until the 1920s with the establishment of the modern military academies that they were institutionalized as we know them today. Despite their proponents, they also have had critics. The notion of principles represents a positivistic view on war and the conduct of warfare, i.e. war as a science, while critics like Moltke view the conduct of warfare more as an art and basically reject the notion of universal principles. And others, like the contemporary and prominent military historian John Keegan, question their theoretical validity due to the fact that they have seldom been subjected to systematic testing (Ångström and Widén, 2015, 80-83). Nevertheless their standing in scholarly research and especially professional thinking is prominent.

Superior–subordinate molecule

In military organizations in general we can expect superior-subordinate relations that create unity of command rather than duality of command.

A body of work in administrative theory holds that in order to manage effectively, "it is necessary for a decision-maker to have a clear and unambig-

uous authority over subordinates that comes from a unity of command (Finkelstein and D'Aveni, 1994) which implies two things: that authority is active and undivided. This "principle of unity" is also dominant in military organizations as it is believed that coordinated leadership, including clear and unambiguous chains of command, promotes operational success (e.g. JCS, 2013a, 85, e.g. JCS, 2013c, Ångström and Widén, 2015).

Even if the principle of unity may be regarded as almost universal in Western military organizations it is widely acknowledged that unity of command is challenging to achieve in both joint[23] and multinational operations (Sproles, 2002). As mentioned in the literary review, Auerswald and Saideman have studied national control over force contributions in ISAF and found a significant variation between participating NATO members (and NATO partners) when it comes to how much control the national government exercises over its troops. To reiterate, coalition governments tend to place more restrictions on their troops, implying less control for the multinational commander, while presidential and single party systems tend to implement less restrictions, implying more control for the multinational commander (Auerswald and Saideman, 2014, 13-14). However, stronger or weaker national control does not have to result in duality of command *per se*. For example, a strong single party government may exercise such strong national control that it effectively disconnects the multinational chain of command which would constitute unity of command, albeit a national one, for that particular force commander.

In the Swedish case, unity of command is expected to prevail even in multinational operations (Försvarsmakten, 2002, Försvarsmakten, 2011a, Swedish Armed Forces, 1997) largely as an effect of the mechanism of transfer of authority. During the Cold War this was upheld to such a degree that Swedish officers in UN operations were forced into a leave of absence from the Armed Forces during their temporary multinational deployments (Ångström, 2010). This practice is very different from that of many other states which insist upon leading their troops from their national capitols, a practice that has led to the use of national caveats that delimits the operational freedom of the multinational commanders (Saideman and Auerswald, 2012) and by implication divides command. Such national/multinational duality of command earned negative connotations after the failures to protect civilians in Srebrenica in 1995 and is commonly viewed as military malpractice. As can be noted, this Swedish experience contradicts Auerswald and Saideman's theory since Sweden has had a coalition government throughout the time period, and actually a minority coalition government during the last three years of it.

Thus, we can expect unity of command in military organizations in general and, accordingly, a striving for unity of command in multinational oper-

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[23] Operations involving more than one branch, e.g. army, navy and air force.

ations (either with a national or a multinational emphasis) which, theoretically, will decrease the discretion of subordinates. Even though it may not be feasible in multinational military operations due to political and other considerations, it is still the goal, and nation states can, depending on their view on national, sovereign control over its own military assets, be expected to either strive for a national unity of command (thus rendering the multinational chain of command operationally redundant) or to hand over command to the multinational chain of command in order to maintain a multinational unity of command.

Authority

Regarding authority we can expect that military leadership will be exercised actively rather than passively which implies active leadership on the part of the superiors vis-à-vis their subordinates. This notion is associated with the professional expectation of military personnel to *act* as opposed to being passive. As mentioned before, Swedish doctrine and leadership manuals have consistently stipulated that "irresoluteness and omission to act burdens a commander more than mistakes regarding choice of means". In military scholarship this notion is intimately related to the principle of *initiative* which is seen as crucial in the iterative loop that is the duel between opposing adversaries according to military thinking on decision making and leadership. Thus, to act rather than to react makes it possible to maintain or gain the initiative in the duel (cf. Ångström and Widén, 2015, 83). Furthermore, according to Auerswald and Saideman's (2014) research we can, in theory, expect stricter national control of the Swedish force given the government collations of the time period. Hence, both research and military professional norms, in cooperation, tell us that we can expect authority to be active rather than passive which will delimit rather than increase a subordinate's discretion.

Task Specificity

In military command and control we can expect specificity rather than non-specificity regarding tasking.

In the research literature, task specificity is related to the *Principle of Purpose* which stipulates that "military endeavors should be aimed at clear and achievable objectives" and that "plans and operations at each level - strategic, operational and tactical - should help achieve the overall political objective" (Ångström and Widén, 2015, 82-83). This presumes that decision making at each level transforms a higher objective to partial, coordinated sub-objectives to be transferred down the chain of command.

Military professional norms mimic this concept in practice, in the modern era in the shape of so called mission command, or *Auftragstaktik* and it is

hard to exaggerate the importance of this command philosophy in Swedish military doctrine. It has been present in Swedish military thinking and encoded in doctrine and handbooks since the latter part of the nineteenth century (Palmgren and Wikström, 2016, 48). It is also a principle that is deeply embedded in the Armed Forces socialization of its personnel and that holds a central position in its doctrine:

> Mission command is the foundation of all command within the Armed Forces [...] (Försvarsmakten, 2014, 17).

Mission command is also a central concept in most other Western military communities, for example in the UK armed forces (Storr, 2003), and has also, as a consequence of lessons learned in Afghanistan and Iraq, gained increased relevance in the US military, where the concept does not seem to have had the same cultural status as in, for example, the Swedish military (Heyward, 2013) but where it is purposefully implemented in doctrine (US Army, 2012).

   In the military, mission command can be seen as a philosophy for the vertical relationship between superior and subordinate. The principle is to push initiative downwards in order to enhance operational results, building on the idea that the executer has both the skill and the insight to better decide *how* a mission is to be executed. It is thus a system of mutual trust and initiative (Storr, 2003). However, it is still a disciplined system that allows bounded discretion but that is still about authority:

> Mission command is the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations (US Army, 2012).

This bounded delegation is enabled by "making goals and limitations clear for the subordinate so that they understand the purpose of the operation […] and how their tasks will help achieve the goals (Försvarsmakten, 2014, 17). Hence, subordinates are free to choose the *method* with which they accomplish a given task.

An important input here is the recently issued Swedish special investigation which concludes that the Swedish Government has failed to concretize the goals of the UN Security Council resolutions and the international Afghanistan conferences and formulate clear goals of the military engagement. Instead it referred to the operation plans of ISAF (Regeringskansliet 2017, 11, 181). This could suggest non-specificity on the onset so to way. However, political vagueness does not imply low specificity for a force commander on the ground. Instead, given the planning competence of the military organiza-

tions - both the Swedish one and NATO – we could expect increased military efforts to transform vague political goals into relevant tasks for the deployed forces.

In summary then, we can expect a specific rather than a non-specific *what* in a superior's tasking of a subordinate and a non-specific *how,* which, theoretically, will increase a subordinate's discretion within certain boundaries defined by the specific what.

Implications of allocated resources

In military operations we can expect allocated resources that harmonize with the mission, even though this concept is harder to ground in research and professional norms than the other ones.

In war studies, the notion of harmonization between resources and mission can also be derived from the Principle of Purpose as well, by assuming that allocated resources should reasonably match a mission at a given level of warfare just as a given mission is assumed to correlate to an overarching military or political goal. Furthermore, the Principle of Economy also implies harmonization between resources and mission since "the limited means that are available lead to the need to prioritize so that operations only receive as large a proportion of the available resources as the task requires" (Ångström and Widén, 2015, 83, 84). Hence this notion of economy of force not only presumes allocation of the right force for the mission but also the right equipment.

Sweden takes pride in its long track record of so-called traditional peacekeeping, a tradition which has been challenged by the operations in the Balkans and in Afghanistan (Agrell, 2013) where force structure, equipment and mandate suggested a type of realistic peacekeeping, i.e. a traditional peacekeeping force with added capabilities for worst case scenarios such as riots and combat situations. Yet, Swedish forces are generally deployed to relatively safe multinational operations or relatively safe parts of a conflict area. Thus, while for example US, UK, Canadian and Danish forces generally were deployed to high risk operations such as the campaigns in Iraq and the relatively more hostile southern part of Afghanistan, Swedish forces were not sent to Iraq (arguably also for political reasons) but to the relatively calmer northern part of Afghanistan. This has been an issue of some debate in Sweden as the operational environment in the north has gradually turned more hostile and violent, prompting some observers to speak of warfighting rather than peacekeeping (e.g. Agrell, 2013).

However, since the end of the Cold War, the character of Swedish participation in multinational operations has changed in a number of ways.

After the experiences in the Balkans in the 1990s, the mission of traditional peacekeeping has been augmented with two other levels of ambition creating a range of missions in peace operations ranging from peacekeeping

to the more ambitions - and dangerous – peace enforcement and even war (Försvarsmakten, 2002, 106-107, Swedish Armed Forces, 1997, 3-6, 3-7). Thus, in the Post-Cold War era, Sweden has participated in larger operations than before led by NATO or EU rather than the UN. Also, the character of the operations has been peace enforcement rather than traditional peacekeeping. Taken together, Sweden (like the other Nordic countries) has made a move "away from the classical UN model dominated by impartiality, consent, and non-violence towards a more coercive posture of using military force" (Ångström, 2010). Thus, given Sweden's history of participation in multinational operations, and particularly considering the evolvement of Swedish deployments after the Cold War, we can expect allocated resources to reflect peacekeeping or to be of a multipurpose character that can handle both peacekeeping and peace enforcement and in some instances even war-like contingencies. Theoretically, a multipurpose force will not increase discretion as long as the accompanying task is specific.

Summary

To recapitulate, we note that research on both Western military organizations and the Swedish military, as well as the professional norms of the latter, due to a close relationship between theory and practice, point in very similar directions and hence lay out a rather coherent set of expectations. These are presented in the matrix below:

Table 2. *Summary of expectations*

Structural factors	Result
Superior–subordinate molecule	Unity of command
Authority	Active
Task specificity	Specific what/non-specific how
Resources	Peacekeeping/multi-purpose

In the multinational military operation we expect a strive for unity of command with active rather than passive authority, which bounds subordinates' discretion to determine the means within reasonable and agreed upon limits. In the multinational military operation we also expect superiors to issue *specific* tasks for the *Auftragstaktik* to work, that is a specific *what* but a non-specific *how*. Finally, we expect to see a force that is organized, equipped and intended for peacekeeping. Taken together this implies a bounded discretion on the part of force commanders, i.e. a very controlled and delimited discretion in a mission command manner, meaning that they have discretion to choose or design their concept of operations to achieve a given mission.

As a final note it should be mentioned that this horizon of expectations may or may not align with force commanders' *a priori* expectations, or their *posteriori* experiences for that matter. Undoubtedly, they have been trained and socialized in the very milieu that I derive these expectations from, and thus could be expected to foster the same ideas and norms and hold the same or similar expectations. Or, if they have previous experiences from multinational operations such as the Afghanistan campaign that perhaps depart from these expectations, they may have different expectations.

Arguably, this is an empirical issue, and even though force commanders' preconceptions are not an explicit research question in this investigation it is undoubtedly an aspect that will be revealed during the investigation.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed theoretical concepts that pertain to the discretion of managers in organizations, a category that force commanders fall into. What I carry forward into the next chapter are two main things. The first is the notion that force commanders are managers in vertical chains of command that need to elucidate what the overarching principal's mission is, what their force's mission is and how they are to achieve it. These three decisions will provide analytical focal points that serve two critical purposes for this thesis. One is that they can be seen as transition points in the implementation chain where policy from one level changes form and transits to the next level below. And another is that these transition points represent the best place to observe discretion in implementation. As Lipsky stresses, discretion is an integral part of the street-level bureaucracy, but, as recent research points out, it is not exclusive to the lowest levels of the street-level bureaucracy (Hupe et al., 2015). Thus, we can assume that military force commanders *have* discretion, but *what* that discretion is and, in the end, how it affects policy implementation, remain pressing empirical questions.

The second thing I carry forward is the notion that the structure in which force commanders are situated projects input for their decision-making, both explicitly and implicitly. I.e. there is more than the actual policy content that operates in strategic decision-making. Furthermore, these (potentially) influential structural factors can be understood both objectively with an outside-in perspective and subjectively with an inside-out perspective. Thus, an investigation of force commanders' discretion can include a part with an outside-in perspective of such structural factors that aims to make an objective assessment of how discretion occurs in that structural setting and what discretion force commanders can be expected to have. And it can also include a part with an inside-out perspective of such structural factors that aims to describe how force commanders have *perceived* that structural setting and what discretion they have experienced. Not only can this dual approach pro-

vide a richer description of discretion but it can also say something of how the structure and the agent interact to create or curtail discretion.

These two aspects have been summarized in an analytical schema to be used in the analysis of structurally induced discretion and perceived discretion of force commanders. Finally I have populated the analytical schema with expected outcomes to serve as a frame of reference when I discuss the empirical findings in the final chapter.

Chapter 4 – Method

In international affairs, and throughout the social world, there are two sorts of story to tell and a range of theories to go with each. One story is an outsider´s, told in the manner of a natural scientist seeking to explain the workings of nature and treating the human realm as part of nature. The other is an insider's, told so as to make us understand what the events mean, in a sense distinct from any meaning found in unearthing the laws of nature.

Hollis and Smith, 1991

Introduction

This chapter discusses three main aspects of method. The first is research design where I explain the origins of the idea to study force commanders' discretion from two different perspectives and describe how I apply the analysis schema in the analytical chapters. The second aspect is case selection where I explain why I have chosen to study Swedish force commander as a category of policy implementers and discuss methodological considerations regarding that choice. And the third aspect is data collection where I describe how I have collected official print and conducted interviews with the force commanders and other informants, and discuss methodological considerations pertaining to the data and its sources.

Research design

The underpinning idea for the research design in this study is a simple and straight forward assumption: to study force commanders' discretion from two perspectives is more fruitful than to study it from one.

The notion draws from Simon and Hollis' text *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*. In it, they discuss the two intellectual traditions that dominate the social sciences: one which they call the "outsider's" story, associated with the scientific ambition to *explain*, and the other the "insider's" story which is associated with the ambition to *understand*.

The inside story is common in journalism and news media where international relations are often represented as personal encounters between world leaders, for example Reagan and Gadaffi rather than the U.S. and Libya, or al-Assad and Putin rather than Syria and Russia, where actions are explained by trying to convey their reasons and accounts at an individual level, regardless of the fact that those independent variables are rarely readily available to news reporters. Hollis and Smith associates the inside story with the hermeneutic branches of social science. It takes the perspective of the individual actor and aims to investigate "how the actors defined the issues and the alternatives, what they believed about the situation and each other, what they aimed to achieve, and how" (Hollis and Smith, 1991, 2-3), which we in theoretical, international relations terms might categorize as a constructivist approach (c.f. Jackson and Sørensen, 2003, 254).

This idea that ideas matter in the study of international politics can be traced back to the pioneering Snyder, Bruck and Sapin who founded a tradition of research on perceptions and belief systems as a part of foreign policy decision-making back in the fifties (Wendt, 1999, 92). Their notion of the state as a situated actor (in turn constituted by the individuals acting in the name of the state) put heightened analytical focus on the actor's perception of their situation and they even argued that "the key to the explanation of why the state behaves the way it does lies in the way its decision-makers as actors define the situation". However, their analytical model also encompassed what they called internal and external settings referring to both domestic and international factors and conditions that the state's decision-makers perceived and built their world view on (Snyder et al. 2002, 59-61) suggesting, in a way, that both an inside-out and an outside-in perspective is necessary to describe – and indeed explain – decision-making in international politics. Incidentally, Hollis and Smith also acknowledge that the inside may not only be the result of the "desires, beliefs, and resulting reasons for action", but also of external factors.

The outside story on the other hand is associated with the natural sciences' search for causes, i.e. causal factors exogenous to the actors (Hollis and Smith, 1991, 3) and also, by implication, with social science disciplines that share such conceptions, for example neorealism in which the general cause for actors' behavior is considered to be the anarchic system of states rather than what goes on in the minds of state leaders (Jackson and Sørensen, 2003, 84-85). However, causes – of war for example – can be sought at various levels of abstraction e.g. "within man, within the structure of the separate states, within the state system" and the focus can vary depending on where one places the "nexus of important causes" (Waltz 2001, 12).

In this field of two seemingly opposite perspectives, scholars usually take one of three positions. They either advocate one and criticize the other or vice versa, or regret the polarization between them and suggest some form of integration between the two. It has been suggested that "In many cases there

may be much to be gained by using the tools of one to try to answer questions that tend to be asked primarily by the other" and that it is the "most fruitful way to advance not only these two research agendas, but more importantly, our understanding of world politics" (Fearon and Wendt, 2008, 52-53). I will return to such debate shortly.

To complicate matters, Hollis and Smith also argue that there is a level-of-analysis problem to take into account, which problematizes the seemingly one-dimensional character of the inside-outside model. They argue that both the inside perspective and the outside perspective are impaired with level-of analysis problems. While the outside perspective struggles with the relationships between the behavior of entities at different levels of analysis, i.e. the system of states, the states and the bureaucracies within the states, the inside perspective is challenged with dealing with the relationships between ideas and norms at the individual and various aggregate levels, e.g. organizational, national and international norms.

Thus, these layers or levels imply that there is a second dimension to take into account, namely a top-down/bottom-up, or holistic/individualistic, dimension. Accordingly, by combining the outside/inside (or explain/understand) dimension with the implied top-down/bottom-up (holistic/individualistic) dimension, Hollis and Smith attempt to show that the two perspectives together create a two-dimensional representation which suggests multiple analytical approaches (Figure 7). For example, the structurally inclined analyst "would be best suited by some realism in a unified philosophy of science and hence by taking the main task to be one of *explaining*" while "someone who inclines to a hermeneutic view in philosophy will be best suited by a[n International Relations] theory which works from the inside and tries to *understand* international relations:

Figure 7 Hollis and Smith's combination of two analytical perspectives

Hence, the ambition to understand, or to explain for that matter, does not exclude the analyst from taking both a holistic and individualistic approach. On the contrary, by doing so she is able to combine the holistic and individualistic to reveal both the "rules" or "institutions" that guide the individual *and* the reasoning of the individual (Hollis and Smith, 1991, 7-9, 214-215).

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This is the approach that I strive for in this study. I am not concerned with the potentially reciprocal, causal relationship between entities at different levels-of-analysis but rather with illuminating one phenomena from two different perspectives based on the assumption that this approach yields a richer result than applying only one perspective. To elaborate, taking the inside-out perspective alone will not allow us to determine whether the decision maker's reasoning and deliberation and subsequent choice is congruent with her outside influence or not. And to try to understand the decision maker from the outside-in by analyzing the influence that is placed on her will only be useful when her decisions are congruent with that influence. But if the outside-in perspective predicts one type of behavior or decision and the decision makers act differently than that prediction, then we lack sufficient information to understand why. Thus, by combining the two perspectives I argue that we generate more information that will facilitate a greater understanding of what occurs in the intersection between the top-down policy chain and the decision maker, for example by illuminating the presence and operation of discretion.

As briefly mentioned above, this methodological attempt can be questioned and criticized. It could be argued that combining a holistic and individualistic perspective is equivalent to combining a realist with a constructivist approach which, according to some scholars, is not possible since they are incompatible, a line of argument that could undermine the outside-in model. In the seemingly polarized debate between rationalists and constructivists, by some identified as the "rationalism-constructivism controversy", some constructivists claim that their methodology is incompatible with realism due to it being "variously 'positivist' or 'empiricist'". Realists, on the other hand, often claim that their paradigm is incompatible with constructivism *per se* due to a perceived idealism and utopianism of constructivists in general (Barkin 2003, 325, 330).

However, Barkin (beyond showing that both realism and constructivism are too multifaceted in nature to be juxtaposed in this manner) argues that the critics' arguments do not hold up to "careful scrutiny", his point being that constructivism is not a paradigm in the sense that realism, liberalism or Marxism are but rather "a set of assumptions about how to study politics". Hence, constructivism, "whether understood as a methodology, epistemology or ontology", is compatible with a variety of paradigms, including realism. In fact, he also argues that to be able to account for and explain change in international systems, constructivist methodology requires both an "idealist constructivism" and a "realist "constructivism" (Ibid., 326, 336-338).

Arguably, the rationalism-constructivism debate is far more complex than the issue of combining an outside-in with an inside-out perspective in Hollis and Smith's sense. Nevertheless, the critique cannot be disregarded by simply disconnecting the two issues from each other, but Barkin as well as

Hollis and Smith make the argument that combining viewpoints and approaches offer opportunities that should not be left undiscovered.

My own position in this somewhat tangled discursive field can be described as eclectic. I am uncomfortable with having to determine myself as either a realist or a constructivist and find it hard to understand the sometimes almost ideological positioning of scholars in different camps. I understand the different viewpoints' that varying views on ontological, epistemological and methodological issues entail, but I do not believe that they necessarily have to exclude one another. Instead, in line with Hollis and Smith, or Snyder, Bruke and Sapin, or Wendt for that matter, I believe in an eclectic approach that can combine different perspectives or viewpoints if it benefits a certain purpose.

I am also somewhat uncomfortable with having to define my analytical ambition as either explaining or understanding. I acknowledge that the two terms have come to be associated with different theoretical and methodological positions but, again, they do not need to exclude one another other. In natural and social science, to explain is generally defined as establishing causality between independent and dependent factors or even to subordinate the *explanadum* under a general scientific law (e.g. Teorell and Svensson 2007, 27, Ödman 2007, 82). This is not the ambition or purpose of this study. However, in daily life, and in science according to some, pointing to a general law doesn't explain much at all. The almost classic example of the failing car engine suggests that to explain function, or lack of function, is to make something (the engine) understandable (Ödman 2007, 83) for example by describing it.

The purpose to understand is also tightly associated with the method of interpretation. For example, in hermeneutics, a text needs to be interpreted in order for us to understand it. This sounds somewhat mysterious but in practice it means to apply a hypothetic-deductive method on meaningful data (Teorell and Svensson 2007, 99). This is something that can be applied in this study to understand the perceptions, deliberations, and – ultimately – the discretion of force commanders. The hypothetic-deductive part would thus be the outside-in analysis which provides a "preliminary interpretation", or what we think that the structural factors mean for individual discretion, while the analysis of the "text" – i.e. revealing the force commanders' perceptions of and deliberations over those factors – shows what the structural factors actually mean to them (Ibid.).

Thus, as declared earlier, this study applies both perspectives to investigate force commanders discretion. Hence, one part (the outside-in perspective) investigates how the force commanders are commanded in the implementation chain and what discretion such command reasonably entails, and the other part (the inside-out perspective) investigates how force commanders experience their discretion under such command. In short, I aim to illu-

minate discretion from two perspectives in order to increase our understanding of it.

Here it should be clarified that Swedish colonels and other officers can operate in many different contexts, for example in national operations, training of troops, national and international exercises, and purely bureaucratic settings, and it is acknowledged that these varying contexts imply varying characteristics regarding chains of command and implementation chains. In this study though, I am only interested in the context of multinational operations and the discretion force commanders have in that context. Therefore, the expected outcome discussed in the previous chapter (p. 77) reflects this particular setting.

To implement this two-sided design the analysis schema described in chapter 3 is applied in three consecutive parts that 1) establish a horizon of expectations, 2) analyzes the externally implied discretion of force commanders, and 3) analyzes their perceptions of this influence and their experiences of discretion. The first part has already been conducted in chapter 3 by determining the expected outcome based on research and professional norms.

In the second part, the analysis schema is applied in an analysis of structural factors without regard to the force commanders' perceptions of them. The analysis primarily interprets the content of official documents that regulate the operational context of the force commanders and draws conclusions about how discretion is shaped based on the theoretical assumptions in chapter 3. This outside-in part of the analysis is presented in chapter 6.

In the third part, the analysis schema is applied in an analysis of the force commanders' individual perceptions of the structural factors and their experience of discretion. This inside-out part of the analysis is presented in chapter 7.

The results for each factor in each part of the analysis are successively entered into the following matrix:

Table 3. *Matrix for compiling empirical results*

Structural factors	Expectations	The outside-in perspective	The inside-out perspective
Superior–subordinate molecule			
Authority			
Task specificity			
Resources			

Case selection

In this project I study one particular level of command, and, consequently, one particular instance of military commander. And furthermore, I study them in the context of one particular operation: the U.N. mandated multinational campaign in Afghanistan that followed the attacks in New York City and Washington D.C. in 2001 and that was eventually placed under NATO command. Thus, I have made case selections at two levels of abstraction which I discuss here.

Sweden's participation in the Afghanistan campaign

At a higher level of abstraction, the Afghanistan campaign can be seen as one case among many possible ones. For the more general question regarding the role of the military in the policy process one could argue that any other military campaign could suffice, for example the Balkan operations in Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia. Also at a higher level of abstraction, the Swedish participation in the Afghanistan campaign is one of many cases, others being the Norwegian or British participation for instance. However, this study is driven by a particular observation, that of an apparent discrepancy between Swedish political decisions and military practice in the Afghanistan campaign. This is the puzzle that I wish to shed light on and thus the case selection at the aggregate level is given in a sense. Furthermore, the Afghanistan campaign offers some unique and useful characteristics. First, Sweden has been so-called *lead nation* of the PRT in Mazar-e Sharif for several years, which implies particular responsibilities on the commanders of the Swedish force and presents a suitable interface between the studied force and its superior principals from a policy implementation perspective.

Second, the conflictual character of the campaign has arguably placed a tougher strain on decision-makers at all levels than previous campaigns have. Seldom has the national debate been so polarized as in this case, both regarding the appropriateness of participating in a campaign that was so apparently dangerous, as well as the actual purpose of participating.

And third, the Afghanistan campaign's implied task of nation building is new compared to previous operations. In Kosovo for instance, the multinational military force's overarching task was to create a "safe and secure environment", or SASE as it was commonly abbreviated, while efforts regarding governance and development was the task of other organizations. In Afghanistan, ISAF managed "security, governance and development" itself for a considerable period of time, suggesting a relatively broader military mandate. Thus, the Afghanistan campaign not only presents an interesting context and challenge for the cases (the commanders) but also promises to generate specific and interesting empirical results.

To what extent can findings based on this case selection be generalized? As mentioned, the Afghanistan case presents some interesting, and thus particular, characteristics that may render generalization difficult. In particular, it's partly operative features of counterinsurgency and nation building and it's periodically high level of violence potentially places it in a different category than other campaigns. However, previous campaigns have also been categorized by particular and new features, for example the ethnic conflict character of the Balkan campaigns in the nineties and the geographical and cultural aspects of the Chad campaign in 2008. In fact, most campaigns in the post-Cold War period display varying and unique characteristics which renders generalization somewhat difficult. For instance, the command and control arrangements have varied throughout the time period, as some have been led by NATO while others have been led by the EU. However, this does not make them incomparable. On the contrary, studying them in a comparable manner makes it possible to identify similarities and differences which can be used to draw general conclusions with a logic of difference approach.

The force commanders

At a lower level of abstraction, force commanders can also be seen as one possible choice among many within the Swedish force in Afghanistan and for the purpose of analyzing the discretion of street-level bureaucrats in the deployed force, several options are available. Michael Lipsky might argue that the squad commanders and their eight riflemen would be the most suitable categories as they can be said to constitute the purest cases of street-level bureaucrats with his definition. However, that choice would disregard the role of managers in street-level bureaucracies, their discretion and its impact on policy implementation. And with a more manager oriented approach, several other categories of officers are also viable candidates. The force's staff for instance is populated by many officers who undoubtedly exercise discretion as they apply their professional skills in planning and designing particular aspects of the force's operations. They are, however, not decision makers in the same sense as force commanders are since they are not situated in the operational chain of command but rather attached to it as they serve such decision makers, primarily the force commander.

This leads us to the other commanders in the chain of command: the company commanders and the platoon commanders. These two categories certainly play a significant and unique role in the execution of the force's operations. They regularly act as "on scene commanders" when a part of the force departs from the camp to conduct an operation in the field, either alone or together with other units from ISAF or the Afghan security forces, and in this role they have to be able to make decisions based on sound judgement under very particular circumstances. For example, during the infamous de-

ployment on the so-called Ali Zayi Hill in 2010, the platoon commanders where the highest ranking ISAF officers on the scene and had to deal with any events that took place in the surrounding villages and fields, including battle, based on their own judgement.

Yet, even though their position in the force deserves its own research project, its relevance for policy implementation cannot be equaled to that of the force commanders. Positioned at the top of a nationally deployed force to ISAF, force commanders are the organizational locus where policy direction from the outside is transformed into military direction on the inside of the force. They may (eventually) be assisted by both staff members and subordinate commanders but they are the ones that hold the ultimate responsibility to turn policy into practice in a designated geographical area. Their position and influence also has the potential to shape the work of staff members, subordinate commanders and soldiers in the field in an unprecedented way, and in combination this makes the role of force commanders unique from a policy implementation perspective. Therefore, force commanders are the units of analysis in this study.

Regarding generalizability, conclusions based on the study of force commanders can only be generalized to other levels of commanders to a limited degree. However, this is not the purpose of this study. Instead, the explicit purpose is to study force commanders and *not* to study other categories within in the force, even though they could, arguably, be studied in a similar manner. The findings could however be generalized to a general class of force commanders (e.g. in other campaigns) considering the arguments made above about the character of the Afghanistan campaign. Even though force commanders in Bosnia, Chad and other campaigns have not faced the exact same operational challenges as the force commanders of the Afghanistan campaign have, they have arguably faced similar challenges and have arguably approached them in a similar manner. Thus, conclusions regarding decision making and discretion could be generalized and tested on other cases. Likewise, to some degree, the findings regarding Swedish force commanders in Afghanistan could be generalized through *comparing* Swedish force commanders with other nations' force commanders. Here, both most different cases (e.g. U.S., German and Georgian force commanders) and most likely cases (e.g. Norwegian force commanders) would offer fruitful points of comparison for generalization.

I delimit the selection of force commanders to the time period when Sweden acted as the so-called lead nation of the Provincial Reconstruction Team Mazar-e Sharif, i.e. from the spring of 2006 until the early summer of 2013.[24] Before that, the senior Swedish officer in Afghanistan, normally a lieutenant colonel, only had the role of contingent commander, i.e. the employing

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[24] The unit was renamed Task Force Northern Lights (TFNL) at the very end of the time period, but in order to avoid confusion I will use the term PRT throughout the text.

agency's highest representative in the country and the principal Swedish military representative in country. However, the deployed units were scattered across the multinational force, and the contingent commander did not command a task force of his own. This changed with the Swedish takeover of the British PRT in Mazar- e Sharif, when the senior Swedish officer in the country was not only the contingent commander but also the commander of the task force.

During this period, the Swedish force had fourteen force commanders (but only thirteen individuals) with the rank of colonel. In the Swedish military system, officers can rise to the rank below that (lieutenant colonel[25]) by completing certain school steps. Attaining the rank of colonel and above (the general ranks) requires selection and nomination by the Armed Forces Headquarters Promotion Board and appointment by the Government. Hence, colonels are individuals who have been screened, evaluated and vetted by their peers for more than two decades.

In the regular force structure at home, a typical post for a colonel is chief of a regiment (or flotilla for a commander in the Navy)[26] or brigade commander. Lately, the post as regimental commander has come to imply a temporary posting as force commander in a multinational force.

The post as deployed force commander is rather particular. Since Sweden is normally involved only in one or two major multinational operations at a time, only one or two Swedish colonels hold such a post at any given time. Thus, only thirteen officers of the Swedish Armed Forces have had the experience of being PRT commander in Afghanistan.

The following table identifies the force commanders of the time period:

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[25] The Army, Air force and Marine corps uses the term lieutenant colonel while the Navy uses the term commander.
[26] Other posts are particular staff posts such as chief of staff of the land component command in the national headquarters, or as military attaché at an embassy abroad.

Table 4. *Swedish commanders of PRT MES/TFNL 2006-2013*

Unit	Time in theatre	Name	Age	Previous deployments	Background
FS11	May 2006-Nov 2006	Bengt Sandström	46	-	Ranger
FS12	Nov 2006-May 2007	Jan Pålsson	47	-	Armor
FS13	May 2007-Nov 2007	Mats Danielsson	46	-	Ranger (Air force)
FS14	Nov 2007-May 2008	Torbjörn Larsson	48	-	Artillery, armor
FS15	May 2008-Nov 2008	Bengt Alexandersson	47	Bosnia 1994	Armor
FS16	Nov 2008-May 2009	Håkan Hedlund	45	Macedonia 1993, Kosovo 2004	Infantry
FS17	May 2009-Nov 2009	Olof Granander	48	Kosovo 1999	Armor
FS18	Nov 2009-May 2010	Christer Tistam	49-50	Bosnia 1998, Kosovo 2005	Infantry
FS19	May 2010-Nov 2010	Gustaf Fahl	49	Liberia 2005	Armor
FS20	Nov 2010-May 2011	Michael Nilsson	49-50	-	Armor
FS21	May 2011-Nov 2011	Richard Johansson	45	Bosnia 1994	Armor
FS22	Nov 2011-May 2012	Anders Löfberg	52	-	Ranger
FS23	May 2012-Nov 2012	Torbjörn Larsson	53	Afghanistan 2007	Armor
FS24	Nov 2012-May 2013	Michael Claesson	47	Kosovo 2000	Armor

The individuals in this selection were born around 1960, did their military service at about 18 years of age and then entered the military profession around 1980. This means that they were professionally trained and socialized during the 1980s when the purpose of the Swedish military was to ward off a hostile invasion of Swedish territory and when service in multinational operations, i.e. in Cyprus or Lebanon, was something extracurricular and not normatively mandatory as it has become since. This is reflected in the fact that those individuals who had previous multinational experience before their tour in Afghanistan earned it in the 1990s or 2000s and not during the 1980s. Thus, a Swedish colonel who is asked to consider serving as force commander in Afghanistan for six months is typically a 45-year-old man. He is likely an armor officer (53 %) and chances are fairly good (53 %) that he has served abroad before.[27] However, nearly all of them (92 %) have never served in Afghanistan before, nor served as force commander abroad[28].

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[27] As a point of reference, the international experience of the subordinate – and younger – company commanders in the Swedish force is far greater. Of them, the majority have at least one previous tour behind them, making their Afghanistan deployment their second or third one.
[28] The only exception being Torbjörn Larsson who first served as force commander of FS14 in 2007-2008 and then as force commander of FS23 in 2012.

Methodological considerations

According to Pettigrew, the "best possible way" to study people making decisions is to live with them while they make the decisions (Pettigrew, 2001, 56). This seems instinctively right, even though it involves a number of methodological issues and choices. The observer role (participant or non-participant) cannot be considered optimal *per se* if, for example, the empirical requirements concern decision-makers' personal deliberations and reasoning. Furthermore, the mere presence of an observer, participating or not participating, risks affecting the observed and alter the outcome. Depending on the degree of participation of the observer, it may be best suited for studying interpersonal interactions within a decision group rather than the more tacit reasoning of a single individual. Furthermore, the method is only suitable for future decisions and does not facilitate the study of past events which are to be understood or explained.

In contrast, a less good possible way would be to observe the actions that follow from the decision-making. Such a behavioral approach presupposes that actions transparently convey the decisions that precede them. In a Simonian hierarchy of decision-making, analyzing a particular decision would then imply observing and interpreting either the decision-making made or the action taken at the level below based on the decision of interest. Although this is a feasible approach, it does not correspond to the theoretical position taken in this thesis.

Another less perfect way would be to question individuals close to the decision-making, for example people in decision-making groups. However, as has been argued earlier, even though modern organizations often house executive staffs and decision-making groups, they do not make actual decisions but rather advise or inform the leader who makes the formal decisions. Naturally, such individuals may be invaluable in understanding the context of leaders' decision-making, but they cannot account for how the leader has deliberated and chosen.

I claim that the best way, for the purposes of this study, is to simply ask the decision-makers of interest. This approach makes it possible to interact with the units of analysis in a way that the observer cannot; it makes it possible to probe the individual and personal deliberation and reasoning of the decision-makers; and it makes it possible to study a longitudinal sequence of decision-makers without having to "live with them" for the duration of their tenures. To ask force commanders about force commanders' decision making and sense of discretion is to engage sources with high *authenticity* and *centrality*.

An obvious drawback of this approach is the accumulating loss of *contemporaneity*. When studying fourteen successive commanders from a seven-year period, the earlier ones will have more distant recollections of their thoughts and deliberations than the later ones will. Another obvious draw-

back is the issue of *tendency*, as asking the decision-makers themselves how they made decisions inescapably introduces the risk of self-flattering, rationalization and reconstruction. And finally, force commanders' *dependency* towards their principals and employers must be scrutinized.

Dealing with these drawbacks is not trivial. There is hardly any way of getting around the problem of decreasing contemporaneity in a successive, historical line of commanders. The only mitigating circumstance that I can muster is that the strategic decisions that the respondents were faced with prior to their deployments reasonably was such a central issue to them, not only at the time but in light of their careers, that they can recollect how they deliberated and what they decided. The strategic decision I study ought to be different in that respect compared to more finely grained and detailed issues regarding their deployments. This has been noted by several force commanders when I have approached them and has even prompted some of them to revisit their personal journals prior to the interview.

The problem of using the units of analysis as sources is not trivial either. It evokes questions of both tendentiousness and dependency, e.g. can we trust a commander's accounts of how he made crucial and perhaps controversial decisions? Are they objective enough? Do they attempt to frame their decisions in a manner that promotes their future military career?

My first argument for defusing the issues of dependency and tendentiousness is based on my experience from the interviews with the force commanders. It has been evident that the commanders are willing to reveal their personal deliberations and standpoints, even when their answers risk being regarded as less than flattering by outsiders. It is my general impression that commanders stand by their decisions and refrain from sugarcoating them. I assess that this is an expression of professional norms as well as a result of commanders' desire to get their story out. For many of them, the deployment in Afghanistan has been a crucial professional event and most of them have experienced a disappointing lack of interest from outsiders.

Of course, this raises the question of whether they use me, in my role as researcher with military connections, as a qualified valve thought which they can vent their own views for whatever purpose. However, my second argument is that any suspected and obvious attempts to alter accounts for personal or other gain can be discovered by verification with other sources, which I am confident that the respondents are also well aware of. As a researcher, I have broad access not only to informants in immediate and distant proximity to the force commanders, but also to written accounts, such as orders and their own reports, for triangulation and checking. Force commanders are somewhat public figures and their decisions, particularly their strategic ones, are to a large extent public domain. Thus, I assess the risk for tendentiousness to be low.

An associated risk is that respondents believe that I will protect them given our partially shared background and that they can therefore be more open

in an interview with me than with a more outside researcher. This is of course not a problem from a purely methodological standpoint but rather a problem for the respondents. However, apart from the guaranteed anonymity and promise of asking permission to quote respondents by name, no guarantees of such protection have been given, neither explicitly or implicitly. On the contrary, I have always made it extremely clear that the results of my investigation will be compiled in a scientific text and published.

On the other hand, using the decision-makers as sources also entails some methodological advantages. Most obvious is perhaps their unique centrality. Ideally, perhaps, one would prefer objective informants (to the extent that such informants exist), perhaps drawn from the decision-makers' immediate surroundings, e.g. an executive staff or group of advisors. However, although they appear adjacent to the decision-making, they are virtually by definition outsiders to a commander's personal deliberations and reasoning.

Hence, in order to tap into the deliberations and reasoning of commanders in their strategic decision-making, interviews with commanders make up the central data-collection technique in this study. And in order to qualify their stories, interviews with other respondents, both close to the commanders and beyond are used, along with documents. And finally, instead of asking direct questions about decision-making, I have asked more general questions meant to encourage discussions about their decision-making. Not until the end of the interviews, when the empirical requirements of the investigation became clear to the respondents, were more specific questions about decisions asked in order to qualify my interpretations. This will be discussed in more detail below.

Data collection

The theoretical aspects of discretion have been discussed in the previous chapter. I concluded the discussion by asserting that discretion is best understood as structurally induced and individually perceived. Even though the latter may well be sufficient for a basic understanding of discretion, the inclusion of the structural perspective deepens our understanding of the individual perceptions and is therefore warranted. Furthermore, I argued that discretion is intimately related to decision-making and proposed close observation of discretion in relation to the making of so-called strategic decisions, i.e. decisions regarding the principal's mission, the force's mission and the force's concept of operations, which in more general terms could be labeled as the why, what and how of the deployed force. For any level of command, these may be considered the most crucial when it comes to implementation of policy. Thus, the discretion of force commanders is studied both as an objective consequence of the structural factors identified here, and as a sub-

jective consequence of the agents' perceptions of those factors. This assumption drives both the data collection and the interpretative strategies.

As stated, speaking to the decision-makers and analyzing their stories and accounts constitutes a central part of this study. Hence, the interview is the core data collection technique is used here. However, a multitude of data regarding the structural conditions of the force commanders is available from other sources, mainly official documents. In this section I discuss these sources as well as their methodological consequences separately and also provide a brief account of the fieldwork conducted.

Interviewing force commanders

Gathering data from the main respondents has been a matter of identifying them, locating them, arranging a time for an interview, and then conducting the interview. Identifying the force commanders is a fairly straightforward task since they were more or less official figures during their deployment. Common search engines on the Web are sufficient tools for that task. Locating them was trickier. The entry point for locating them was the switchboard at the Armed Forces Headquarters. In some cases, force commanders were found to hold positions in the Armed Forces Headquarters and in other cases the switchboard operators were able to search other telephone directories and forward me to units and garrisons in other parts of Sweden where the colonels have served as regimental or brigade commanders. Others were located through hearsay from colleagues at the Swedish National Defence College, many of whom are officers or former officers. They were able to help me find force commanders who have left the armed forces for example.

Before I describe how the interviews were conducted I will discuss my role as an analyst. In my project a relevant issue is that I have served in the military, that I still have a military status and that I can use it to get close to my units of observation. I have often felt like an anthropologist, but with the significant exception that I am a former insider rather than an outsider which is the typical problem for the regular anthropologist. This inverted circumstance provides some unique opportunities but also some methodological and ethical issues that I will discuss here.

I am a former officer and have served in the peacetime production of military units in Sweden as well as in an operative capacity in the multinational operation in Kosovo. I left active status in 1996 and have been a civilian since but with reserve-officer status. As a researcher on military matters, this background makes it possible for me to conduct fieldwork and data collection in a way that few others can. If I wish, I can use my status and experience not only to gain trust in interview situations but also to get very close to soldiers and officers in their natural habitat, so to speak. It is also very helpful to be familiar with the military bureaucracy when I approach various units and headquarters to gain access to their personnel. And of course, my

background also gives me an interpretative advantage, as I am able to speak the language of the profession and am well acquainted with the general matter at hand.

From a standpoint of scientific theory this means that I am something of a hybrid insider-outsider. Some argue that only insiders can understand and accurately represent that which they attempt to research on the inside, while others argue that outsiders, given their relative ignorance, are better at asking deep and clarifying questions about the inside (Ortbals and Rincker, 2009, 288). It seems safe to say that most researchers that study the military are outsiders. Students in war studies, international relations, peace and conflict studies, military history etc. are usually civilian academics with little or no personal experience from the military. In an interview situation with a civilian academic and a military officer, factors such as civil–military, age, gender, and rank may have a significant impact, both regarding how the researcher views and treats the respondent and also regarding how the respondent views the researcher and chooses to answer questions. Thus, such factors of social structure need to be addressed by the researcher in order to understand his or her role in an objective fashion.

Identity, or more precisely relational issues between researcher and informants/respondents based on differences in identity, affects most researchers at some point. Of utmost importance for the research is the potential influence of "systems of social power" that emanate from factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, age and so on. This may not only be of relevance to the elicitation of information, for example in the setting of an interview, but also to the way in which the researcher presents the results. Yet it is an issue that receives little focus in training prior to undertaking fieldwork (Ortbals and Rincker, 2009, 287).

However, the insider-outsider problem complex also has an almost epistemological dimension, captured well by Chiara Ruffa, who has studied military cultures in Afghanistan and Lebanon: "Can an Italian civilian female researcher ever truly know, describe and interpret the reality of being an insider within the Italian and French battle group?" (Ruffa, 2011). In this dimension, the insider-outsider issue suggests that a researcher without previous personal experience from the domain being researched cannot reach the same level of understanding that an insider can. This argument holds some merit, but so does the argument that an outsider can have the ability to view a foreign domain in ways that insiders cannot. As Ruffa explains, differences in identity required extra time to establish rapport with her military respondents. However, her rather extensive experiences from war-torn countries, her European identity and language skills, and the fact that she was a researcher and not a journalist allowed her to bridge the identity gap between her and the respondents (Ibid., 103-104).

In my case, as an insider-outsider hybrid, I have also had to deal with problems and opportunities. As a semi-insider, I have gained rapport very

easily. Speaking the language of the military and possessing domain knowledge, as well as having the opportunity to wear a uniform during the field trips, has helped create a sense of shared identity and a belonging in interview situations. This has undoubtedly made the respondents open up to me but has also risked jeopardizing my integrity as a researcher and "going native." Another risk with the insider role is that I fail to maintain an objective distance and ability to reflect critically on the results.

However, this is where the bonus of the added role as an outsider comes in. Having trained as a researcher for several years (and having been out of military profession since 1996), I was schooled in critical thinking and in assuming the researcher's distanced attitude to my subject of study. The main guarantor for this ability was the analytical framework with which I approached the force and its members, namely my research question, my theoretical foundation, my empirical requirements and my interview technique. Thus, whenever I could risk nibbling on my researcher perspective, for example in a deep discussion about a respondent's personal deliberations, I could always fall back on my research framework, in the situation as well as afterwards when I transcribed the interview. This has made it possible for me to always regard my discussion partners as subjects of analysis and their stories as data, which I have always been careful to make clear to them. However, the outside role was not only beneficial. A few respondents clearly assumed a skeptical posture towards me as a researcher and treated me as a clear outsider despite my insider attributes. This has not been the case with the force commanders though, as far as I can assess.

In this study, the purpose of the interview is not to capture an objective image of the social reality of respondents. Instead, the purpose of the interview is to capture the respondents' views of such a reality as well as their interpretation of it, i.e. the meaning that they assign to it. As Charmaz explains:

> We start with the experiencing person and try to share his or her subjective view. Our task is objective in the sense that we try to describe it with depth and detail. In doing so, we try to represent the person's view fairly and to portray it as consistent with his or her meanings (Quoted in Miller and Glassner, 2011, 133).

Thus, the analysis of the perceptions of force commanders is not interpretative *per se* but rather descriptive in nature. Interpretation on the part of the researcher only becomes necessary if the respondents do not themselves account for their understandings of structural factors or their discretion. How this is done is explained in the next section regarding operationalization.

My technique for eliciting the respondents' views on structural factors and discretion has been to stimulate them to describe how they made strategic decisions by asking them to tell stories about their experience as force

commanders, focusing on how they got the job, how they deliberated about it, how they created meaning about the mission and how they prepared for it.

The interviews were conducted in secluded facilities in order to provide privacy for the respondents. At the Swedish Defence University and at regiments, garrisons and other workplaces in Sweden, these were usually regular conference rooms or offices. In Afghanistan I was allotted a designated room by the visiting officer of the Swedish force. This provided a controlled and somewhat neutral setting where respondents could temporarily detach themselves from their own specific work situation and immerse in the interview session.

Each interview session began with an introduction that followed a set script. In this introduction I explained that I was a civilian Armed Forces employee on leave to pursue a doctorate at the Swedish Defence University and Uppsala University and that I had not served in Afghanistan but in another theater. I explained that I conduct research on how the state uses its military and how political decisions are turned into concrete activity at the very end of this policy chain, and that such research has been done in other policy areas such as police work, social work, education and health care, but not on "what you guys do and especially not at this organizational level." I also explained that in order to do so I ask questions about how the respondents regard their mission and what they do to fulfill that mission. I stressed that I was interested in personal views rather than official positions.

Furthermore, I declared that I treated my respondents with anonymity[29] and that I wished to record the interviews (audio) in order to maintain precision in my transcripts, and that I asked for and kept certain meta-information about my respondents in order to be able to differentiate them and in order to be able to contact them in the future, should the need arise. I declared that the interview did not contain questions pertaining to classified information and that classified information should not be brought up by the respondents. While conducting interviews at Camp Northern Lights in Afghanistan I also declared that I had cleared this procedure with the task force's security officer. I explained that participation in the interview was voluntary, that the respondent was free not to answer questions, to abort at any time, and to have passages stricken (which never occurred).

After the introduction I asked if the conditions were acceptable (which they always were) and elicited the following meta-information[30] before starting the audio recording:
- Age at beginning of deployment
- Previous missions

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[29] Most force commanders explicitly waived this option, but I have still arranged formal permission to quote them by name afterwards.
[30] When interviewing other categories than force commanders I also asked for name, positon in the unit, and time spent in the operations area

- Military background (eluding to unit and branch culture)

The interview technique followed a semi-open structure. Prior to approaching respondents in Sweden or arriving in theater I constructed a set of interview questions that did not mirror the categories in the analytical schema but that were assessed to elicit data that would correspond to them. The reason was that I wanted to address matters that were central and relevant to the respondents, e.g. thoughts about the mission and the operations, rather than analytical constructs, with the purpose of generating a fruitful discussion instead of discussing theoretical concepts. Hence, I explained that I did have empirical research questions and analytical categories but that the interview would revolve round their personal experiences in Afghanistan.

The interview began by having the respondents describe their own journey from being asked to serve in Afghanistan to deploying there. This was an effective way to quickly uncover several of the empirical issues and to acquire a sense of the particular respondents focus on them and inclination to discuss them. This in turn served as a useful guide for tweaking and tailoring the follow-up questions to achieve the desirable results. The follow-up questions, then, addressed the issues of mission understanding, relationships with superiors and subordinates, and their perceived freedom to shape their own understandings and decisions. Obviously, by the end of the interview, respondents would have developed a good sense of the nature of the underlying empirical requirements as well as the analytical categories, particularly discretion. I therefore left time at the end of the interview for respondents to reflect on things that they deemed pertinent but that had perhaps not been captured during the interview. The complete interview schema is presented in Appendix 1.

The interviews were recorded using a Sony ICD-UX200 digital voice recorder. The audio files were transferred to a computer hard drive and loaded in the F4 transcription software application from audiotranskription.de where the interviews were transcribed and saved in RTF format.

Official documents

Fortunately, military practice produces documents. Military planning processes contain structures of clearly specified documents that serve to capture various aspects of the planning process and provide some traceability between command levels.

Three artefacts can be said to have a particularly central role in military activity. The first is the *operation plan* (OPLAN) which can be seen as the operationally conceptual pivot of each command level (NATO, 2010, 4-2,). The OPLAN describes what is to be achieved and how it is to be executed. It is the result of previous thought and planning and the basis for directing

subordinate commanders and their units. Developing OPLANs is a core activity of military staffs at all levels.

A closely related artefact is the *operation order* (OPO, OPORD or OPORDER) which is the container that conveys operational concepts of the OPLAN and, more importantly, *tasks* from superior to subordinate. Ideally then, each level in a chain of command will develop an operational plan to figure out what is to be done, and issue an operational order to the subordinate level in order to have it done. In some instances, e.g. among lower levels of command during combat, plans and orders are often developed and issued verbally, while at higher levels of command, plans and orders are captured in written documents.

A third artefact that is central in the flow of the superior/subordinate molecule is the *report*. While orders trickle down, reports climb up the chain of command. Thus, various types of reports are used by subordinates to inform their superiors, for example regarding the progress of executing the assigned tasks of an order.

In this study I have attempted to obtain the orders of the superiors of the force commanders. At first, this seemed like a daunting task, partly because the documents are classified secret or confidential, and partly because there was no obvious or easy starting point for identifying and finding the documents. Nevertheless, with a snowball technique it has been possible to successively map the system of plans and orders relevant to this case. The most fruitful method has been to identify a relatively recent order and using its list of references to identify previous versions of it, which are most often explicitly superseded in the beginning of the text, and the guiding orders of the superior command level, which are explicitly referenced. In this manner I have been able to identify a reasonably representative selection of orders of the force commanders and their superior commands.

The next challenge was to locate the documents and obtain them. Finding them was accomplished by writing formal requests to the archive at the Swedish Armed Forces Headquarters, which has forwarded the requests to the relevant sections of the headquarters for processing. They, in turn, have then screened the documents to delete secret information and thus declassified them before handing them out. This has been a remarkably smooth process. Given that Sweden is not a NATO member, I deemed it futile to initiate a similar procedure with NATO. Instead, I requested ISAF documents through the Swedish Armed Forces Headquarters and settled for the ISAF documents that they had in their possession.

The most central documents obtained by this procedure are the operational order of the national superior, i.e. the so called Land Component Command in the Swedish Armed Forces Headquarters, and the multinational superior, i.e. ISAF's Regional Command North (RCN). I have chosen to analyze the main operational orders of both actors and omit any short-term operational orders pertaining to particular issues or situations. Main opera-

tional orders lay out the goals, concepts and tasks for longer periods of times, e.g. months or even years, and are therefore more relevant to force commanders' strategic decision-making.

To the best of my knowledge, these are the operational orders issued by the Land Component Command to the Swedish force:

Table 5. *Land Component Command operational orders*

I	OPORD Sunnanvind I? 2001? (out of scope)	
II	OPORD Sunnanvind II? 2002-2003? (out of scope)	
III	OPORD Sunnanvind III, 09 100:69378, 2 June, 2004 (out of scope)	
IV	OPORD Sunnanvind IV, 15 December, 2005	
V	ATCH OPORD ISAF, 02 100:81114, 1 May, 2009	
VI	ATCH OPORD ISAF, 02 100:81120, 4 June, 2010	
VII	ATCH OPORD ISAF, 02 100:80801, 23 May, 2011	
VIII	ATCH LCO FS22, 02 100:82092, 16 September, 2011	
IX	ATCH LCO FS23, 02 100:80659, 14 March, 2012	
X	ATCH LCO FS24, 02 100:82120, 17 September, 2012	

As can be seen, until 2005 the operational orders were issued somewhat intermittently, and beginning in 2009 they were reviewed and issued annually. Also, the last operational order was issued in 2011 after which it was complemented for each rotating force with a so-called *Land Coordination Order*. Thus, for these later rotations, their respective LCO and the 2011 OPORD were their respective operational orders. Of the relevant ones, all but one (VII) have been obtained.

In addition to the Land Component Command operational orders, a few operational plans from the Swedish Armed Forces Headquarters were obtained and analyzed for reference. Also, a few reports from the Land Component Commander's inspections in Afghanistan were included in the material for triangulation. These were documents that I stumbled upon and deemed pertinent for triangulation.

Fortunately, the Land Component Command documents point out other relevant documents which are not as readily available or even as easily found as the Swedish documents in the Armed Forces archive. This helped me identify a series of consecutive orders in the multinational chain of command, of which the operational orders issued by Regional Command North are of particular relevance. However, the completeness of this succession is far less reliable than the one above, since it depends on the references from Swedish documents. Nevertheless, the following operational orders from RCN have been identified:

Table 6. *Regional Command North operational orders*

I	RCN OPORD 002-06, 1 June 2006
II	RCN OPORD 302-07, 10 April 2007
III	RCN OPLAN NIAID OMID 004-09, 2009
IV	RCN OPLAN OMID 1390 001-11, 2011
V	RCN OPLAN 1391 NAWEED, 2012

Only one of these orders and plans (II) has been possible to obtain for various reasons. The most important one is that Sweden is not a member of NATO and it is therefore not possible to request NATO documents in the same way as one can request Swedish official documents. Therefore, the NATO orders are the greatest empirical weakness of this study. However, the orders and plans of the Swedish force in Afghanistan as well as the orders and plans of the Swedish Armed Forces Headquarters reiterate the intent, objectives, concept of operations of ISAF and its Regional Command North, which means that they can substitute for the Regional Command's orders and plans to a sufficient degree.

The final set of written data of a military nature is the just-mentioned operational plans and orders of the Swedish force itself. Their first use is that they reiterate the tasking from the superior commanders and thereby substitute for orders that could not be attained. Their second use is that they indicate what the force has paid attention to in the orders from its superiors, and their third use is that they illustrate the relationship in superior/subordinate molecules where the force commander is the superior, thereby aiding in the analysis of the structural setting of company commanders. The following operational plans and orders from the Swedish force were identified:

Table 7. *Provincial Reconstruction Team operational orders*

I	OPO Commander's Directive, 09 400:60095, 6 November, 2006
II	OPO TOLO ODEN Rev 1, 1 July 2009
III	OPORD OMID BA HAM DIGAR (HOPE TOGETHER), 02 100:82622, 29 December, 2009
IV	OPORD OMID-E AYENDA (HOPE FOR THE FUTURE), 02 100:70015, 29 May, 2011
V	OPORD EBTEKAR IV, 02 100:81675, 16 March, 2012
VI	OPORD NAWEED-E TAWSEA, 02 100:82157, 25 July, 2012

The completeness of this list is also uncertain. However, since I have had access to all force commanders in person I have still been able to elicit the required data for the whole period. Of the identified orders, all but one (II) have been obtained. In addition, plans and orders from other levels of com-

mand were acquired when the opportunity to do so presented itself, for example the commander of ISAF's operational plan.

The political documents are more readily available than military ones, and all documents listed below have been obtained. For the analysis of political steering I have selected the following defense bills relevant to the time period:

Table 8. *Swedish defence bills*

I	Bill 1999/2000:30, *The new defence*, 18 November, 1999
II	Bill 2004/05:5, *Our future defence*, 20 September, 2005
III	Bill 2008/09:140, *A usable defence*, 19 March, 2009

Since 2001 the Government has passed/presented the following bills to the Parliament regarding the contribution of troops to the Afghanistan campaign:

Table 9. *Swedish Afghanistan bills*

I	Bill 2001/02:60, *Swedish participation in a multinational security force in Afghanistan*, 20 December 2001.
II	Bill 2001/02:179, *Continued Swedish participation in an international force in Afghanistan,* 8 May, 2002.
III	Bill 2002/03:21, *Continued Swedish participation in an international force in Afghanistan*, 14 November, 2002.
IV	Bill 2003/04:71, *Continued Swedish participation in an international force in Afghanistan*, 15 April, 2004.
V	Bill 2005/06:34, *Extended Swedish participation in the international security force in Afghanistan*, 27 October, 2005.
VI	Bill 2006/07:83, *Continued Swedish participation in the international security force in Afghanistan*, 15 March, 2007.
VII	Bill 2008/09:69, *Continued Swedish participation in the international security force in Afghanistan*, 13 November, 2008.
VIII	Bill 2009/10:38, *Continued Swedish participation in the international security force in Afghanistan (ISAF)*, 22 October, 2009.
IX	Bill 2010/11:35, *Continued Swedish participation in the international security force in Afghanistan (ISAF)*, 4 November, 2010.
X	Bill 2011/12:29, *Continued Swedish participation in the international security force in Afghanistan (ISAF)*, 9 November, 2011.
XI	Bill 2012/13:41, *Continued Swedish participation in the international security force in Afghanistan (ISAF)*, 8 November, 2012.

XII   Bill 2013/14:33, *Continued Swedish participation in the international security force (ISAF) and future participation in NA-TOs training mission (RSM) in Afghanistan*, 7 November, 2013.

During the time period, the Parliament passed the following budget bills:

Table 10. *Swedish budget bills*

I   Bill 2005/06:1, *Budget bill for 2006, Expenditure area 6: Defense and readiness against vulnerability*, 20 September, 2005

II   Bill 2006/07:1, *Budget bill for 2007, Expenditure area 6: Defense and readiness against vulnerability*, 16 October, 2006

III   Bill 2007/08:1, *Budget bill for 2008, Expenditure area 6: Defense and readiness against vulnerability*, 20 ¨September, 2007

IV   Bill 2008/09:1, *Budget bill for 2009, Expenditure area 6: Defense and readiness against vulnerability*, 22 September, 2008

V   Bill 2009/10:1, *Budget bill for 2010, Expenditure area 6: Defense and society's crisis readiness*, 21 September, 2009

VI   Bill 2010/11:1, *Budget bill for 2011, Expenditure area 6: Defense and society's crisis readiness*, 12 October, 2010

VII   Bill 2011/12:1, *Budget bill for 2012, Expenditure area 6: Defense and society's crisis readiness*, 20 September, 2011

VIII   Bill 2012/13:1, *Budget bill for 2013, Expenditure area 6: Defense and society's crisis readiness*, 20 September, 2012

IX   Bill 2013/14:1, *Budget bill for 2014, Expenditure area 6: Defense and society's crisis readiness*, 18 September, 2013

Appropriation directions are annual directives from Government ministries to their respective agencies. In the context of this thesis, the appropriation directions are issued by the Ministry of Defence to the Armed Forces.[31] During the time period, the Government issued the following Appropriation directions:

Table 11. *Swedish appropriation directions for the Armed Forces*

I   *Appropriation direction for fiscal year 2006 regarding the Armed Forces[32]*, 15 December, 2005

II   *Appropriation direction for fiscal year 2007 regarding the Armed Forces[33]*, 15 December, 2005.

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[31] The Ministry of Defence also issues appropriation directives to other agencies, e.g. the Swedish Defence Research Agency, the Swedish National Defence College, and the Swedish Coast Guard

[32] Including six amendments issued during the fiscal year.

III	*Appropriation direction for fiscal year 2008 regarding the Armed Forces*[34], 15 December, 2005.
IV	*Appropriation direction for fiscal year 2009 regarding the Armed Forces*[35], 15 December, 2005.
V	*Appropriation direction for fiscal year 2010 regarding the Armed Forces*[36], 15 December, 2005.
VI	*Appropriation direction for fiscal year 2011 regarding the Armed Forces*[37], 15 December, 2005.
VII	*Appropriation direction for fiscal year 2012 regarding the Armed Forces*[38], 15 December, 2005.
VIII	*Appropriation direction for fiscal year 2013 regarding the Armed Forces*[39], 15 December, 2005.

Apart from the methodological issues mentioned above, source criticism according to established criteria has been exercised (Teorell and Svensson, 2007, 104-106). First of all, with one exception[40] I have only used primary documents and refrained from using secondary accounts of them, such as Wilhelm Agrell's book on the Afghanistan campaign. All government documents are collected from official sources such as the web sites of the Government and the Parliament which sufficiently certifies their *authenticity*. Likewise, military documents have been collected though the Armed Forces Headquarters' archive which is as good a guarantee as can be obtained for the authenticity of those documents. Several of the military documents have been censored but not altered, and the censorship has pertained to issues that are of a military or national security interest but seldom of relevance to the empirical requirements of this study. The *contemporaneity* of the documents is also satisfactory since they have been drawn up and ratified at the time of the event that they concern. For the same reason, their *centrality* must be regarded as satisfactory. The issue of *tendency* is somewhat more complicated since one could argue that the political character of many documents may imply certain tendentiousness. However, this will always be the case regarding political documents, and will thus be a constant hindrance in political science research. And besides, or more to the point, regardless if policies or orders are tendentious or not they are of empirical interest in this study, assuming that no other, non-tendentious policies or orders exist in parallel. And finally, considering the top-down relationship between many of the

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[33] Including ten amendments issued during the fiscal year.
[34] Including seven amendments issued during the fiscal year.
[35] Including eight amendments issued during the fiscal year.
[36] Including four amendments issued during the fiscal year.
[37] Including six amendments issued during the fiscal year.
[38] Including four amendments issued during the fiscal year.
[39] Including six amendments issued during the fiscal year.
[40] The aforementioned use of PRT operational plans and order to compensate for the lack of Regional Command operational orders

documents, we can also expect a form of *dependency* between them, but this is also of empirical interest and relevance in this study as it to some extent attempts to trace such dependencies.

Other sources

Beyond the primary interviews with force commanders and the official documents, data from additional sources has been collected mainly for contextual and triangulation purposes.

Apart from force commanders, a large number of other individuals have been interviewed. One purpose for these interviews has been to increase my own understanding of the force commanders' operational environment. Throughout the project I have identified individuals in various positions within and outside the force and interviewed them about their perception of the overall campaign and their role in the operation. In this way I have been able to build a comprehensive picture of the character of the force and its daily activities. One important category has been members of the subordinate rifle companies, both officers and soldiers, who have been carrying out the actual tasks of the force in the field. Of particular value have been my interviews with the rifle company commanders of FS15 through FS24 (i.e. those who have actually executed the concept of operations in the field) who have been direct or indirect subordinates to the force commanders depending on rotation. Also, I have interviewed individuals in so called enabling units, such as medical teams, civil-military cooperation teams, mine clearing teams and so on, as well as staff members that have worked to support the decision making of the force commanders. This has provided a broad and comprehensive picture of how the force is organized and how it operates. I have also interviewed civilian advisors (political, development, police), one senior Swedish representative, and members of aid organizations working in the vicinity of the Swedish force. Not only has this provided a much needed contextual setting for the interviews with force commanders but also a basis for triangulating their accounts. For the latter purpose some of these interviews have been used directly in the analysis through quotation. These interviews have been conducted both in Sweden and during my two field trips to Afghanistan in 2012 and 2013.

For the same purposes I have tried to conduct a number of observations of force activities both in Sweden and in Afghanistan. At home I have been able to attend pre- and post-deployment activities of FS23, FS24 and FS25, e.g. a COIN course, a force commander's first meeting with his staff and key leaders, as well as a post-deployment seminar. During the field trips to Afghanistan I have been able to attend operational meetings led by force commanders, training exercises at the camp, and have also had the opportunity to tag along on a few low-risk excursions in the field, for example a company commander's meeting with an Afghan police chief in one of the districts.

Also, while spending time in the Swedish camp I have been able to develop a sense of the force members' everyday life while eating lunch in the dining hall, attending sermons in the camp chapel and participating in informal discussions at the mess. All formal observations have been of a non-participatory, fly-on-the-wall character. The only instances in which I have played a more active role, besides the interviews, is during informal conversations with force members outside of these formal occasions. Even though the time in Afghanistan has been brief (three weeks in total) the experience has greatly contributed to my understanding of the place and the life of the force. This contextual insight has been invaluable when interviewing force commanders as well as when analyzing government bills and military orders. As Mead puts it: "Above all, field work allows one to ask new questions" (Mead, 2005). The results of these observations have, thus, been of a more indirect use to the actual analysis of this study.

Part II

Even though, as far as physical cause and effect are concerned, it is the machine gunner and not the major who fights battles, the major is likely to have a greater influence upon the outcome of a battle than any single machine gunner

Simon, 1997

Chapter 5 – Sweden's military contribution to the multinational security force in Afghanistan

Introduction

The purposes of this chapter are to position force commanders in context and to familiarize the reader with some peculiarities of that context. The reason for this is that the military apparently is something very unfamiliar to those on the outside and that picturing what goes on inside is difficult. Therefore I wish to provide a rough sketch of the bureaucracy under study in this thesis. This is done in three steps. First, I present a few but central terms and concepts that I believe will reduce unfamiliarity significantly and that will aid in contextualizing the empirical description in the following chapters. In short I present a few concepts that are central in defining a military unit. For anyone who is already familiar with terms such as mechanized battalion and rifle company this section can be skipped. Second, using those concepts, I describe the Swedish force in Afghanistan. The purpose of this is to familiarize the reader with the type of unit that the force commanders have been in command of. And third, I provide a condensed history of the Swedish military engagement in Afghanistan from 2001 and onwards. I conclude that historical expose by providing a periodized model of the Swedish military engagement in Afghanistan.

Central concepts

The upcoming chapters describe and analyze particular aspects of a rather large military force deployed in a conflict area. That will require some concepts and terms that are commonplace in the domain of focus but that hardly can be considered public property. The military domain, like so many others, contains central concepts and terms that are hard to leave out when attempting to describe and analyze it. To offer an analogy, it would be very difficult, and perhaps even futile, to analyze and describe a hospital without using terms such as doctor, physician and nurse, surgery and diagnosis, emergency room and hospital ward for example. Similarly, it is difficult to speak of a military organization and activity without using words that identify distinguishable parts of the military organizational hierarchy, such as company

and platoon, and words that signify particular aspects of military activity, such as intelligence, logistics and combat. Some might argue that the proper way would be to adopt some generic terminology, some sort of *lingua franca* that would enable seamless communication between scholars of different policy fields. However, I'm afraid that no such generic terminology exists. On the contrary, *all* policy fields have developed their own terminologies so that the military field, the medical field, the education field, and the energy field all have their own words for describing the vertical ordering of organization units, as well as their horizontal specializations. Nor does it seem practical to adopt a foreign terminology in an attempt to make the military domain more understandable and comparable. This would not only confuse the readers already familiar with the domain, but also create a unique and sub-optimal discourse which is hardly desirable. Instead, my strategy will be to reduce military jargon and excessive terminology to a minimum in order to maximize readability, and to explain and use a limited set of concepts that are central to the subject at hand.

The military is often described as being mainly hierarchical and top-down controlled. I would argue that a better way to understand the military, or military organizations to be more precise, is by *size*, *specialization*, and *vertical-horizontal relations*. These three concepts can describe any given military unit.

Unit size

Military terms for signifying size are fairly standardized internationally. States typically organize their militaries into (from larger to smaller) corps (with tens of thousands of soldiers), divisions, brigades, regiments, battalions, companies, platoons, and squads (the smallest fighting unit comprising a handful of soldiers), although variations exist depending on nation size and tradition. Sweden for instance is too small to maintain an army corps while the United States deployed several during World War II. These units are stacked like Matryoshka dolls so that a battalion contains three to four companies which contain three to four platoons which contain three to four squads. In modern Western militaries the squad consists of about 8 soldiers, which means that a platoon consist of 30 to 40 forty soldiers, a company of 100 to 150 soldiers, a battalion of 300-800 soldiers and a brigade or regiment of about 2,000 to 5,000 soldiers and so on[41]. The illustration below aims to

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[41] The eight-man squad has ancient roots. In the Roman army, the smallest organization unit was the *contubernium*, eight men who shared marching tent, lived and fought together. During the period 100 BC to AD 200, ten of these *contubernia* made up one *centauria*, *s*ix *centauria* made up a *cohort* and, finally, ten cohorts made up a *legion*. The *centauria*, the rough equivalent of today's company, was commanded by a *centurion* (Goldsworthy, A.K. (1998). *The roman army at war: 100 bc-ad 200*. Oxford, Clarendon.
, Roth, J. (1994). The size and organization of the roman imperial legion. *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte,* 43(3), p. 346-362.)

provide a visual impression of the size of a generic company. Besides a company commander and two additional company officers (typically a deputy and an intelligence officer) it often contains four platoons, each consisting of four eight-man squads and two platoon commanders,
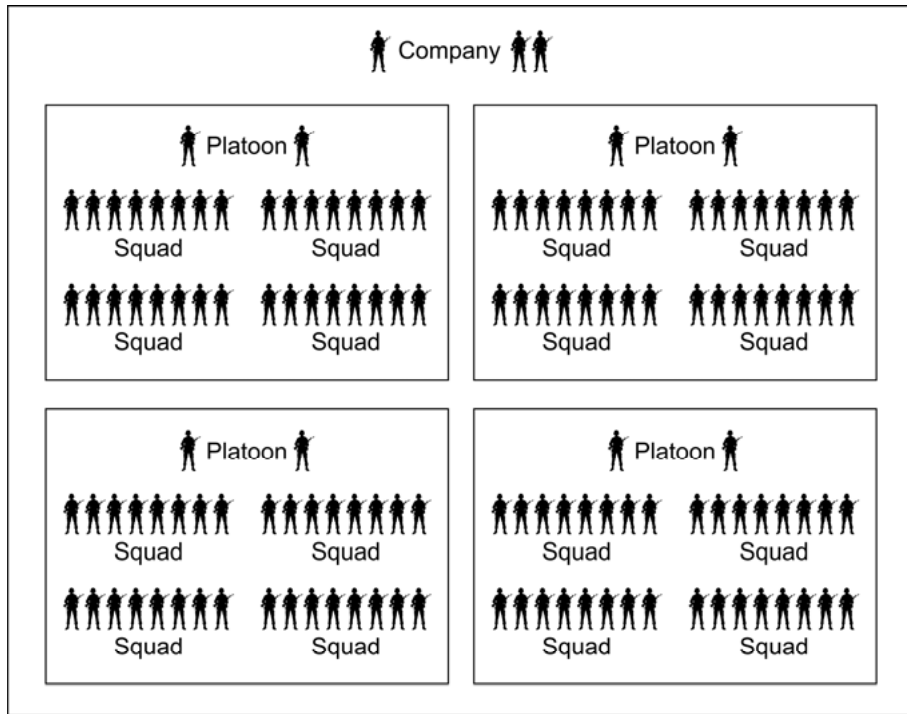
Figure 8. The approximate size of a generic company-sized military unit

adding up to just short of 140 personnel in this example. Multiplying by four gives a rough idea of the size of a battalion, and a good image of how large the Swedish force was when it peaked in size in 2011-2012.

In the Afghanistan campaign, large countries like the United States and the United Kingdom have deployed whole brigades, while smaller nations like Sweden and Norway have deployed battalion-size units or smaller.

The examples given above constitute *permanent* military units within a country's force structure. In multinational operations however, it is common to deploy *temporary* units such as *battle groups* or *task forces*, i.e. temporarily composed units, often of battalion or brigade size. For example, in the Afghanistan campaign, Sweden has deployed provincial reconstruction teams, which can be described as small battalion sized units that are ISAF specific.

Related to the concept of organizational size is the concept of officer rank. Accordingly, a battalion is commanded by a lieutenant colonel while a company, like the one depicted above, is commanded by a major[42]:

Table 12. *Typical relationship between unit size and commanders' rank*

Unit size	Approx. no. of troops	Rank of commander
Division	~10,000	Major general
Brigade	~5,000	Brigadier general
Regiment	~1,500	Colonel
Battalion	~500	Major/lieutenant colonel
Company	~150	Captain/major
Platoon	~40	Lieutenant
Squad	~8	Sergeant

Beyond the number of soldiers, the unit size also implies relative strength or power. Hence, a battalion is, in general terms, more powerful than a company. This is significant since it is used by military planners to predict the outcome of combat, all else being equal. For example, to assault a company-sized enemy is generally considered to require a battalion-sized unit.

A unit's size also indicates its geographical footprint. During an assault for example, a battalion can be expected to seize an objective of about 2 to 3 kilometers in width if its companies are able to seize objectives of 500 to 1000 meters in width. Thus, if the objective is to seize and control a crossroads, a company might be given the task. It follows that a larger force can operate over larger areas (size, control or defend them) than smaller units can.

Unit specialization

Unit specialization defines what a specific unit of a specific size can do (and not do). The perhaps most common type of unit is *infantry*. They typically consist of soldiers with automatic rifles that seize and hold portions of terrain. They usually move around in armored personnel carriers (a wheeled or tracked armored vehicle for up to 8 soldiers), fly in helicopters or ride in boats, and may dismount during combat. Armored units are quite different. They drive tanks and use their cannons to destroy the enemy's tanks. In an operation such as the one in Afghanistan, where the strategy often demands close interpersonal contact with the local population, infantry units are re-

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[42] The ranks of battalion and company commanders vary significantly. In the case of Sweden, ranks tend to be stepped up a notch when units are deployed abroad. Hence, while a regular company in the army is commanded by a captain, a company deployed in Afghanistan is usually commanded by a major or a captain temporarily promoted to major. Likewise, regular battalions are commanded by lieutenant colonels, while a battalion size unit in Afghanistan, i.e. the PRT, is commanded by a full colonel, who is often a regimental commander at home. Likewise, the number of troops in different unit types also varies significantly. The numbers presented here are approximations aimed at providing a rough idea about the intervals.

garded as more useful than armor units, while the opposite is true in the hypothetical scenario of a third world war confrontation between the East and West in Central Europe. In a multinational operation such as the one in Afghanistan, a number of particular specializations are common besides regular infantry. For example, various types of reconnaissance units, often equipped with advanced technical sensor systems, are used to locate and track the enemy. Other particular specialties are military police to uphold internal, military law and order, mine-clearance units, and CIMIC[43] units that uphold relations with various parts of the local society.

Vertical-horizontal relations

The final concept is the ordering of relations between units, in both the vertical and horizontal dimensions. Vertical relations in the military are known as *chains of command* and constitute authority. In order to arrange and organize units of different size, they are placed in chains of command. Hence, within the Swedish battalion size PRT in Afghanistan, the companies are placed under the command of the PRT commander.[44] And by default the rifle platoons are under the command of one company commander. Furthermore, for certain operations, special units such as mine-clearing squads and dog squads that actually belong to the PRT's headquarters company, can be placed under the command of a company commander temporarily, creating an optimized task force for a particular purpose. Such changes in the command chain can only be ordered by a commander at a higher level.

While chain of command establishes control between units at different levels, it also establishes autonomy. Within a rifle company, for example, while each platoon is under the command of the same company commander they are also autonomous vis-à-vis each other. The commander of one rifle platoon can therefore not exercise control over another rifle platoon, or parts of it within the same company, unless the company commander has directed so.

If vertical relations constitute authority, horizontal relations constitute cooperation. Such horizontal cooperation does require vertical sanction however. A typical example is when one rifle squad provides fire support ("covering fire") to another rifle squad's advance during an assault. Such cooperation is coordinated by the platoon commander through the chain of command. There are, of course, less formal types of cooperation in the horizontal dimension, usually with tacit or perceived sanction from higher command.

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[43] Civil–military cooperation.
[44] For a short period of time, when there were up to four companies in the PRT, the post of battalion commander (a lieutenant colonel) was injected into the chain of command between the force commander and the company commander. Adding little to the efficiency of command, this experiment was soon abandoned, according to one respondent.

The Swedish PRT's force structure

Using the concepts presented above, we can now describe the Swedish force in Afghanistan. First I will present a typical force structure and its components. Then I will describe the staff, the maneuver units and the enablers in more detail. Finally, I will describe the lifecycle of a "rotation" i.e. each of the fourteen consecutive Swedish units that has served in Afghanistan between 2006 and 2013, before placing them in a historical context.

The following generic chart is a rough depiction of the organization of FS19 in 2010 (personnel strength in parenthesis) and can serve as a generic model for a PRT:
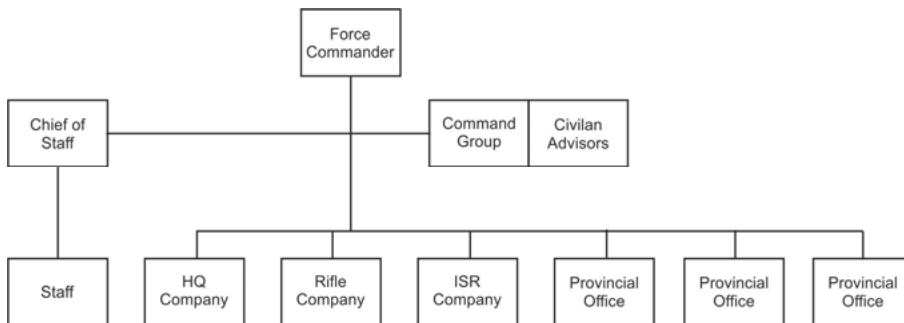
Figure 9. Generic organization of Provincial Reconstruction Team

The force commander has a command group (6) and an adjacent group of civilian advisors (2) at his disposal for the planning and direction of operations. He also has a chief of staff who directs the work of the PRT staff (68). Subordinate to the force commander are:

- A headquarters company (98) that harbors most of the PRTs enabling units (described below),
- A rifle company (148), consisting of a headquarters platoon and four rifle platoons,
- An intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance company (31) consisting of a weapons intelligence team, an electronic warfare platoon, and a field HUMINT platoon, and
- Three provincial offices (totaling 98), one in each provincial capital where each commands between 2 and 3 military observation teams.

Not depicted in the chart are the military observation teams operating in the Balkh province without a separate provincial office (ATS, 2009a, Appendix 1).

The staff

The staff can be compared to the managing function of any other large organization, be it a private business or a government agency: a designated

part of the organization that the leadership uses to manage the organization as a whole. A military staff is organized into *sections* that assume certain responsibilities according to contemporary Western military (NATO) doctrine.
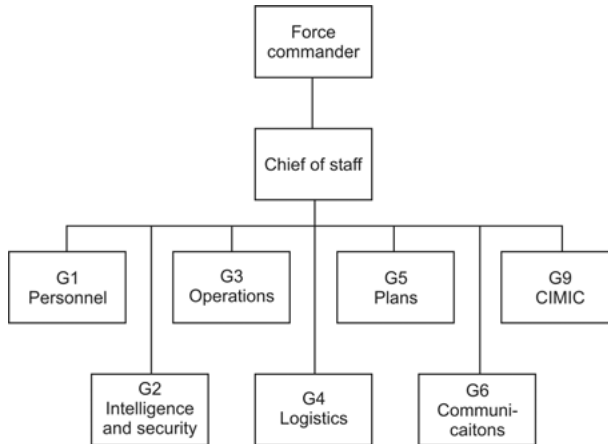
Figure 10. Organization of PRT staff

The staff contains a *personnel section* (G1) that handles all personnel issues; an *intelligence and security section* (G2) that gathers and analyses intelligence information according the needs of the force commanders and other parts of the force and also manages security; an *operations section* (G3) which executes the force's operation plans by commanding and controlling maneuver units in the field; a *logistics section* (G4) which managed supplies; a *planning section* (G5) which handles long term planning; a *communications section* (G6); and a *CIMIC section* (G9) which manages relations between the force and various civilian actors in the area. The staff is led by a *chief of staff* (COS) who is under the direct command of the force commander.

Maneuver units

When Sweden assumed responsibility for the provincial reconstruction team in Mazar-e Sharif in March of 2006, the main maneuver unit (the operationally defining unit type) of the Swedish force was the *military observation team*, or MOT. The MOT was, in effect, a rifle squad in two Toyota Land Cruisers, and was a concept that Sweden inherited from the British who previously led the PRT. The MOTs patrolled one or two districts in one of provinces of the PRT's area of responsibility.

Figure 11. A military observation team of FS13 in night location. Sar-e Pul province, 2007 (Photo: Combat Camera/Swedish Armed Forces)

The number of MOTs varied between 2006 and 2010. Initially they were under the direct command of the force commander. Eventually this command was delegated to so-called *provincial offices* (POs), in effect semi-stationary MOTs with responsibility for one of the provinces.

Beginning in 2008, the role of the MOTs slowly diminished with the introduction of the *rifle company*. The first company was set up under FS15, and in the following years the rifle company became the main maneuver unit of the Swedish force. This development culminated in 2011 when FS20 was the first force with no POs or MOTs but with four rifle companies.

Throughout the rifle company period, the 1st rifle company has been designated Quebec Lima or QL. QL of FS23 for example (2012) contained, besides a five-man company command group including the company commander, around 160 personnel organized into five platoons (FS23, 2013):

- 1st rifle platoon Alfa Quebec, with three eight-man squads equipped with armored multipurpose wheeled vehicles,[45]
- 2nd rifle platoon Bravo Quebec, equal to 1st platoon,
- 3rd rifle platoon Charlie Quebec with four nine-man squads in tracked combat vehicles,
- 4th rifle platoon Delta Quebec with three eight-man squads in wheeled armored personnel carriers[46],
- 5th staff and logistics platoon with 22 personnel.

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[45] The BAE Systems RG-32 Scout, which is comparable to the well-known U.S. Humvee.
[46] A Finnish platoon that was added to the company when Finland withdrew its rifle company in the summer of 2012.

Figure 12. Rifle squad members of third platoon Charlie Quebec in first rifle company Quebec Lima preparing for an operation in their CV90 combat vehicle in April, 2013. To the left is the so-called HESCO wall surrounding Camp Northern Lights. Photo: Magnus Johnsson.

With the introduction of the rifle companies, the squad was no longer the defining unit *size* of the force. Instead, the preferred constellation during operations became a so-called *task force* comprised of one or more platoons under a company command group.

With four rifle companies, FS20, FS21 and FS22 resembled a mechanized battalion, a force structure quite different from that of the original MOT-based PRT. After the adoption of the exit strategy in 2011 and the subsequent troop reduction of most contributing countries, the number of rifle companies in the Swedish force also diminished, beginning with FS23 in 2012. The following force, FS24, was the last Swedish contingent to have a rifle company.

For a period of time, the PRT also contained an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) company that gathered intelligence information with various sensors in support of the PRT. The ISR company may be considered as an enabler more than a maneuver unit and will not be discussed further here.

Enablers

So-called enablers are particular, often smaller, subunits that provide specific capabilities to the PRT. One example is the special teams for the detection and disposal of mines and *improvised explosive devices*, the so-called IEDD

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teams (Improvised Explosive Device Disposal), whose role has become crucial with the increase in IED attacks. Other examples are K9 units which operate military dogs, military police units (MP) that maintain internal law and order in the force, mobile medical teams (MMTs), which can be described as highly qualified military ambulances that accompany other units during operations in the field, and other service support elements. These enablers have been organized within a headquarters company, commonly known by its call sign Papa Lima, but attached to the rifle companies or task forces during operations.

Fourteen rotations[47]

The Swedish Armed Forces regularly rotate the personnel in multinational operations every six months. Each force or "rotation" is given a consecutive designation. In the case of the Afghanistan campaign, the Swedish forces have been named FS2, FS3, FS4 and so on[48], and they have rotated in late spring and late autumn.

Each rotation has begun so to speak with the appointment of a force commander. This process has taken many different shapes but often been manifested by a personal call from the Land Component Commander to the candidate. From the time when Sweden became lead nation for the provincial reconstruction team in Mazar-e Sharif, the force commander has been a full colonel. After appointment, which has taken place about a year before deployment, the force commander has begun to build his force, usually beginning with a close group of staff officers and gradually adding components. In some cases, whole subunits have been included, for example the rifle companies of the EU Nordic Battle Group, and in other cases the subunits have been recruited though advertisement campaigns. About six months before deployment the force has begun a tailored training and preparation program at different training sites in Sweden, often terminating at the Swedish Armed Forces International Center west of Stockholm. During the preparation phase the force commanders and certain key personnel have conducted reconnaissance trips to Afghanistan in order to visit their predecessors and to get acquainted with the milieu and the mission. Then, during the actual rotation process corresponding parts of the leaving force and deploying force have conducted what is called a week-long hand-over/take-over procedure (HOTO) to facilitate a smooth transfer.

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[47] This account builds on my own interviews with respondents from several rotations. I particularly draw from the force commanders' accounts of how they were given the assignment and how they built and prepared their force for deployment.

[48] The first two Swedish forces in 2002 were designated FB1 and FB2, and the following force was designated Fortsättningsstyrka 2 meaning *contingency force 2* and abbreviated FS2 (page 95 in Agrell, W. (2013). *Ett krig här och nu: Från svensk fredsoperation till upprorsbekämpning i afghanistan 2001-2014*. Stockholm, Atlantis.)

Veterans tend to distinguish between summer rotations (beginning in May) and winter rotations (beginning in November). Summer rotations have generally been characterized as more intense as the dry weather permits all fighting parties to be more active. Analogously, winter rotations are often characterized as calmer, given the "off-fighting season". The following table identifies the rotations of forces between 2006 and 2013, where FS11 is the first Swedish led PRT in Mazar-e Sharif:

Table 13. *PRT rotations 2006-2013*

Force	Deployment time	Force Commander
FS11	May 2006-nov 2006	Col Bengt Sandström
FS12	Nov 2006-May 2007	Col Jan Pålsson
FS13	May 2007-Nov 2007	Col Mats Danielsson
FS14	Nov 2007-May 2008	Col Torbjörn Larsson
FS15	May 2008-Nov 2008	Col Bengt Alexandersson
FS16	Nov 2008-May 2009	Col Håkan Hedlund
FS17	May 2009-Nov 2009	Col Olof Granander
FS18	Nov 2009-May 2010	Col Christer Tistam
FS19	May 2010-Nov 2010	Col Gustav Fahl
FS20	Nov 2010-May 2011	Col Michael Nilsson
FS21	May 2011-Nov 2011	Col Rickard Johansson
FS22	Nov 2011-May 2012	Col Anders Löfberg
FS23	May 2012-Nov 2012	Col Torbjörn Larsson
FS24	Nov 2012-May 2013	Col Michael Claesson

A brief history of the Swedish force in Afghanistan

After the toppling of the Taliban regime in the fall of 2001, Afghanistan was left without a government. With Resolution 1378 (14 November) the United Nations Security Council encouraged the Member States to take action in order to provide "provisional arrangements" while Afghanistan prepared for establishing a permanent and viable government (UNSC, 2001a). The ensuing Bonn Conference suggested, among other things, a plan for the establishment of a constitution and a democratically elected government, and also requested the Security Council to "consider authorizing the early deployment to Afghanistan of a United Nations mandated force" to "assist in the maintenance of security for Kabul and its surrounding areas" until the new Afghan security and armed forces would be "fully constituted and functioning" (Bonn Agreement). Consequently, on 5 December the Secretary General called upon the Security Council to consider the deployment of a force to Afghanistan as recommended by the Bonn Conference (Annan, 2001). The day after, the Security Council acknowledged the Bonn agreement through resolution 1383 (UNSC, 2001b).

During the following two weeks the Member states developed plans for such a security force. Great Britain assumed the responsibility of leading the force, and on the 12th of December the British Embassy contacted the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs with an offer to participate in the force. Sweden participated in the preparatory force generation meetings in London on 13th, 18th and 19th of December, and in a memo dated 12 December, the Swedish Armed Forces declared to the Government its ability to send an intelligence platoon with reconnaissance tasks to Afghanistan (Utrikesdepartementet, 2001, Försvarsmakten, 2001). On the 18th, the Ministry of Defence requested the Armed Forces to commence preparations for deploying such a force (Försvarsdepartementet, 2001), and on the 21st the Security Council authorized the establishment of *the International Security Assistance Force* in Resolution 1386 (UNSC, 2001c). After approval from the Combined Foreign Policy and Defence Committee, the Parliament granted the Committees recommendation to approve the Government's proposal (Riksdagen, 2002). The mission was to send a 45-man strong "intelligence platoon with reconnaissance tasks" to the British-led part of the force in the Kabul area,[49] for a period of four months, which was deemed "an appropriate time for the unit to operate in the area," at a cost of EUR 3.5 million (Utrikesdepartementet, 2001).

Since then the multinational force has changed in many ways, as has the Swedish contribution. The first two Swedish rotations where manned by Sweden's special operations forces. At the end of summer in 2002, the force composition shifted character towards civil–military cooperation, or CIMIC[50]. During this period ISAF was grouped in Kabul, and the Swedish units operated in the city and its immediate surroundings, mainly by conducting patrols (Agrell, 2013, 95-97).

In 2003 NATO assumed command of ISAF, and with Resolution 1510, the Security Council mandated ISAF to expand its presence and operations throughout the country. As a first step, the German PRT in Kunduz in the north was placed under ISAF command, and in 2004 four new PRTs where established in the North, among them PRT Mazar-e Sharif under British command, thereby expanding ISAF's reach over nine new provinces. During this process, the Swedish Government was assessing alternatives to partake in the expansion. It resulted in participation in the British-led PRT in Mazar-e Sharif, to which it contributed military observation teams (MOTs), and a platoon to the British quick-reaction company. In the spring of 2004 the first

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[49] This contribution was modeled on Sweden's previous experience from the KFOR operation in Kosovo.

[50] CIMIC are force-initiated interactions between the force itself and surrounding civilian and non-governmental actors in support of the mission. (Paul, M. (2009). Cimic in the isaf mission. Concept, implementation and development of civil-military cooperation in the bundeswehr abroad. In. Berlin: SWP.) CIMIC may include projects aimed at helping or supporting various actors, and are sometimes mistaken for humanitarian or development aid.

Swedish units, taken from a stand-by military police company, deployed to Mazar-e Sharif (Westerdahl, 2013). The frame for the Swedish engagement had now grown to 112 personnel and EUR 17 million annually (ISAF, 2012, Utrikesdepartementet, 2004).

Not long thereafter the British began to shift their focus again, this time towards the southern province of Helmand, a shift that created an opportunity for the Swedish government to assume the role of lead nation for one of ISAF's provincial reconstruction teams, and early in 2005, the Government asked the Armed Forces to start planning for taking command of the PRT in Mazar-e Sharif (Regeringen, 2005). A little over one year later, in March 2006, British Colonel Mike McMahan of the Wiltshire Light Infantry transferred control to Swedish Colonel Bengt Sandström during a ceremony at the new location of the Swedish-led PRT, Camp Northern Lights in the southern suburbs of Mazar-e Sharif (ISAF, 2006). This was the beginning of the period of interest for this study.

Sweden inherited the British interpretation of the PRT concept characterized by the military observation teams that operated in the remote districts of the area of responsibility, acting as the PRT commander's eyes and ears (Johnsson 2017, 85). As mentioned above, the force gradually replaced the MOTs with rifle companies, culminating in 2011 when the force resembled a mechanized battalion rather than a British PRT. About the same time, President Barack Obama announced a strategy that included an exit from Afghanistan by the end of 2014 (Obama, 2011). At the NATO Chicago Summit in May 2012, the Alliance followed suit by devising and adopting a transition strategy (often called the *Exit strategy*) which focused on partnering with and mentoring of the Afghan national security forces more predominantly than before (NATO, 2012a). To enable the Afghans to assume responsibility became the main mission for ISAF from then on, and as the need for combat troops diminished, so did the Swedish force. Hence, beginning with FS23 in 2012 the number of companies was reduced drastically and steadily, and in May of 2013, Quebec Lima of FS24 left Afghanistan as the last rifle company.

Finnish cooperation and civilian leadership

Two additional circumstances pertain to the description of the Swedish force in Mazar-e Sharif, and require mentioning here. The first regards Sweden's cooperation with Finland. Shortly after assuming command of the PRT in Mazar-e Sharif, Sweden and Finland began to cooperate regarding the PRT. With Sweden as lead nation, Finland has contributed with a relatively smaller force component. For example, during FS18, Finland contributed one provincial office and two military observation teams (FS18, 2010) and dur-

ing FS23 Finland contributed with one of the rifle companies[51] (Tango Lima) and an IED-D team (FS23, 2013). Throughout the cooperation, Finland has also manned the post of deputy force commander (with the rank of lieutenant colonel) and assigned a number of staff officers, typically constituting 5-10 % of a staff section.

The second regards the so-called "transition to civilian leadership" beginning in 2010. In order to coordinate military and civilian efforts, the Swedish Government assigned a *Senior Civilian Represe*ntative to head a *Transition Support Team*. Simultaneously, the PRT ceased to exist, and the military force was henceforth designated *Transition Support Unit* (Landerholm, 2013, Regeringskansliet, 2012). This meant that the civilian advisors of the old PRT came under the command of the SCR and that the force commander was relieved of some of the duties he had previously had, rendering the job more military if you will. The Swedish Government's framing of this reorganization, transparently reiterated by news media, implied that the Swedish force in Afghanistan had come under civilian leadership. Messages such as "the power shift from military to civilian" (Göteborgsposten, 2012), "the shift to civilian leadership" (SVD, 2012), "Now the Swedish soldiers in Mazar-e Sharif get a civilian boss" (Sydsvenskan, 2012) undoubtedly projected that the Swedish military force was now under Swedish civilian command. However, as is made clear in the Government's instruction to the senior civilian representative (Regeringskansliet, 2012), and as has been made clear by the force commanders it who served at this time, the military force was still under ISAF command, making the relationship between the SCR and the force commander horizontal rather than vertical. Any coordination of military and civilian efforts was therefore the fortunate consequence of the personal relations between the SCR and the force commander rather than of a new chain of command.

Phases of the Swedish force's operations in Afghanistan

Introduction

In the last section of this chapter I present the first empirical contribution of the thesis. It is a description of the time period of interest, divided into four distinguishable phases, that summarizes the general mission understanding of the commanders. The model is not an analytical tool but an empirical inference based on an interpretation and amalgamation of commanders' understanding of the principal's mission, their force's mission and their choice of operational concept.

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[51] Finland downsized the contribution during FS23, replacing the rifle company with a rifle platoon that was placed under the command of the Swedish company Quebec Lima.

This model is different than previous attempts to describe the Swedish participation in ISAF in phases. First of all, there are arguably as many time-sequenced models of the engagement as there are Afghanistan veterans. Many officers who have served in the Swedish force define their rotation and their time in theater by contrasting it with earlier ones. For example, participants in the later and relatively more peaceful rotations often compare their experiences with their understandings of the earlier rotations, particularly FS17, FS18 and FS19. Similarly, officers and soldiers who have served in multiple rotations often describe the differences between them in terms of the force's attitude, the character of the enemy, the level of violence and so on. However, these attempts to categorize various periods or rotations remain undocumented, or at least unpublished.

The first adequate attempt to describe the Swedish military engagement in Afghanistan was Agrell's book from 2014. In it, he categorizes the Afghanistan campaign as a (deviating) continuation of previous Swedish participation in peacekeeping operations, and divides the entire period between 1956 and 2014 into five phases that he labels according to his own interpretation of the role of the Swedish troops. Accordingly, Swedish troops serving in operations abroad between 1956 and 2000, that is *all* Swedish participation prior to Afghanistan, are labeled "The Peacekeepers," referring to their partaking in so-called traditional peacekeeping.[52] Then, the participation in Afghanistan is categorized in four separate phases. The first of these Afghanistan periods, referring to the years between 2001 and 2005, i.e. the period before the Swedish PRT, is labeled "The Standard Bearers," a somewhat elusive label,[53] while the next period between 2005 and 2009 is labeled "The Reconstructers," referring to the assumed role of a unit that is called provincial *reconstruction* team. The third period, 2009 to 2012, is labeled "The Counterinsurgents" portraying the Swedish troops as implementers of the COIN doctrine, and the fourth and last period between 2012 and 2014 is labeled "The Out-Phasers" refereeing to the terminal task of the Swedish force to phase-out the Swedish participation in the Afghanistan campaign (Agrell, 2013).

Shortly thereafter, a report from the Swedish Defence Research Agency FOI also partitioned the Swedish participation in Afghanistan into four phases. This model is based on an analysis of differences in "defining needs of basic capabilities," i.e. strategic maneuverability, intelligence, tactical ma-

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[52] Agrell refers to peacekeeping under chapter VI of the United Nations Charter, thereby contrasting it with peace-enforcing under Chapter VII and regular military operations. For further discussions on the term traditional peacekeeping, please see Diehl, P.F. and A. Balas (2014). *Peace operations*. Cambridge ;, Polity.

[53] It is unclear whether Agrell uses the label ironically, implying that the troops had almost ceremonial tasks in the Afghan capital, or whether he uses it to imply that the troops were deployed with the sole purpose of placing the Swedish flag on the international arena, i.e. for international political gain rather than to solve a problem in Afghanistan.

neuverability, command and control, protection, battlefield maneuverability, engagement, and logistics. The phases of the model were:

- Establishment and liaison (2002-2004)
- Monitoring and coordination (2005-2008)
- Stabilization and counterinsurgency (2009-2012)
- Transition and retrograde (2012-2014)
  (Roosberg and Weibull, 2014)[54]

In this thesis I offer a model of the Swedish military contribution in ISAF during the PRT years[55] by generalizing the *commanders'* understanding of the mission:
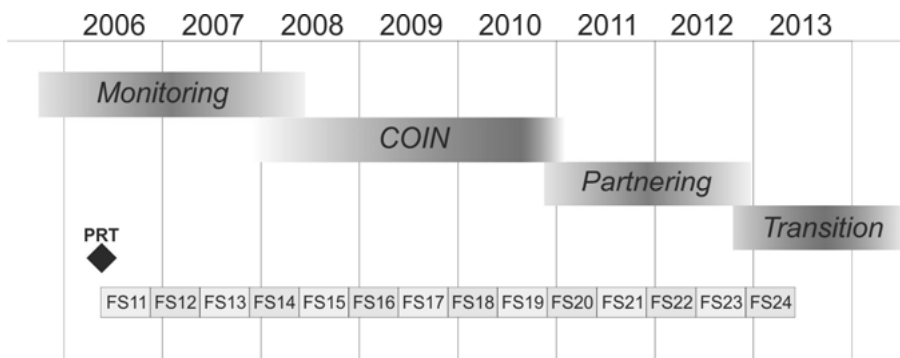
Figure 13. Phases and Swedish rotations during the Afghanistan Campaign

The graph depicts four phases that express the *general* mission understanding of force commanders. It is a coarse but relevant model that displays the significant commonalities in the force commanders' mission understanding. What the model does not show are the variations between force commanders during each phase, differences between force commanders' understanding during the same rotation, or the many combinations of principal's mission understanding, force-mission understanding and force concept of operations that the actual cases represent.

Furthermore, and this is significant, the model is not based on ISAFs or the Swedish Armed Forces' periodizing of the operation. Admittedly, terms like COIN/counterinsurgency, partnering, and transition have been used by military planners to identify time periods in operation plans, particularly towards the end of the operation, but the model is not a copy of the original blue print for the Afghanistan campaign. To be sure, early U.S. and NATO planners did not foresee a thirteen-year campaign, nor where they aware of

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[54] For further information about the content of the model I refer to the cited report.
[55] Since this study only covers the time period when Sweden was the lead nation for a force of a considerable size, first designated *provincial reconstruction* team or PRT and renamed *Transition Support Unit* or TST at the end of the period, the model is narrower than the two previously mentioned ones.

the COIN concept before it emerged for instance. If similar models exist, like the ones mentioned above, they are charts of what came to be, or "realized" operations plans as Henry Mintzberg (Mintzberg et al., 1998) might call it.

The first period, the *Monitoring phase*, begins when Sweden assumed lead nation responsibility of PRT Mazar-e Sharif in March of 2006. ISAF was expanding its presence throughout the country and while the forces in the south experienced a growing insurrection (e.g. Hope, 2008) the northern provinces were seen as relatively stable and safe. The dominant mission understanding among Swedish force commanders, as well as among subordinate personnel, was to monitor the relatively stable situation in the four provinces, particularly in terms of level of security and needs for development efforts. In fact, the strategy can be described as a type of containment with the purpose of preventing or at least stalling a development towards a situation resembling the southern provinces such as Helmand and Kandahar. This strategy was mainly operationalized by the operations of the military observation teams (MOTs) and frequent liaison with key leaders in Afghan society.

Transition to the second phase, the *Counterinsurgency phase*, began with the creeping introduction of the counterinsurgency concept. It is beyond the scope of this study to describe or explain that transition, but interview data and the literature suggest multiple influences. One was the influx from contemporary U.S. doctrinal and operational thinking, manifested in writings of military academics such as David Kilcullen and John Nagl (Kilcullen, 2006, Kilcullen, 2010, Nagl, 2005), lessons from the operation in Iraq (Biddle et al., 2012), the issuing of the U.S. Counterinsurgency doctrine (United States. Dept. of the Army et al., 2007), and the advocacy of a "small group of soldier-scholars" within the U.S. Army (Kaplan, 2013). And another related factor was the appointment of counterinsurgency advocates as ISAF commanders, most prominently U.S. generals Stanley McChrystal and David Petraeus. During this phase, parts of the Swedish force adopted the COIN concept both as an analytical framework and as an operational concept. This adoption was far from unanimous and unambiguous, but it nevertheless marked the PRT in a salient way.

The third phase, *the Partnering phase*, constituted a break from the COIN idea and an adoption of another idea that stressed the partnership with the Afghan security forces, stressing the ambition to initiate and conduct joint operations with them. This shift may be traced to the U.S. president's speech at West Point in late 2009 where he announced a troop surge in 2010 which was to be followed by a "transfer of our forces out of Afghanistan in July of 2011." This transfer was to be dependent on "developments on the ground" (Obama, 2009), and required boosting the Afghan security forces, hence the partnering.

The fourth phase, designated *the Transition phase*, was characterized by significant troop withdrawals and transition of security responsibilities to the Afghan authorities as the campaign in Afghanistan headed towards its end. It may also be traced to the speech mentioned above where President Obama announced the end of 2014 as the completion of a "process of transition" (Obama, 2011) For the Swedish force this implied withdrawal of intelligence and combat units and an increased focus on so-called advisory teams. This phase model may be seen as one result of this study in that it summarizes the mainstream of the thinking of the Swedish commanders in Afghanistan during the time period. It may also serve as an important backdrop to the variances identified in the analysis, emphasizing the point of commanders' discretion in determining the principal's mission, their force's mission and concept of operations.

Summary

In this chapter I have provided a brief background to the Swedish military participation in the Afghanistan campaign during time period between 2006 and 2013, when the country acted as lead nation for the PRT in Mazar-e Sharif, and with a focus on the operational conditions and operational context of force commanders in terms of the force that they commanded and the doctrinal, strategic and operational setting in which they commanded it. The next step is to engage the empirical analysis against this contextual backdrop.

Chapter 6 – The outside-in perspective

Introduction

This chapter analyses force commanders' discretion with an outside-in perspective that will provide the type of preliminary interpretation described in chapter 4. It takes an outsider's viewpoint and assesses how structural factors pertaining to authority and mandate affect force commanders' discretion. It starts out by describing the organizational setting of the force commanders and continues with an analysis of the authority of the superior–subordinate relationships of that setting. Then, the mandates given to force commanders are analyzed in terms of task specificity and allocated resources. Here, the scope is extended to include steering from higher levels of the organization with the purpose of enhancing the understanding of the overall steering of the deployed force. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings and overall implications for the discretion of force commanders.

Analysis

Superior–subordinate molecule

In this first part of the analysis I position the agent in focus as a subordinate in a superior–subordinate molecule and identify the superior.

In the Afghanistan campaign, Swedish force commanders are located in a very particular position where two chains of command *converge*, a circumstance that entails two superiors and which creates duality of command, all else being equal. By design, officers in command of a national military unit in a multinational operation (force commanders) belong to two superior–subordinate molecules that are a consequence of two parallel chains of command (e.g. JCS, 2013c, II-1),:
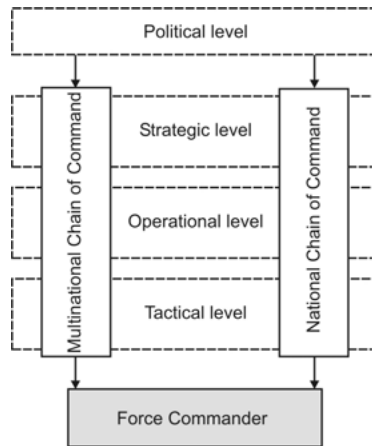
Figure 14. Description of parallel chains of command

Control of a nation state's military is a matter of sovereignty. Therefore, the command arrangements of a multinational military force can be seen as a matter of striking a balance between handing over enough control to the multinational organization so that it can achieve the common international goals, and at the same time maintaining ultimate national control over the participating national military force. The mechanism for handing over authority to the multinational organization is called *Transfer of Authority*, or TOA which is further described below.

From this, we can identify superior–subordinate molecule from each chain of command, a national one and a multinational one. The general structure of the force commander's *national* molecule consists of commands at three organizational levels which mirror the so-called "levels of warfare" (JCS, 2013b, 1-7, Försvarsmakten, 2011a, 52-53), the strategic, the operational and the tactical one:
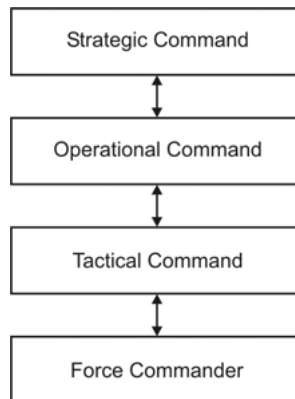
Figure 15. A generic national chain of command

The structure in particular national cases will vary, but commonly a deployed force commander will share a superior–subordinate molecule with a commander at the tactical level, for example a land component commander or an air component commander.

The general structure of the force commander's *multinational* molecule normally (e.g. in the case of NATO-led operations) consists of commands at the same three organizational levels:

```
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│      Strategic Command      │
└─────────────────────────────┘
               ↕
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│  Joint Operational Command  │
└─────────────────────────────┘
               ↕
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│   Multinational Task Force   │
└─────────────────────────────┘
               ↕
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│  National Force Commander   │
└─────────────────────────────┘
```
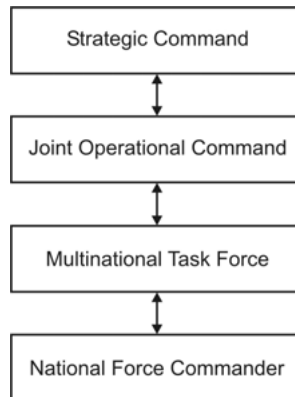
Figure 16. A generic multinational command

The structure in particular multinational operations will also vary but commonly, as in the national chain of command, a deployed force commander will share a superior–subordinate molecule with a multinational commander at the tactical level or below, e.g. a commander of a multinational brigade or the equivalent.

In the case of the Afghanistan campaign, Swedish force commanders reside in two chains of command[56]. The following diagram depicts the *national* chain of command:

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[56] In this description I omit the political strategic level which in NATO is represented by the North Atlantic Council NAC and in Sweden by the Government's Ministry of Defence.
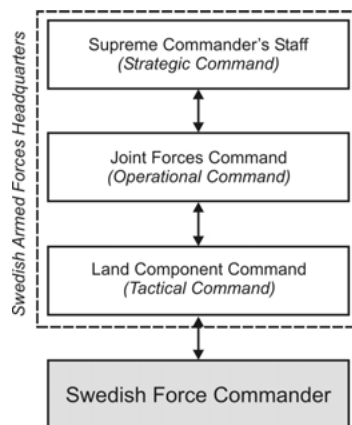
Figure 17. Swedish force commanders in the Swedish national chain of command during multinational operations

All three levels of command reside in the Swedish Armed Forces Headquarters. The strategic level is represented by the Supreme Commander's Staff,[57] the operational level by the Joint Forces Command,[58] and the tactical level by the Land Component Command[59] (ATS, 2009b, 7, Försvarsmakten, 2013a, 20-21, Wessén, 2015).

The following diagram depicts the *multinational* chain of command:
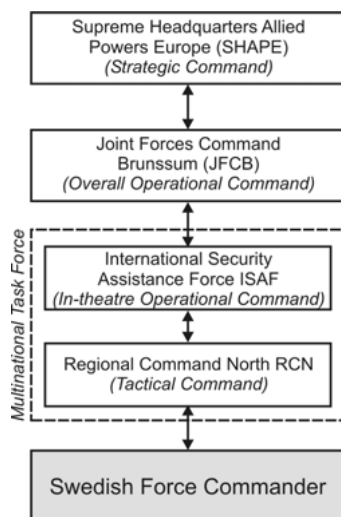
Figure 18. The Swedish force commander in the multinational chain of command in Afghanistan

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[57] Överbefälhavaren ÖB and Ledningsstaben LEDS
[58] Insatsledningen INS
[59] Armétaktiska staben ATS

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The strategic level is represented by the NATO's European headquarter, the operational level by JFC Brunssum, which is one of NATO's operational commands, and ISAF headquarters in Kabul, and the tactical level by Regional Command North in Mazar-e Sharif (RCN, 2007, 3).

Thus, the Swedish force commander is a subordinate in two superior–subordinate molecules:
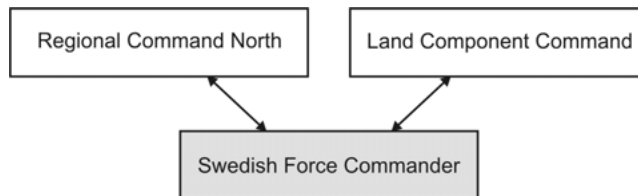
Figure 19. Two superior–subordinate molecules of the Swedish force commander

And accordingly, the superiors of the Swedish force commander are the commander of ISAF's Regional Command North (COM RCN) and the Swedish Land Component Commander.[60]

Conclusion

In summary, the arrangement with dual chains of command that converge on the position of the force commanders creates a particular superior–subordinate molecule where the force commander is subordinate to two superiors at the same organizational level which entails duality of command, all else being equal.

According to my theoretical assumptions this will increase discretion on the part of the force commanders. However, this need not be the case if the split command arrangement clearly defines and delimits the respective roles and responsibilities of the superiors. Thus we need to take other factors into account before we can indicate discretion, but the fact that duality of command exists means that it cannot be excluded.

Authority

The authority in the relationships between the force commander and his superiors can be characterized by comparing them with the normal or ideal relationship in regular national scenarios. A force equivalent in size to the PRT is, in a national setting, normally incorporated into a larger formation, e.g. a brigade. In such a setting, the force (probably a battalion) is one of three or four similar units which are coordinated operationally by the brigade commander. The brigade commander has full and undivided command of the

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[60] Armétaktisk chef, ATCH

force, and each subordinate battalion commander has little or no reason to consider any other influences than those that come from his single superior the brigade commander. Nor has he any significant room to formulate his own tasks, unless his superior requires it.

The situation of force commanders in Afghanistan is somewhat different. According to international practice, the nation states that contribute forces to a multinational operation delegate to various extent the actual operational control of the deployed military force to the multinational organization (e.g. JCS, 2013c, II-1), in this case NATO and its International Security and Assistance Force ISAF. The fact that it is a partial delegation entails diversification of authority, and this implies increased discretion for force commanders.

In the case of the Swedish force in Afghanistan, the delegation of operational control is formally total, which entails a leveling out of the superiors' authority. The authority of each superior can therefore be said to be weak in comparison to the military ideal. Also, the international contract that creates the division, the so-called *Technical Agreement*, grants force commanders discretion to keep an authoritative distance to their superiors by making it possible for the commanders to play out the superiors against each other. Authority can therefore be said to be pushed down from the superiors to the subordinate, rendering the superiors more passive than what would have been the case in a regular, national scenario.

The multinational chain of command

According to the U.S. military doctrine "attaining unity of effort through unity of command [in multinational operations, author's comment] may not be politically feasible, but it should be the goal" (DOD, 2013, xv). Under such circumstances, the multinational commander, the commander of ISAF in this case, can attempt to project authority in their relationships with subordinates:

> COM RCNORTH is the commander of the assigned AOO in Northern AFG. He will command and lead all activities conducted by assigned forces within this area to fulfill his tasks as given by COMISAF[61] (RCN, 2007, 3)

Such (redundant) remarks suggest active authority.

Also, Swedish officials are keen to point out that the control of the Swedish force has been handed over to the multinational force, while Swedish political influence is maintained via government channels. Under NATO's Partnership for Peace program (PfP), the Swedish Government has handed over command of the Swedish force to NATO through a number of agree-

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[61] Written out: "Commander of Regional Command North is the commander of the assigned area of operations in Northern Afghanistan. He will command and lead all activities conducted by assigned forces within this area to fulfill his task as given by the commander of ISAF."

ments. This means that the commander of ISAF, as appointed by NATO, has command over the Swedish force regarding tactical and operative issues. The Swedish Government can be said to exercise indirect operational control over the Swedish force through a number of mechanisms under this agreement. First, representatives of the Swedish Government attends meetings at the North Atlantic Council (NAC) in NATOs headquarters in Brussels, where NATO members and other contributing nations discuss ISAF issues, for instance the operational concept and the operations plan for ISAF. In a similar manner, Sweden participates in the meetings of the Operations Policy Committee which gives recommendations to the NAC. At the military level, Sweden also attends meetings at NATO's Military Committee and its ISAF working group, which gives military advice for the development of the operations plan. These meetings are attended by Sweden's NATO delegation under the leadership of a dedicated ambassador. The Delegation includes representatives from both the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces. The Swedish Government exercises control by issuing instructions to the delegation when necessary (Alvin, 2014). This partial shift of national authority from the national military chain of command to the multinational policy chain constitutes a more passive authority than that of regular national scenarios, and, consequently, a more active authority of the multinational commander theoretically.

However, through the institution of Transfer of Authority the multinational commander's authority is also delimited. In multinational operations, the authority of superior commanders (vis-à-vis subordinate commanders) is regulated by certain doctrinal concepts. For the layman, and indeed the expert, these may appear conceptually blurry, so for the purposes of this study, it suffices to describe the differences between two types of command authority, *full command* and *operational control*.

Full command (FULLCOM) implies full legal ownership of a military unit. This is the normal command relationship in the regular force structure of national armed forces where, for example, a standing battalion is owned by the brigade in which it resides. FULLCOM gives the superior commander full authority to task the subordinate, to alter its internal organization, and to manage both logistics and administration. FULLCOM is a part of national sovereignty and cannot be delegated or handed over to a commander of a multinational organization. Thus, an ISAF commander cannot have full command over a Swedish force commander and his unit. This authority is maintained by the force's national superior commander (JCS, 2013c, II-1, MOD, 2009, 1-3, NATO, 2011, 1-26f, Young, 2002, 41).

Operational control (OPCON) is the command authority that is utilized when units are placed under the command of other than their regular superiors. OPCON is a weaker authority that gives the superior commander the right to direct assigned forces to conduct certain missions or tasks which are normally delimited in content, time and space. It also gives the right to dele-

gate tactical control but not the right to use subordinates for other tasks or make alterations to the subordinate force's structure. This is the type of authority that is delegated to multinational commanders by the contributing nation states (Ibid.) which results in a *de facto* division of authority.

Furthermore, contributing nations issue so-called *caveats* i.e. conditions that delimit the multinational commander's use of the supplied force. For example, a nation state may issue a caveat that prohibits the multinational commander to use the force outside of the agreed area of operation, or to use the force for particular tasks, such as combat operations. In the case of Afghanistan, Sweden issued a caveat that prohibits COM RCN to deploy the Swedish force outside of RCN area of operation, for example in the southern Afghan provinces (ATS, 2009b, 19). On top of that, the Swedish commander is obligated to submit a mission-approval request (MAR) to his Swedish superior commander (ATS, 2009b, 7) if the multinational commander orders a task that may fall outside of the caveats. Thus, the freedom of action of the multinational commander, or his influence if you will, is further delimited which renders his authority more passive . Caveats are an integral part of multinational operations but are considered an obstacle for achieving so-called unity of command and have been said to "diminish the alliance's overall effectiveness and created resentment within the coalition" and in ISAF (Saideman and Auerswald, 2012).

Finally, a less salient circumstance has potential impact on authority. By the multinational nature of multinational operations, the superiors and subordinates at this particular level of command are often of different nationality. Although the empirical evidence is scarce, it can be assumed that military officers of one nationality may have hesitations regarding the command, influence and authority of superiors from other nation states, or at least regard it with some caution.

These circumstances imply significant delimitations of the superior commander's authority in the multinational chain of command, and thus a more passive than active authority. And as a consequence, the subordinate's discretion is objectively increased. The limitations give the subordinate the opportunity to assess given tasks and the option to choose whether to obey them or not, either with the power of his own discretion or with reference to the authority of his national commander or the agreed caveats.

Taken together, authority in the multinational chain of command can be described as passive relative to a regular national scenario and relative to what it would arguably have been under a full transfer of authority.

The national chain of command
As a consequence of the transfer of authority, the Swedish Land Component Commander is deprived of operational control of the Swedish force in the other chain of command. What remains is control over logistical and administrative matters, implying a more passive authority than under regular con-

ditions. Roughly, the remaining authority entails issuing orders for the force's preparations, deployment and re-deployment. Hence, regarding the national chain of command, we should not expect to find mission statements and operative orders other than the ones expressed in NATO's chain of command. Any mission statements of an operational character should be reiterations of those expressed in NATO orders:

> After the Parliament's passing of the bill, the Armed Forces produce an operations plan (OPLAN) which is based on the plan of the multinational organization. The Swedish planning has its focus in the deployed "wares" and on who does what. It deals with personnel issues, logistics, rotations, capability adjustments, and out phasing. The actual content of the mission, and consequently what the deployed Swedish unit is supposed to do, is determined by the responsible and executive organization. In the cases of Kosovo and Afghanistan it is NATO that determine the boundaries of what is to be done within the operation (Riksrevisionen, 2011, 24).

Still, the Land Component Commander enjoys partial authority over operational issues, indirectly through the caveats and more directly through the authority to approve mission approval requests, for example in case of deployment outside they area of operations of the Regional Command North (ATS, 2009b, 19). Thus, if a Swedish force commander submits an approval request for a mission given by COM RCN that he regards as dubious in some sense, the Land Component Commander has the authority to approve or dismiss it. This right infringes on the authority that has been transferred to the multinational commander. However, the opportunity for the Land Component Commander to decide on mission approval requests depends on the force commander's inclination to submit them. If a force commander *assesses* that a mission in an issued order from the multinational superior falls within the boundaries of the technical agreement, he does not have to submit a mission approval request. In theory then, the force commander has the option to delimit the authority of his superior by making such judgements at his own discretion.

Also, as the reading of the orders reveals, despite the deprived operational control, the Land Component Commander has attempted to influence the Swedish force commander in operational matters by exercising more active authority. Besides tasks regarding logistic and administrative matters, the Land Component Command's operational orders (OPORD) have contained operational guidelines that appear to be the result of in-house operational assessment and planning based on ISAF operational orders. In the following section on task specificity I will support this observation with several examples associated with tasking.

This tendency to influence operationally increased in 2009 and culminated in 2011-2012. The operational orders from the earlier years of the campaign lack such elements, while the later orders are rather obvious in their

attempts to steer the force commanders, not through direct tasking but through other means, which will be demonstrated in the next part of the analysis. The extent to which force commanders choose to heed such influence attempts is a different empirical question. In theory, they can choose to disregard them, given the transfer of authority, but as the forthcoming analysis reveals, force commanders have differing opinions on whether to pursue a national agenda or to submit to the multinational agenda all-out.

As opposed to the multinational chain of command, the superior–subordinate molecule in the national chain of command includes commanders of the same nationality, and indeed of common organizational affiliation and profession. This can be interpreted as a type of subtle authority, since any obstinate behavior on the part of the subordinate force commander may have future negative effects on his career. After the deployment, the colonel will return to the national setting where he may be dependent on a positive service record from Afghanistan, a circumstance which may make him less inclined to resist subtle or even plain influence attempts. He thus has an incentive to act loyally towards his national superior.

Taken together, these circumstances demonstrate delimitations of the superior commander's authority in the national chain of command as well, and, again, as a consequence, the subordinate's discretion is objectively increased. Yet, they also imply certain opportunities to wield influence, whose effect however is dependent on the attitude of the subordinate. Taken together, authority in the national chain of command has been more passive compared to a regular national scenario and became temporarily slightly more active after 2009.

Conclusion

From a military perspective, dual or multiple chains of command are not desirable, since they divide and diversify authority. However, the realities of the battlefield require more organizational flexibility than the ideal of single chains of command provides. Thus, the system of differentiated levels of authority, i.e. FULLCOM, OPCON, and so on, is applied to achieve such organizational flexibility. In this way, one commander can detail a unit temporarily to another commander and give him authority enough to use it. However, for this system to work, the detailing and receiving commanders need to play their respective roles well, and the commander in the middle so to speak needs to regard his two masters in their respective capacity.

In multinational operations, as has been described above, two parallel chains of command can result in a weaker total authority over the force commander. The national authority can be expected to become more passive, particularly regarding operations, by the transfer of authority, but as has been demonstrated here, the national superior may still attempt to influence the subordinate. At the same time, international circumstances can lead to variations in superior–subordinate authority in the multinational chain of com-

mand. The evidence for this claim is sparse, but the reasoning laid out here will be supplemented with empirical evidence in the next chapter. However, based on the interviews I have made with force commanders and PRT staff officers, I can already conclude that Swedish officers hold different views of superiors from different nations, which arguably affects their attitudes towards them. Such attitudes have a greater chance to surface if the division of authority between the national and multinational superiors is blurred.

To conclude, the force commanders, as was demonstrated in the previous section, have been positioned between two superiors, a construction which implies divided authority and that can create a man-in-the-middle position that force commanders can use to balance the power of the superiors. Also, as has been pointed out, this does not have to be the case if the division of command and the roles and responsibilities of the superiors are clearly defined and seperated. However, in this case authority has generally been passive, despite later attempts of superiors to exercise more active authority, which, according to my theoretical assumptions, leaves room for discretion on the part of the subordinates.

As was discussed in the theory chapter and the section on expectations, this is not a given in multinational operations. In fact, some countries, like the United States, counteract this by maintaining a national unified command and, one can presume, an active one. And even though other countries, like Sweden, do apply the principle of transfer of authority this does not imply weak or ambiguous authority *per se*. On the contrary, the principle of transfer of authority merely aims to *divide* command, not to weaken it.

Task specificity

Through the national and multinational chains of command, strategic political decisions are successively transformed before they eventually reach the deployed force. This transformation, or implementation, is manifested in a series of central documents that occur along both chains of command:
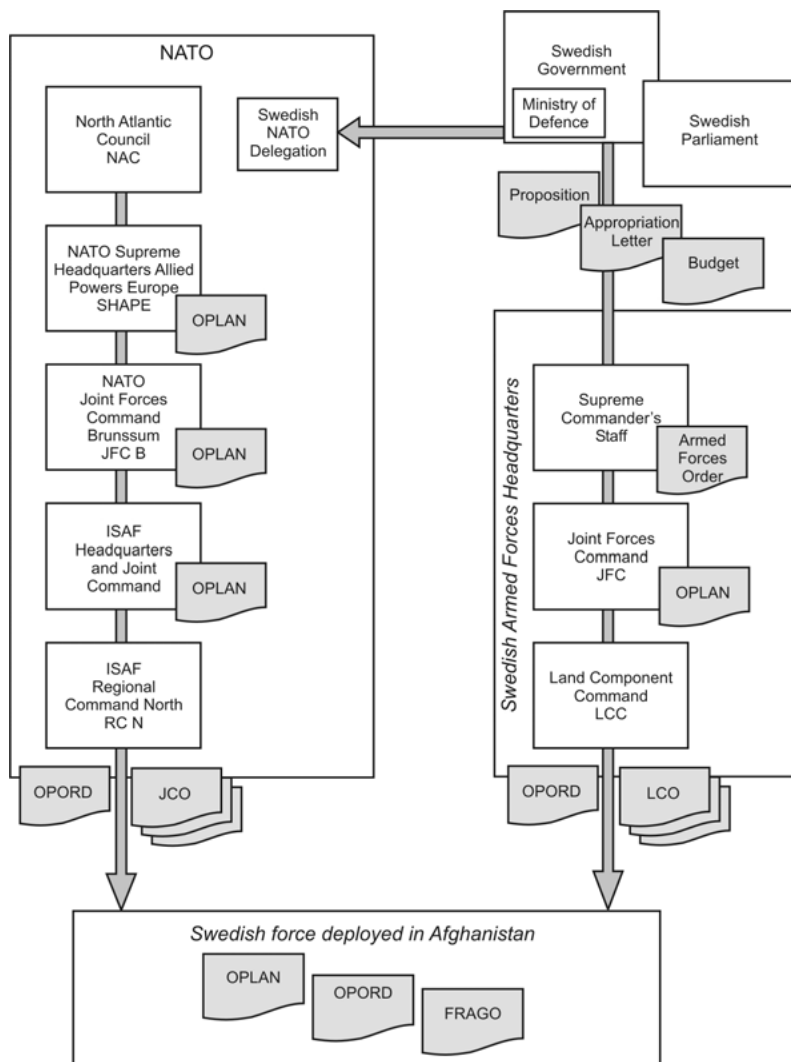
Figure 20. Generic description of steering documents in the dual chains of command.

The main political documents, from a Swedish perspective, are depicted in the upper right corner[62]. They address the Swedish Armed Forces as a government agency and are not directly aimed at the deployed force in Afghanistan even though they pertain directly to it. However, they are publicly available and may be of interest to anyone who is curious about what politi-

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[62] Here I deliberately omit the international agreements that mandate the multinational operation in the first place, i.e. the United Security Council Resolutions regarding Afghanistan beginning with resolution 1378 and 1383 from November 14th and December 6th, 2001 which implied a multinational security force, and resolution 1386 of December 20th which mandated the International Security Assistance Force ISAF.

cal aims a certain military operation is supposed to achieve, e.g. an appointed force commander.

Through the national chain of command, the relevant content of the political documents is broken down, refined and filtered in multiple instances of the military planning process, and eventually expressed in the Land Component Commander's *operational order* (OPORD) which is issued to the force commander. During certain periods, the operational orders have been supplemented with so-called *Land Coordination Orders* (LCO), which can be regarded as briefer amendments.

Parallel to that, the content of NATO's political documents is broken down, refined and filtered through the multinational chain of command in similar planning processes and eventually expressed in the *operational plan* (OPLAN) and operational order (OPORD) of the commander of ISAF's Regional Command North. His operational order is then issued to the force commander, and intermittently supplemented with *Joint Coordination Orders* (JCO). After internal mission analysis and operational design, the force develops its own operational plans and issues its own operational orders that describe the force's operations and instruct the force's subunits. Particular, delimited operations and contingencies during that period are coordinate through so-called *fragmentation orders,* or FragO in daily language[63] (Elofsson, 2014a, Elofsson, 2014b).

Tasks are expressed both explicitly and implicitly by the force commanders' superiors. Mission orders that are produced in most, if not all, Western armed forces today, at most levels of command, follow the *de facto* standard of the five-paragraph order format. The U.S. Army describes the ideal five-paragraph order as follows:

> Mission orders clearly convey the unit's mission and commander's intent. They summarize the situation (current or anticipated starting conditions), describe the operation's objectives and end state (desired conditions), and provide a simple concept of operations to accomplish the unit's mission. When assigning tasks to subordinate units, mission orders include all components of a task statement: who, what, when, where, and why. However, commanders particularly emphasize the purpose (why) of the tasks to guide (along with the commander's intent) individual initiative (DoA, 2010, 2-13).

Thus, the captions of the five paragraphs in the order have the following roles:

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[63] It should be noted that the specific occurrence of various documents, as well as their names, is dependent on changes in military staff practices

Table 14. *Structure and content of a five-paragraph order*

Paragraph	Caption[64]	Role
1	Situation	To describe the enemy, friendly forces, terrain and so on
2	Mission	To define the mission, task and purpose of the issuer
3	Execution	To define the issuer's plan to accomplish his mission
4	Logistics	To coordinate support issues
5	Command and signals	To establish chains of command and relations between participants

A commander who receives a mission order from his superior, at any level in the chain of command, will pay particular attention to paragraph three, *Execution*, which contains three major subparagraphs: *Commander's intent* which lays out the will of the commander, *Concept of operations* which describes his chosen way to use his forces in order to accomplish the mission, and *Tasks* which assigns tasks to the subordinates based on the concept of operations (NATO 2010, Annex B Appendix 5). It is, if you will, the implementation pivot of each command level in the military organization.

The most central part of the mission order, then, is *Tasks*[65]. The section is essentially a list of what the superior wants, or demands rather, his subordinates to do. However, the preceding parts of the order will add context to the assigned tasks by explaining their purpose and rationale, as well as their relation to the tasks assigned to other subordinates[66]. To use an analogy, these preceding parts are to the military commander what *travaux préparatoires* is to the lawyer – elaborations and assumptions that aid in the interpretation of the laws, or tasks in this case. Furthermore, these two items – Commander's intent and Concept of operations – are crucial for *Auftragstaktik* as they lay out the overarching goals and boundaries needed for a subordinate to act in the absence of the superior. These parts of the order may include explicit tasks, as well as assumptions or positions that imply new tasks and certain ways to solve explicit tasks. The following analysis will begin with the explicit tasks but soon move on to the other parts of the order that a subordinate can be assumed to perceive as influence and that a subordinate can be assumed to accept, or reject, as influence. Due to the intermittent release of main operational orders the analysis will have a snapshot character that touches down at certain times during the period.

An analysis of the task specificity projected on force commanders can be assumed to focus on the orders issued by their national and multinational superiors. However, as a result of my initial investigation it became evident

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[64] The terms may vary slightly over time and between users.

[65] The first two items – Commander's intent and Concept of operations – are crucial for *Auftragstaktik* as they lay out the overarching goals and boundaries needed for a subordinate to act in the absence of the superior.

[66] This is, of course, a very simplified description of how a mission order works. It does however cover the essential basics and is sufficient for an analysis at this level.

that the superiors' tasks were rather vaguely formulated and that force commanders, and indeed other actors at the street-level, tended to turn to other sources further up the chains of command (and outside it) to make sense of their mission. Therefore I include an analysis of such documents to provide a more complete representation of the structural conditions. Thus, this part of the chapter will begin with an analysis of the documents in the multinational chain of command and the documents in the national chain of command, to be followed by an analysis of documents at the national political level.

In the case of the Swedish force in Afghanistan, tasking has generally been non-specific, both regarding the what and the how. Mission and tasks where initially expressed in vague or broad terms that would require significant interpretation and choice to be transformed into operational activities for the force. Through recurring low task specificity at the higher levels of decision making, such interpretation and choice was pushed down through the chains of command to the force commanders where they, due to broad mission statements, had considerable room for interpretation. At the end of the campaign, when the ultimate mission was to "exit," task specificity increased somewhat, albeit at a level of abstraction that transcended the operational realities of force commanders, thus requiring further interpretation and choice.

The multinational chain of command
In the beginning of the period, the tasks issued from Regional Command North (RCN) were numerous and varying. They can be grouped into three main clusters: establishing situational awareness, operating together with the Afghan security forces, and encouraging other actors' development efforts.

A core interest of ISAF in the years following the geographical expansion in 2004 was to build a common understanding of the situation in the provinces with regards to security, development and governance. Thus, the PRTs were tasked to monitor the situation, gather intelligence, and also to "provide a visible presence."[67] Another group of tasks aimed at encouraging and facilitating other actors to conduct activities that would lead to increased development reconstruction as well as increased cooperation between these actors. These tasks were, for example, to "maintain dialogue with provincial leaders," to support provincial councils and international organizations in their work, and to support humanitarian assistance. A third group of tasks was geared to increasing the capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). These tasks were to "partner" with units from the Afghan National Army, conduct joint patrols with them and to support their training (RCN, 2007, 13-14).

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[67] Sometimes referred to as "show the flag" as mentioned in the literature review.

The purposes of the tasks were stated separate from the tasks themselves. According to the ISAF campaign plan, the purpose of this phase, and indeed its name, was "stabilization," a prerequisite for the following phases of "transition," e.g. the handing over of the security responsibility to the Afghan government, and "redeployment," i.e. the withdrawal from Afghanistan (Ibid., 1).

The commander of RCN's intent has been expressed in terms of "the aim of the operation" and objectives. In 2007, the aim of the operation was to "contribute to the peaceful development of our host nation" and to be able to reach "phase 5," or redeployment, i.e. to leave Afghanistan. Fostering popular trust in a peaceful and prosperous future, as well as popular trust in the Afghan government, was seen as an important effect of ISAF actions (Ibid., 6-7). Beyond that, the intent was sketched in very broad strokes and in language that may appear more political than military in nature. Overall, the regional commander's intent was not as distinct as a subordinate may have wished in order to interpret or prioritize among the wide array of tasks.

The objectives of RCN were to reduce the influence of "illegal armed groups," increase coordination between military and non-military foreign actors, coordinate other activities such as counter narcotics, border control and disbandment of illegal armed groups, and to facilitate Afghan "primacy" (Ibid., 7-8). These objectives all align with the *de facto* nation-building task of ISAF, which means that the traceability across levels of command appears logically coherent but that the scope of the array of objectives and tasks at the PRT level is extremely wide compared to that of a regular military unit of an equivalent size, e.g. a mechanized battalion. Not only are the tasks numerous, they also span competences that can arguably be said to exceed that of any regular military force, instead suggesting the competence of police or humanitarian aid organizations.

RCN's concept of operations can also be seen as rather illusive in explaining exactly what it and its subordinates are supposed to do. The CONOPS calls for "an integrated approach" (Ibid., 9) which in its simplest definition means that everyone has to work together towards the same goal. Even though this was a popular concept at the time, it can be characterized as rather trivial since the integration of efforts arguably can be said to be an almost universal goal, and nothing that is easily operationalized through regular military skills.

Another salient part of the CONOPS was to support the Afghan Government's counterinsurgency campaign (Ibid., 10). This directive is relatively specific at the level of the regional commander, but given the innumerable possible interpretations of the concept of counterinsurgency, which I will return to, it can entail almost anything at the level of the PRT commander and his force, ranging from conducting few or many surveillance patrols, establishing combat outposts in populated areas, carrying out search-and-

capture operations, engaging in all-out combat operations (to seize terrain) or calling in air strikes on suspected insurgent strongholds.

Furthermore, the order is non-coherent regarding prioritizations between the three so-called lines of operations,[68] or LOPs. The CONOPS of the operational order highlights *security* as the most important one:

> RCN has to improve security in the AOO [area of operations] and the Security Pillar is very important to the ISAF mission, however development and governance in concert with security are anticipated to be complementary efforts (Ibid.).

This prioritization does not seem to harmonize with the previously expressed commander's intent:

> We have to support the Nation Building process along the main Lines of Operation. RCN will continue to focus on security for the population, but LOPs development and governance will be our special focus! (Ibid., 6).

One reading of this apparent clash is that security is emphasized in one part of the order while governance and development are emphasized in another. Another, closer, reading is that the formulation of the commander's intent focuses on security *and* on governance and development, thereby not placing particular focus on either of the lines of operations. Regardless of the reading, the subordinate may be rightly confused. But he is at the same time also served an opportunity to make his own prioritization since the order can be used to justify such a choice.

As Regional Command North grew and matured as a command organization, so did its ability to plan operations. From 2009, their operational orders are clearly more focused than before and also tend to span over 12- to 18-month time cycles, thereby facilitating some continuity.

In 2009 RCN defined its mission as follows:

> CT-N[69] and other supporting organizations, in full partnership, conducts combat and clearance (population-centric comprehensive) operations based on intelligence reports in key terrain of AOO,[70] with priority to KUNDUZ, BAGHLAN, BALKH and FARYAB provinces within the next 12-18 months, to neutralize the insurgency, protect the population against enemy attacks, secure the main commerce routes (1, 3, 5 and 6), support Border Police

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[68] For most of the duration of the campaign, the nation-building concept, eventually codified in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, has rested on three pillars, or three lines of operations as the military calls them, – security, development and governance. For more information on this please see:
http://www.undp.org.af/publications/KeyDocuments/ANDS_Full_Eng.pdf
[69] Combined Team North, a label that signified cooperation between ISAF and ANSF.
[70] Area of operations.

operations with priority to HAYRATAN and SHIR KHAN border crossing points and set conditions for social economic and cultural development (PRT MES, 2009, 4).

Even though the scope of this mission statement is very broad, it still points out some particular issues and regions and thereby increases the specificity of the principal's mission. The mission statement of the following order in 2011 was almost identical. The only significant difference was that "combat and clearance population-centric comprehensive) operations" was replaced by the more concise "COIN operations" (PRT MES, 2011, ii), a concept that was more or less obsolete after 2011 however.

Before turning to the force's mission, let us recapitulate briefly: even though the specificity of the overarching mission statements increased with time, for a force commander who aimed at grasping a guiding principal mission, this structural context provided a veritable smorgasbord of options and several non-specific tasks that required interpretation.

The tasks issued to PRT MeS can be divided into four categories based on which party of the conflict they are aimed at. Firstly, the PRT is to engage and "neutralize" enemy forces and other "negative influencers" in key areas. If they do not alter their behavior, their actions must be "disrupted." Second, the Afghan National Security Forces are to be "supported" in various ways, i.e. by joint operations and patrols, with medical assets, and in establishing so-called Operational Coordination Centers[71] at the provincial level. Third, the efforts of other actors, e.g. the Afghan government and international agencies, are to be coordinated. And fourth, Afghan civil society are to be supported by arranging *shuras[72]* at the district level (PRT MES, 2009, 4).

These explicit tasks are specific in that they clearly identify targets for the PRT efforts, but they are less specific in how they are to be executed, despite the use of seemingly specific concepts such as shuras and arrest operations. Several variables remain undetermined, such as the content of a shura, or the purpose or target of an arrest. Furthermore, the wide range of tasks forces a subordinate commander with limited resources to prioritize, which entails discretion on the part of the force commander.

An expression of such discretion is the interpretation offered as the *Commander's intent*. Here, the subordinate Swedish force commander states that the main purpose is to "provide security for the Afghan people in key terrain" together with ANSF (Ibid., 7). This is but one of several possible interpretations of the tasks issued by the superior. Also, under the caption *Concept of operations* the force commander decides to "conduct COIN opera-

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[71] The OCC was an ISAF invention that aimed at bringing security actors together and facilitate joint planning of security operations.
[72] Communal meeting

tions in AOI 1[73]” while conducting intelligence and focused operations in “AOI 2-4” (Ibid., 7) which suggests a clear segmentation of the *areas of interest*. These operational decisions illustrate that despite the apparent specificity of the tasks issued by the superior, significant discretion is left to the force commander to develop them. One can hardly criticize these choices, but one can confidently assess that another Swedish force commander, or a force commander from another nation, could have made different choices.

Furthermore, the chosen concept of operations entails “joint clearing operations (CLEAR)” and to “separate AAF[74] from population (HOLD) in AOI 1 (Ibid.). This represents one particular interpretation of the counterinsurgency concept, i.e. the shape-clear-hold-build model. As COIN was not an explicitly stated method at the time (2009) the probable interpretation is that the adoption of both the COIN concept and the clear-hold-build model was a choice made by the force collectively and ultimately by the force commander. However, any other interpretation of the COIN concept, or any other non-COIN concept of operation for that matter, would have been a feasible operational choice.

The four categories used to describe the tasks in the 2009 order require some altering to describe the tasks of 2011. First, RCN directs its PRTs to initiate their “own operations planning” in order to support the objectives of the RCN's new operations plan (PRT MES, 2011, iii-iv), an almost redundant task but one which illustrates both the RC's will to propagate its intentions throughout the multinational force as well as the institutionalized discretion that mission command entails. In fact, this task codifies the bottom-up practice, which force commanders claim is common in multinational operations, and delegates discretion to the force commanders. This will be discussed further in the next chapter. The rest of the tasks roughly mirror the target-oriented tasks of the previous order, such as “support ANSF in order to protect the population,” “disrupt and contain anti-Afghan forces,” and facilitate coordination between other Afghan and international actors (Ibid.). PRT MeS was also given the specific task to “maintain stable security situation with focus on Highway 1 and the area “West of MAZAR-E SHARIF” and “support ANSF in improving security” in the remote Tri Provincial area in the southwest (Ibid.).

It is noticeable that the task lists for 2009 and 2011 differ, given the superior's almost identical mission statement. It is also noteworthy that RCN emphasizes COIN operations more in 2011 than in 2009 given that the influence of the COIN concept on the forces culminated around 2009-2010. It almost appears as if RCN plans and orders are lagging behind its own actual operations.

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[73] Area of Interest number 1, most probably meaning the area named “West of Mazar-e Sharif”.

[74] Anti-Afghanistan Forces

Finally, as I indicated regarding the 2009 order, the concepts used at this level are so conceptually broad that they can lead to many different interpretations. To illustrate that, it can be noted that the 2011 PRT operational order, which builds on the 2011 RCN operational plan, represents a very different interpretation of the COIN concept. Instead of focusing on designing operations according to the shape-clear-hold-build model, this operational order mimics more traditional, British COIN practices, such as small-scale operations, information operations, and launching so-called quick impact projects in secure areas (Ibid., v), illustrating the interpretational width of the tasks.

The final RCN operational plan of the period differed significantly in content. While the central concepts of the OMID[75] orders in 2011, i.e. counterinsurgency and partnering, focused on reducing the insurgency and bolstering the ASNF, the central concepts of the new NAWEED[76] orders in 2012 – transition and retrograde – instead focused on handing over to the Afghans and leaving Afghanistan (PRT MES, 2012, 5). The assigned tasks reflected this shift only to some extent. Most tasks were still expressed as providing "support" to ANSF, the rest of RCN or the Afghan government, and some appeared very rudimentary as if they had been formulated during ISAFs expansion in 2004. For example, the PRT was to "support GIROA[77] in providing basic services," to "support, monitor the effectiveness and transparency of the civil service," "coordinate and enable RoL[78] support," and to "support GIROA in establishing an effective budget administration taking into account national priorities" and so on. However, a few tasks were specific and clearly related to the retrograde, for example "Close Camp Monitor[79] no later than 31 DEC 12" (Ibid., 10). Thus, apart from a few specific tasks associated with the exit strategy, the task list had suddenly lost in specificity from the years before.

In summary, despite some fluctuation over time regarding specificity, the regional command's operational orders cannot be said to have clearly defined and demarcated the activities of its subordinates. Instead, they have served up a buffet of tasks and purposes from which subordinate PRT commanders can compose their own mix. With such an array of assigned tasks, a force commander, particularly one with such a vast area of operations as the Swedish force commanders have had, is reasonably forced to prioritize, and the array gives him good arguments for making prioritizations. If the superior insists on the force commander addressing all tasks with equal effort, the force commander can simply request the resources he deems necessary to do

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[75] Omid means "hope" in Dari.
[76] Navid or naveed means "promise" or "good news" in Dari/Farsi.
[77] Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
[78] Rule of law.
[79] The PRT's forward operating base in Sheberghan in the Jowzjan province.

so. One could even argue that the wide scope of the regional commander's operational order *encourages* his subordinates to design their force's mission within the frames of the order, the logic being that the regional command can display a widespread effort among its many and different subordinates that is not achievable though authoritative leadership in a multinational force.

The national chain of command

The Land Component Command's main operational orders were also issued intermittently during the first years of the campaign but began to appear more regularly in 2009. After 2011, when it was clear that the campaign was heading towards an end, the Land Component Command turned to issuing brief amendments to the last operational order, so-called Land Coordination Orders, one for each rotating force.

The national operational orders of the earliest years in the campaign were named Sunnanvind[80] (Agrell, 2013, 81). OPORD Sunnanvind III was issued in the summer of 2004 and OPORD Sunnanvind IV at the end of 2005. OPORD Sunnanvind III falls out of the scope of this investigation, but since it may have been of interest to the first PRT commander of this study, it deserves at least a brief review.

The main purpose of this operational order was to expand the Swedish force from Kabul to Mazar-e Sharif in order to partake in the British PRT with two Military Observation Teams (MOT), one Quick Reaction Unit (QRU), an airlift unit and firemen at Kabul airport, and various staff officers in Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif (ATK, 2004, 1). The task of the Swedish contingent commander[81] was simply to deploy the units and staff officers in Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif and to "exercise the Land Component Commander's national control in the area of operations in order to support ISAF" (Ibid., 8). In effect, these tasks instruct the contingent commander to act as the Land Component Commander's representative in the area of operations, which is an illustrative description of the responsibility of a contingent commander. The order offers little in terms of intent and concept of operations as the tone of the order is almost operationally indifferent. It projects that the purpose is merely to provide assets to ISAF and not to interfere in the OPCON of the Commander of ISAF. What stands out in the order is the repeated mention of "own force protection" which projects onto the force that their safety is of national importance (Ibid., 3,7). However, it is notable

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[80] In Sweden, the warm and mild southerly wind – sunnan or sunnanvind – bears positive connotations, while the cold and harsh northerly wind - nordan or nordanvind – bears negative connotations. Why Sunnanvind was chosen as the name for the relatively small operation in Afghanistan back in 2001 remains unknown to me.

[81] This is a term for the officer in charge of all Swedish units in a multinational operation. After the takeover of PTR MES, the force commander, or the PRT commander, was also contingent commander.

that the order contained no caveats regarding the use of the Swedish force. The area of operation was defined as "the entire ISAF AOR" (Ibid., 10) which was a rather fluid concept at the time. Yet, this stance is not surprising, given that the insurgency in the southern regions did not accelerate until 2005.

In short, this early order adheres to the principles of transfer of authority and leaves operational matters to the multinational commander. And as a consequence, it gives little guidance to the Swedish contingent commander and the force commanders that were to follow. Thus, this order can be assessed as unproblematic from an implementation perspective since it adheres to the principles of the transfer of authority and leaves the specificity to the multinational commander.

Of greater relevance to the first force commanders/PRT commanders was the operational plan *Sunnanvind IV* issued in December of 2005, three months prior to Sweden taking over PRT Mazar-e Sharif. The order declares that the national center of gravity is "the will to contribute with military resources in multinational crisis management" and coordination to achieve a "common national agenda" with a long-term goal of "contributing to a positive peace and development process in Afghanistan" (INSS, 2005, 5). Overall, the operational plan focuses on force generation, i.e. to recruit, train, equip and deploy a force to be placed under ISAF command. This is further stressed in the operative end state, which is formulated as "the force contributions are decommissioned after accomplished mission" (Ibid., 7).

The plan does not, however, elaborate on what a PRT is or what its mission and conduct of operations are. The only indication in this regard is the directive that the force is to "maintain the 'British model' which implies 'low military profile' with an open yet firm and correct attitude in its conduct" (Ibid., 8). Hence, it becomes the force commander's responsibility to interpret both the PRT concept and the "British model" which in itself is one particular interpretation of the PRT concept. Thus, from a perspective of task specificity, the operational order that serves as the foundation of the Swedish takeover of PRT Mazar-e Sharif lacks specific direction.

For a first force commander this national direction implies a certain degree of freedom to make operational choices. The pointing out of the "'British model' with a low military profile" and an "open yet firm and correct attitude" is not specific *per se*. In fact, a fuller interpretation of what the British model meant is left up to the force commander with such a formulation. Also, it does not dictate what sort of tasks or operations the force is to focus on while assuming the low military profile. In one particular incident in September of 2006 during the first rotation (FS11), parts of the PRT participated in a joint operation in the village of Boka where an Afghan "warlord" was killed (Seretis, 2006). In a journalistic TV report, the operation was described as "Sweden's single largest military operation abroad since the war in the Congo in the sixties," and the report questioned whether "downright

assaults" were congruent with the mission of the Swedish "peacekeeping force" (Gustafsson, 2007). Such reporting clearly illustrates the scope of various understandings of the Swedish force's mission and concept of operations in Afghanistan, and it also shows that a "low military profile" does not exclude actively engaging perceived security challenges and the use of armed force.

After a few almost dormant years, the Swedish Land Component Command issued a set of far more extensive operational orders, beginning in 2009, almost three and a half years after the last one. Without drawing any causal conclusions, it may be relevant to note that these orders coincided in time with an organic expansion of the force, increased violence and increased reporting and debate about the violence, as well as the increasingly heated national debate mentioned in the introduction.

In terms of tasks, the 2009 *Land Component Commander's operational order for ISAF* (sic)[82] was similar to the earlier orders, focusing on transfer of authority and refraining from interfering in operational matters. The task list had grown from two to three tasks and from one to two "be prepared to" tasks, The tasks were to "command the Swedish contingent in the area of operations" (i.e. being contingent commander), to be placed under OPCON of COM ISAF as commander of PRT MES (i.e. being force commander), and to "coordinate and guarantee support to EUPOL[83] (ATS, 2009b, 18). This must be considered a small increase. Thus, as far as tasks go, the orders were still kept simple and straightforward, and non-specific regarding operational matters and, thus, in accordance with the principles of transfer of authority.

However, in terms of operational consideration and deliberation, the orders from 2009 and 2010 were far more elaborate than previous ones. Under the captions of "intent," "Land Component Commander's analysis," and "conduct of operations," operational considerations were made and expressed in language that can be interpreted as influential and even instructive. Thus, compared to earlier orders, task specificity increased regarding operational matters. To begin with, the pretext to the 2009 order explains that the document is meant to convey to the force commander "the aim and direction of the Armed Forces as well as the Land Component Commander's *intention* with the ongoing operation in Afghanistan" (ATS, 2009b, 2, my emphasis), suggesting a growing national will and attention.

Next, the Land Component Commander describes his mission to be to "maintain and develop the Swedish force contribution," to "update and revise conducted risk analysis," and to conduct lessons-learned activities. These can be seen as being coherent with the transfer of authority. But he

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[82] This can, of course, be read as if the Swedish national commander is trying to command the entire multinational force.
[83] European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan.

also states that his mission is to "exercise national tactical command over the Swedish contingent and the operative ground force contribution[84] in order to achieve national and by ISAF declared goals." This mission understanding also correlates well with the task that the Land Component Command assigns to himself in the order (Ibid., 11-12). The "national goals" that are mentioned in the order are more or less identical to ISAF's goals and pertain to the Afghans' ability to manage their own security and their own country so that the ISAF forces can leave Afghanistan (Ibid., 6-7). The writing does clearly indicate an awakening interest in operational matters at the force level, and this is a more active authority as mentioned in the previous sub-chapter.

Beyond this, the order takes a number of positions and makes a number of remarks that can be seen as going beyond the role and responsibility of the national commander. The content under the caption "Land Component Commander's Intent" contains explicit directives to the deployed force conveying a more specific what. Most of them mimic aspects of ISAFs operational planning and can be seen as the Land Component Command's reiteration of those aspects that the national commander deems particularly important. Examples are the importance of winning the trust of the Afghans and the importance of fostering cooperation with civilian organizations. Also the Land Component Command states national requirements on proficiency:

> our operations shall be well coordinated with the superior commander's directives and activities in order to project a unambiguous image of ISAF's intentions and will (Ibid., 13)

However, the order also makes an explicit prioritization regarding the three lines of operations:

> Military operations *shall* be characterized by the direction towards COM ISAF goal regarding SECURITY. This *implies* that counterinsurgency operations (COIN) is an important part of the force's modus operandi (Ibid., my emphasis in italics)

This statement is problematic in several ways. First, in accordance with the principle of transfer of authority, the prioritization between lines of operations may rightly be regarded as the prerogative of the commander of the multinational force. Yet interviews with some Swedish officers, both in the force and elsewhere, suggest that it is rather a national prerogative and that different nations' armed forces make different prioritizations in that regard. Hence, there is a present but not dominating attitude among Swedish officers that contributing nations should pursue a national agenda in multinational operations, regardless of the transfer of authority. Second, it may contradict

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[84] Implying the PRT.

the commander of RCN's prioritization. As was earlier mentioned, RCN's operational order from 2007 was unclear about the prioritizations between lines of operations, and, given that both RCN's 2007 OPORD and Land Component Command's 2009 OPORD are based on the same strategic and operative documents (from COM ISAF and NATO JFC), it appears that two commanders at the tactical level make slightly different interpretations of the strategic and operative directives. And third, it introduces a particular concept of operations by suggesting that the prioritization of the security line of operation implies counterinsurgency operations. This is debatable, given that security has traditionally been enforced without counterinsurgency operations, and it is ambiguous, given the confusion about the meaning of counterinsurgency that arose at this time (c.f. Egnell, 2010). This is perhaps the clearest example of the national command attempting to specify the mission.

This short passage relates to force commanders' discretion in several ways. Firstly it can be seen as a national attempt to recapture authority lost though the transfer of authority mechanism, an attempt which outcome we cannot predict since the force commander can either ignore it by referring to the transfer of authority or chose to follow it. In fact, if the statement clashes with the intent of the multinational commander, the force commander is forced to make a choice. And secondly, it constitutes, from the perspective of the superior, an increase in task specificity as it stipulates a how that is specific at his operational level (the method of counterinsurgency operations) but which is so ambiguous, and hence non-specific, at the force commanders' level that it in fact *increases* the latter's discretion.

Moving on, we find, under the caption "Land Component Commander's Intent," expressions for what are results of an internal (to the Land Component Command) operational planning process, e.g. description of "center of gravity," and "decisive points" (ATS, 2009b, 14-16), concepts that are commonly used in Western contemporary military planning methods (e.g. Försvarsmakten, 2011a, 126-129). This segment points out, for example, the importance of Afghan consent, freedom of movement for own troops, Swedish national will, cooperation with Afghan parties and so on (ATS, 2009b, 14-16).

Under the caption "Conduct of operations," the phases of the ISAF campaign are reiterated and the force's "main tasks" are stated, focusing on the support of the Afghan government and the Afghan security forces. The order also says *how* these tasks are to be carried out, e.g. by "co-operation with civilian and military officials and coordinate activities within *Reconstruction and Development* and to make Swedish troops visible in the Afghan society as much as the threat situation admits" and "by create conditions for civilian aid organizations and humanitarian aid to reach prioritized objects and areas" (Ibid., 17, emphasis in original).

Furthermore, in the beginning of the document, the Land Component Commander refers to an ongoing plan review process within the national

Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding how the Swedish force "shall modify its conduct in order to shift from *Framework Operations* to *Focused Operations*, and how Swedish units shall act in *Counterinsurgency Operations* (COIN)" (Ibid., 2, emphasis in original).

First, these "intents" can be regarded as infringement on the operational mandate of the multinational commander, further amplifying the authority problems associated with duality of command. Second, they increase task specificity towards the force commander. Placing increased focus on "visibility" and prioritizing focused operations are both relative specifications at the level of the Land Component Command, but are still so non-specific at the level of force commanders that they entail a considerable amount of interpretative freedom.

The 2010 order, which is based on more recent ISAF operational plans, is essentially similar. Regarding the role of the document, it includes a similar but slightly sharper formulation: "This OPORD shall be regarded as the directive document in which the Armed Forces direction and intentions, as well as the Land Component Commander's intention with the ongoing operation in Afghanistan, is conveyed to the Swedish contingent commander" (ATS, 2010b, 3). The tasks in the 2010 order are also similar. In addition to the tasks from 2009, the force commander was to "coordinate and guarantee support to" USAID and to Swedish advisors from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, SIDA, and the Folke Bernadotte Academy, FBA (Ibid., 26), placing priority on the development line of operations. Although limited, this increase in tasks reflects both the difference in complexity between being contingent commander, as was the case before the PRT era, and the complexity in being both force commander and contingent commander, as well as the increasing complexity of the force-commander job.

Under the caption of "Land Component Commander's Intent" the 2010 OPORD takes a step further than the previous one, most likely due to access to more recent ISAF OPLANs.[85] It is stated that in order to fulfill the requirements of ISAF, the Swedish force needs "the capability to conduct operations together with ANSF, so-called *Partnering.*" Also, it needs to prioritize "the capability to conduct operations near populated areas. *Counter Insurgency Operations* (COIN) is an important part of the mission's *Modus Operandi*" (Ibid., 19).

Here, the Land Component Commander interprets ISAF operational plans and formulates directives to the Swedish force. From a perspective of transfer of authority, this must be regarded as somewhat problematic. On the one hand, it must be considered out of order for an organization outside of the

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[85] According to the lists of references, the 2009 OPORD was based on revision 1 of JFC OPLAN and COM ISAF OPLAN, while the 2010 OPORD was based on revision 4 of both documents.

multinational chain of command to establish this type of interpretative by-pass channel. But, on the other hand, the Land Component Command, and indeed the rest of the national chain of command, including the political level, have a legitimate need to develop requirements in order to maintain and develop the force contribution so that it harmonizes with NATO's and ISAF's operative intentions. If the interpretations and conclusions do not deviate from or clash with the operational intentions of ISAF, then this venture is harmless. But if they do, the force commander is placed in a precarious situation where he has to make choices.

After the 2011 OPORD[86], the Land Component Command began to issue briefer Land Coordination Orders, or LCOs, instead of full operational orders. A plausible explanation for this is the emergence of the exit strategy that emerged after President Obama's speech in June of 2011 which caused contributing states to focus on withdrawal by the end of 2014. Thus, with the transition laid out in the 2011 OPORD, it sufficed as an order for the coming rotations and only minor adjustments were needed for each of them. And accordingly, the LCOs mainly refer to the operational order from 2011. The tasking is basically the same for FS22, FS23 and FS24. The only additions that are made regard preparations for retrograde, such as closing down forward operations base Camp Monitor in the Jowzjan province (ATS, 2012, 2). The increase in task specification seen between 2009 and 2011 seems therefore to have subsided, suggesting a renewed increase in discretion on the part of the force commanders.

As has been described, throughout the time period, tasks were issued per military bureaucratic practice under the appropriate caption in the five-paragraph format. The tasks may appear specific and straightforward. In fact, the central tasks issued to the force commander were to command his own force and to be commanded by his multinational superior in the area of operations, tasks whose obviousness makes them almost trivial[87], but that still needs to be issued by the Land Component Command in order to establish transfer of authority.

However, other tasks are implied, and even explicitly expressed sometimes, in the analytical superstructure that is included in the order. Coarse concepts such as counterinsurgency, partnering, security and focused operations are awarded task status so to speak, but given that these are general concepts and not concrete tasks, they must be considered non-specific from the perspective of the force commander, and associated with considerable interpretative freedom for the receiving force commander. To task a subor-

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[86] Not available for analysis
[87] In all fairness, the practically useful direction of the national operational orders resides in the many annexes, but since these are aimed at particular functions within the force, such as logistics, communications or intelligence, they fall outside of the scope of this thesis.

dinate to conduct counterinsurgency operations, to create security, or to partner, is non-specific both regarding the what and the how, not only from the perspective of the force commander but also from a general military perspective since such concepts are almost doctrinal in nature. Without a predetermined, common understanding of what conduct, posture, actions and outcomes such concepts entail, they leave significant discretion to the executer to determine it.

These influence attempts can be understood in several ways. One is that the attempts are benign and that the Land Component Commander is merely trying to convey and elucidate ISAF's goals, intentions and concept of operations. Another, and perhaps the most probable one, is that these extrinsic parts of the order are not intended to influence the deployed force as much as to inform other parties involved, for example other parts of the Armed Forces Headquarters that are participating in the force-generation process. A third and also likely interpretation is that this parallel operational analysis and design is conducted to support the Land Component Command's explicit responsibility to maintain and develop the force in order to fulfill ISAF requirements. It may be so that the force requirements expressed by NATO are of a quality that requires analysis, and perhaps even interpretation, in order to be addressed. And finally, a fourth interpretation is that the attempts are more malevolent than benign, and are actually meant to steer the force into a particular operational conduct. This could be due to sheer ignorance regarding the role of a national command in a transfer of authority scenario, due to a perceived need to reiterate the multinational commander's tasking, or due to a strategy of pursuing a national agenda.

Regardless of what the intentions of the Land Component Commander are there is a clear risk that force commanders indeed understand the operational directives as just that and make their own interpretation of "to conduct counterinsurgency operations". In the previous part of this analysis we concluded that the force commander is positioned between two relatively weaker chains of command, and that the discretion that this entailed gave him the opportunity to use this man-in-the-middle situation and choose which influence attempts to pay regard to, based on his own preferences. Thus, the significant set of questions, from an implementation perspective, is how he interprets the influence attempts from the national commander, what attitude he takes, and how he acts on them. This will be addressed in the next chapter.

Political steering

The Swedish Government primarily steers the deployment of armed forces through a number of official documents. In the long term, and without particular focus on single deployments to multinational operations, the *quad-*

rennial[88] *defense bills*[89] give broad direction for the Swedish military defense. Rather than indicating which operations the Armed Forces are to deploy forces to, it stipulates what capabilities and assets they are to develop and maintain, e.g. the organizing, equipping and training of particular units and the capability to send troops abroad with short notice. In the short term, the *state budget* constitutes a central policy steering tool. The state budget's "item of expenditure number 6 - Defense and society's crisis readiness" – sets the financial frames for the military defense on an annual basis, including contributions to multinational operations under "appropriation item 1:2 *Peacemaking missions."* The state budget is laid down in the Government's annual budget bills, which are presented to the Parliament for approval. Also, with an annual perspective, the Government (the Ministry of Defence in this case) directs the Armed forces annually through *appropriation directions.*[90] The appropriation directions are supplemented several times a year through *amendments*. Finally, particularly regarding the deployment of forces to multinational operations, or the alteration and prolongation of such deployments, the Government proposes *dedicated bills* to the Parliament. Furthermore, the Government can issue *requests* for the Armed Forces to investigate or prepare for particular operations.[91]

As has been explained, this part of the analysis does not address the direct tasking of force commanders. The political steering is intended for political actors at the national level and the government agencies that implement the policies, including the Armed Forces. In that respect, this part of the analysis can be seen as separate section. However, bills, appropriation directions and budgets are also readily available to anyone else who wishes to gain a broader understanding of policy and political steering regarding a particular military deployment abroad. Thus, for a force commander who wishes to understand the national political will and purpose regarding the participation in a multinational operation in order to do a better job as the senior Swedish military representative in Afghanistan, it is not strange to visit such sources. Also, many of the force commanders, particularly the early ones, where summoned to the Ministry of Defence for an informal pre-deployment briefing which arguably projects a political effort to convey the political intentions to the ultimate implementer of that policy.[92] It is therefore pertinent to

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[88] The periods between defense bills vary slightly but are often four or five years long

[89] When passed by Parliament, the bills are commonly called *defense decisions*. Hence, Defense decision 2005 builds on the bill from 2004 and so on.

[90] Regleringsbrev in Swedish.

[91] The Government may also issue classified directives, but for obvious reasons such documents are not available for analysis.

[92] It should be stated that none of them found such meetings informative in that regard. Instead, in their views, the meetings were more of a meet-and-greet character which often included a pat on the shoulder and a "Good luck!" – a gesture that should not however be disregarded as insignificant. In fact, it may have encouraged force commanders to seek political intentions in the written documents.

analyze available political documents that may be of significant to a force commander's meaning-making process.

From the onset, and throughout the main part of the campaign, the Government has not expressed a clear purpose for the Swedish engagement nor a clear mission for the Swedish military contribution to the multinational force. Instead, a simple casual model of conflict resolution has been offered (security leads to development), and the focus of the top-down direction has been on the size and cost of the force. It was not until ISAF adopted the so-called *exit strategy* in 2011 that the Government began to express purpose and mission more explicitly, though still so vaguely as to leave room for interpretation. Content that may have been identified as a principal's mission from the perspective of the implementers has included the security-development model and vague, ambiguous and non-military tasks such as "to contribute" and "to support", terms that previous part of the analysis showed propagated all the way down to the force commanders. Instead of projecting concrete or concretizable policies or policy goals, the political documents have expressed what could be called a *policy of participation*, meaning that the deployment of assets to the area of operations in itself is more politically important than what they are meant to accomplish.

The defense bills

The Parliament has passed three defense bills relevant to the time period. The Defense bill of 1999 and the following Defense Decision[93] of 2000 marked a deliberate turn from national defense to international operations. The bill stressed the 1990s experiences from the Balkans, and in particular the 1999 NATO intervention in Kosovo. It was seen not only as a sign of an altered international security situation, but also as a shaping factor for the development of the Armed Forces. In the bill, the Government argued that the international developments of 1998-1999 were a reason for Sweden to strengthen its ability to contribute to European crisis management at a faster pace than previously anticipated. Based on this conclusion, the Government argued that the Armed Forces should develop their capability for international crisis management as early as 2001:

> .. there is a need to quickly reinforce Sweden's capability to participate in international operations to handle crises (Regeringen, 1999, 31)

It also argued that this should be done at the expense of the national defense capability:

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[93] The designation of the adopted bill.

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In order to strengthen our capability to participate in international operations as soon as possible, priority should be given to such measures that have great value to that capability, while measures that only are significant to developing the national defense capability will have to be deferred. It may therefore be necessary to forgo such measures that aim at adjusting the capability to counter a more substantial armed assault in the five-year perspective (Ibid. 32-33).

Furthermore, participation in international operations was argued to be beneficial both for the development of the international capability as well as capability for national defense:

Swedish participation in international activities with military forces has provided extensive experiences. The experiences have contributed to creating good capability to participate in international peacemaking operations but have also been useful in the development of our national defense. Of particular interest are the experiences and lessons learned from the latest conflicts in the Balkans (Ibid. 35).

Even though the Government did not find any reason to reconsider the main missions for the Armed Forces, it stressed that:

the capability to participate in international operations will be a highly prioritized task for the Armed Forces (Ibid. 37).

This standpoint stands in rather stark contrast to the main point of the previous defense bill only seven years earlier:

The Armed Forces most important mission is to counter an assault on Sweden (Regeringen, 1992, 4).

In conclusion, it can be argued that the experiences of the 1990s had contributed to a policy, or even strategy, of international military participation, and that the Swedish Government entered the 21st century with this policy.

The defense bill of 2004 consolidated the change of focus from the national to the international that the previous bill had initiated. The security situation in Sweden's "immediate surroundings" was described as being in a state of "continued positive and dynamic change," and the development of the Armed Forces' capability for international operations was stressed. The bill's opening sentence established that:

The realignment of the Swedish defense continues (Regeringen, 2004, 1).

This was also in line with the new security strategy:

Sweden's international missions promotes international peace and security, thereby strengthening our own security (Ibid. 12).

The solution was a "flexible and available force" with expeditionary capabilities that would operate in and around Sweden and also abroad (Ibid. 41). The focus on multinational operations abroad was evident at his time.

The 2004 bill also mentioned the campaign in Afghanistan. It argued that Afghan security structures had not yet achieved sufficient capacity to maintain national security, making international military and civilian presence necessary for several years (Ibid. 21).

The following defense bill was scheduled for late 2008. However, in the wake of the Russian-Georgian war in August of 2008, the Swedish Minister of Defence announced that the bill was postponed until early 2009 in order to await "a renewed and updated security assessment based on the events in Georgia." The strategic shift from a large national defense force to a smaller and more expeditionary force had suddenly come under scrutiny, and critics argued that the role of Russia had to be reassessed (Holmström, 2008).

The defense bill mirrored this reevaluation of the security situation by taking a half step back:

> The new requirements for operative capability conveys, among other things, that the Armed Forces execution of operations in the immediate surroundings and outside of the immediate soundings is placed in the center of the Armed Forces activities (Regeringen, 2009, 1).

Regarding the Afghanistan campaign, the bill stated that the Swedish engagement "should be long term," and that the campaign should be seen as a test for future international crisis management beyond the Euro-Atlantic sphere (Ibid. 32, 20).

In summary, the defense bills have not contained any information that can be interpreted as mission directives for the Swedish forces in ISAF. Instead, to participate appears to have been the main political purpose. If anything could have been derived with regards to the Afghanistan campaign, it was an indication of a long-term commitment, implying a prolonged military presence in Afghanistan. Also, for acting and appointed force commanders, the political focus on multinational operations must have been clear and reasonably have created an anticipated political prioritization of such operations.

The dedicated Afghanistan bills
The Government has passed twelve dedicated bills to the Parliament regarding the contribution of troops to the Afghanistan campaign prior to and during the time period under study. Hence, the Government and the Parliament has reassessed the participation in the Afghanistan campaign almost annually. Two central themes have served as a conceptual foundation during this period. The first is a salient and apparently firm belief regarding a causal relationship between security, development and stability.

> As the Government has already concluded there is a fundamental connection between how people's basic needs are met, the state's legitimacy and the stability in the area. Stability and security constitute fundamental conditions for fighting poverty and conducting humanitarian aid efforts with the purpose of establishing a long-term, sustainable political, economic and social development that safeguards the poor and his or her needs. Without security the chances for development are delimited, and without improved living conditions long term security is threatened. The military, civilian and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan shall therefor be seen as cooperating and complementing each other in support for security and development in Afghanistan (Utrikesdepartementet, 2008).

Indeed, this is an international conceptualization that has not only influenced the Afghanistan campaign in the post 9/11 era, but also one that has largely escaped critical scrutiny (see Wilder, 2009, Fishstein and Wilder, 2012). Regardless of the underpinning politics of this conception, it does signal a certain division of labor to implementing agencies, i.e. the Swedish International Development Cooperation agency SISA and the Swedish Armed Forces. With the distinction between security and development, both agencies are given clear and demarcated roles in the Swedish efforts in Afghanistan.

The second and logically related theme is a continuous deterioration of the so-called security situation in Afghanistan and the associated increased difficulty to provide humanitarian aid, development and reconstruction. This framing further stresses the importance of security and, by implication, the need for, and importance of, a military contribution.

These two themes have been iterated in all Afghanistan bills. Furthermore, the rationale for participating in the Afghanistan campaign has been held constant even though the argument for participation has evolved discursively over time. The argumentation has contained three main components, namely the underpinning logic mentioned above, an adherence to the principal of loyal international participation of nations, and a rather coarse description of the role of the Swedish military contingent.

As already mentioned, the underpinning logic has been a firm belief in the relationship between security and development. Each bill has used this logic as justification for contributing military troops. Also, the Government has made repeated references to the combined efforts of the international community to design solutions for the perceived problem in Afghanistan, particularly the outcomes of international conferences such as the Bonn Agreement in 2001 and Kabul Conference in 2010. The contents of these agreements have been fully accepted by the Swedish Government. And finally, and of more relevance to members of the force, the bills have depicted a rather coarse and vague description of the role of the military force. First, the bills have spoken of participating unit types rather than of their tasks. For example, the 2006 bill explains that the force will contain mobile military

observation teams, mobile medical teams, guard and escort units and units for logistics, a composition that the Government believes will "contribute to maintenance of the relative calm in northern Afghanistan" (Utrikesdepartementet, 2007). From a perspective of military planning, this is an awkward argument since it defines half of a solution (the other half being what a force with such a structure is supposed to do) before it defines the problem. Arguably, numerous other force structures could be devised to "contribute to maintenance of the relative calm in northern Afghanistan," for example a police force or training force. Also, for an outsider, including a military professional, it would be difficult to infer exactly what the mission and tasks of such a specific force composition would be, especially since military observation teams were not a unit type in the Swedish military. However, it should be noticed that this mentioning of a particular force structure is not the result of a design process within the Government but the reiteration of a suggestion from the Armed Forces Headquarters. This does not change the fact that the bill speaks of a solution rather than a problem though.

In the cases where the bills *have* spoken in terms of tasks, these have been sketchy at best and not contributed to any task specificity, for example:

> The Swedish ISAF unit's task is to contribute to maintenance of the relative calm in northern Afghanistan. The force is dimensioned based on this premise (Utrikesdepartementet, 2007)

and

> The unit mans provincial offices and contains mobile military observation teams and medical, guard, escort, and logistics units (Utrikesdepartementet, 2008).

For a military professional, "to maintain relative calm" is a fairly vague but also a potentially very complex task to operationalize into concrete military activity, and "to man" only implies just that, and leaves out what to do and achieve with the manned units.

The bills became somewhat more explicit after the Haag Conference, the United States strategy revision in 2009, and the Bratislava Conference and NATO's newly adopted Transition strategy in 2010. After that, the bills began to speak about a "population-centric approach[94]," a strategy which the Government believed was "in line with how Swedish forces already worked in Afghanistan." It also began speaking in terms of "supporting the Afghan security forces" rather than conducting combat operations

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[94] At no time did the bills use the term counterinsurgency though, which is the concept that harbors the population-centric approach.

(Utrikesdepartementet, 2009, Utrikesdepartementet, 2010a). Hence, the force's mission came to be described accordingly:

> The Swedish force will, in light of this, probably conduct operations together with Afghan security forces in the northern area of operations to a greater extent.

and as a Senior Civilian Representative was attached to the contingent, the mission of the military component was

> primarily to support the reconstruction of the capability of the Afghan security structures (Utrikesdepartementet, 2011, 19).

These task definitions are more specific than earlier ones, but still leave considerable room for interpretation regarding their implementation. This, however, should not be a concern of force commanders, assuming that the Swedish Armed Forces and NATO had turned these directions into goals and tasks relevant to their level of operations.

Also, throughout the period, the mission, either expressed explicitly as particular tasks such as patrolling and liaison, or implied by force components such as CIMIC (teams for so-called civil–military cooperation), was formulated by the Armed Forces. Prior to each bill, the Government asked the Armed Forces to review its contribution and to suggest modifications. Overall, the Armed Forces suggestions were deemed "suitable" and fitting Swedish intentions and where subsequently integrated into the bills. Hence, it is the Armed Forces that designed the force composition that the Government proposed to the Parliament. In this context, it should be noted that the Armed Forces was as non-specific about what the suggested units are supposed to do and achieve as the Government was, rendering the Government's vague mission statements in the bills quite understandable.

However, this handing back and forth between the Government and the Armed Forces depicts the civil–military relationship as a rather problematic feedback loop rather than a top-down implementation process. Even though it falls outside of the scope of this study, the observation raises relevant questions about who formulates policy and who implements it. It also suggests that relatively little policy refinement takes place in the vertical relationship between the Government and its implementing agency, which arguably means that such refinement has to take place elsewhere, reasonably further down the chain of command.

In summary, to the extent that force commanders have turned to the dedicated Afghanistan bills for guidance regarding the principal's mission and their own mission, any explicit or implicit missions have been non-specific both regarding the what and the how, but surprisingly specific regarding the *who*, i.e. which type of military units the force shall comprise. This may

have been interpreted as implied missions, something that will be discussed further in the subchapter on allocated resources.

The budget bills

The Swedish state budget is processed annually through the budget process, which results in a bill that is proposed by the Government and voted on by the Parliament. The bill is divided into policy fields, and chapter 6 of a budget bill pertains to the budget of the defense policy field[95] for the following year.

With regards to the Afghanistan campaign, the budget bill goes hand in hand with the content of the dedicated Afghanistan bills. The budget bills handle the Armed Forces participation in the Afghanistan campaign in a consistently structured way. They account for the past year's activities, the past year's achievements, the economic result, an assessment, and direction for the coming year. The budget bills do not project any mission statement beyond what is found in the dedicated Afghanistan proposals and appropriation directions.

The budget bill for 2006 illustrates this format well. It reports that "during 2004 Sweden has contributed with personnel to ISAF" and that the mission has been to assist the Afghan interim government in maintaining security. It points out that the participation has generated useful experiences, and that "the concept of small, regional units, which also include Swedish observation teams, is considered as successful" (Finansdepartementet, 2005, 19, 44-45). The bill describes the mission as assisting the Afghan interim government to maintain security within ISAF's area of responsibility, and that it has been "executed in a good way," for example by making it possible to execute the presidential election in October of 2004 in an acceptable manner (Ibid. 44).

With regards to the economic result, the budget was SEK 651.6 million and the outcome SEK 140.9 million (Ibid. 46). An assessment is given under the caption "Analysis and conclusions":

> The Government believes that the activities in the international operations where Swedish troops have participated have been conducted with good result, and in accordance with the political direction given for the activities during the year. Their work has contributed to increased security and stability in the various areas of operations. Swedish units have on many occasions been praised for their work (Ibid.).

and finishes by mimicking the directions given in the corresponding Appropriation direction.

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[95] The term defense holds a rather broad meaning in this context, including various aspects of societal security and not only the military defense.

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The three following budget bills are almost identical in content. The only variation is that the budget is successively raised to SEK 495 million, SEK 599 million and eventually SEK 772 million in 2009 (Finansdepartementet, 2006, 37, Finansdepartementet, 2007, 34, Finansdepartementet, 2008, 37).

The budget bill for 2010 constitutes a slight change by making a more precise assessment:

> In Afghanistan, the Swedish contingent has had continued command responsibility for a regional unit for security and reconstruction. The Government assesses that the Swedish force in ISAF generates good results. The joint stabilization operations that have been conducted together with Afghan National Security Forces **have evidently contributed to stabilizing and normalizing conditions in the area of operations** (Finansdepartementet, 2009, 27, my emphasis).

an assessment which does not seem to harmonize with the assessment of the Afghanistan bill of the same year:

> The security situation in Afghanistan has continued to deteriorate during 2009 […] In those provinces in northern Afghanistan where Sweden is in command of the regional unit for security and reconstruction in Mazar-e Sharif, as well as in the rest of northern Afghanistan, the long-term trend is that the security situation is successively deteriorating and that the capabilities of the resistance, and their use of force, is increasing (Utrikesdepartementet, 2009, 8-9).

The budget bill for 2011 contains more detailed descriptions of the force structure and thereby, at least implicitly, of their activities. For example, the budget bill for 2011 is the only government document that mentions the new *Provincial Operational Coordination Cells* (OCC-P) that the Swedish force worked with in order to help the Afghan security forces coordinate their operations (Finansdepartementet, 2010, 22). It also mentions that the force has included a female military observation team (known as *MOT Juliette*) in order to broaden the interface with the local population (Ibid. 27-28). It does not mention, however, that MOT Juliette was set up in the operations area *after* deployment at the personal initiative of the Swedish force commander and not as a result of direction from the Swedish Government, the Armed Forces or NATO (Johnsson, Forthcoming).

The following budget bill continued to assess the Swedish contingent as a generator of good results, and also mentioned the upcoming retrograde with the purpose of leaving Afghanistan in 2014. For the first time, it also gave a comparatively clear description of the mission:

> The main mission of the contribution will be to support and train the Afghan security forces, with the purpose of facilitating a successive handover of the security responsibility from ISAF to the Afghan authorities in accordance

with the goals of the Afghan government. During 2012 the support will main-
ly consist of so-called capability support, i.e. support during planning and ex-
ecution of ANSF various operations (Finansdepartementet, 2011, 26-27).

This is perhaps, and quite paradoxically, the most specific mission statement
at the Government level from the perspective of a force commander.

The final budget bill of the period added nothing significant in this regard,
simply reiterating that the Swedish contribution would primarily focus on
support, training and advising in preparation for the handover
(Finansdepartementet, 2012, 39).

In conclusion, the budget bills have provided more information than ex-
pected regarding the mission of the force. This can be understood by viewing
the budget bills as a combination of forward-looking budget and a closing of
the books at the political level. As such, the budget bills can be said to have
expressed the Government's approval of how the Armed Forces and the
deployed force in Afghanistan have interpreted the mission and carried out
operations. With such an interpretation, the Ministry of Finance can be said
to have used the bills to explain and legitimize not only the funding but also
the conduct of the Afghanistan campaign. In effect, then, the Government
legitimizes the implementing agencies' conduct of operations *a posteriori*,
determining them to be both *effective* ("generating good effect" i.e. stabiliza-
tion and normalization) and *appropriate* ("in accordance with political direc-
tion given"). Hence, there is little reason for either the Armed Forces Head-
quarters or the deployed force and its commander in Afghanistan to doubt
the way they have chosen to implement the non-specific policy directives.

Appropriation directions
The directives in the appropriation directions are kept within the limits stipu-
lated in the budget and the dedicated Afghanistan bills. With regards to the
mission of the Swedish force in Afghanistan, the appropriation directions
can be described as rather brief and technical in nature. They focus on stipu-
lating the maximum number of personnel in the force and setting the eco-
nomical frames by determining the annual cost for the deployment. They
also mention particular force's components, such as medical teams, un-
manned aerial vehicle systems and helicopters, but are generally non-
specific regarding the mission of the force as well as the purpose of the par-
ticipation. In fact, nothing resembling a purpose of the participation and the
mission of the force appeared in the appropriation directions until fiscal year
2012, eleven years into the campaign when NATO had adopted the so-called
exit strategy.

The first appropriation direction of the period (affecting FS10, FS11 and
FS12) stipulated a force of around 200 personnel at an annual cost of SEK
315 000 000. It mentioned that the contribution consisted of command of a

PRT with commander and staff as well as personnel for MOTs and guard, escort, and logistics units. The Armed Forces was mandated to temporarily increase the force within the economic and personnel limits set by the Parliament (Försvarsdepartementet, 2005, 25, 40).

The year after, the appropriation direction for 2007 (affecting FS12, FS13 and FS14) announced an increase in personnel from 200 to 365 and an annual cost of SEK 772 million (Försvarsdepartementet, 2006, 9, 33). During the fiscal year, the Government directed the Armed Forces to suggest what would be required in order to maintain an adequate medical capability within the force.[96] The following appropriation direction for fiscal year 2008 did not add anything of relevance (Försvarsdepartementet, 2007, 10, 38).

At the end of 2008, when FS15 had operated a rifle company for the first time and FS16 had just deployed, the appropriation direction for fiscal year 2009 announced the new personnel limit of 500 at a cost of SEK 1,015 million. The letter also added a reference to the newly adopted Swedish strategy for international operations, referring to its guidance regarding increased civil–military coordination (Försvarsdepartementet, 2008, 10, 33).

Furthermore, in an amendment (5 March, 2009) the Government imposed more stringent (quarterly) requirements regarding the reporting back of "plan, budget, result and prognosis" for appropriation item 1:2 *Peacemaking missions*.

The only significant difference in the Appropriation direction for 2010 was to increase the budget to SEK 1,503 million (Försvarsdepartementet, 2010, 6, 20).

So did the Appropriation direction for 2011. The budget was set at SEK 1,899 million. The Appropriation direction also mentioned the *Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams* (OMLT) for the first time, and also mentioning their mission and the purpose of their mission, being:

> through military advice, contribute to building and supporting the Afghan army (Försvarsdepartementet, 2010, 19, 5).

However, the OMLTs were not a part of the PRT and thus not under the operational control of the force commander[97].

The letter also required the Armed Forces to rapport on results in a new way:

> The Armed Forces shall account for the realization of mission objectives, which are basically expressed in the operations plans for ISAF and KFOR (Ibid.6)

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[96] In the amendment of 19 April, 2007.
[97] Although they were subordinate to him in his capacity of national contingent commander.

Before that, the only requirement was for the Armed Forces to present "assessed operative effect in the theater of operations" (Försvarsdepartementet, 2008, 11). More interestingly though, this instruction also clearly states that mission objectives have no room in appropriation directions, and implies that they have no room in the relationship between the Government and the Armed Forces at all, since they, according to the formulation, belong in the chain of command of the multinational organization.

The reduction of the Swedish participation was first expressed in the appropriation direction for 2012. The budget was decreased by 7 % to SEK 1,760 million, and the force was to be reduced from 500 to 400 by the end of the year. A peculiar addition to the force composition was added:

> The contribution shall contain capability with tactical unmanned aerial vehicle (Försvarsdepartementet, 2011, 5)

providing a good illustration of the attention often paid to details and technicalities. In this direction, eleven years into the campaign, the actual mission of the force is actually mentioned:

> The main mission for the Swedish contribution is to assist the Afghan Government in maintaining security, and thereby facilitate political reform and reconstruction, and to support and educate the Afghan security forces with the purpose of facilitating a successive transfer of the security responsibility from ISAF to the Afghan authorities in accordance with the Afghan Government's ambitions (Försvarsdepartementet, 2011, 5, 20).

This means that the three last Swedish rotations (FS22 which had already deployed, FS23 and FS24) were the first ones to serve in Afghanistan under a more detailed political mission statement expressed through the appropriation directions to the Armed Forces.

The final appropriation direction pertinent to this analysis further reduced the force from 400 to 300 at the end of 2013 and reduced the budget to SEK 1,449 million. It also stipulated increased cooperation with Finland, Norway and Lithuania to form a joint Nordic/Baltic contribution by June 1, 2013 (thereby affecting FS24) to remain operational throughout 2014. The mission was now formulated in the following manner:

> The main mission for the Swedish force contribution is to assist the Afghan Government with upholding security by supporting and educating the Afghan security forces, in accordance with the ongoing transition process (Försvarsdepartementet, 2012, 4-5, 19).

Even though the appropriation direction for fiscal year 2014 falls outside of this analysis, it deserves to mention that it ended the contribution of a PRT-like force. It stipulated a contingent of 300 personnel until May 2014, when

the Swedish participation in ISAF was to be terminated. The mission of FS25 and FS26 was expressed accordingly:

> The main mission for the Swedish contribution is training and advising aimed at the Afghan security forces with the purpose of developing their ability to independently manage security in the country in accordance with the Afghan Government's ambitions.

and:

> The Swedish unit shall contain, among other things, advisors, intelligence, medical, and logistics units. The contribution shall also contain personnel in military advisory teams, instructors at the Afghan Army's staff and function schools, and personnel at the staffs that command ISAF. Beyond that, a helicopter unit for medical evacuation and personnel for support for degradation of infrastructure and home-rotation of equipment and materiel (Försvarsdepartementet, 2013, 5).

Compared to the dedicated Afghanistan bills and the budget bills, the appropriation directives are marginally more specific in their tasking of the Armed Forces regarding the mission of the Swedish force in Afghanistan. Yet, this is the document where we should expect sufficiently specific mission statements. Instead, they make it perfectly clear that mission objectives are stipulated by NATO and ISAF. It is not until international adoption of the exit strategy in 2011 that the appropriation directions, like the budget bills, become clearer regarding the mission. A plausible interpretation of this development is that the Swedish Government did not fully understand the Afghanistan campaign prior to that, and that it only began to understand it when the concrete task of going home became the mission. This in turn may shed light on the confused national debate[98] about the purpose of the campaign that arose in 2009 and 2010.

Other documents
Beyond these bills and appropriation directions, a number of other formal government documents exist that pertain to the political direction of the military participation in Afghanistan and that must be regarded as a part of the national discourse and therefore of potential significance to policy implementers including force commanders.

The 2010 Afghanistan strategy
On July 8 of 2010, the Swedish Government issued a *Strategy for Sweden's support to the international engagement in Afghanistan*. It is a document that puts forth an "analysis" of the situation in Afghanistan and suggests a set of

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[98] See page 14

solutions. In it, the Government expresses its goal for the combined efforts in Afghanistan:

> Sweden's engagement/commitment shall strengthen Afghanistan's ability to maintain stability and security, democracy and human rights and to offer its citizens opportunities to improve their living conditions and a fair and sustainable development (Utrikesdepartementet, 2010b, 2).

According to the Government, what is needed in order to achieve these goals is a number of measures such as political reforms, development efforts, and to enhance security. A core principle is that so-called Afghan ownership is to be in focus (Ibid.) The mission of the international security forces is to aid the Afghan Government in maintaining security to facilitate political reform and reconstruction and to support the build-up of the Afghan security forces. Security responsibility is to be transferred to the Afghan security forces depending on Afghan proficiency (Ibid. 20). In this context, the goal for the Swedish contribution is to "be a reliable contributor to the international security force":

> The international security force has the leading responsibility for the military support. As a non-allied troop contributor to the NATO-led force, it is central to assure our control and influence in the decision processes that pertain to the force.

and:

> The main mission of the Swedish military contribution is to assist the Afghan government in creating security both for the Afghan population and for the activities that shall support the country (Ibid.).

In summary, the Government's Afghanistan strategy does not add anything new to the writings of the dedicated Afghanistan bills or the appropriation directions, since the context of the military engagement has already been expressed in them. The fact that the Government issues a strategy[99] does however signal some resolve to project engagement and Governmental unity. Yet, the fact that it was issued nine years into the campaign rather raises questions about the Government's resolve prior to that, and also gives the impression of a realized strategy rather than an intended strategy (c.f. Mintzberg et al., 1998, 11-12).

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[99] The document has the status of a so-called *country strategy* at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Such strategies exist for several countries but are usually addressed to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), which the Afghanistan strategy was not.

The 2008 strategy for international peacekeeping operations

The 2010 Afghanistan strategy refers to another official document, the *National strategy for Swedish participation in international peace and security operations* from March 2008. This is not a document specifically pertaining to the Afghanistan campaign, but it can be assumed that political experiences of the participation in the Campaign played a significant role in its conception, and that it (and the Afghanistan strategy) was a source that military professionals turned to for guidance.

The strategy stated that:

> The overarching goal is that Sweden shall take a larger and more coordinated responsibility in peace and security operations

i.e. the main argument of the strategy was that Swedish contribution should increase (Regeringen, 2008, 5). Such arguments can help to explain perceptions of Swedish strategy and policy as focusing on international participation rather than concrete policy goals that can be transformed into action-relevant policy output and outcomes.

The 2008 Parliamentary hearing

On 4 December 2008 the Parliament's Defence Committee held an official hearing regarding the "conditions in Afghanistan." It was an information gathering activity conducted merely weeks before the Parliament passed the 2008 dedicated Afghanistan bill. The hearing began with presentations given by representatives of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SAK), the Swedish deployed force (Colonel Torbjörn Larsson who had recently commanded FS14 and who would later command FS23), the National Police Board, the Armed Forces Headquarters, and a research institute. Of interest here is that Colonel Larsson described the mission in very broad terms, familiar to representatives of the highest political level:

> What mission is it that we *de facto* have in Afghanistan? Well, the mission is to support the Afghan authorities. […] We shall create conditions to build up their armed forces and police.

Furthermore, he described the concept of operations in the following words:

> So what do we *de facto* do there? Well, we are a number of patrols with two cars that try to have daily contact with all of the districts, about forty of them. But it is impossible to have daily contact, so the ambition is to meet the governor, the police and other key actors in each district once a week. […] It is similar at the province level. You try to have a good relationship and meet the province governor and the province chief of police and other actors. That is what we work with. So we go to meetings and have relations with people to get a good understanding of the situation (Försvarsutskottet, 2009, 14-16).

General Anders Lindström, the Armed Forces Director of Operations, used similar formulations:

> Our concept is, as you can see in the picture, to move around in reinforced Toyota vehicles, meet the people, create contacts and generate intelligence (Ibid. 23).

In the following Q & A session, the participating committee members asked questions about the risk of the Swedish ISAF force being mistaken for the U.S.-led *Operations Enduring Freedom*[100], about how the training of the Afghan National Army was validated, about why it was more difficult to support the Afghan National Police than the Afghan National Army, what would happen, security-wise, if Swedish troops engaged in anti-drug operations, and if there was common, long-term planning among different agencies in Sweden (sic!). One member also expressed anxiety over the lack of Swedish helicopters for medical evacuation (Ibid. 28, 30, 37). No questions were asked about the purpose of the participation, the meaning and appropriateness of the mission, or the character or appropriateness of the conduct of the Swedish force.

The chairman concluded by stating:

> This open hearing has given clear answers: The Afghanistan issue is not a simple issue, if anyone though that when they came here today. There are many questions. How many troops shall we have there? What direction shall we have for our total effort? Is our PRT too big for our work to generate results? The issue of coordinating military and civilian efforts. How do we act so that our soldiers can operate in a safe environment? Are preparations and coordination the best possible? (Ibid. 39)

The hearing indicates that the politicians concerned with the issue had a poor understanding not only of the conditions on the ground but also of the conditions at home. But it can also be argued that the representatives of the implementers did not take the opportunity to provide clear and concise information to remedy this shortcoming. The two military accounts cited above, the first one describing the mission as to "support the Afghan authorities" and the second one describing the concept for accomplishing that mission as "meet the people, create contacts and generate intelligence," leave a huge logical gap. As puzzling as it is that the two officers failed to fill that gap, it is perhaps even more puzzling that the committee members did not ask them to do so. This further suggests that the specificity of the mission has not been a core issue in the relations between the Government and the Armed Forces.

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[100] The U.S.-led *Operation Enduring Freedom*, which ran parallel to the NATO-led ISAF operation, was more of a counterterrorism operation in that it focused on engaging insurgent groups more directly.

The 2010 bilateral agreement on Afghanistan

In November 2010, the Swedish government made a bilateral agreement with the two major parties of the opposition, the Social Democratic Party and the Green Party, as a result of the Kabul Conference, which proclaimed a shift in focus to training and enabling the Afghan security forces and a NATO withdrawal by the end of 2014. According to the agreement, the goals set up by the Kabul Conference required "a new direction for the combined Swedish activities in Afghanistan." In order for the Afghan security forces to be able to command and conduct operations in all provinces, the Swedish effort should focus on "training and supporting" them. The agreement stated that:

> Our strategy is a successive change from a fighting force to supportive security measures (Regeringen, 2010).

Since the Government had not expressed a "fighting" strategy before this, the statement may be interpreted as an indication of a growing political awareness of the character of the operations on the ground[101] and an emerging disapproval of it. The "change" is clearly aimed, at least partially, at the military, implying a change in conduct (to less violent) on the part of the deployed force but also implying a shift in focus from military to civilian operations. Beyond that, the written agreement did not contain any information in addition to the dedicated Afghanistan bill that was issued three days later.

At the accompanying press conference, the Swedish Prime Minister reiterated that the time limit of the engagement, the "development with fiercer fighting," and the broad political unanimity were the main points of the agreement. Also, the leader of the Green party stressed that the "military strategy" was "a dead end" and needed to be replaced by a new strategy of support. He also pointed out that the Swedish force would be placed under civilian leadership during 2012 (Thurfjell, 2010).

Even though the Swedish Supreme Commander commented on the agreement by saying that the members of the Swedish force would benefit from a broad political agreement (Försvarsmakten, 2010c), it can be argued that the agreement offered little to the force members who were wondering about what he principal's mission in Afghanistan was. "To support" had been a part of the discourse from the onset in more or less explicit terms, and as we shall see, the "new strategy" left considerable room for interpretation. The argument that a more offensive force conduct was to be replaced by a more supporting force conduct also indicates the Government's failure to

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[101] Following a summer of significant violence in the vicinity of the combat outpost that the Swedish force had established in a troublesome area 40 kilometers west of Mazar-e Sharif earlier that year. This operation will be dealt with in detail in the following chapters.

shape the character of the military contribution and to control its evolvement. Even though the Government had not previously tasked the force with a "fighting strategy," the agreement now made it clear that it perceived the force's conduct in such terms, despite its insight into, and approval of, NATO's strategy development and operational planning. The remarks made by the parties to the agreement therefore shows that the way in which the force interpreted and implemented the principal's mission did not correspond to the political beliefs and preferences, at this particular time that is (which is of course contradicted by the approvals offered in the budget bills), and also that those political beliefs and preferences had not been sufficiently expressed. This development could indicate a type of top-level mission creep where the implementers' interpretation of the principal's mission and its implications on the ground had moved to the outskirts of what was (tacitly) appropriate.

The Armed Forces Annual Reports

Finally, in order to add to this description of how political will and policy implementation were expressed at the national strategic level, the Armed Forces annual reports deserves some attention. In this instrument, the Armed Forces Headquarters reports to the Government how the contribution to the multinational force in Afghanistan was executed.

In 2006 for example, the first year of the Swedish PRT in Mazar-e Sharif, the mission of the deployed force in Afghanistan is described in the same type of language as is used in the political documents:

> The Swedish engagement shall contribute to the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan (Försvarsmakten, 2007, 19).

Without offering reasons or evidence, the report assesses that

> The force is operational and performs its tasks well, considering the size of the area and available resources (Ibid. 20).

and furthermore,

> PRT MES has placed its focus on stabilization operations together with the Afghan National Security Forces. The assessment is that the presence markedly contributes to normalizing and stabilizing the area (Ibid. 21).

The annual reports for 2007, 2008, and 2009 use almost identical formulations to explain operational focus (joint stabilization operations) and to assess the effects of the deployment. The annual report for 2009[102] for example states that:

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[102] Accidently labeled Annual report *2010* on the cover of the appendix.

[d]uring the second quarter, PRT MeS has focused on supporting the Afghan presidential election, during which the force has operated throughout the area of operations. The assessment is that the support to the Afghan National Security Forces contributed to the presidential election being held in PRT MeS area of operations without any considerable limitations (Försvarsmakten, 2010b).

The annual report for 2010 follows the same format. It does not report, however, that the Swedish force has established a combat outpost on Ali Zayi Hill in the summer of 2009, an activity that is related to the peak in violence of that year (Försvarsmakten, 2011b, 4-7). The following annual reports offer little variance.

The lasting impression of the reports is that they speak in vague terms about the force's mission but reports details and particularities that it is questionable whether the addressees can appreciate, for example the negotiations with a local contractor regarding the dismantling of a cell-phone tower next to the Swedish camp (Försvarsmakten, 2008, 6) or the fact that 12% of the force in 2012 were women (Försvarsmakten, 2013b, 54). Also noticeable are the sweeping and almost casual assessments of operational effectiveness and mission objective accomplishments, which is what the appropriation directions actually call for. The phrase "The force is operational and performs its tasks satisfactory, considering the size of the area and the available resources" (Ibid.) has been used, with almost no changes, in each annual report between 2007 and 2013. In summary then, the annual reports provide a picture of a successful implementation on the ground in Afghanistan that is well in line with the issued political direction. And again, this must reasonably reinsure not only the Government but also the force on the ground that how it implements the mission is acceptable and appropriate.

At a first glance, the political framing of the participation in the Afghanistan campaign may appear to be clear and coherent. The dedicated bills are consistent in their will to promote stability though security and development, the appropriation directions convey these policies without distortion, and the budget bills find that the policies have been implemented satisfactorily. Here, policy direction and evaluation appear to be in balance.

Given the non-specific formulation of political goals and the outsourcing of mission objective formulation to NATO, the integrity of such an evaluation may be questioned. It is for example unclear whether the Government makes these judgments based on the annual reports from the Armed Forces or based on some Government evaluation process. The Swedish National Audit Office report from 2011 claims that political motives and mission objectives are so unclearly stated that it is "difficult to assess the Armed Forces activities in relation to these formulations" (Riksrevisionen, 2011, 25). Also, the Armed Forces reports are "brief and without underlying rea-

sons" (Ibid. 28) which further problematizes the political evaluation of the military deployments. Nevertheless, in terms of policy steering, and regardless of the quality of the data and the evaluation methods, the Government has generally expressed approval of the conduct of operations in Afghanistan. Again, this suggests a practice at the national level where broad policies and direction and broad evaluations reinforce each other to create an image of policy clarity. Thus, anyone who seeks insight into the purposes, principles and practices of the Swedish participation in the multinational campaign in Afghanistan will get a coherent picture, but one that is so broad in its scope that it can mean virtually anything on the ground. For a force commander who finds the principal's mission somewhat non-specific in his superior's orders, the steering documents at the Government level offer little clarification.

The two main conclusions of this analysis are that a) the Government – and Parliament – expresses the purpose and utility of the military deployment in Afghanistan vaguely and also holds a vague understanding of what it is that the deployed force actually does there, and that b) the problem of interpreting and determining the meaning of the vague policy is handed over to someone else, either NATO, the Armed Forces, or both.

These conclusions are corroborated by the aforementioned 2011 report from the Swedish National Audit Office, which, after an audit of Swedish participation in multinational operations, found that the Government, in general:

> has not concretized the goals and motives that have been formulated at an overarching level when it comes to Swedish contributions to specific operations or countries. It is therefore not clear what Swedish contributions are expected to achieve in particular instances or against what criteria the Swedish engagement are to be evaluated. The Government's control of the authorities concerned primarily deals with what each authority is to contribute but not what the contributions themselves are aimed at. It is a business where the aim is to participate (Riksrevisionen, 2011, 10).

The audit also found that the Government's control of its agencies in the case of the engagement in Afghanistan imply unresolved differences of interest, which passes on the clarification of national policy to the actors in the field (Ibid. 11).

One might be surprised that the Government orders the Armed Forces to deploy troops without offering a clear and actionable mission statement. However, with another viewpoint this can actually be expected. Scholars have suggested at least two reasons for deploying forces to multinational operations other than mission utility: for international political gain and respect, e.g. within the U.N., the E.U., or vis-à-vis NATO), and as a consequence of strategic culture, i.e. Sweden participates in multinational, U.N.-mandated operations because that is what Sweden does (Ångström, 2010,

169-170). And furthermore, non-specific goals and missions may be necessary at the political level in order to achieve political agreement. It may also be seen as necessary in order to facilitate local problem-solving, since strict regulations may pinion the implementers. However, such benefits come with the price of pushing the act of concretization downward in the chain of command.

Conclusion

In summary, both what is to be achieved and how it is to be achieved has been non-specific across the board which, according to my theoretical assumptions, increases the discretion of force commanders. In fact, the combination of a non-specific what *and* a non-specific how was assumed to have the greatest effect on the subordinates' discretion.

At the national level, where the political purposes of the participation can be expected to be found, little has been offered to raise specificity for the implementers in the lower echelons. Both government documents and hearings actually suggest that concretization of mission, tasks and concept of operations has not been a core issue in the interaction between the Government and the Armed Forces, which inevitably pushes it downwards in the policy implementation chain. And in operational orders from the force commanders' superiors, where specificity can be expected to be the highest, mission and tasks have to a large degree been described in such broad, non-specific terms (sometimes identical to those used at the political level) as to leave room for interpretation and concretization or in such numbers as to induce prioritization. Under such conditions, a deployed force commander with a particular set of resources (discussed below) and a given, vast area of operations, is arguably granted significant discretion to specify or choose both the purpose and the content of the mission.

If one purpose of bureaucracy is to achieve a vertical division of labor by having decision-makers at different levels make different types of decisions according to their competence and responsibility, some sort of balance along the tiers of that bureaucracy could seem warranted. In this case however, it appears as if the lion's share of this labor has been placed at the lower levels of the bureaucracy. In a more regular or traditional military context, the commanders of corps, divisions, brigades and battalions each add to the successive specification of goals and missions down the chain of command, aided by doctrine that defines roles and operational concepts at each level of command. In fact, contributing such added value so to speak can be said to be the *raison d'être* of the various levels. Here, it appears as if the echelons above the force commander have neglected to do that to a degree that has rendered task specificity comparatively low at the force level.

One could object that multinational peace operations are so complex that they need to be defined on the ground so to speak and that it takes the situation awareness and tactical insight of a commander on the ground to be able

to both define the actual problem and design the appropriate solution. The fact that the battalion-sized deployed force is assigned a full colonel and not a lieutenant colonel or major, which are the more appropriate ranks for battalion commanders, could be an expression of a tacit insight regarding the uncertainties and complexities and of the mission, and a belief that such matters are best addressed in the field rather than in the corridors of the national capitol. And in order to enhance the chances of success a full colonel is given the post, a broad mission, and the discretion to accomplish it.

A number of arguments contradict such an objection. First, even though the challenge may be regarded as complex, it is not managed by delegation by necessity. For example, other countries like the United States and the United Kingdom address the complexity by developing strategy that is (supposed to be) carried out by the deployed forces. In the case of Afghanistan the Counterinsurgency strategy is the prime example of such a policy approach. It is the role of doctrine to manage complex challenges and avoid discretion at the lower echelons. However, Sweden has not had a doctrine for the types of missions that have been sent down the chain of command to the force commanders in Afghanistan. Such doctrines have been available elsewhere though (e.g. in the U.S or the U.K.), as we shall see in the next chapter, but it has been up to the deployed force to find and accept or reject them. And second, the delegation of dealing with complexity, in the lack of strategy and doctrine, opens up for arbitrariness – and hence discretion - at the tactical level, which is, reasonably, neither politically nor militarily desirable.

Implications of allocated resources

The deployed force's resources are allocated by the Land Component Command in the national chain of command. This may seem like a trivial statement regarding an obvious arrangement, but the arrangement actually entails several potential implementation risks.

First, since it is the multinational command that develops and issues the operational requirements, and the national command that supplies the resources, a flawless mechanism that facilitates congruence between those two processes is required if harmony between mission and resources is desirable. Thus, the multinational command must be able to clearly convey operational requirements to the national authorities, which in turn must be able to translate them into resource requirements and turn those into actual resources in terms of personnel, organization, doctrine and equipment. Given the complexity not only of the subject matter at hand (the conflict in Afghanistan and the chosen way to handle it) but also the large and multifaceted organizations that are involved in formulating and realizing operational requirements, a perfect, flawless process seems somewhat utopian.

Second, this mechanism must also be able to resist and weed out any other bureaucratic attempts to affect the force structure. Acknowledging that both the political system that mandates the deployment of the force and the military bureaucracy that executes that mandate are political in nature, we can expect attempts to affect the composition of the deployed force, and there exists a real risk that the force will be equipped beyond what the requirements call for. Various factions within government, rivaling departments and units within the Armed Forces, procurement agencies and research organizations may all have many and various interests that could be satisfied by equipping a national force in a multinational operation in a particular way.

And third, the force-generation process must be able to consider other legitimate and relevant requirements that are neither expressed in the multinational organization's operational requirements nor derivable from them. There may for instance be political requirements regarding force protection (to have as few body bags returning from the war as possible) that justify safety measures that surpass those of the military establishment, which may be more willing to take risks than their political principals are in order to achieve a dangerous mission.

Taken together, the chance of inconsistencies between original operational requirements and allocated resources cannot be disregarded. This should be kept in mind while analyzing the implications of allocated resources from an objective perspective.

Organization and Personnel

Over time the organizational structure and staffing of the force has developed from smaller units for surveillance and civil–military liaison to larger units for combat. In the beginning the operational bulk of the force consisted of a number of military observation teams (MOT) equipped with so-called soft-skin vehicles, unprotected, white Toyota Land Cruisers that are more associated with UN peacekeeping than NATO warfighting. The earlier forces contained only a few platoon size units (thirty to forty troops strong) that can be regarded as combat units, a rifle platoon and one or two guard and escort platoons. These units had standing tasks to guard the camp and escort and rescue other units across the area of operations (e.g. FS14, 2009). This is a force structure that signals peacekeeping with the ability to protect itself and handle minor emergencies.

On the other hand, the units were staffed with officers and soldiers from elite-type ranger regiments to a larger extent than for example in the Kosovo campaign. Thus, the MOTs were often in effect ranger squads assuming new tasks in the context of the PRT concept. And furthermore, these new tasks were eventually trained at the Armed Forces Intelligence and Security Center (Respondent 122, 2013, Respondent 121, 2013, Respondent 53, 2013, Respondent 120, 2013), which further stresses the elite status of the MOTs.

Taken together, this signals a higher level of difficulty and ambition as opposed to, for example, the Kosovo campaign, where equivalent liaison teams and CIMIC teams where manned with other categories than elite soldiers and officers.

With FS15 the force structure changed significantly when the rifle, guard and escort platoons were reorganized into a rifle company in 2008. In practice, the re-organization was little more than the supplement of a new joint company command group, but FS15 did not manage to transform the three platoons into a functioning company, and the command group ended up acting as a new dispatch central for the platoons. It was not until FS16 that the new rifle company could begin to operate as one (Respondent 3, 2013, Respondent 111, 2013).

While the actual change in force composition may seem trivial (the addition of small company staff of about three officers) the signaling effect of introducing a rifle company is significant, not least on the force itself. A PRT with a company-sized maneuver unit (a strike team, if you will) is something rather different than a PRT without one (several force commanders will testify to this, as will be seen), and the introduction of a rifle company is an organizational escalation. Thus, the new organization clearly implies another force mission than the old one did, both to inside and outside observers. In fact, one could say that the introduction of the rifle company filled a gap that early force commanders had identified and raised and that it created new operational options, and thus courses of action, for coming force commanders.

Parallel to these changes in force structure, troop size also changed. In 2005 the Parliament mandated the Armed Forces to assume leadership of the British-led PRT in Mazar-e Sharif. At the same time the maximum troop size was increased from 150 to 375,[103] i.e. by 150% (Utrikesdepartementet, 2005). Thus, the first force commander of the time period was given a significantly larger force than the contingent commander of FS10 had had. However, given the simultaneous significant change in mission (operating a PRT in Mazar-e Sharif) this increase does not necessarily imply a particular mission in itself.

In March of 2007, at the end of FS12's deployment, a new government bill further increased the maximum troop size from 375 to 600, i.e. by 60 % (Utrikesdepartementet, 2007). What is notable is that the 60 % increase was neither justified by any specific arguments nor explained in terms of what problem it was supposed to solve. The only argument that was given was the difficulty of assessing any demand for reinforcements. However, the previous troop size already contained ample room for reinforcements, which renders the 2007 escalation somewhat ambiguous.

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[103] The PRT was estimated to constitute 185 of this total.

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In November 2008 the Government mandated the next and final increase in troop size, enlarging the maximum force by 42.5 % to 855 troops.[104] This time the increase was justified by the enlargement of the mentoring teams (OMLT) and the supplement of an air transport unit and a helicopter unit (Utrikesdepartementet, 2008), contributions that went outside of the PRT proper. The organization of the PRT therefore remained largely unchanged with the MOTs in the provinces and one rifle company throughout 2010 and the redeployment of FS19.

Then in the end of 2010 with the deployment of FS20, the Armed Forces changed the organization quite significantly. Over time the MOT structure had evolved so that each province had a provincial office (or PO which in effect was a large, fixed MOT) in each provincial capital and a number of MOTs under its command that operated throughout the province. This organization had come to resemble a company structure with the PO as the company command and staff and the MOTSs as the smaller platoon elements (e.g. FS18, 2010). Thus, the PRT of FS19 contained (ATS, 2009a):

- a PRT staff
- a headquarters company
- an intelligence and surveillance company
- a rifle company (with one headquarters platoon and four rifle platoons, totaling 148 personnel)
- five MOTs in the Balkh region (without a PO)
- one PO and two MOTs in Aybak
- one PO and three MOTs in Sheberghan
- one PO and two MOTs in Sar-e Pul

With FS20, which rotated to Afghanistan in late 2010, the rifle company was reduced to three rifle platoons, and the three PO/MOT units were transformed into three reduced rifle companies with a headquarters structure and one rifle platoon (ATS, 2010a, Appendix 2) thus forming a "reduced mechanized battalion" through mere reorganizing:

- a PRT staff
- a headquarters company
- an intelligence and surveillance company
- the 1st rifle company (with one headquarters platoon and three rifle platoons, totaling 113 personnel)
- five MOTs in the Balkh region (without a PO)
- one PO and two MOTs in Aybak
- **the 2nd rifle company** (with headquarters and one rifle platoon, totaling 54 personnel) stationed in the Sheberghan
- **the 3rd rifle company** (with headquarters and one rifle platoon, totaling 54 personnel) stationed in the Sar-e Pul.

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[104] With an estimated regular force of 500 in place.

This transformation was justified by an elevated threat level, the changing nature of operations, and ISAF's partnering concept (Ibid., 1-2). Also, the so-called "Army model" came to fully characterize the selection and composition of deploying units. While earlier rotations had been recruited on an almost individual basis, thus generating a rather heterogeneous composition of personnel categories, FS20 and later rotations were mainly set up from standing units from selected regiments, mainly armor and mechanized infantry regiments (e.g. the Skaraborg Regiment, the South Skåne Regiment and the Norrbotten Regiment) and a ranger regiment (the airborne battalion of the Life Regiment Hussars) (Ibid., 1-2). This led to more homogeneous units, albeit with varying specializations such as light infantry operations, armor operations and ranger operations.

On the one hand, this transformation can be seen as minor. In effect, the existing PO/MOT units in Sheberghan and Sar-e Pul where supplied with troops from the existing rifle company and renamed. Yet, they contained merely one rifle platoon which inhibited them to actually act as a rifle company (ATS, 2009a, Appendix 2, ATS, 2010a). Thus, the *character* rather than the size of the PO/MOT units was transformed. However, this change can be seen as significant since the new name and character implied combat operations, while the old organization had implied surveillance and monitoring. The term "reduced mechanized battalion", whether explicitly pronounced or implicitly suggested by the force's organization, definitely denotes combat operations in a way that the character of the previous, MOT-based, force structure did not.

The organizational increases in 2007 and 2008 also placed Afghanistan in first place as Sweden's largest multinational operation ahead of Kosovo. This entails a significantly different status than in 2002 when it was one of the smallest operations (45 personnel) that was to go on for only a few months (Utrikesdepartementet, 2001). Thus, from 2010 an onwards, the Afghanistan campaign was a highly prioritized operation of a more war-like character, a significant shift from the peacekeeping character it had in 2006.

Equipment

Over time, the growing force was equipped with increasingly heavier equipment, mainly visible in the fleet of vehicles and its associated weaponry. In the beginning, equipment was a peripheral issue. The first rotations deployed and operated with what can be described as a system of regular peacekeeping equipment. With the assistance of a Swedish engineer unit[105] the force built and inhabited Camp Northern Lights two kilometers southeast of the center of Mazar-e Sharif (Agrell, 2013, 134). The camp, a 300 x 240-meter rectangular compound, was different from previous camps in Bosnia and Kosovo in that it was fortified with so-called HESCO walls, a construc-

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[105] A type of unit that constructs roads, bridges, fortifications and so on.

tion method that was the norm in both Afghanistan and Iraq, making the camp resemble a fort to a larger extent than for example Camp Oden in Tuzla, Bosnia or Camp Victoria in Pristina, Kosovo, which were established in existing buildings (BA02, 1997, Forsberg and Wramén, 2001). Beyond that, the force was equipped in a similarly way as the contemporary force in Kosovo were with regular weapons and vehicles. The main vehicles were non-protected, white-painted Toyota Land Cruiser jeeps and green-painted, non-protected Mercedes Geländewagen jeeps, with a few wheeled armored personnel carriers (several still painted green) for emergencies and high risk missions. Parts of the force still wore the dark green splinter camouflage uniforms since the desert version was not yet in full production (e.g. FS11, 2006, Vamstad, 2009).

As the demanding security situation became apparent, the seemingly under-dimensioned fleet of vehicles became an issue for media attention and political discussion. Parallel to this, the fleet of vehicles successively evolved from lighter unprotected vehicles to heavier combat vehicles. Thus, the Armed Forces decided to deploy the first set of the CV90 combat vehicles[106] in the spring of 2009 (Försvarsmakten, 2009). Also, the unprotected jeeps that were used earlier were successively replaced with the armored jeep RG32 (Petersson, 2009), Sweden's equivalent to the infamous U.S. HMMWV or Humvee.

The evolution of the fleet of vehicles, and its accompanying evolution of the weapons arsenal, is perhaps the most significant change in resources during the period. To an outsider who could actually get a glimpse of the force conducting vehicle-mounted operations, for example a villager in rural Jowzjan province, two white Toyota jeeps must have made quite a different impression than a column of four dessert-painted, tank-like vehicles (perhaps accompanied by a pair of U.S. attack helicopters hovering over a field) would. It remains an empirical question what the difference meant to the insiders, including force commanders, but it is reasonable to assume that two such different sets of equipment imply different types of missions.

The escalation in equipment may be understood in several and different ways. First, it may be seen as an adaptation to a perceived deterioration of the security environment, a reasons which was voiced both in reports from the deployed forces[107] as well as in the news media. Second, it may be seen as a prerequisite for more aggressive operational conduct. This, however, was never an issue in the national debate, since combat tasks were not politically mandated or implied. It may instead have been a result of requirements from the field to be able to perform actions of force projection, or as a result

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[106] The CV90 is an infantry combat vehicle designed to carry a rifle squad on the battlefield. Despite its appearance it should not be confused with a tank, which is a completely different type of combat vehicle.
[107] The inadequate fleet of vehicles was an issue in the forces' after action reports from the onset.

of an interpretation of the task to "support" the Afghan security forces that implied participating in combat situations. The escalation was probably a combination of all of these reasons,[108] and it is evident that the explicit decisions were not made at the political level but in the Armed Forces Headquarters (ATS, 2009b).

Regardless of the reasons for this escalation, the actual changes in equipment render more than one interpretation possible. One is that the force is expected to conduct regular peacekeeping operations in an increasingly hazardous environment, i.e. the escalation is not an offensive escalation but a defensive measure for force protection. A second interpretation is a variant of the first and is a consequence of the task to support the Afghan security forces that implies participation in peacekeeping-like or counterinsurgency-type operations that may result in combat situations (i.e. the proximity to Afghan forces requires force-protection measures), suggesting a multipurpose force structure. And a third is that the force is expected to perform more offensive operations, alone or together with Afghan security forces.

The first interpretation may be dominant in the national political discourse but is unlikely in the military establishment. If the purpose was to transport troops safely across the battlefield, a slightly different fleet of vehicles would have been more appropriate (wheeled armored personnel carriers are more optimal for that purpose than the tracked CV90 combat vehicle). Instead, the objective interpretation from a military perspective is that the force's equipment was intended for potential combat situations, with or without Afghan security forces, i.e. multipurpose.

Doctrine

To analyze structural implications of doctrine, understood here as a conceptual indication of how to operate in order to achieve certain effects, from an objective perspective we need to first locate the sources of such indications. If we leave aside a deploying force's own notions of doctrine for now and deal with it in the upcoming subjective part of the analysis, we can identify two major sources of doctrine as it pertains to such a force. The first is by *decree* in the national and multinational chains of command, i.e. in the way that the national and multinational command directs the force to operate according to a particular doctrine, and the second is by *instruction* in the national and multinational organization, i.e. in the way the national and multinational command suggests a particular doctrine through some training regime.

Before addressing those aspects, it deserves to be mentioned that, as some readers may just have noted, I do not include any formal Swedish doctrine here, the reason being that Sweden did not have a formal, written doctrine –

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[108] Even though anecdotal evidence suggests reasons beyond mere force protection, actual data of such underlying arguments is hard to find.

in the formative sense implied here – for peacekeeping operations in general or PRT operations in particular during the period (Respondent 122, 2013). Even though the system of Swedish military doctrinal publications developed significantly during the period, they deliberately avoid taking up a doctrinal stand in this regard. The Military Strategic Doctrine from 2011, incidentally embellished with a picture of a Swedish soldier in Afghanistan on the cover, clearly states that:

> [f]or necessary military interoperability there exist today various international doctrines regarding for example Peacekeeping Operations (PKO), Stability Operations (SO), Crisis Response Operations (CRO), Peace Support Operations (PSO) and Counter Insurgency Operations (COIN). Therefore, the Armed Forces do not need to develop their own doctrines for national use within the areas mentioned above (Försvarsmakten, 2011a, 134).

Thus, units deploying to multinational operations are referred to the doctrines of others and not to Swedish doctrine, although it will, of course, be relevant to many other aspects of the force's conduct as expressed in manuals, field manuals, standard operating procedures and such.

Over time, allocated, or rather available, doctrine has implied both peacekeeping and peace-enforcement variants of the PRT concept, as well as counterinsurgency and military operations. Taken together, numerous sources of influence presented a fragmented and conceptually shallow doctrinal canvas which left ample room for choice and interpretation for the implementers.

As has been discussed at length in the previous subsection, both the national and multinational commands largely refrained from explicitly telling the force what to do and also how to do it. However, the force has been designated with the rather sketchy concept of provincial reconstruction team (PRT), which has served as a significant doctrinal indication for a large portion of the period, but with its sketchiness creating space for interpretation and conceptual choice. Eventually, most probably as a result of the many variants of the PRT concept that emerged throughout Afghanistan, NATO and ISAF attempted to streamline the efforts of the lead nations. Two salient institutions in this attempt were the PRT Course at NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany, which taught the PRT concept to force commanders (PRT commanders) and their staff crews, and the ISAF PRT Handbook, a semi-formal publication justified by the realization that

> […] even with a single command, achieving coherence among all 26 PRTs remains a challenge, if for no other reason than, as of March 2008, there are 14 different nations leading PRTs (ISAF, 2009, 1).

illustrating an insight that different nations apparently interpret and implement the PRT concept differently. In the pursuit of unity of effort, NATO

conducted a pilot course for PRT key personnel at the NATO School in Oberammergau in 2006. The five-day ISAF PRT Predeployment course, designated "N2-09," aimed at providing a "common frame of reference" (Ibid., 30-31) and provided relatively general information on the Afghanistan campaign and the PRT concept (NATO, 2012b). More substance was found in the PRT Handbook, a 314-page document that was last issued (in version 4) in 2009. The core of the handbook aimed to explain the "conceptual framework for a PRT," to explain how concepts and strategies were to be implemented on the ground, and how to organize a PRT (ISAF, 2009, 1). The doctrinal foundation expressed in the PRT handbook can be described as somewhat muddled. Like the ISAF orders, the handbook goes through many and varying aspects of a PRT, and it is somewhat difficult to see the logical derivation between levels of abstraction, mixing abstract issues such as "focus upon improving stability by seeking to reduce the causes of instability" and rather concrete measures such as "conduct joint patrols with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) whenever possible" (Ibid. 4-5) even though "joint patrols" also presents a range of options. Thus the handbook can be said to offer more of a smorgasbord of conceptual components than a causal, coherent, operational idea.

The handbook declares that the purpose of the PRT is to approach the complex social and conflictual aspects of Afghanistan in a way that the military in itself cannot do, hence the (desired) joint civil–military character of the PRT:

> PRTs were devised in 2002 with the initial PRTs being deployed in late 2002 and 2003, as a mechanism that could "solve" this problem. A PRT is a civilian military institution that is able to penetrate the more unstable and insecure areas because of its military component and is able to stabilize these areas because of the combined capabilities of its diplomacy, military, and development components (Ibid. 7-8).

The handbook also provides a "Strategic Framework" in the shape of a model that identifies a number of political, civilian and military "essential tasks" along a "spectrum of intervention," for example, "eliminate TB, AQ, HIG[109] – kill, capture, deny sanctuary," "trust and confidence projects," "political engagement – with communities, officials, Pakistan," "security sector reform," and "extend the reach of government" (Ibid. II-5). The model was described as a starting point "that the PRTs can use to understand where their provinces sit in a larger international intervention, and can be used as a discussion point about how they will fulfil the role of non-kinetic operations, keeping in mind the goal of supporting the GIRoA[110] in establishing stability in the province" (Ibid.). The scope of the essential tasks as well as the sug-

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[109] Resistance identified as Taliban, al-Qaeda, Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin.
[110] Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

gestive nature of the tone in the document expresses considerable discretion for force commanders to interpret the role of their PRTs in the operation.

Undeniably, the PRT Handbook is a central doctrinal artefact that both contributing nations and deployed forces can use to organize and run a PRT. However, contributing nations (among which the U.S. leads close to half of the PRTs) organize, train, equip and operate their PRTs differently to a degree that has prompted analysts and veterans to call for "an agreed concept of operations and an effective central coordinating authority." Also, actual PRTs have been predominantly military organizations with the civilian element often restricted to only a handful of advisors to the military force commander, which has called the civil–military character, and proclaimed key for success, of PRTs into question (GAO, 2008, Perito, 2005). Yet, despite the military ownership and dominance of the PRTs, the more civilian parts of the concept remain, leaving it up to the military force commanders to deal with them, which, considering their potential lack of relevant training, might also account for the variance between PRT instances.

Another central doctrinal concept is counterinsurgency, or COIN. The COIN concept fully entered ISAF doctrine in 2009 (Roosberg and Weibull, 2014, 44) with the arrival of General Stanley McChrystal as commander of ISAF. The discursive revival of the counterinsurgency concept is a separate topic, but suffice it to say that McChrystal brought it with him from Iraq and introduced it as a key to success in the Afghanistan campaign with a commander's guidance directive issued in late August (NATO, 2009). The guidance directive called for a so-called people-centric approach that aimed at protecting the local population and partnering with the Afghan security forces in order to undermine the influence of the insurgents (McChrystal, 2009), and it was emphasized through a personal round trip where he met with force commanders to convey the message (Tistam, 2013). However, given the colonial legacy of the concept as well as its theoretical ambiguity and empirical weaknesses, it was far from certain that all participating nations would embrace the directive. Furthermore, the concept did not immediately penetrate the formal tasking in the chains of command. Thus, the concept did not enter the orders of the Swedish Land Component Command until 2010 and Regional Command North until 2011 (ATS, 2010b, PRT MES, 2011). And as these orders do not elaborate on nor specify the blurry doctrinal foundations of the COIN concept, commanders and their personnel came to build their own understandings of the concept from other sources as well. We will return to this in the inside-out analysis, but here it serves to point out a particular ISAF institution that was aimed at further spreading the COIN concept: the Counterinsurgency Training Center in Kabul. There, a week-long course was offered, on a voluntary basis, for officers and staff members of the ISAF PRTs and Afghan security forces (Linder, 2010).

For deploying Swedish units, a central part of the preparation process was a period of time spent at the Swedish International Center west of Stockholm. The ISAF training center was staffed with Afghanistan veteran officers who, based on training directives from the Land Component Command, developed and gave a range of preparation courses to the deploying units (Respondent 120, 2013). Quite naturally, the instructors used their own experiences in the training, thereby projecting their own experiences and convictions regarding the mission and the appropriate concepts of operation upon the trainees. Given that trainers and trainees often had different professional backgrounds and therefore made different interpretations based on different foreknowledge, intermittent clashes were inevitable. Several company commanders describe how disagreements between them and their mentors resulted in conflict that led to rejections of the instruction that they were given, and how they therefore found parts of the training at the Center a waste of time. Typical examples are deploying forces that understood their mission more in line with the COIN concept and thus rejected the more combat-oriented training that they were given at the Center. On the other hand, deploying forces who also understood the mission in combat terms had no such quandaries. Over time, then, the pre-deployment training developed in line with the development of the force organization. Interviews with MOT commanders and company commanders show how the emphasis during the MOT period was placed on small-unit conduct, meetings and conversational techniques, and later came to focus on larger units (platoon and company) in regular combat situations.

In summary, the doctrinal resources provided to the force form a patchwork quilt of doctrinal ideas and operational concepts but lack any established and common doctrinal core. Even though it falls outside of the scope of this thesis to describe and explain this, it may be pertinent to suggest that this can be understood against the backdrop of the apparently new, "complex" and "irregular" type of challenge that the Afghanistan campaign presented to the international community and the many eager attempts to find doctrinal solutions to the problem, e.g. the resurrection of the counterinsurgency concept (e.g. Ucko, 2009). Or in other words, as warfare was believed to have radically changed character, the doctrinal void was soon filled with several and hastily thought-out solutions.

Thus, force commanders (and their peers) have been exposed to a range of doctrinal options, each with sufficient elbow room to allow the carving out of an appropriate niche. The range has encompassed both peacekeeping doctrines and combat-oriented doctrines, with a detectable movement from the former to the latter. In the beginning of the period, peacekeeping doctrine must be said to have dominated, while the later part of the period can be said to have allowed the full range.

Conclusion

In summary, the implications of allocated resources have gradually and slowly moved from peacekeeping in the beginning to multipurpose later on. This is mainly indicated by developments regarding organization, personnel and equipment. However, the apparent escalation arguably continued to allow for robust peacekeeping at the same time as it began to suggest more regular and combat-oriented warfare. A large and robust force does not *necessarily* imply offensive conduct but can also imply defensive conduct or even passive deterrence (Posen, 1984, 14). This, in combination with the force structure's lack of critical capabilities for warfighting, e.g. artillery and anti-aircraft systems, indicates a multipurpose force.

According to my theoretical assumptions, a multipurpose force structure constitutes a large optional space and will increase force commander discretion and invite them to interpret the resource's appropriate purpose vis-à-vis their understanding of their mission. One could reasonably argue that the allocation of a multipurpose and multifunctional force structure is merely a reflection of a national desire to provide the force with the tools to handle many contingencies in a better-safe-than-sorry manner. This may be the case, but it does not undermine the argument that it also opens up for interpretation if the mission is vague and potential variation in force conduct if force commanders interpret both mission and force structure differently.

Summary

In conclusion we can now place the summarized findings of this preliminary interpretation or analysis in the matrix of structural factors:

Table 15. *Summary of empirical results from outside-in analysis*

Structural factors	Result
Superior–subordinate molecule	Duality of command
Authority	Passive
Task specificity	Non-specific what/non-specific how
Resources	Shifting from peacekeeping to multipurpose

In multinational operations force commanders belong to two different chains of command, a national one and a multinational one, a circumstance which creates **duality of command**. Force commanders can, theoretically, take advantage of this man-in-the-middle situation and choose which influence attempts to pay regard to based on their own preferences.

In the case of the Swedish force in Afghanistan, authority was divided between the force commanders' two superiors by contract, whereby the opera-

tional control of the force was handed over from the national command to the multinational command. Thus, the authority of each superior has been more **passive** than it would reasonably have been in a case of unity of command. Furthermore, with time, the superiors have become more active and have attempted to strengthen their authority vis-à-vis each other and the subordinate force commanders. However, in the position at the intersection of two chains of command, force commanders have had opportunity to ward off such attempts.

Tasking during the time period has been generally **non-specific**. From the onset, and throughout the main part of the campaign, the Government did not express a clear purpose of the Swedish engagement nor a clear mission for the Swedish military contribution to the multinational force. Instead, a simple casual model of conflict resolution was offered (security leads to development) and the focus of the top-down direction was on the size and cost of the force. It was not until ISAF adopted the so-called *exit strategy* in 2011 that the Government began to express purpose and mission more explicitly, yet still so vaguely that it left room for interpretation. Content that may have been identified as a principal's mission from the perspective of the implementers has included the security-development model and vague, ambiguous and non-military tasks such as "to contribute" and "to support." Instead of projecting concrete or concretizable policies or policy goals, the political documents implicitly expressed a *policy of participation* which suggests that the deployment of assets to the area of operations in itself was more politically important than what they were meant to accomplish. The same pattern is found in both the national and multinational chains of command. Tasking in the national chain of command was simplistic and abstract, focusing on deployment and redeployment and a set of abstract warfighting concepts such as counterinsurgency, partnering and security. Tasking in the multinational chain of command has had such a character that it has forced the implementer to pick and choose in order to design meaningful operational activities for a relatively small force in an overwhelmingly large area of operations. Thus, tasking has been non-specificity initially both regarding the what and the how and later slightly more specific regarding both, but at a higher operational level than that of force commanders.

The allocated resources implied a range of possible missions, from traditional peacekeeping in the beginning to robust peacekeeping and regular warfighting at the end of the time period. The implications spring from a successive growth in troop size, increased troop skill, and increasingly heavier equipment in terms of vehicles and their weaponry. Objectively, this escalation have indicated an operational shift from **peacekeeping to multipurpose**, but given the fact that even a robust, well-protected and heavily

armed force may well be used for peacekeeping missions,[111] we must keep the possibility open that force commanders have interpreted their allocated resources differently.

Taken together, these findings suggest that **structural factors generated significant discretion** for force commanders. The organizational arrangement, with two superiors with divided authority, created a position of power for force commanders. Also, low task specificity encouraged or forced them to make interpretations and decision about the character of their mission and their concept of operations that arguably belong to their superiors. Thus, the discretional room of force commanders increased. And finally, the allocated resources, over time, rendered multiple interpretations of the mission possible, ranging from peacekeeping to warfighting or multipurpose. Hence, force commanders, if so inclined, had the room to make their own interpretations and choices regarding their mission in Afghanistan and the way to accomplish it.

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[111] Some nations choose to beef up their forces in peacekeeping missions while others prefer a "light footprint."

Chapter 7 – The inside-out perspective

Interviewer: How would you describe your freedom of action as force commander?

Force commander FS11: Well, maximal.

Introduction

In accordance with the interpretative method described in chapter 4, this chapter continues where the preliminary interpretation left off and moves on to interpret the perceptions, deliberations and sense of discretion of force commanders with an inside-out perspective. First, from the previous chapter we know that the force commanders belong in two intersecting chains of command that create duality of command so the question here is how each force commander has perceived and handled that. Second, I investigate their views on the authority of those relationships[112]. Third, I analyze their perception of task specificity and, fourth, their understanding of mission-related implications of assigned resources. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings and an assessment of force commanders' discretion. Throughout the chapter I pause to reconnect to my theoretical assumptions and to discuss counterfactual or opposing arguments in order to substantiate my own arguments, findings and claims.

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[112] As the reader may notice, the four separate parts of the analysis are intertwined to some extent. Hence, indications of authority may surface in the section on superior-subordinate molecule as well as in the section on task specificity for example. The reason for this is that in the inside-out analysis these issues often coincide and in order to maintain readability I have chosen not to separate them.

Analysis

Superior–subordinate molecule

All force commanders perceive their position in the particular superior–subordinate molecule as one with duality of command. Thus, all force commanders acknowledge a national superior in the form of the Land Component Command and a multinational commander in the form of Regional Command North. The only exception is the commander of the first rotation, FS11, who was in fact assigned under the commander of ISAF (COM ISAF) in Kabul since the regional command in Mazar-e Sharif was not yet established. However, his position was also in the intersection of two chains of command.

Force commanders' perceptions of the superior-subordinate molecule have changed slightly over time. In the case of the three first force commanders it is perhaps better described as a duality of *non*-command. Even though the dual command structures were clear on paper, force commanders' overwhelming experience is the *absence* of both superior commanders.

The early force commanders of FS11, FS12 and FS13 in 2006 and 2007, appear to have perceived their national superior as absent or to some extent indifferent. They received no adequate order briefings prior to their deployments and the Land Component Command treated the ISAF mission as "one in ten," indicating that the Afghanistan commitment was not yet regarded as a priority. It was however framed as Sweden's most prioritized operation to the force commanders, a standpoint which was not matched by the indifferent attitude that they encountered when they required logistical support to be able to cope with the relatively dangerous operational environment for example (Danielsson, 2012, Pålsson, 2013, Sandström, 2013).

It is striking how, on the one hand, the first force commanders received a high level of attention prior to deployment, including personal meetings with both the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Defense, and how they, on the other hand, received far less interest and attention after they deployed. As the commander of FS13 realized just after deployment in 2007:

> I sort of got the feeling that Sweden probably doesn't know what we're doing down here (Danielsson, 2012).

In hindsight this may appear odd, but at the time it is unlikely that any observer could have predicted what was to unfold in Afghanistan (and Iraq) over the following thirteen years. That the deployment was politically significant at the time is no bold assessment, but it is equally safe to assume that neither the Government nor the Armed Forces were planning for a fourteen-year deployment with significant escalation and several casualties. In any

case, the first force commanders received little attention in the national chain of command and were largely left to themselves.

Curiously enough, according to two of the first three force commanders, the Supreme Commander himself[113] was the only official in Sweden who showed any genuine interest in the deployed force. The force commanders could call the supreme commander in person at any given time for advice or support, and the supreme commander himself called the force commanders in Afghanistan on several occasions, especially in conjunction with certain events such as accidents or ambushes:

> There wasn't much from Sweden, we didn't hear much. But when we were in combat or when we were ambushed and they blew something up, then I always talked to the supreme commander. It was an incredible support, personal like. You could call him at any time, or you could get a call from him. He often called me (Danielsson, 2012).

This relative lack of attention from the national superior command is, as mentioned, perhaps not surprising given the context of the time. However, it did leave the force commanders much to themselves during a time that might be seen as a temporary state, at the time but that came to be formative for the rotations to come.

These early force commanders perceived their multinational superior as absent as well. This can be understood against the infant character of the multinational command structure at the time. The commander of the first rotation for example, did not have a regional commander in place during his time in theater. The regional command was more of a "controller function and played a very passive role" at the time, and instead he reported directly to the commander of the whole of ISAF, then an Italian general in Kabul, far away from the Swedish area of operations (Sandström, 2013). During FS12 and FS13 the regional command grew, and so the respective force commander experienced the emergence of the multinational chain of command, but as one of them put it, the regional command had "orientation problems" (Pålsson, 2013). This issue will be elaborated on in the next part of the analysis.

This lack of unity of command, manifested in absence of command as perceived by the first force commanders, is not what we would expect according to research and professional norms. Absence of command is not necessarily a problem in a military organization that applies *Auftragstaktik*. On the contrary, inherent in that concept is the ability and responsibility of subordinates to act in the spirit of their superior in the case of the latter's inability to command. However, the concept presupposes that the subordinate is well aware of the superior's will and the overarching mission. In theory then, the situation observed here could have left the force commanders

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[113] General Håkan Syrén at the time.

perplexed and passive. However, as we shall see in the following, they instead seized the initiative and acted using their discretion to shape their mission.

As both the national and the multinational chains of command became more established, perceptions of later force commanders were different. Thus, the following force commanders, roughly from FS14 and onwards, perceived the dual command as division of labor rather than absence. While the national command dealt with the logistical practicalities of the deployment, the multinational command dealt with the operational aspects, in line with the intention of the transfer of authority mechanism.

   Yet, even after the first years of absent command, several force commanders still felt that the national superiors were large indifferent to what the force actually did. However, the support from the national command was generally seen as "relevant", and force commanders generally felt that the two respective superiors played their roles well (Alexandersson, 2013, Hedlund, 2014, Johansson, 2012). This perception of roleplay between two superiors prevailed throughout the time period. The last force commander of the period describes the duality of command and the division of labor very clearly:

> So the land component commander's order to the unit pertains to national matters, so there is no one in [in Sweden] who tells me how to conduct operations in that context. If there are other limitations they will notify me, I mean national limitations, which in "new Swedish" is called caveats. That will be conveyed, but beyond how and what I de facto do is a matter between me and my superior in ISAF (Claesson, 2012).

Overall, force commanders appear comfortable with duality of command. Despite the seemingly severe lack of attention in the beginning, the early force commanders express few concerns regarding their often independent position. Neither do their successors who experienced more present superiors. Furthermore, the somewhat unique position seems to have granted them a certain autonomy vis-à-vis their superiors which they could benefit from, initially as they were in effect left alone by both superiors, and later as they could balance them against each other by various methods. This will be addressed later on in the analysis of authority and task specificity. Also, there is one aspect of the duality of command where force commanders' views are polarized, namely their attitudes on whether the national or the multinational superior should have the dominant influence over the force and its operations. This will also be discussed further on.

Conclusion

In general, force commanders have perceived the superior–subordinate molecule as duality of command. During the first few rotations, under the so called start-up phase, force commanders experienced what can be described as an absence of superiors, arguably a consequence of both chains of commands not being established yet which created discretion for force commanders. As both chains of command consolidated, force commanders experienced the situation as duality of command, even though they held varying views on the appropriate role of their respective superior. This consolidation did not decrease force commanders' perception of discretion though, as theoretical assumptions suggest.

According to my theoretical assumptions, duality of command promotes subordinate discretion. Hence, the force commanders should experience discretion given their perception of duality of command. What stands out here is that the first force commanders experienced what can be categorized as an absence of command, which could arguably create a sense of total discretion. Yet, as was discussed in the previous chapter, we also need to investigate their perceptions of authority and task specificity before we can say anything definite about their perceived discretion.

Two counter arguments can be made in this regard. The first is that we, and the force commanders, could actually expect a form of duality of command in multinational operations even though it is not desired, which was discussed earlier when we formulated the horizon of expectations (see page 78). As was also discussed in the previous chapter, this is true in one sense but it comes with the assumption that the roles and responsibilities of the superiors are so well defined that there is unity of command for each role and responsibility, e.g. operations and logistics. This needs to be analyzed further in the coming sections.

The second is the argument that this type of organizational autonomy is an expression of an organizational sense of uncertainty that by necessity grants force commanders extended freedom to make decisions in the field where they are regarded as being experts. This may be so, but it still creates discretion for force commanders and also places the responsibility to handle uncertainties on them. This will also be discussed further in the following.

Also, if this responsibility is passed down to the force commanders the value that the superior levels of command add to the implementation process comes into question. This will be discussed in the final chapter.

Authority

As already described, the first force commanders experienced an almost indifferent attitude from their superiors in both chains of command. Not surprisingly then, they also perceived both national and multinational author-

ity as quite passive. From the national command, influence was seen as virtually nonexistent in the beginning:

> So, well, no, I wouldn't say that there was any pressure from home to deliver results. Rather it was like they were happy and content that we were there. I sent some reports home and described the progress we were making. We wrote joint reports with the political, police, and development side of the unit and presented suggestions regarding prioritizations and the support from home that we required. But we never got any feedback on those issues. It was an autonomous operation (Sandström, 2013).

In one instance when the first force commander felt operationally restrained due to limitations in his communication system, he reported this to Sweden:

> And then I called home to Land Component Command and said that this is simply not good enough that we have not established control in this area. We're only operating in a limited number of areas, and if this thing with the comms is not fixed in the next few weeks I will report to COM ISAF that we're not fulfilling our mission. And the answer was "Oh really?" (Sandström, 2013).

The commander of FS13 in 2007-2008 had similar experiences:

> Politicians and others had their opinions [about what the force did in Afghanistan, author's remark] and I don't know if anyone in the Armed Forces Headquarters really gave the matter any thought, because at that time the operations were commanded from Land Component Command in Uppsala, and they directed with a national perspective, they made sure that people were trained and went down there, made sure they got supplies and gear. But what we actually did down there I felt that no one really thought about, no more than that we were a part of ISAF (Larsson, 2013)

Thus, the national interest in the Afghanistan engagement was perceived as low by force commanders during the earlier rotations in 2006 and 2007 and authority as passive. As suggested before, this perceived attitude from the national level may be understood against the novelty of the Afghanistan campaign at the time. However, even considering the division of labor in the multinational system, one could expect adequate national command even for new operations, particularly since the Afghanistan campaign could be considered politically sensitive as neutral Sweden got involved in an operation so closely associated with the U.S. and NATO. The accounts of force commanders also suggest that interest and attention was greater outside the Land Component Command, e.g. among single politicians and even the supreme commander, attention that was of limited use to the deployed force, however. Thus, the impression that interest and attention at the Land Component Command was low and that their authority therefore was perceived as pas-

sive reasonably contributed to increased discretion for the first force commanders.

The authority of the multinational command was also perceived as passive in the beginning, here illustrated by the two first force commanders:

> Regarding the relations with RC North there was no real pressure either. Only subsequently, two months into the rotation, did he have full command. It worked fine, with a dialog with the RC commander, a German general, really fine, where we brought up the operations that we wanted to conduct and got confirmations to execute them. You know, the way you do it multinationally (Sandström, 2013).

> I don't think that operations in the area of PRT MeS were particularly affected by the German leadership. I didn't feel cornered by either Sweden or the Germans. It was much tougher facing the Afghan representatives (Pålsson, 2013).

The tone of these accounts suggests that relatively passive authority was not perceived as something negative. On the contrary, force commanders seem content with not being "cornered" and with feeling "no real pressure."

The first quote above also highlights a key concept in this context. What Colonel Sandström points out is that the established conduct in vertical, bilateral relationships in multinational operations is for the subordinate to suggest operations for the superior's approval, i.e. a form of dialogue or negotiation about bottom-up initiatives.

This could perhaps be interpreted as an expression of mission command but it is rather the opposite. Mission command grants subordinates certain leeway within limits and under certain tasks, but these limits and tasks are defined through top-down steering and do not build on bottom-up suggestions. Or in other words, mission command accepts subordinate creativity and initiative in *accomplishing* the stated mission, not in *defining* it. This distinction is crucial in understanding mission command, at least in the military sense, and in determining the character of individual discretion.

The commander of FS12 describes it similarly:

> Pålsson: I think the protocol for the meetings[114] was great. Eventually they got really good at it. They summoned the PRT commanders and gave staff briefings and had a dialogue with us on how we looked at the situation, and then they gave a sort of "commander's directive." And then it concluded a couple of days later with either a new or a revised order. I think that part worked well.

> Interviewer: Was it explicit tasks or was it more like outlines that you…

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[114] Between the regional commander and his force commanders, author's remark.

Pålsson: Well, you know, no, that kind of obvious clarity…not for us.
                 They were very explicit towards the German provinces
                 though (Pålsson, 2013).

Later on we shall see several other accounts that corroborate this observation.

In this setting, the first force commanders could maintain their independence by keeping the multinational commander at arm's length, here exemplified by the second force commander:

Suddenly we noticed a German agenda in the operations that I hadn't seen before. All of a sudden the Germans wanted to allocate considerably more energy to the Development line of operation. And then I asked this question: "How? How do you figure military units should extend Development, except from collecting information for situational awareness?" Well, then he argued that we should conduct more civil–military projects. So I explained the Swedish stance to him, which he didn't comprehend, and after that we had a period of frosty relations (Pålsson, 2013).

This is a typical example of how a force commander with two superiors can use one to fence of the other, a behavior that occurs repeatedly throughout the time period, even when authority increased later on.

Is this an expression of professional loyalty rather than discretional space? Is it an example of force commanders merely trying to maintain the boundary between the responsibilities of his two superiors? Perhaps, but arguing for national influence over operational matters is not consistent with the mechanism of transfer of authority which intentionally shifts the operational responsibility to the multinational commander. The exception would be if there was a relevant caveat in place, i.e. a restricting agreement between the force contributing nation and the multinational organization regarding the operational use of the contributed force. However, Sweden did not have caveats of an operational nature in place[115] which means that the multinational commander was free to use the Swedish force as he saw fit within his own mandate. Thus, if the multinational commander wanted to shift focus from one line of operation (e.g. Security) to another (Development in this case) it can be seen as inappropriate for a force commander to claim a national preference, particularly in the light of the lack of strategy on Sweden's part as the previous chapter showed. And as we shall see further on, other force commanders acted in the opposite manner. In fact, as will also be demonstrated, force commanders have held varying attitudes on whether to align with the multinational operative direction or to claim a national preference, leading to variations in behavior over time. Arguably then, given the duality of command and the weak authority, Swedish force com-

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[115] Later Swedish caveats pertained to *geography* which prohibited its deployment to other parts of Afghanistan.

manders had the discretion to shape operations more towards development had they preferred to. In fact, this would have been more in line with Swedish peacekeeping tradition than placing focus on security and would, most probably, have been accepted nationally. It would also have been a reasonable alternative interpretation of the PRT concept.

So, in summary, the first Swedish force commanders did not perceive any particularly active authority in their multinational chain of command, which must lead us to the conclusion that they perceived authority as relatively passive, which contributed to their experience of discretion.

A consequence of passive authority is worth mentioning here. As early force commanders were left largely to themselves by their superior commands, they sought guidance – and direction if you will – elsewhere, and mainly from their own peers, most often their predecessors. Thus, while the first force commander, Colonel Sandström of FS11, credits his British predecessors for his mission conception (Sandström, 2013):

> Interviewer: So if you didn't receive a clear order from Land Component Command about what your mission was all about, what would you say were the most significant influences for how you came to understand your job?

> Sandström: The old PRT commanders, the British. Completely.

his own successor Colonel Pålsson credits Sandström for his:

> So it was still pretty much the Sandströmian analysis, or FS11's analysis of the mission that served as my beacon (Pålsson, 2013).

Similarly, the following commanders drew heavily from their predecessors in the absence of active top-down authority. This suggests that the Swedish contribution to the Afghanistan campaign was, to a significant extent, shaped by a sequential series of a few officers rather than by top-down direction.

One could make the argument that this is an indication of professional conformity rather than a consequence of discretion. However, the choice to adopt the British concept of operations was merely one among many. As we saw in the previous chapter, and which the special investigator has also found (Regeringskansliet 2017, 63, 68) neither the multinational nor the national superiors clearly specified what the PRT-concept meant and in effect left the interpretation to the force commanders. Thus, Swedish force commanders, or Sweden, could have chosen a concept of operations more in line with Swedish peacekeeping traditions, for example by adopting the CIMIC-model from the Kosovo campaign as previous Swedish forces in Kabul had done (Agrell 2013, 96, Regeringskansliet 2017, 66) rather than taking over the novel MOT concept (see page 121) from the British. Not

only would this have been a valid interpretation of the PRT-concept but it would also have been a type of *national* professional conformity.

It could also be argued that adopting the British modus operandi was merely a natural way to maintain operational continuity in the PRTs area of operations. But it is equally reasonable to ask whether a colonel with another background than Sandström's would have chosen another concept of operations. It is almost obvious that the concept of small military observation teams, operating on what could be described as long range patrols, resonated well with Sandström's ranger background even if it is not something that he explicitly suggests. And it is reasonable to assess that a colonel with an armor background for example might have regarded the concept quite differently. For instance, the three following force commanders expressed a lack of armor vehicles both for the purpose of so called force projection (i.e. to show strength in force) and for the purpose of conducting joint patrols with the emerging Afghan army units in the area (Alexandersson, 2013, Danielsson, 2012, Pålsson, 2013). Had one of them been the first force commander, the Swedish interpretation of the PRT-concept might have looked somewhat different.

Furthermore, even though many force commanders relied on their peers in lack of top-down direction throughout the period, far from all of them uncritically adopted their predecessor's viewpoints as we shall see. While all were influenced by their peers to some degree, they chose to act on that influence in very different ways. The second and third force commander for example adopted their predecessors' concept while the commander of FS17 and FS22 choose to go in a somewhat different direction than their predecessors. Horizontal peer influence could therefore be understood as a way to, by necessity, compensate for vague top-down authority rather than as professional conformity. I will discuss this further in the last chapter.

As both chains of command consolidated, several subsequent force commanders experienced a larger interest and a more active authority. However, their perceptions of authority vary considerably during these later rotations.

After the first rotations, force commanders began to experience their superiors' increased willingness to command. The content of this increase will be analyzed in the section on task specificity, and in this section I will concentrate on force commanders' perception of their superiors' demand for obedience.

The commanders of FS15 (2008) and FS16 (2008-2009) experienced considerable autonomy vis-à-vis both superiors. The former described his situation as having great discretion within certain limits. "I was the PRT commander and I was in charge" (Alexandersson, 2013) as he puts it, which indicates the powerful position that force commanders enjoyed in the area, as well as the autonomous position they held vis-à-vis both their superiors.

The first point, which will recur, is a reminder that ISAF force commanders need to be seen as yet another power player in their respective area. As

one Swedish force commander has put it: "I was the new warlord in the area, but with better equipment and better-trained soldiers."[116]. And the second point is an indicator of the discretion that force commanders enjoyed due to their unique responsibility of being force commander in Afghanistan and their unique competence of knowing their job and their area of operations.

The commander of FS15 attributes this form of discretion to the relatively limited situational awareness that the superiors had (Alexandersson, 2016). This unique status of competence, I would argue, gave force commanders a sort of advantage vis-à-vis their superior commanders. Force commanders' unique expertise of the allocated area of operations and ISAF operations in that area made it difficult for their superiors to gain significant influence over the operations. It is worth repeating that when Colonel Alexandersson acted as force commander of FS15 in 2008 only he and four other Swedish officers had any experience of that post.

The commander of FS16 also expresses a sense of great freedom from authority:

> In retrospect I would say that I had complete discretion. In fact, how things would be was totally in my hands (Hedlund, 2014).

He goes on to explain that his multinational commander managed the force "very openly, in a mission command type of way" and that the national commander refrained from meddling in the operational aspects of the mission. "They played their roles well," he concludes (Ibid.).

Other force commanders, on the other hand, experienced what could be described as excessive authority, i.e. instances of active authority where their superiors stepped over the line for what force commanders expected or accepted. One main concern of force commanders in this regard was that the national superior would try to meddle in operational business or take action or inaction that negatively affected operational activities, i.e. to undermine the transfer of authority. And another concern was that the multinational commander would want them to behave in a manner that was not consistent with their own beliefs, such as their views of Swedish military conduct, for example to violate the caveats or other implicit restrictions.

The position in the intersection of two chains of command grants force commanders the ability to manage such conflicts. The commander of the last contingent FS24 explains it well:

> You have two roles as force commander. On the one hand, you are commander of the [Swedish] contingent, i.e. national commander in the whole area of operations, and on the other hand, naturally, you're tactical commander of a unit which in my case is called Task Force Northern Lights [earlier

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[116] Quote taken from a force commander seminar at the Swedish National Defence University outside of this study.

called PRT, author's remark]. It's like wearing two hats, if you will, so those limitations that the Swedish land component commander gave me, they are an important aspect in my dealings with my superior in the ISAF chain of command, where I also play two different roles really, or I can if I need to by waving my red card and say "yes, we hear what you're saying but the nation of Sweden does not accept that" or "the way we see it we should be doing this instead of what you are saying. Accept or reject." So it's a roleplay that you need to manage (Claesson, 2012).

Apparently, this arrangement, or rather the effects of this arrangement, enforces force commanders' discretion. By switching hats, to use Claesson's metaphor, they have a tool for maintaining force integrity in both chains of command by fending off either superior, albeit within certain limits.

For example, the commander of FS18 together with his chief of staff felt that they had to "keep an eye on" their national command and sometimes point out to them that they reported to their multinational commander regarding operations in their designated area and not to the national command, all in accordance with the TOA arrangement. But, on the other hand, they could also fend off their multinational command for similar reasons. At the time of FS18's deployment in 2009-2010, the newly appointed Commander of ISAF General Stanley McChrystal made vigorous attempts to implement his interpretation of the counterinsurgency doctrine by traveling around Afghanistan and meeting with the force commanders. When he tried to convince the troops to "reside, live, sleep, eat with the Afghans," a view that did not harmonize with the force's doctrinal thinking and training, the force commander was compelled to report to his multinational regional commander that "with all due respect, we are not prepared to go that far" (Tistam, 2013)[117].

This is a similar response to the one of Colonel Pålsson (above) in which he also alluded to a Swedish way of war if you will. Technically however, this posture contradicts the idea of transfer of authority mechanism.

The commander of FS20 is also an example of how force commanders need to manage their two subordinate-superior relationships. He claims that "my autonomy was enormously high" but that his relationship with his multinational commanders was far more important than the relationship with his national commander. So when the national command ordered him to implement a new command and control system in his terrain vehicles, he argued that it would negatively affect his operations. This placed him in a conflict because "at 600 miles from Afghanistan they still like to throw their weight around." Also, when the national command suggested that the commander reduce the deliberately large and robust units he operated with in the field,

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[117] This remark referred to the PRT proper and not the Swedish contingent's OMLT (operational mentoring and liaison team) which indeed resided, lived, slept and ate with an Afghan army battalion.

he had to remind them to "think about what you're saying" arguing that it was his responsibility to dimension his units for force-protection purposes (Nilsson, 2013).

Again, one could argue that this fencing off merely indicates professional loyalty to either the nation or the designated superior, i.e. the multinational commander, and that it is not an indication of discretion. However, as shown above, fencing off occurs in both directions on the same grounds, i.e. force commanders can ward off authority in operational matters in both the national and the multinational chain of command. And second, they have done so in an almost stochastic manner. Hence, even if it, at some level, is an expression of professional loyalty, the evidence indicates that professional loyalty is allowed to vary, which suggests discretion on part of the force commanders.

The commander of FS19 was of the distinct opinion that participation in a multinational operation demanded restraint on national interference. Accordingly, he made a point of anchoring his operations with the regional command and to receive the guidance and direction that he needed to carry them out. He was also well aware that he would never get very precise direction, a circumstance which is "in the nature of things" and which deploying force commanders need to be aware of. It was however his duty to "take the baton" and implement the strategy of the multinational force as best he could (Fahl, 2013).

These examples also illustrate that the de-confliction of the problems that transfer of authority creates, to an extent falls on the force commanders which, arguably, is an indicator of force commander discretion.

The commander of FS22 on the other hand found this "belief in the colonels" and the lack of direction frustrating and as a major cause of the variation between rotations because:

> We have probably had very different views of what it is we have been sent down there to do (Löfberg, 2013).

In his opinion, operational continuity would have benefited from a national agenda regarding the mission and concept of operations.

Thus, force commanders perceived authority in their two chains of command somewhat differently during the latter part of the period. The evidence suggests that this is in part related to different views on the relative power balance between the nation state and the multinational organization in multinational operations. Some force commanders believe that the participating nation state should pursue some type of national agenda, not necessarily to achieve certain national goals but to ensure continuity between rotations, while others believe that it is the responsibility of the deployed force to adhere to the will of the multinational organization, though largely for the same reason. The fact that such differences in opinion have been allowed to come

into play is significant of the duality of command in combination with relatively passive authority and thus both theoretically and empirically indicate discretion of force commanders.

I will return to this issue in the last chapter as it may appear surprising that Swedish officers at this level in their careers hold varying opinions in this regard. If nothing else, it challenges the view of the officer corps as homogeneous and controlled, and also indicates their discretion to act on their varying perceptions and beliefs.

In this scenario of relatively passive authority, the aforementioned practice of reciprocal bottom-up initiatives and top-down approval has a very central role. And it is arguably a practice that institutionalizes discretion. Almost all force commanders describe that their operations were largely shaped in dialogue with their multinational superior. In practice then, force commanders developed operational concepts and plans that they presented to their superior for approval: "you know, the way you do it multinationally," as the commander of FS11 so matter-of-factly put it (Sandström, 2013).

Several force commanders describe how this bottom-up arrangement was settled from the very beginning of their tour when they had their first meeting with their superior, the commander of ISAF's Regional Command North. Colonel Löfberg of FS22 describes a fruitful meeting with his commanding general in late 2011 where he laid out his operational ideas and said "this is what I want, this is what I wish to focus on. And then we began." (Löfberg, 2013). His predecessor had a very similar meeting:

> The way we analyzed the mission… the first thing I did when I visited my superior commander General Kneip was to describe how I looked at the task, and I described our new organization because we abandoned the MOT structure, which he already knew, we left the MOT structure and entered a more battalion-like unit, and I have the following conclusions regarding my operational conduct so to speak and said "this is what I want to do, this is what I intend to do." And he just gave me a thumbs-up. "Perfect! Call me if you have any problems." So you had a rather… I perceived early on that I got significant leeway, I had a rather fat mandate to work from, great responsibility, huge scope, gigantic scope, the hugest scope (Johansson, 2012).

It should be noted that these accounts come from two of the last force commanders, indicating that this bottom-up practice did not fade away as the multinational command structure matured.

Such a practice does not however entail uncritical approval from the multinational superior. As both Hedlund of FS16 and Johansson of FS21 explain, you need to come to a briefing prepared, you need to be able to justify your requests well, and that the key to get approval is to frame the request in line with the overarching goals of ISAF and the regional command, and failure to do so would render a reprimand and an appointment for a new briefing (Hedlund, 2014, Johansson, 2012). And you need to present operational ide-

as that are acceptable in order to receive additional resources, as the commander of FS16 points out:

> The approach is bottom-up. You get an approval for your operations accompanied by additional resources, or you don't get any resources (Hedlund, 2014).

Force commanders hold different opinions on the relatively passive authority they experience. The majority appear comfortable with the two roles and the discretion that it entails, mainly indicated by the absence of critical comments. Only a few force commanders voice doubts about the arrangement, mainly arguing that it leaves too much decision-making to the force commanders, which they fear undermines strategy (e.g. Fahl, 2013, Löfberg, 2013).

Conclusion

Force commanders have generally perceived authority as passive, both in the national chain of command and in the multinational chain of command. The perceived character of authority changed over time though as the superiors became more active than before. However, force commanders' perceptions of the authority of their superiors were not as linear as could be expected but instead it was more stochastic, displaying no clear correlation with the development of the command structure. Thus, force commanders of consecutive rotations may have perceived authority as either passive or somewhat more active regardless of the predecessor's view. Also, far from all force commanders saw passive authority as problematic or negative. Overall though, authority has been perceived as passive rather than active which in combination with the experience of duality of command accounts for force commanders' widespread experience of discretion. According to my theoretical assumptions passive rather than active authority promotes subordinate discretion. Thus, the non-linear character of force commanders' perception of authority should result in a non-linear sense of discretion among them, which seems to have been the case. While some commanders express a significant sense of discretion ranging from "maximal" to "large", "complete" and "almost total within the area of operations" (FS11, FS17, FS16 and FS18) the others express a large albeit more bounded sense of discretion.

Similar counter factual arguments as where made about the duality of command can perhaps be made here. The first but least likely one would be that passive authority can be seen as a natural part of multinational operations. That argument lacks reasonable support however since the inherent urgency of a multinational political and military endeavor of this kind would make passivity counterproductive and something that would arguably be actively countered, both for military and political reasons. Thus, from a viewpoint of rationality, all those involved could be expected to strive for

active authority in order to achieve success. However, bureaucratic politics could perhaps cause passivity anyway, but – similarly – this could jeopardize the operation and risk being exposed in external reviews which could lead to organizational crisis. As the recently released special investigation shows, goals may have been vague (Regeringskansliet 2017, 11) but this does not imply passive authority *per se* as I argued earlier. Also, as was discussed in the section about expectations, military culture and norms postulate active over passive authority. Thus, it cannot be seen as a *natural* part of multinational operations.

The second would be that passive authority can be seen as an expression of organizational inertia. This is a plausible, and perhaps even reasonable, explanation that points to political and/or military fallacies but which does not remove the fact that it creates discretion on the part of force commanders.

Task specificity

> Force commander: I had more time to prepare than my predecessors, and I would argue that I was well aware of what it was all about when the question came.
>
> Interviewer: So what did you think it *was* about when you were asked to serve as force commander?
>
> Force commander: Well, at that time it was a question of…of transitioning from, to start doing the transitions from…err…trying to handl… well actually to…well it was a matter of […]

Force commanders' perceptions of task specificity are multifaceted. Several of them claim that, to the extent that their mission had been conveyed to them at all, it had been expressed in specific terms. Yet, I argue that the terms are specific at a higher level of command and that they entail both ambiguity and vagueness at the force commanders' level.

In the following paragraphs I first describe the meaning-making process that force commanders went through after accepting the job. This serves to illustrate how they perceived and handled the task specificity. Then I describe how force commanders reached rather different perceptions and interpretations of their tasks and mission, and I round off by touching on force commanders' attitudes towards task specificity.

Early force commanders, as well as several subsequent ones, did not have a clear mission understanding at the onset of their service, particularly not as a consequence of top-down influence. To begin, many force commanders did not have a clear mission understanding at the time when they were asked to take the job. Frequently, the first proposal from the Armed Force Headquarters came as a telephone call from a human-resource specialist with little or

no knowledge of the mission at all. Thus, early designated force commanders often deliberated on their own and together with their families, for a brief time period and based on their own and limited foreknowledge, before accepting the job (Pålsson, 2013, Danielsson, 2012). The third force commander describes the mission as being "shrouded in mystery," but that he learned, by "reading up," that it "had to do with support and with creating security for development" (Danielsson, 2012).

It should be pointed out here, as a parenthesis, that the Swedish Armed Forces had had troops in Afghanistan for four years prior to sending their first force commander to the PRT in Mazar-e Sharif in 2006. Colonel Sandström was the commander of FS11, i.e. the eleventh Swedish contingent since the beginning of 2002. Thus, personnel throughout the Swedish Armed Forces were informed of the campaign, albeit to different and undocumented levels, as a result of media coverage, own experience, or accounts from returning veterans. However, Colonel Sandström's force was the first PRT and the first rotation with Sweden as lead nation, making that particular organizational experience completely unique.

In later cases, as the collective Swedish experience grew, force commanders had more knowledge of the campaign prior to accepting it. Some even had what can be considered expert knowledge from working with the campaign at the Armed Forces Headquarters. Thus, several force commanders feel that they had a good *general* understanding of both the campaign and the job when they were recruited.

Yet, for a vast majority, the first visit to Afghanistan was the defining moment when they reached some insight as to what the mission was about. The commanders of the early FS12 and FS13 remember their reconnaissance trips (they both visited Sandström and FS11) as an event when they gained a general understanding of what their upcoming task entailed. The opportunity to "breath the Afghan air," to see the Swedish camp, visit key leaders and experience "the heat and the scents" contributed to the understanding and also provided something to convey to the rest of the force that was preparing back home in Sweden (Pålsson, 2013, Danielsson, 2012). The commander of FS16, who considered the task to be "vague" at the outset, also gained a clearer understanding during his first trip to Afghanistan in 2008 (Hedlund, 2014). In other words, matters on the ground, i.e. what the already deployed force was doing, and the meetings with their deployed predecessors, rather than matters at home appear to have contributed to their understanding.

Thus, early force commanders perceived the overarching task, or mission, to be non-specific at the onset, and they increased the specificity by filling the mission with their personally developed conception of it.

Other force commanders felt that they had a fairly good understanding of the essence of the mission even before deployment. The commander of FS20 in late 2010 and early 2011 felt that he had a good sense of the mission and that Sweden had a good grip on its meaning (Nilsson, 2013), and the com-

mander of FS17 in 2009 also considered himself to be already well informed about the campaign and the mission thanks to his job at the Land Component Command, and saw the reconnaissance trip more as an opportunity to scout the terrain (Granander, 2013). This apparent increase in pre-deployment understanding is reasonable given that the military's collective knowledge grew over time.

Yet, it deserves to be pointed out here that the procedure of assigning force commanders was basically the same throughout the period. The procedure was to appoint a colonel without adequately preparing him and instead letting him explore his mission on his own. This suggests a general view of the class of colonels as being capable of shouldering such challenges.

The other defining aspect of force commanders' meaning-making processes was the staff work conducted during the preparation phase in Sweden. This was done both as a form of more informal discussion within the closest circle of staff members surrounding the force commanders as well as more formal operational planning procedures. This suggests that a force commander's individual mission understanding, as well as his force's collective one, was the result of a very internal process, and in light of the often vague and ambiguous input from the outside, it can be inferred that each force developed their own unique understanding of the mission, albeit with considerable congruence with that of their peers and predecessors.

The commander of FS18 and a few of his staff members began such discussions when they attended NATO's PRT course in Oberammergau in Germany in 2009, where they were introduced to the concept of counterinsurgency, which triggered considerable internal deliberation (Tistam, 2013). And the commander of FS21, who could not make sense of either the accounts from his veteran colleagues or of the vague mission briefing he received at the Armed Forces Headquarters, engaged his staff in a rigorous planning process that broke down the very broad mission statements, expressed as bullets in a UN PowerPoint presentation, to operational and tactical tasks as per regular military procedure (Johansson, 2012).

Thus, force commanders perceived task specificity as gradually increasing but due to their own efforts of individual fact finding and collective staff planning rather than superior tasking.

In this context, an initiative taken in 2010 is worth mentioning. After Colonel Johansson received his pre-deployment brief from the Land Component Command, he initiated collaboration with the commanders of FS20, FS22 and FS23 in order to formulate what he deemed a more purposeful operational concept and in order to create some operational stability across several rotations. He explains:

> So questions arose, at the regiment, with me. We, the regiment, had had people down there before, during FS16 and they had one interpretation of the task but I didn't understand what they said. Well I understood what they said

but not the meaning of it. And I talked to many people, I talked to the commander, the chief of staff, people who had worked in the staff and yet, 'What are we *doing* there? What is the *task*?'. […]

But I didn't get any good answers. I talked to those who had been down there before, I talked to Gustav Fahl [commander of FS19], I talked to Granander [commander of FS17] and all of them, and you know everyone had their own image of this (Johansson, 2012).

The agreement between the four collaborating force commanders built on an extended operational planning process conducted by Colonel Johansson's staff, which stretched from the goals at the international political level down to tactical goals on the ground. The results were presented to and approved by the Land Component Command and eventually also by ISAF's Regional Command North. FS20 was already on its way to deployment, so the plan was implemented by FS21 and followed up by FS22 and FS23 (Johansson, 2012, Larsson, 2013, Löfberg, 2013, Nilsson, 2013).

This episode is perhaps the best most illustrative demonstration of a challenge that all force commanders faced – the challenge of filling the gap between non-specific political and military goals (the what) and specific tactical behavior on the ground (the how). Albeit with varying degree of ambition all force commanders were forced to determine what their actual mission was and formulate it in in more distinct terms than what had been offered though top-down directives. It could be objected that such operationalization is in fact a central part of military command, but it could also be argued that commanders at the tactical level are not normally responsible for interpreting political and strategic goals and directions. Thus, the responsibility actually bestowed upon force commanders can be characterized as greater than should be expected. And, of course, this grants them discretion regarding matters that can be said to transcend their role and responsibility in the chain of command.

In the lack of a clear, common strategy and doctrine force commanders did this rather differently. The collaborative example of the four force commanders above is an exception, as most force commanders made similar attempts individually, leading to different analyses and slightly different mission conceptions over time.

As has been described, force commanders accepted the job under varying conditions ranging from having little or virtually no foreknowledge to considering themselves as being very well informed about the campaign. Also, they engaged in individual and/or collective and, in a sense, unique meaning-making processes for the purpose of increasing task specificity and developing their principal's mission conception and force's mission conception. Notwithstanding the continually but slowly evolving direction of the ISAF mission, force commanders hence reached different mission conceptions, sometimes leading to continuity and sometimes causing disruption.

During the first part of the time period, the task was generally understood as "security, governance and development" a conceptual triad that came to saturate the international discourse on Afghanistan to a degree that almost made them seem specific. To begin with, these three "pillars" were a central concept in counterinsurgency theory drawing on French military scholar David Galula's argument that counterinsurgency is

> only 20 percent military and 80 percent diplomatic, political, and economic. In a well-coordinated counterinsurgency campaign, security, governance, development, and information operations can be mutually reinforcing (Nagl, 2010, 161).

They were also central themes in NATO's and ISAF's strategy for Afghanistan and thus also a part of the overarching operations plan and the PRT concept (ISAF, 2009, 4). Finally, they reached the highest doctrinal level when they entered the UN Security Council resolution on Afghanistan in 2006 which recognized:

> once again the interconnected nature of the challenges in Afghanistan, reaffirming that sustainable progression security, governance and development, as well as on the cross-cutting issue of counter-narcotics, is mutually reinforcing and welcoming the continuing efforts of the Afghan Government and the international community to address these challenges (UNSC, 2006)

Security, governance and development were thus a central set of themes in the international debate. Hence, the commander of FS13 understood his mission as "to get those three lines of operations together" (Danielsson, 2012). The commander of FS12 reasoned along similar lines but chose to focus on security (Pålsson, 2013).

While subsequent force commanders describe their mission understanding in slightly different terms, e.g. "to go down and support" (FS14) and "to improve Afghan military capacity" (FS15), several of them also refer to these three lines of operations, for example the commander of FS16:

> The overarching task was to enhance security in the area mainly by supporting the Afghan security actors. It was to strengthen development, societal development, that is, and it was to support the government of the civilian society, what is called security, development and government was the responsibility of the PRT where the PRT commander was the symbol for this, including the political and the development aspect (Hedlund, 2014).

For him, then, the mission was to "conduct operations in line with the overarching goals" (Ibid.). His successor of FS17 (2009) describes it similarly as conducting so-called focused operations and framework operations in accordance with the three lines of operations which he saw as tasks. And in the end he concluded that it was "a regular COIN operation" (Granander, 2013).

None of these mission understandings can be considered as specific at the operational level of a commander of a battalion sized force. There is no reason to doubt that force commanders regard these overarching tasks as specific, but I would argue that this is because they have come to fill them with meaning over time, which has made them seem specific. The way that force commanders describe their meaning making processes indicates that they have faced two challenges: first to identify and choose a main task among several possible ones, and second to define it based on available knowledge. This way they have come to make slightly different choices and fill them with slightly different meanings, both regarding the what and the how.

The examples above also illustrate the gradual broadening of the force commanders' mission perception as new concepts came to the fore. The perhaps most illustrative case is the gradual infusion of the concept of counterinsurgency or COIN, which has been interpreted very differently by force commanders as well as by their force members.

The commander of FS17 felt he had a rather clear understanding of the meaning of COIN, even though he acknowledges that it was not shared by all parts of his force. While the force commander incorporated the concept of placing Afghan forces in the lead of all operations with the basic tenets of COIN, several of his subordinate commanders "wanted to do more" in order to promote security that they felt could not always be accomplished with Afghan forces in the lead (Granander, 2013).

His successor, the commander of FS18, expressed greater uncertainty as to the implications of COIN. After learning about the concept at the PRT course in Oberammergau, he and his closest staff deliberated over the meaning of COIN and what it meant in "a Swedish context". They felt that the exaggerated version of COIN that the commander of ISAF promoted did not harmonize with Swedish military culture and conduct. He also points out that their deliberations did not result in a unified conception but that "there were hopefully not as many understandings as there were people in the force, but we clearly did not have a mutual understanding" (Tistam, 2013).

For their successors in FS19, COIN became a very concrete reality in the summer of 2010. A year earlier, the commander of FS17 had conceptualized a plan for the area called West of Mazar-e Sharif, which built on the COIN concept's operational template of clear-hold-build (Fahl, 2013). The idea is to expel insurgents from an area, introduce government control and gain popular support. To "clear" implies "eliminating organized resistance" in an area by entering it with military troops and forcing the insurgents' withdrawal. To "hold" means keeping the insurgents from returning, preferably with the cooperation of the host nation's forces, for the purpose of securing the people and separating them from the insurgents, and to "build" means to establish and foster popular support by improving the living conditions in the area (United States Deptartment of the Army, 2007).

Both the commander of FS17 and FS18 assessed that the plan, designated Ab Tamiz,[118] was not feasible without the firm commitment of the Afghan army and police, and since such a commitment did not exist during their time in theater due to the limited capacity of the Afghan forces, they passed the plan on to the following force commanders, thus awaiting the proper conditions. Soon after their arrival to Afghanistan, FS19 executed the plan, albeit in a slightly altered version. On the 14th of June 2010, rifle company Quebec Lima together with supporting units from the rest of the PRT and the Afghan security forces, seized a hill (allegedly a former Soviet outpost) on the southern outskirts of the village Ali Zayi (Fahl, 2011, 6, Försvarsmakten, 2010a). What was meant to be an uncomplicated start-up operation (Respondent 45, 2012) turned into the main focus of FS19's entire deployment in 2010 as well as a major commitment for the two subsequent forces throughout the following year (Nilsson, 2013, Johansson, 2012). For the force commander of FS19, his mission was clear: to implement the multinational organization's strategy of counterinsurgency and the combat outpost on ''Ali Zayi Hill'' was a central part of the implementation. Hence, what first looked like a textbook example of a clear-hold-build operation was a very logical manifestation of the force's perceived task (Fahl, 2011, 6).

However, as previously feared, the commitment from the Afghan forces soon dried up, leaving the Swedish unit on Ali Zayi Hill without the theoretical conditions for the hold and build phases. The Swedish PRT did, however, decide to maintain its presence and eventually handed over the situation to the relieving FS20 in the late fall of 2010.

The summers of 2009 and 2010 were the two periods in time when the gap between political goals and tactical events became pressingly evident. This was also when violence began to escalate dramatically:

Table 16. *Enemy contacts, killed and injured in PRT MeZ (Regeringskansliet 2017, 75)*

	-2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Enemy contacts	7	32	71	54	23	0
Killed	3	1	4	1	0	0
Injured	4	10	11	8	2	0

Swedish journalists began reporting on incidents that in military terms were best described as ambushes and fire fights where so-called insurgents attacked Swedish, and Afghan, troops with improvised roadside bombs (often called IEDs or improvised explosive devices), small arms fire and even rocket-propelled grenades (e.g. Carlsson, 2009, Holmström, 2009a, Holmström, 2009b, Lapidus, 2009). What had previously been seen as yet

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[118] Allegedly meaning *clear water* in Dari as opposed to "muddy waters" denoting areas with insurgents and criminals mixing with the local population (Granander 2013).

another peace operation began to be referred to as a war (Hildebrandt, 2009, Höglund, 2009, Guillou, 2009) and the heated discussion even entered the Parliament during the debates ahead of the decisions whether to prolong the deployments. These were the summers when FS17 and FS19 acted on their understanding of a counterinsurgency mission, and their concept of operations, in combination with the summer fighting period, most probably contributed to the increase in violence of that time, which in turn stirred the heated debate in Sweden. Comments from various unnamed military officials, including other force commanders, indicate that other individuals might have made different interpretations and taken other actions, had they been force commanders, which is arguably another indication of force commanders' discretion rather than indications that the commanders of FS17 and FS19 made odd choices. And in the end, the Parliament held firm in its policy despite the pressure, thereby granting the implementers a form of silent approval.

Again, this illustrates how force commanders have chosen and defined their main task individually. COIN, which is so conceptually ambiguous that it must be categorized as non-specific at any level of operation, has been identified as the main task, or mission, by some but not by others, and force commanders have defined it in their own way. Some of them have even struggled with varying definitions within their own force which clearly illustrates the ambiguity of the concept.

The following force commanders, of FS20 through FS23 who had conducted collaborative operational planning, also had slightly varying mission conceptions and different interpretations of COIN in particular, and although the commander of FS20 felt that the already established combat outpost on Ali Zayi Hill diminished his capability to conduct armored warfare (which was his principal's mission understanding) it was not until later in 2011 that FS21 finally abandoned Ali Zayi Hill (Johansson, 2012, Nilsson, 2013). For the commanders of FS20, FS21, FS22 and FS23 then, the mission was to *partner* with Afghan forces with the purpose of enhancing the Afghan forces' capabilities and autonomy so that ISAF could eventually withdraw (Johansson, 2012). COIN is a part of all of their vocabularies but not at all in the same explicit and determining way as it was with the previous commanders of FS17 and FS19.

Despite the apparent conceptual consensus of these four force commanders, they interpreted partnering in slightly different ways. While FS21 and FS23 adopted a rather broad understanding of the partnering concept, entailing a range of peacekeeping-like operations such as intelligence operations and joint security operations (e.g. searching for contraband and insurgents or gathering information together with the Afghan forces), FS20 and FS22 adopted slightly different understandings.

FS20 was already ready to deploy when the four force commanders formed their shared mission understanding and negotiated it with the Land Component Command. The force commander brought with him the idea of partnering though, determined to do things together with his Afghan counterparts, particularly the Afghan National Army. However, both his unit's specialty (mechanized warfare) and the structure of the force (a reduced mechanized battalion, to be discussed in the next section) made him draw the conclusion that the Swedish force and their Afghan partners should conduct mechanized combat operations (Nilsson, 2013). One much-discussed manifestation of this approach was an assault-like operation in the Darzab corridor, i.e. the road down to Darzab in the southwest corner of the Swedish area of operations early in 2011. According to Agrell, Operation Shariki was unusually combat intensive and complex (Agrell, 2013, 286ff), an operation that Colonel Nilsson describes in armor-like terms as "open the road down to Darzab, turn around and assault back up through the area" (Nilsson, 2013).

The commander of FS22 had yet another take on the concept of partnering. First, he and his subordinate commanders were, again, set on conducting counterinsurgency operations but with their own interpretation, which can be said to be rooted in their identities as rangers. Their interpretation of counterinsurgency focused more on the insurgents than the population and aimed at disrupting insurgent strongholds together with their Afghan partners (Löfberg 2013), a view that can also be said to be consistent with the ranger specialty.

Second, being used to operating in smaller units on foot the force did not use their armored vehicles in the same way as their predecessors and successors from armor units did. Thus, the soldiers of FS22 often left their vehicles behind during operations (as opposed to FS20 for instance) something that the commander of FS22 was criticized for but defended:

> I've always been called a "ranger romantic," but I said that we cannot have a mechanized behavior when we are partnering with infantry. In that case you need to dismount the heavy vehicles and walk. "Yeah but then the risk increases," they argued, and I said "No it doesn't," and they went on "But you won't have the same level of ballistic protection if you're dismounted," and I replied, "no we won't, but the protection is not only in the armor shields but in being close to the Afghans and earning their trust" (Ibid.).

Thus, despite Colonel Johansson's insight that partnering was the actual overarching task in Afghanistan and despite a collaborative planning effort, at least three of the four force commanders arrived at slightly different understandings of both partnering and COIN which illustrates the non-specific nature of the task as well as force commanders' discretion of interpretation. Consequently, three slightly different variations in mission interpretation, despite deliberate collaboration, created a variation in the Swedish force's

operational conduct during 2011 and 2012, something which was noted in the Armed Forces Headquarters but not acted upon (Respondent 122, 2013).

Here it seems obvious that the specialization of each force commander and his unit influences the interpretation of the mission and the choice of concept of operation. This could perhaps "explain" force conduct but the point to be made in this analysis is that force commanders had discretion to make such interpretations and choices.

The aforementioned bottom-up regime of multinational operations is generally not a major concern of force commanders. A fair and general description would be that they are reluctantly comfortable with this state of affairs. Thus, the practice of suggesting to their superior commander what their force ought to focus on during their six-month deployment sits well with them. It is an arrangement that appears to harmonize with the Swedish command and control philosophy and that force commanders expect:

> Well, it's a part of the nature of things that you have to go down there as force commander and realize that you will not have the type of direction that that entails constant and detailed top-down assignments, but rather that you have to try to understand or grasp your mission based on an overarching strategy (Fahl, 2013).

However, even though most force commanders' experience and accept this arrangement, one can detect a slight reluctance in their attitude. It is not until they are pressed on the issue that they reflect openly on their discretion and the influence it brings, as illustrated by these two consecutive force commanders:

> Granander: Well, I had a task to carry out, I had a task from ATS [Swedish Land Component Command] like I said, I had an operations plan to follow from COM RCN, and within that framework I had great freedom of action to conduct the PRT's business.
>
> Interviewer: Was the mission from RCN rather wide?
>
> Granander: Well it was to conduct framework operations and focused operations… yeah, it was rather wide (Granander, 2013).

and

> Interviewer: But if this direction is framework-like so to speak, and you had your area of operations here, the initiative almost had to come from your end for anything to happen?

Tistam: Absolutely, and that is the foundation for the whole thing, to do the driving, so to speak (Tistam, 2013).

A few force commanders are more reluctant to acknowledge their own discretion, however (Fahl 2013, Johansson 2012). This attitude can perhaps be understood in relation to military norms about discipline and the principle that a subordinate officer is not supposed to override his superior or make decisions for the superior. However, in the case of Afghanistan, and probably many other multinational operations, force commanders are *forced* to make decisions that the superiors have not made in order to determine and shape their daily activities. And even though that experience of discretion may clash with professional norms, it is still conceivable for force commanders, possibly as a consequence of contemporary command and control philosophy among Swedish officers.

Conclusion

To summarize, certain tasks at a lower level of abstraction have been specific during the time period. Typical examples were to provide security during elections, to protect prominent visitors from the contributing nations, and to keep the main supply routes (e.g. the main highway that runs through the PRT's area of operations) open for traffic. However, many tasks, particularly those that pertain to the force's overarching mission, have belonged at a higher level of command, typically those described as "the three pillars" of security, governance and development, and thus been non-specific at the operational level of the force commander. This has enabled, or forced, force commanders to interpret their meaning, to make choices regarding methods, and to prioritize which areas and which issues to focus on, i.e. to make tasks more specific regarding both the what and the how. Lack of doctrinal support regarding these somewhat extracurricular military tasks left room for improvisation and thus discretion. As one of force commanders put it, as he reflected on the competence of Swedish colonels: "Who the hell has conducted state building and the type of COIN operations we ran down there?" (Löfberg 2013). The most salient example is the way in which the COIN concept has been interpreted and implemented. Thus, force commanders had considerable discretion regarding key operational decisions such as what the force should do in order to implement assigned or suggested strategies, e.g. COIN or provincial reconstruction. And with the bottom-up practice, any operative suggestions that fell within the conceptual boundaries of their superiors were approved. Hence, the PRTs tasks were a product of a form of negotiation between subordinate and superior rather than a product of distinct top-down direction, which means that force commanders played a significant part in shaping the operations of the PRT and, by implication, the operations of ISAF within four Afghan provinces.

My theoretical assumptions stipulate that task specificity pertains to both the *what* and the *how* of a task that a superior gives his subordinate, and that different combinations of specific and non-specific whats and hows have different consequences for the subordinate's discretion. For example, a non-specific what in combination with a non-specific how would, theoretically, generate almost complete discretion (as in "do what you want any way you want to"), while a specific what and a specific how would almost completely delimit discretion. Also, based on research and military professional norms, I argued that the most likely outcome would be the combination of a specific what - derived from political will and strategy through a tiered division of labor - and a non-specific how that would delegate to the subordinate and his professionalism to choose how to achieve the task in the spirit of *Auftragstaktik*.

The findings do not fall neatly within either of the two extreme theoretical categories nor do they perfectly match the expectation. Instead, what we see is a sort of level problem where a significant portion of the what (the principal mission) is specific at a higher level of abstraction (global-political or national-political for example) but non-specific at the level of the force commanders. The consequence is that what from the outside may appear as a very specific task for the military is in fact too abstract in nature to be specific at the so called tactical level. Furthermore, the how is also non-specific even though particular albeit ambiguous methods (e.g. COIN) have been implicitly suggested. Thus, to generalize, the findings point to a combination of non-specific what and a non-specific how, albeit not as outré as the extreme theoretical combinations of my analysis scheme suggest. Under these circumstances, force commanders came to understand their mission by different means and ways and reached varying mission conceptions as has been shown in this section.

It has been suggested that this type of variation is not necessarily malignant. Some respondents (but no force commanders) have offered the mitigating suggestion that variation in force conduct makes the force less predictable and hence less vulnerable to enemy adaptation. Not only is this contrary to the general military principle of unity of effort, but it is also not an expressed strategy of NATO or the Swedish Armed Forces in the Afghanistan campaign and thus a rather void argument.

Admittedly, political direction and strategies at the international level evolved over time, which means that mission conceptions can be expected to have changed too, but observations at the force commander level indicate a bureaucratic gap between the international/national level and the level of force commanders. Had political goals and strategies been operationalized throughout the levels of command in an ideal manner, variations in mission conception among force commanders would likely have been fewer and more linear than observed here.

Understanding of allocated resources

The analysis suggests that several factors came into play in shaping force commanders' perceptions of allocated resources, for example their own professional background and experience as well as their own pre-understanding of the mission. Consequently, their perceptions of allocated resources varied. More often though, allocated resources were *evaluated* based on force commanders' *a priori* understanding of the mission, usually rendering the resources inadequate for the (perceived) mission.

Almost all force commanders pointed out that their resources were insufficient for how they understood the mission. This is generally associated with the extensive size of their area of operations. While many PRTs in Afghanistan assume so-called "battle space ownership" of one province, the Swedish force's area of operations comprised four: Balkh, Jowzjan, Sar-e Pul and Samangan. By any standard, this is an extremely large area for a force of not more than six hundred troops of which only a portion operate in the field. Even though this circumstance did not affect the force commanders' understanding of their mission, it did force them to prioritize, both geographically and mission-wise. During the first rotations when the prevailing mission understanding was monitoring and surveillance, the force's military observation teams (MOTs) were scattered across the area with three to four eight-man teams operating in each province, where they had to choose certain districts and tasks to focus on while ignoring other districts and tasks (e.g. Danielsson, 2012). And later on, when the force had a more armor battalion-like structure, the rifle companies were also largely (and unevenly) spread across the provinces, thus inhibiting any comprehensive battalion conduct (e.g. Nilsson, 2013). Even though this circumstance does not directly pertain to the resources' implications for mission understanding, it undoubtedly had a significant impact on force commanders' decision-making. Also, it demonstrates that force commanders' understanding of their mission is something quite separate from the resources that they are given, further indicating a disconnect between any top-down implied mission and force commanders' perceived mission.

Personnel

The personnel resource had different implications throughout the period. During the beginning of the period, the force was recruited on an individual basis, in a "newspaper fashion" as one company commander describes it (Wendt, 2012) alluding to the advertisements that were issued via newspapers and other channels to recruit personnel to each rotation. Later on the principle of the "army model" was adopted, which entailed drafting standing units from the assigned force commander's home regiment to form the core of a rotation (Respondent 122, 2013). This means that the personnel body of later rotations was more homogeneous than that of earlier rotations. Thus,

FS22, which was set up by the Life Regiment Hussars (and their airborne ranger battalion) arguably shared a more coherent and common professional identity than for example FS18, which was set up by the Life Guards Regiment but which contained personnel from Armed Force units all over the country (Wendt, 2012, Peters, 2013). Furthermore, as a consequence of the "army model" and Sweden's abolition of conscription in 2010, later rotations were made up of professional soldiers rather than voluntary former conscripts, which was the case in the beginning of the period. Furthermore, they were drawn from different types of regiments (armor, infantry, engineers, rangers and even air force) under the implied principle that the professional background should not be a factor in assuming the tasks of the PRT in Afghanistan, since the core idea was that the deploying force, regardless of composition and characteristics, should assume the role of the PRT, sometimes referred to as to "man the equipment" (Respondent 122, 2013).

Thus, earlier force commanders paid less attention to, or reflected over, the character of their personnel as it pertains to mission understanding. In one case the force commander explains how the status and specialization of the soldiers of his rifle company, mainly made up of former conscript elite paratroopers and coastal rangers, forced him to think hard about to what extent he could order them into combat-intense situations (Fahl, 2013) a decision that affected his ability to implement the counterinsurgency strategy that he felt committed to. The other earlier force commanders reflect even less on personnel characteristics.

But in late 2010 this changed. The commander of FS20 identifies the armor specialization of his force as a clear indicator of its mission (Nilsson, 2013). However, its significance was most probably conditioned by other factors of mission understanding, such as the task to partner with the Afghan army and the mechanized character of the force structure. If his personnel had been sent to an operation with an explicit peacekeeping mission equipped with more peacekeeping-like materiel, it is unlikely that the armor specialization of his personnel would have affected his mission understanding in a similar fashion.

In contrast, the commander of FS22 deployed merely a year later with a force that considered itself to be an airborne ranger battalion, a salient professional identity that clearly shaped their mission understanding (Löfberg, 2013, Peters, 2013, Respondent122, 2013). Applying their ranger battalion mentality, they made conscious decisions about what the mission was ("hunting the Taliban"), about operating with the Afghan army in new insurgent strongholds, and about operating on foot rather than mounted in their armored vehicles (Löfberg, 2013), quite opposite to the armor-oriented FS20 before them.

Hence, during the latter part of the period, with the introduction of the "Army model," the status and specialization of the personnel appear to have influenced force commanders' understanding of their mission more than it

did during the earlier part of the period. However, the force commanders' general reluctance to reflect on personnel renders the data very limited and the ability to make such generalizations limited. However, if this could be generalized, it is conspicuous that the practice of deploying whole, standing forces appears to have counteracted its purpose of manning the equipment for the purpose of achieving continuity in conduct.

Based on the limited data it is difficult to draw any solid conclusions regarding the implications of allocated personnel resources. Some observations indicate that the successive increase of skill with the move from conscripts to contracted soldiers and more coherent forces was understood as a move from peacekeeping to something resembling warfighting or multipurpose, but the data is inconclusive.

Organization

The implications of organization also leave somewhat limited empirical traces in the analysis of force commanders' perceptions. Nonetheless, two force commanders do explicitly comment on the organization's impact on mission understanding in general terms. One claims that each force commander has his unique mission since he has a unique organization (which changes slightly, or sometimes significantly, with each rotation), not in the sense that it dictates the mission but in the sense that it delimits what the mission *can* be (Johansson, 2012). His successor, on the other hand, argues that the organization has a tacit, inherent mission that is not necessarily reflected in the strategy and the operational orders (Löfberg, 2013), pointing to the implicit armor character of force structure of the later rotations.

Force commanders reflect more on their organization in light of their mission understanding than the other way around. Nearly all force commanders point out that the organization was inadequate for the mission, both regarding size and composition. This is particularly evident during the time when mission understanding began to shift from monitoring and surveillance to counterinsurgency. Thus, some earlier commanders made some organizational changes and even innovations to serve their mission needs. For example, one of the earliest commanders reorganized the force structure in the provinces by giving the Provincial Offices (PO) a coordinating role over the other MOTs in the province in order to reduce the number of his subordinates, thereby introducing a new level of command (Pålsson, 2013). Another created an all-female military observation team (MOT) with female officers drawn from other parts of his force in order to tap into a part of the Afghan society that the force was virtually excluded from, i.e. women and children (Sandström, 2013). Also, due to the lack of maneuver units, early force commanders created temporary maneuver units by putting together MOTs with the guard, escort and rifle units for particular operations and force projection purposes (Danielsson, 2012), thus auguring or perhaps advocating for the upcoming introduction of the rifle company. Another way to compensate

for the lack of maneuver units, needed to operate according to their mission understanding, was to borrow rifle and armor units from the Norwegian PRT (Pålsson, 2013).

Another consequence of perceived organizational inadequacy is operational prioritization. Starting with FS14 and FS15, force commanders began to develop so-called focus areas or hot spots, geographical areas that were deemed in need of particular attention due to perceived troubles such as crime and insurrection. In this fashion, the area designated *West of MeS* became the prime area of interest for the Swedish force from FS14 and onwards (Alexandersson, 2013, Larsson, 2013). This development can perhaps be best understood as an attempt to achieve local operational effects with limited organizational resources in an overwhelmingly large area of operations. The most manifest expression of this development is arguably FS19's choice to establish a combat outpost (COP) in the West of MeS area in the summer of 2010, a move that stretched the force's resources and that came to shape the operations of both FS19 and FS20 (Fahl, 2013, Fahl, 2011, Respondent45, 2012, Respondent49, 2013).

But there are also a few examples of force commanders that interpreted their mission in light of the size and structure of their provided organization. The commander of FS14, for instance, observed that his force contained more MOTs than maneuver units, which suggested more of a peacekeeping conduct than warfighting (Larsson, 2013). Analogously, the commander of FS15 realized that his brand new rifle company allowed for the kind of focused operations that his predecessors had not been able to conduct (Alexandersson, 2013) suggesting an interpreted multipurpose character of the organization. Likewise, the commander of FS16 acknowledged that there was still a "MOT focus" at the time of their deployment but that the new rifle company allowed him to redirect towards so-called focused operations (Hedlund, 2014).

Yet, the most salient example of interpreting the mission based on force structure is FS20, which in late 2010 deployed with what the force commander understood as a mechanized battalion, which corresponded well with his background as an armor officer and which influenced his general mission understanding of conducting (armor style) combat operations together with the Afghan security forces:

> Because FS20 was the first rotation that deployed as a mechanized unit. Quite bluntly, the earlier rotations had been organized for information gathering and intelligence while we were organized for combat (Nilsson, 2013).

Similarly, the commander of FS23, who had earlier commanded FS14 with a very different organization, observed that

the mission was completely different the other time around; we were more of a warfighting machine that time (Larsson, 2013).

The commander of FS22 on the other hand, whose unit (part of a ranger battalion from his home regiment in Karlsborg, Sweden) deployed to man the same force structure as the two commanders just mentioned, also perceived the implied force conduct as armor, but disregarded that and applied the more familiar ranger tactics (Löfberg, 2013) thus illustrating a the multipurpose character of the organization. Hence, even though force commanders derived similar implied purposes from the same force structure, they did not necessarily act on it in the same way.

In summary, the organizational evolution of the force structure has implied peacekeeping as well as multipurpose and warfighting to force commanders.

Doctrine

Although doctrinal decree appears to have played a more crucial role for other categories of commanders in the force,[119] for some force commanders, particularly during the COIN oriented era, doctrinal decree has also been a source of considerable contemplation, interpretation and choice. The main source of doctrinal decree appears to have been the PRT Course at the NATO School in Oberammergau but also general, contemporary military discourse.[120] For several force commanders, this was the first time they encountered both the PRT concept and the COIN concept.

The earlier force commanders were challenged with understanding and implementing the PRT concept. As has been discussed, the concept was comprehensive and lent itself to interpretations. At the outset, force commanders' understanding of the PRT concept entailed a variant of peacekeeping that focused on monitoring and surveillance, by some described as " a big intelligence operation" (Larsson, 2013). It was, by organizational design, operationalized by the activities of the military observation teams (MOT) and provincial offices (PO) as well as the force commanders' own key leader engagement activities. In that context, force commanders were challenged with aligning the MOTs and POs, whose personnel often held different views on how to operate (e.g. Granander, 2013).

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[119] For example, several of the rifle company commanders of FS15 through FS24, who, due to their close proximity to the operations in the field, engaged eagerly in finding doctrinal inspiration to deal with the new type of operational challenge they found in Afghanistan.
[120] It would require an entire and separate investigation to map the military discourse at the time, but suffice it to say that the concept of counterinsurgency entered and almost dominated the discourse for a number of years around 2009-2010, not least as a result of a series of influential books from military scholars such as David Kilcullen, John Nagl and David Petraeus. For an accessible account of this movement, please see Kaplan, F.M. (2013). *The insurgents: David Petraeus and the plot to change the American way of war*. New York, Simon & Schuster.

Furthermore, force commanders made slightly different prioritizations between the three "lines of operations" – security, development and governance – where some appear to have placed equal focus on all three and tried to bridge them together (Danielsson, 2012), while others focused more on security with the argument that the PRT was a predominantly military organization (Pålsson, 2013), a characteristic of the Swedish incarnation of the PRT concept[121] that even generated expectations from the German-led regional command of a focus on security (Hedlund, 2014). Thus, a potential discrepancy between the original idea of the PRT, or the common belief of what a PRT was, and the actual design of the Swedish force may have facilitated various interpretations of the PRT concept and its implementation in the Swedish case.

With the advent of the COIN concept, force commanders were faced with understanding yet a new and contemporary warfighting concept that had no obvious place in their world view as Swedish military officers. The reactions ranged from bafflement and embracement to paying lip service. For the commander of FS16, for instance, it was rather unclear what the concept actually meant. One possible interpretation was alignment of the three lines of operations (the same as one interpretation of the PRT concept, as mentioned above), and another was the idea of clear-hold-build (Hedlund, 2014). The commander of FS18 and his team, which included Finnish colleagues, also struggled to understand the concept and were not sure that the force ever reached a mutual understanding. However, one prevailing component of their interpretation was to engage the Afghan security forces in their operations (Tistam, 2013).

The commanders of FS17, FS19 and FS20, on the other hand, felt rather confident in their interpretations. For FS17 it meant to engage trouble spots and enhance the legitimacy of the Afghan government (Granander, 2013), and for FS20 it meant "to break up the resistance" in the places it existed in cooperation with the Afghan security forces (Nilsson, 2013). The commander of FS19 was also confident in his interpretation that COIN meant conducting clear-hold-build operations (Fahl, 2013). And so was the commander of FS22 who drew from his experiences as a ranger to interpret the concept and its implications for his force's conduct, which was to seek out the insurgents in their previously safe strongholds (Löfberg, 2013).

Other force commanders, particularly during the end of the time period, appear to have played down the meaning of the COIN concept by simply adopting it as a politically correct, or politically useful, term to describe their

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[121] One interpretation of the PRT concept that takes as a starting point the inherent concepts of provincial reconstruction, and security, development and governance implies a broad and comprehensive force structure that addresses all those aspects. The Swedish PRT, however, was predominantly military in nature throughout the time period, which is one tentative explanation for such skewed interpretations of the PRT concept in general and the role of the Swedish PRT in particular.

operations, instead of deriving any significant operational conclusions from it (e.g. Claesson 2012, Johansson 2012).

Such variations in understanding, however subtle, combined with different interpretations of personnel and force structure, thus led to rather varying approaches to what was generally called "COIN operations," ranging from regular patrols, building of police stations, armored assaults, establishing of combat outposts and ranger operations.

The main take-away from the analysis of the force commanders' interpretation of provided doctrinal concepts such as provincial reconstruction and counterinsurgency is that they have filled the terms with meaning based on their own understandings. The conceptual scope of the concepts and, I would argue, Sweden's relative unfamiliarity with them, has allowed such discretion. For force commanders, as well as the rest of their personnel, the deployment to Afghanistan was the point in time when they were forced to engage the concepts head-on, and, hence, they faced them armed with their respective foreknowledge and the information that was available at the time, and given the extensive variation of that foreknowledge, the plethora of available information and the lack, or divergence rather, of top-down guidance, the variations and differences in interpretation and choice are hardly surprising.

Furthermore, as may have been noted, the analysis above regarding the force commanders' perception of doctrinal resources resembles the earlier analysis of force commanders' perception of task specificity. The reason is likely that tasks were, to a large extent, expressed at a level of abstraction that resembles doctrine. For example, while COIN can be considered a doctrinal component, it can also be perceived as a mission, or even a concept of operations, in the sense of "conducting COIN operations." This circumstance further emphasizes the point made earlier that mission formulations were non-specific in their high level of abstraction.

Equipment

As was the case with organization, the allocated equipment, particularly the vehicles, was a concern to force commanders, especially in the beginning of the time period when it was deemed inadequate for the perceived mission. Also, allocated equipment to some extent carried an implied mission when analyzed by force commanders, which, however, led to different choices.

During the first half of the time period, the quality of the fleet of vehicles was of significant concern to force commanders as well as many others. The so-called soft-skin vehicles, mainly unprotected Toyota Land Cruisers painted white, signaled UN peacekeeping. For force commanders and others who experienced a more dangerous operating environment than the prevalent national image in Sweden suggested, soft-skin vehicles were not appropriate for the mission. Neither were they appropriate for the purpose of so-called

force projection, i.e. to signal coercive military strength for some purpose. And despite frequent and repeated complaints from the theater of operations, both in reports from the field during deployment as well as in after-action reports, decision-makers on the home front were mainly indifferent. The Armed Forces' general response to such complaints was to "operate with what you have" (Danielsson, 2012, Sandström, 2006, 10, Sandström, 2013, Pålsson, 2007, 4, Pålsson, 2013). This, of course, limited the available courses of action and thus the discretion of force commanders.

As has been described earlier, the fleet of vehicles was successively reinforced beginning in 2009, partly due to media attention, and as the quality ceased to be an issue to force commanders, the quantity remained troublesome and forced them to make prioritizations in the same way that organizational size did.

The development towards heavier equipment is somewhat difficult to analyze, however. As concluded in the previous section, it is undoubtedly so that the character of the vehicles of the force went from suggesting traditional peacekeeping to suggesting more of combat operations with the earlier unarmored, white Toyotas successively being replaced by armored jeeps, armored personnel carriers and combat vehicles painted in desert camouflage colors. However, as also noted, whether this development was an effect of strategic direction (indicating changes in mission statement) or force requirements (indicating perceived gaps between actual mission and allocated equipment) or both, is difficult to conclude. Sometimes force commanders express a view that this material escalation was not offensive in nature but rather a protective measure in response to a perceived deteriorating security situation as well as a necessary step to allow for joint operations with Afghan security forces (e.g. Alexandersson 2013), sometimes describing it as necessary to be able to project power (e.g. Danielsson 2012) or to handle dangerous situations such as ambushes (e.g. Hedlund 2014).

It is difficult to establish that the reinforced fleet of vehicles actually implied a particular mission to force commanders. However, if the reinforcement in equipment is seen as a part of the evolution of the force structure as a whole, it can be argued that it did. Indeed, the growth of the force towards battalion size could have been done without adding heavy armor, which would have suggested light infantry operations rather than armored operations. One could say that the way the force evolved, both regarding organization and equipment, created a multi-purpose force that could handle situations ranging from peacekeeping to warfare. One could also argue that force commanders were free to choose within that multi-purpose scope, where one interpretation would be to use the multi-purpose force all-out (for combat), while another would be to use it with a lower ambition (peacekeeping) but maintain the ability to escalate.

This could be one reason why force commanders interpret the allocated resources in different ways. Thus, while the commander of FS20 (an armor

officer by trade) saw his force as a mechanized battalion, a perception that was obviously reinforced by the armor personnel carriers and combat vehicles it contained, the commander of FS22 (a ranger officer) saw the same vehicles as an operational problem, since they obstructed his intended operational conduct which was more along the lines of light infantry:

> I was always charged with being a ranger romantic, but I said that we cannot have a mechanized conduct when we are supposed to partner with infantry units, which means we need to dismount and operate on foot. "But that increases the risk!" they argued. "No it doesn't," I said. "But you won't have the same protection," they went on, meaning the armor in the vehicles, and I said "No, I won't, but the protection is not in the bloody armor! It's in being close to the Afghans and gaining their trust!" (Löfberg, 2013).

Thus, the implications of allocated resources must be understood on a case-to-case basis and from the perspective of the respective actor and his or her horizon of interpretation. With this perspective, the allocated equipment has signaled both peacekeeping, multipurpose and warfighting to force commanders.

Conclusion

As I have discussed here, force commanders reflected on the appropriateness of their resources based on their force's mission understanding more than on what type of mission their allocated resources implied. And in that regard they generally deemed the resources inappropriate for the mission, early on in that they were not equipped for the warlike situation that they experienced and later on in that the resources were insufficient for the scope of the mission.

Objectively, the allocated resources held a latent meaning regarding the mission's character, or in fact many latent meanings given its multipurpose character. However, force commanders interpreted such implications individually and differently, ranging between peacekeeping and warfighting. As the commander of FS22 argues, the organization of the force clearly implied one type of mission while the tasking implied another, a disharmony that force commanders reasonably have had to deal with and that he and his predecessor dealt with differently.

This presents a form of paradox if we assume that the introduction of the "army model" aimed at achieving quality and continuity by deploying standing units. Earlier "newspaper recruited" units were blank slates, in a sense, that were assembled prior to each deployment and that were forced to shape their force's mission understanding in the absence of specific and clear top-down direction. This entailed interpretation and choice, which led to variations in mission understanding and force conduct. Partly to remedy this shortcoming, the army model was introduced. This would eliminate the non-deterministic meaning-making that the newly assembled units were faced

with and thus eliminate variation. But instead, the army model led to the deployment of units with their own personality and attitude, if you will. Since no Swedish standing units are PRTs *per se*, they too were faced with meaning making though with a completely different point of departure than that of the earlier newspaper-recruited units. These units were cohesive, particularly skilled and trained, sometimes experienced and often predetermined. Hence, instead of engaging in a blank slate meaning-making process (which, of course, is a simplification), these units were forced to challenge their own unit identity and purpose with their perception of the Afghanistan mission and vice versa. As one Armed Forces Headquarters planning officer points out, the notion of sending standing units to Afghanistan to assume the role (and organization, skill, equipment, and doctrine) of a "PRT," whatever that was, was almost naïve. Instead, and in fact, standing armor units, infantry units and ranger units deployed to Afghanistan as armor units, infantry units and ranger units in the guise of a "PRT" (Respondent 122, 2013). And force commanders' discretion made individual variations possible.

According to my theoretical assumptions, the design of a force structure can be seen as a part of the mandate in that it constitutes the resources allocated to achieve a given task and thus should correspond to the nature of the mission. Furthermore, a multipurpose force structure can leave room for interpretation if the corresponding task or mission is not specific enough to explain it or if the reason for designing a multipurpose force structure is not offered.

But as we saw in the previous section, task specificity has generally been low which means that what is perceived as a multipurpose force structure leaves room for interpretation regarding its intended use and thus contributes to force commanders' discretion. The fact that force commanders have made different interpretations regarding the intended use of the force structure, the successive commanders of FS20 and FS22 perhaps being the two most salient examples, indicates that no additional explanation of the intended use of the force structure has been offered outside of the non-specific tasking analyzed in the previous chapter.

A counter argument to this analysis is that the allocated force structure holds no particular meaning with regards to the mission, i.e. the superior does not intentionally imply a particular task with it, but that it is merely designed for contingencies. With this reasoning, the heavy armored vehicles did not imply the conduct of armor operations but were meant as a back-up for a worst case scenario. This was, for example, the explicit purpose of the armored vehicles deployed to the Kosovo campaign after the Pristina riots in 2004, and they were indeed stored at the Swedish camp for contingency purposes. However, CV90 combat vehicles that were deployed to the Swedish force in Afghanistan have been used regularly during operations and not as a worst case back-up resource (see *Figure 12*). Furthermore, they were deployed in

2009 not only to enhance force protection in face of increased hostilities in 2008 (which was the dominant angle in the news media) but also as a way to increase the force's combat capability by ''increasing fire power'' as the Chief of the Army formulated it (Försvarsmakten, 2009, Rasmusson, 2008) which shows that at least two different interpretations of the purpose of deploying armored combat vehicles are possible even at the national level. And as the commanders of FS20 and FS22 are examples of, to use them for armored assaults and to not use them at all are two additional interpretations at the tactical level.

Summary

Finally, we can place the summarized findings from the inside-out analysis in the matrix of structural factors.

Table 17. *Summary of empirical results from inside-out analysis*

Structural factors	Result
Superior–subordinate molecule	Duality of command
Authority	Passive
Task specificity	Non-specific what/non-specific how
Resources	Varying between peacekeeping, multi-purpose and warfighting

Force commanders perceived **duality of command** throughout the time period, first in the perceived absence of the superiors and later as two more engaged superiors but with divided responsibilities. Although these circumstances were of some concern to some of them, most force commanders were generally rather comfortable with them. To some, the duality of command was even seen as a way to exercise discretion.

Authority was generally perceived as **passive** rather than active, which can be understood as a consequence of the division of authority in the dual chain of command. In the beginning, authoritative passiveness appears to be related to the superiors' relative absence, which in turn can be seen as an expression of the uncertainty associated with the startup of a new mission. Later on, discretion appears to have been a paradoxical result of increased activeness and competition on the part of both superiors, which may perhaps have been unintended but that still enforced the discretionary role of force commanders, a role that they generally seem to have appreciated.

Tasks were generally perceived as **non-specific**. Force commanders received tasks as conceptually broad (non-specific *what* at their operational level) and mandates as broad (non-specific *how*), which left ample room for interpretation and choice, not only regarding their force's mission and concept of operations but also regarding the principal's mission. Force com-

manders' reactions to these circumstances varied from demanding clearer strategy and mission statements to interpreting the strategy and mission by themselves.

Force commanders either do not reflect much upon the implications of allocated resources, or are somewhat reluctant to do so. Yet, those who do clearly indicate that the composition of the force, both regarding organizational design and its material and human resources, imply both a certain mission and certain concepts of operations. However, these implications are interpreted very individually, **ranging from peacekeeping to multipurpose or warfighting**, and handled rather differently among force commanders. While some embrace the implied use of a particular force's structure, others acknowledge it but reject it, based on individual arguments about the mission and the utility of the allocated resources.

Taken together these findings suggest that **force commanders have perceived structural factors similarly in some cases and differently in others**. They also show that **force commanders have experienced their discretion in several different ways**. The duality of command in combination with generally passive authority granted them relative autonomy vis-à-vis their superiors and increased their own discretion. Also, their unique standing as battle-space owners of four provinces granted them unique competence and responsibility that weighed heavily in negotiations with both national and multinational superiors. In this capacity they enjoyed a particular respect (for lack of a better word) that was seldom questioned or challenged. In combination with the multinational practice of generating operational initiatives at the subordinate level for approval at the superior level – a practice where framing is a key factor of success – force commanders enjoyed a position of significant discretion, although not all of them are comfortable putting it in such terms. This discretion was, however, delimited by the superior's power to reward acceptable suggestions through allocation of resources.

In this setting, non-specific tasks added to their discretion to interpret and formulate not only their force's mission and concept of operations but also the overarching principal's mission. Even though many force commanders describe the mission as being quite clear and specific, for example "to support" and to conduct "counterinsurgency operations," at their operational level these concepts must be considered as non-specific given their conceptual ambiguity. And the variance of force commanders' interpretations and implementations of such seemingly specific tasks supports this claim. Thus, the Swedish force's operational activities were able to vary – or not – with every six-month rotation.

Furthermore, to the extent that the design of the force itself implied a particular mission interpretation and concept of operations, force commanders were free to determine that as well. The most salient example is the time period between 2011 and 2012 when the size of the force peaked with four

rifle companies, a force structure that was seen as a tool for conducting mechanized warfare by one force commander, as a tool for conducting ranger operations by another and a tool for supporting Afghan patrols by a third. The last observation indicates that individual factors such as professional background appear to play a part in their perception and interpretation of structural factors.

Chapter 8 – Summary, conclusions and discussion

> You know, when I think about it, and about what you are writing about, it hits me that we had complete freedom of action down there. No one knew what we were doing and no one could have checked up on us even if they wanted to. We could do whatever we wanted.
>
> Swedish force commander in Afghanistan

Introduction

In the beginning of this thesis I formulated the following main research question to drive the study:

> What discretion have Swedish force commanders had in turning top-down direction into action on the ground in Afghanistan?

I also formulated three aims for the thesis: to further our understanding of the military and military commanders as policy implementers, to analyze the Swedish force in the Afghanistan campaign in order to further our understanding of Sweden's military engagement in Afghanistan, and to theoretically develop the concept of discretion in order to facilitate such an analysis.

The purpose of this last chapter is threefold: to summarize the empirical results and answer the research question, to discuss the contributions that have been made and the implications of the results, and to point out paths for future research.

The discretion of Swedish force commanders in Afghanistan

The empirical analysis of this thesis departed from an analytical schema of four structural factors that theoretically shape discretion and commenced in three steps. It began by sketching a horizon of expectations based on previous research and professional norms. It then continued with an outside-in analysis of official documents and complementary data, and concluded with

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an inside-out analysis of force commanders' perceptions and experiences. The results have been compiled in the following matrix:

Table 18. *Summary of empirical results*

Structural factors	Expectations	The outside-in perspective	The inside-out perspective
Superior–subordinate molecule	Unity of command	Duality of command	Duality of command
Authority	Active	Passive	Passive
Task specificity	Specific what/non-specific how	Non-specific what/non-specific how	Non-specific what/non-specific how
Resources	Peacekeeping	Shifting from peacekeeping to multipurpose	Varying between peacekeeping, multipurpose and warfighting

Summary of empirical results

As a first look at the matrix reveals, the outcome from the inside-out analysis correlates better with the outside-in analysis than with the expectations. This enforces the conclusions from the outside-in analysis that the deduced and observed influence of the structural factors deviates from the expectations and illustrates that force commanders perceive structural factors in a manner that creates discretion beyond the expected.

The results from the inside-out analysis also display internal variance with regard to implications of allocated resources which on the one hand can be expected since they represent fourteen individual experiences while the outside-in analysis represents only one analytical perspective (the analyst's), but also, and more importantly, demonstrates that force commanders have had freedom to interpret and choose *differently* within the structural realms suggested by the outside-in analysis, which in turn is an indicator for discretion.

First, the duality of command that the outside-in analysis revealed is perceived as such by all force commanders. This is unsurprising given the result from the outside-in analysis of the *de facto* arrangement with two chains of command. Force commanders generally appear comfortable with this circumstance.

Second, although force commanders perceive authority somewhat differently they generally perceive it as passive rather than active. Given the relative stability in authority that the outside-in analysis showed, with only a few and slow transformations, this, together with the force commanders' testimony, suggests that force commanders hold various presuppositions towards

authority in multinational operations and that their presuppositions affect their attitudes. Force commanders are also generally comfortable with the perceived passive authority, which may be understood as an expression of their shared and pronounced culture of *Auftragstaktik* which has prepared them to operate in a command vacuum if required.

Third, force commanders generally perceive tasks as non-specific regarding both the what and the how. Some have characterized the mission as specific but, as I have argued, these specific mission statements belong at a higher level of command and thus at a higher level of abstraction. Force commanders are generally comfortable with this circumstance as well (with the exception of some force commanders' frustration over the non-specific what), which may also be understood as an expression of their shared culture of *Auftragstaktik*. Only in a few cases do force commanders ask for more specificity and, interestingly, more often regarding overarching strategy (what) than concrete tasks at their own level (how), which suggests that they seek top-down guidance for their own operationalization at the tactical level. The broad mandate that they are given, as well as the multinational practice of bottom-up operational proposals, is generally seen as unproblematic and even necessary by several force commanders. But while this circumstance apparently grants them considerable discretion, far from all force commanders are willing to draw that conclusion, which may also be seen as an expression of their professional culture where *Auftragstaktik* in *combination with* clear and unambiguous top-down tasking is seen as the ideal. As it appears, force commanders generally appear comfortable with discretion but uncomfortable with the implications of it.

And fourth, force commanders' interpretation of the allocated resources does not necessarily correlate with the expectations and the outside-in analysis. To the extent that force commanders dwell on this issue, they interpret the inherent meaning of the force structure in varying ways, possibly also as a result of their presuppositions of the mission, ranging between peacekeeping, multipurpose and even warfighting. More frequently, force commanders view the force structure and its equipment as inadequate for their own interpretation of the mission, a circumstance that has led to individual initiatives, frequent reshufflings and, arguably, bottom-up influence on the force-generation process at the national level. The analysis also suggests that professional background plays an important role in force commanders' perception of allocated resources. Thus, the results from both the outside-in and inside-out analyses deviate from the horizon of expectations, i.e. structural factors have a different influence on force commanders' perceptions than was expected.

In summary, the analysis of how structural factors in the command chain influence force commanders with an outside-in perspective is close to the *opposite* of what we could expect based on previous research and professional norms. This is of course a significant result that challenges common

existing knowledge and, I would argue, common wisdom. An implication of this is that our expectations ought to be more in line with the results of the outside-in analysis than the ideal horizon of expectations that I sketched at the onset.

Furthermore, the inside-out analysis corresponds almost completely to the results of the outside-in analysis. The most significant difference is that the inside-out analysis yields longitudinal variation between cases which indicates effects from factors at the individual that I did not take into account in the analytical schema, such as professional background, previous experiences and perhaps personality traits. This calls for research that looks closer at the force commanders as individuals, which would arguably further our understanding of them as decision makers in the policy process[122].

In conclusion then, these two analyses work together to show that our understanding of military officers' role in the policy implementation process has had blind spots that to some extent has been filled here but that arguably require extensive further research.

Assessing force commanders' discretion

I concluded each analytical chapter by assessing discretion from each perspective. To proceed, we can now summarize and compare the results side by side.

Table 19. *Conclusion*

Expected	Outside-in	Inside-out
(Bounded) Discretion	Discretion	Discretion

As concluded, force commanders were expected to have bounded discretion. Military professional norms and practices stipulate a striving for unity of command, which facilitates strong authority. However, military professional norms also stipulate mission command or *Auftragstaktik*, which entails management by goals that leaves room for force commanders to design or choose the ways for accomplishing those goals. Furthermore, post-Cold War experiences of the Swedish military suggest allocation of resources that imply robust peace keeping but not warfighting. In conclusion, force commanders could be expected to have discretion to choose method within adequately defined goals and set boundaries.

The outside-in analysis revealed divergences from these expectations, suggesting greater discretion for force commanders. The arrangement of two parallel chains of command and its associated mechanism of transfer of (op-

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[122] This could be readily achieved by adopting military officers at this organizational level into the field of political psychology for example.

erational) authority pacified each superior's authority by division. Further-
more, low task specificity on behalf of both superiors (and above) refers
operative, and arguably even strategic, issues to force commanders at the
tactical level. Also, the change in allocated resources over time indicates a
form of escalation that can be understood in different ways. Thus, structural
factors have interacted to create a setting where force commanders have
been granted, or even imputed, discretion to interpret their mission – at sev-
eral levels – and shape their concept of operations.

Finally, the inside-out analysis reinforced the outside-in analysis' sugges-
tion of greater discretion than expected. The duality of command revealed in
the outside-in analysis was clearly perceived by force commanders. Early
on, their two superiors were perceived as absent or indifferent, creating a
sense of abandonment in the field. Later on, their superiors became more
involved, which created a situation where force commanders came to hold
the balance of power. Also, tasks were generally perceived as non-specific
during the time period. Force commanders generally experienced great free-
dom to interpret both their force's mission (what) and concept of operations
(how), and they were also challenged to interpret the principal's mission,
albeit with varying degree of engagement. Finally, the implications of allo-
cated resources varied among them in a fashion that does not correlate with
the evolution of the force structure. Force commanders were thus free to use
their force and its resources in ways that fit their individual mission under-
standing. In summary then, force commanders generally perceived consider-
able discretion not only regarding matters that fall within their domain under
normal *Auftragstaktik* but also regarding matters that transcend their respon-
sibility such as interpreting and formulating the principal's as well as their
force's mission.

The conclusion from this juxtaposition of the expectations and the results
from the outside-in and the inside-out analyses is that force commanders'
discretion was greater than expected and that it also, to a large extent, per-
tained to decisions above their own level in the chain of command.

Answering the research question

In order to answer the research question, I have assumed that discretion is an
effect of structural induction and individual perception, and the analytical
schema has reflected that assumption. With this approach, I hoped to be able
to provide a broader answer to the question of "what" discretion force com-
manders had rather than merely giving a quantitative estimate.

The short answer to the research question, then, is that the structural set-
ting of the force commanders *and* their perception of that structural setting
created discretion for them to interpret the principal's mission, to interpret
and frame their force's mission, and to shape their own force's concept of
operations. Their discretion, then, can be seen as a product of certain struc-

tural conditions *and* their perception of those conditions, a statement that can be elaborated on based on the empirical findings.

With an outside-in perspective, the factors created discretion in several ways. The multinational command and control arrangement created a duality of command that pacified the authority of the respective superiors. Their tasking vis-à-vis their subordinates, as well as their principal's mission statements, ranged from indifferent to vague and broad (non-specific what), and, in combination with the allocation of a multi-capable set of resources, rendered multiple interpretations and understandings possible. This created a freedom, or optional space, for the subordinates to shape their mission and their concept of operations to an extent that is not expected. However, force commanders discretion was not unlimited. Physical delimitations such as the amount of available resources vis-à-vis the size of their allocated area of operations, as well as superior's power to stimulate certain operational proposals by controlling pooled resources, all set limits for force commanders' discretion. Nevertheless, structurally induced discretion exceeded the expectations.

From the individual perspective of the force commanders, perceptions of structural factors also created discretion in several ways. The perception of two somewhat indifferent and relatively weak superiors, in combination with non-specific mission and a multi-capable set of available resources, generally created a considerable sense of discretion among force commanders. Experiences ranged from a sense of freedom to shape their own force's concept of operations, similar but more extensive than what they are used to in the national context of *Auftragstaktik*, to choosing and/or formulating their force's mission, and even to interpreting and formulating the overarching principal's mission. Within this discretional space, force commanders made different interpretations and choices that cannot only be accounted for by the gradual evolution of the campaign. Thus, while all force commanders had similar discretion from an outside-in perspective, they experienced and used it differently.

And again, their perception was not that of unlimited discretion. The asymmetric relationship between their allocated resources and the vastness of their mission, not least suggested by the extensive geographical area of responsibility, circumscribed their available courses of action. Also, professional military norms and international military discourse pointed out several and certain appropriate courses of actions (as well as eliminated inappropriate ones), that were regarded differently depending on professional background and individual attitude. Nevertheless, the individually perceived discretion in general exceeded the expectations as well as experiences from regular, military operations in a national context.

Military commanders as policy implementers

At the onset, I claimed that local actors in war, and military actors in particular, traditionally have lacked close scholarly attention. Undoubtedly, the military has been of great interest to historians, journalists and social scientists, but until recently, as a political entity, it has largely been regarded as a black box whose inner qualities have been disregarded in trying to understand its behavior. This attitude has limited our understanding of military organizations, units and members as political entities, and my argument was that we need to study the military from the inside to a greater extent to further that understanding.

Even though this study is limited to a few cases within one particular context, it constitutes a substantial contribution in that regard. By analyzing both the structure that military agents are situated in, as well as their perception of that situation, I have described how discretion occurs in the military operational context of a multinational operation. The result is a thick description of the role of force commanders as political decision-makers in a complex political and military context, and a novel insight into the military street-level bureaucracy.

In the introduction I departed from an apparent implementation gap sprung from the observed difference between political discourse and military practice in the Afghanistan campaign. Within this context I have chosen to study the discretion of force commanders, which is only one possible part of such a gap but arguably a very central one. As the analysis suggests, vague policy formulation and direction is another. In this section, where I intend to point out a few implications of force commander discretion, I also wish to address the role of policy formulation in the context of an implementation gap. And in order to do so I start by conceptually separating these two potential implementation issues.

The first is the "problem" of discretion. As mentioned, discretion can be seen as both positive and negative. One stance in the implementation literature regards discretion as a problem that needs to be curtailed in order to avoid implementation deficits. Another stance is that discretion is a necessary evil that facilitates policy output under vague top-down direction. In the case at hand, one could argue that force commander's discretion is a problem if it leads to unwanted variation in policy output, i.e. varying or even stochastic force conduct. However, one could also argue that it is necessary, given the political uncertainty and complexity (manifested in vague and ambiguous mission formulation and tasking), and that force commanders' discretion makes *any* policy output possible.

The second problem is the vague top-down direction in itself, i.e. the lack of a clear political will (besides participating) and a sound and clearly formulated idea in the shape of a policy and/or strategy that addresses a given

problem associated with that will, an issue highlighted by the special investigator's report (Regeringen 2017, 11). Now, one could argue that political direction in this context is always weak (which does not mean that political *will* has to be). Although this is an empirical question to some extent, the fact remains that political vagueness regarding the desired strategic and street-level policy outcomes passes that problem along down the policy chain. Thus, it may be more adequate to speak of an *implementation displacement* rather than an implementation gap.

The reason for separating these two problems is that they are not necessarily connected. Discretion can occur without vague top-down direction. Indeed, increased or too much top-down direction can lead to increased discretion (Lipsky, 2010, 19). Yet, the vague top-down direction is arguably a most relevant issue in regard to an implementation gap. Thus, in the following I intend to raise several implications that relate to discretion, vague policy formulation and direction, or both.

Implementation issues

The first and perhaps most obvious question that arises from the results is how policy is implemented in an implementation chain that displays gaps, or, rather, *what* policy is implemented under such conditions. In a regular military scenario, where the military is tasked with regular military missions that address clear political goals such as territorial integrity or freedom of movement at sea, ambiguity is limited due to doctrinal specificity, an optimized and common nomenclature, and strategic defense planning, and standardized military operations are executed to meet such defined ends. Regardless of whether the operations are successful or not, they are at least stringently traceable to policy and policy goals.

In the case at hand, circumstances are different, due to the lack of doctrinal specificity, an optimized and common nomenclature, and clear strategic planning. Thus, if issued tasks and principal's mission are non-specific, and if the implementers have discretion to interpret them and implement them on an individual basis, then the output, and, by implication the outcome, is unpredictable. Policy will then be formulated and implemented at the tactical level and have limited traceability to policy at the strategic level.

In turn, this separation of (regular) policy-makers and policy-making generates other questions. One is the question of the political utility of force and military effectiveness. National military assets are deployed to achieve national or/and international political objectives, and military effectiveness can be defined as the military´s ability to achieve the objectives assigned to them (Nielsen, 2002, 76). But if policy and objective are both formulated and implemented at the tactical level, then the political utility of the deployment of force, and thus the military effectiveness, becomes questionable. Let us assume for the sake of argument that the main national political goal is to par-

ticipate in a multinational operation in order to prove the nation's willingness and capability in the international arena for the purpose of gaining political influence, leverage and prestige internationally. It then matters little what the deployed force actually does and achieves besides being in place. This could be considered a doubtful utilization of a nation's military resources. One could for example raise the argument that the deployment of armed military units, which can lead to own as well as collateral losses and consume considerable amounts of tax revenue, should only be done for purely instrumental purposes, i.e. to solve a problem that requires armed force. Such a position would reject the idea of deploying armed force for other political reasons, claiming low political effectiveness of the use of force. It also raises the question of the rather uncomfortable morality of sending troops in harm's way under pretenses other than achieving effects on the ground, an issue that I will refer to discussion outside the scope of this thesis.

Related to this is the question of military efficiency. With widespread discretion at the level of force commanders, a multinational force will experience difficulties in achieving so-called unity of effort. Unity of effort is a core military value, and lack of unity of effort is seen as a cause of mission failure. According to military doctrine, in regular military operations unity of effort is achieved through good command, but in interagency and multinational operations where unity of command may be challenging, other forms of coordination of participants, for example cooperation, may be required to achieve unity of effort and mission success (JCS, 2013b, xv, JCS, 2013c, I-3, II-6). Simply meaning that all participants in an operation should work towards the same goal, it may seem to be an almost trivial tenet of military doctrine. Still, it has been a major issue in the Afghanistan campaign (Lamb and Cinnamond, 2009, Partlow, 2010). And as many members of the Swedish force have described during the course of this study, forces from different participating countries, e.g. Sweden, Norway, Hungary and Germany, operating under the same regional command, have approached both the PRT concept and the counterinsurgency concept in many different ways, leading to significant variation in operational conduct in the different provinces. The results of this study have shown significant discretion on the part of Swedish force commanders in Afghanistan. It remains an empirical question whether force commanders from other countries have similar or perhaps different discretion. Yet it does not seem improbable that force-commander discretion exists in units from other nations as well[123], an assumption that problematizes ISAF's prospects to solve the perceived problem as well as the prospects of achieving military effectiveness and efficiency in multinational operations in general.

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[123] See my arguments on generalizability between force commanders from different countries in chapter 4

Trust in commanders in the field

The observed implementation displacement coincides with the observed appointment of highly qualified commanders at the bureaucratic street level. A colonel can be considered overqualified for the command of a battalion sized unit in the field, but the complexity and novelty of the apparent challenge on the ground, as well as other responsibilities as the senior Swedish military representative in Afghanistan, justifies this practice. It also signifies a great trust in the colonels, which appears warranted since they appear capable of handling the complex challenge. However, it also reveals a belief in a professional uniformity of the officer corps that the findings of this study put into question.

Evidently, colonels are not cast in the same mold, and they do not think alike in all aspects. They have different experiences and hold different attitudes and beliefs and in the absence of clear direction they will act on their attitudes and beliefs to fill in the blanks, so to speak, possibly leading to different outcomes. Given this insight, it does not seem realistic to expect implementation consistency by passing the implementation buck to the force commanders regardless of how qualified they are in managing complexity. Such consistency would arguably require both additional training (in state building and counterinsurgency operations for instance) and more distinct top-down direction, particularly regarding what the expected policy outcomes are.

The implications of this apparent trust in force commanders' ability to sort out the complexities is perhaps most crucial during the so called start-up phase. It is evident that the mission understanding of the first force commander and his immediate successors, rather than national or multinational strategic and operational planning, shaped the Swedish contribution ISAF. In what can be described as a command vacuum, they exercised considerable discretion in interpreting the overarching mission and their force's mission and in shaping their concept of operations. Arguably, their choices laid the platform for subsequent developments by setting the stage and influencing their successors' understanding of the campaign.

A democratic deficit?

According to Meier and O'Toole "One of the most important and persisting challenges of modern government is how to reconcile the demands of democracy with the imperatives of bureaucracy." This challenge is made difficult due to the "uneasy relationship" between bureaucracy and democracy. On the one hand, democracy demands insight and popular control over bureaucracy. This is facilitated by the power vested in democratic rule and the legitimacy granted to it through elections, but obstructed by a lack of competence. And on the other hand, bureaucracy demands autonomy. This is facili-

tated by competence, efficiency and the use of judgement but obstructed by the undemocratic character of bureaucratic rule (Meier and O'Toole, 2006, 1-2).

Two main views offer solutions to this dilemma. The top-down view postulates that elected principals must ensure democracy through top-down control that fulfills the population's right to insight and control. The bottom-up view, on the other hand, postulates more direct popular oversight, either by citizen oversight institutions (Ibid., 9-10) or, it can be assumed, other institutions, such as an active, inquisitive and independent journalistic corps for example.

In this case, neither solution seems to be in place. On the contrary, the elected principals appear somewhat indifferent to the practices of the military and reluctant to exercise such control, at the same time as the journalistic corps and the citizenry display a similar indifference or perhaps ignorance. Instead, military bureaucracy is more or less left on its own to design the implementation as well as to formulate the policy that it is supposed to implement. It can be argued that this state of affairs suggests that the "important and persisting" reconciliation of the demands of democracy and the imperatives of the bureaucracy is not taking place, thus contributing to a democratic deficit.

What is the solution to this dilemma? From the view of the political level, one is to simply let it be. It may not be the business of politicians to design military solutions to political problem. But if political will remains vague, the military bureaucracy must become more capable of interpreting and reformulating that will and must have a viable method for developing military solutions to it. This solution changes but does not correct the implementation displacement and also increases the military bureaucracy's power vis-à-vis its political principal. It also raises issues of political accountability that may be irreconcilable with democratic ideals of how to use military force.

The opposite solution would be to raise the political principals' ability to formulate clearer policies that the military bureaucracy can transform into viable and acceptable military solutions. This would balance the responsibilities of the parties involved and engage the problem of implementation displacement. However, it also places greater responsibility on the political level, a shift that does not seem to have been desirable. It remains to be seen whether the special investigator's report will change that.

Possible explanations

Although this thesis is explicitly descriptive, the results contain some inevitable observations that deserve a brief discussion in explanatory terms. One is that discretion as a resultant of individual perception of structural factors also seems to be related to individual factors such as background and specialization. There appears to be a correlation between the professional back-

ground and corps affiliation of force commanders and the way they interpret the mission and choose their concept of operations, regardless of the implications of structural factors. The most distinct examples in this study are the commanders of FS20 and FS22 who both belonged to a group of commanders that decided to co-ordinate their efforts in order to achieve continuity between rotations in 2011 and 2012 but who still perceived or interpreted the mission along the lines of their corps affiliations: armor and ranger, respectively. Additional interviews with the company commanders of the force, which admittedly fall outside the scope of this study but that amplify this point, are even more distinct in this regard.

Miles' Law says: Where you stand depends on where you sit. This famous aphorism captures a concept "probably as old as Plato":

> when a person changes positions organizationally, he or she changes both perspective and responsibility and for both reasons changes his or her position on issues (Miles Jr, 1978, 399, 401).

According to this theory, force commanders should shake off their different corps identities, assume the same position as force commander and adopt the perspectives that it entails. Yet, this does not always seem to be the case. However, beyond this "first lesson" of Miles' Law, there is a second "less well understood significance to this principle of human behavior" which postulates that:

> No person can totally rise above his or her institutional perspectives and responsibilities by being temporarily detached from an organizational position and being asked to perform as a member of a task force that is expected to exhibit the most statesmanlike conduct of which it is capable, looking only at the long-range public good (Ibid., 401).

This thesis, perhaps better aphorized as 'where you stand is where you just got up from,' sheds brighter light on the observed correlation. If the position of force commander is seen as a temporary detachment from the colonels' regular positions as commanders of armor, ranger or infantry regiments back home in Sweden, then they can in fact be expected to bring those regular perspectives and responsibilities with them to Afghanistan.

That military officers of different branches hold different perspectives about warfare is not surprising. Making a career as an armor officer is, in many respects, something completely different than making a career as a ranger officer, at least up to a point where the professional training elevates from tactical and practical matters, such as how you behave on the battlefield. Yet, some of these officers arguably still frame the situation and the mission according to learned belief systems. Recent research actually points this out. According to Gustafson, two opposing notions separate Swedish officers' views on tactics, where one group focuses on larger, combat-

oriented military units with traditional military tasks and kinetic effects,[124] while the other group focuses on smaller, more intelligence-oriented and dispersed units using more "civilian" tasks that cause "soft" effects. These notions correlate to factors such as military background, experience of multinational operations and civilian education (Gustafson, 2014, i, 110). Hence, that a range of officers with very varying backgrounds, who are sent to do essentially the same job as their predecessors, understand the job differently can perhaps be expected. However, some force commanders seem to have made a considerable effort to detach themselves from their regular contexts and to go all-in, so to speak, by applying themselves fully to the perspectives of the multinational force. The commanders of FS19 and FS21 are two salient examples in this respect, even if they went about it in diametrically different ways. Thus, the second lesson of Miles' Law can also be questioned.

Two main conclusions can be drawn here. First, the force commanders were free to bring their backgrounds to bear in deciding what the job was about, i.e. they had discretion from a structural perspective. However, some of them either did not perceive this freedom or chose to ignore it, the latter being an additional indication of discretion. Second, the military profession does not seem to be as homogenous as we might think. The civil–military relations literature tacitly assumes that profession and professionalism will handle any policy vagueness or ambiguity that professional autonomy implies. In the contract between the political and the military, the military is intentionally professionalized so that the political principal can keep its hands of military matters, and vice versa (e.g. Huntington, 1957, 83). Now, if the profession is *not* developed to a point where vague policy direction will lead to predicable or at least consistent military behavior, implementation becomes non-deterministic. If it is of little political importance what the military actually does on the ground, this is not a problem. But from a perspective of military effectiveness (and indeed from the perspective of the Afghan population) it is, since unity of effort becomes unattainable and the prospects of solving any identified problems, e.g. a conflict, become limited. Thus, if the structural factors of the military allow for such stochastic policy output, professionalism is undermined and the civil–military contract is jeopardized.

One does not have to make such a lengthy argument to arrive at the other observation, perhaps best formulated as a question: why does not the Swedish government steer its military?

As the analysis of political steering documents of this study has elucidated, the almost sweeping formulations of policy regarding the military participation in the Afghanistan campaign is neither concealed nor obscured and

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[124] A military term for denoting effects that are caused by kinetic weapon systems such as firearms and explosives.

can therefore be no mystery to the parties involved. Government oversight, bureaucratic reporting, and recently the special investigation, have made this evident to anyone who seeks such insight. Clear and logically founded instrumental purpose of the use of military force appears largely absent from political discourse, a state of affairs that seems to escape afterthought and critical scrutiny. Most recently, when Swedish politicians began to negotiate a response to France's request for help after the Paris shootings in November of 2015, they discussed the matter in terms of where Swedish troops were already deployed, what Sweden "does best," and what type of assistance France had requested. The issues of what problem was to be solved and how it was to be solved were largely absent in these discussions. Or put in other terms: solutions appeared to be more central than the problems they were supposed to solve and how they were expected to solve them. The political goal was simply described as "to contribute to peace and show solidarity with France" (Rapport, 2015). To choose between fighter jets and strategic airlift capacity based on such premises is no trivial task. Naturally, I am exaggerating somewhat. Those two options were probably on the list of French requirements, but one could argue that deploying armed force abroad still requires reasoned and logical deliberation within the contributing nation.

Such observations suggest a policy of participation that addresses purely political goals, e.g. increasing Sweden's prestige and leverage in international organizations, rather than instrumental goals, e.g. defeating the Afghan insurgency or degrading or eliminating the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant as a way to promote world peace and security. Under such direction, implementation – including choosing appropriate military means and formulating an appropriate mission – becomes difficult, and also largely leaves such considerations and deliberations to the implementers.

Several tentative explanations can be brought forth here. One is that policy is formulated in sweeping terms to facilitate multi-partisan agreement. This argument is put forward by Norén and Ångström, who claim that the Swedish political discourse on the Afghanistan campaign displays a "catch-all narrative" that is the result of a consensus-seeking political culture (Noréen and Ångström, 2015). Another is that the policy-makers entrust the instrumental formulation of policy and strategy to an international or multinational body, which is indeed suggested by the analysis in this study and which the transfer-of-authority regime is a manifestation of. However, as has also been shown here, transfer of authority does not seem to result in the reception of well-defined problems and casually viable policies and strategies from the multinational organization. And finally, a political hands-off culture may be the cause of this political behavior. One could envision a historically and culturally rooted tradition among Swedish politicians not to intellectually engage matters of international security in open debate, at least not in terms of cause and effect, either due to a belief that it does not belong

there (but rather in closed circuits) or due to a sense of inadequacy that calls for referral to subject-matter experts.

Regardless of what the best explanation is, the chosen path entails political risk. Also, it is not the only possible path. First, by referring policy formulation and implementation strategizing down the implementation chain, the political leadership loses control and submits itself to political vulnerability. A state that does not know what its military does and cannot foresee the effects of its actions exercises weak governance. Also, in theory, the state may find itself in situations where it has to assume responsibility for things it has been unaware of. In the short-term perspective, so-called deniability may save the state in single situations, but, in a longer-term perspective, repeated deniability, which per definition entails unawareness, may undermine the state's legitimacy. A government oversight commission that investigates unacceptable military behavior in a foreign country may not only create military scapegoats but also raise issues of political accountability. Therefore, the risks associated with extensive and unrealistic political trust in that the military will figure out what to do with a chosen military solution (e.g. fighter jets) may be dangerous.

Second, this pattern of governance is not the only option. Having a clear idea about what the purposes of a military deployment are, is both politically and militarily feasible. As several force commanders have mentioned during the interviews, Sweden – suggesting both the political and military leadership – could and should have formulated and pursued a strategic idea about the contribution in the same way as many other participating countries had done. This suggests that Swedish force commanders do not claim the prerogative to elucidate or formulate the principal's mission. Thus the conditions for voicing a political goal and perhaps even a suggested military strategy appear to be in place. Yet, the Swedish political leadership appears reluctant to do so.

Furthermore, several other nations exercise considerable control over their military deployments. Admittedly, smaller states may not have the same elbow room as larger states to shape policy in multinational operations. Undoubtedly, participants such as the United States and the United Kingdom exercise greater influence over policy and strategy in multinational operations. However, smaller states such as Denmark and the Netherlands have pursued particular strategies in Afghanistan which have differed from that of other small states such as Sweden and Norway, a variation which can be seen as a manifestation of different strategic cultures (Angstrom and Honig, 2012). Also, several respondents in this study have argued that forces from other contributing countries within Regional Command North, notably Germany, have been strictly controlled by their national government which, according to them, has hindered the propagation of a common ISAF strategy (cf. Noetzel 2010).

Also, this study has shown that a nation – in this case represented by its force commanders – *can* exercise significant influence on the operations in the assigned area. The thing is that in this case, this is done by each consecutive colonel and not the political-military decision-makers in Sweden.

As mentioned several times in this thesis, a Government appointed special investigator issued a report on Sweden's collective engagement in Afghanistan between 2002 and 2014, just as this project was finalized. Even if the special investigation does not probe the military engagement in detail, it does provide significant and important context for the findings of this study.

The foreword of what is now known as the *Afghanistan investigation* quite bluntly summarizes its findings in two paragraphs:

> Officially, both the international and the Swedish engagements were described as collective, but in neither case can it be said to have been characterized by the coordination and consensus that the word collective implies.

and

> Overarching objectives resided in the UN Security Council resolutions and the documents from the international Afghanistan conferences but were seldom concretized at the operational and tactical levels (Regeringskansliet 2017, 11)

The focus of the special investigation has been the political level regarding goals, process and outcome. Of particular relevance to this study is that the investigation focuses more on intragovernmental friction and top-down direction in so called stove pipes, than on the actual content of that top-down direction. It would have been useful if the investigation had offered some insight into why the political level did not engage in a more thorough analysis of the problem, formulate achievable and measurable goals, and develop a more coherent strategy for applying its diplomatic, humanitarian and military means to achieve those goals. Given this angle it is not surprising that the investigation focused on the military outcome rather than the military process (Ibid., 11, 187) and that it therefore does not offer an inside-out perspective of the military engagement. In light of this, it is my hope that this thesis can complement the special investigation by adding to a greater understanding of how the military handled the uncoordinated control and unconcretized goals that it identified.

The investigation also found that the implementation of the ambiguous PRT concept was left to each nation and, in reality, to each force commander. Existing guidelines for PRTs were based on an assumed causal relationship between security and development, synergies of civil-military cooperation, and the theoretical foundations of the COIN-concept (Regeringskansliet 2017, 63, 68). This supports my finding that force commanders have had

discretion to interpreted both the PRT-concept and the COIN-concept and that they have done it in sometimes different ways.

The recommendations of the special investigator further corroborate the findings of weak top-down direction. For the future use of Swedish military force in complex multinational operations, the investigation stresses the need for an early, overarching strategy for the collective engagement including objectives, timelines, and a clear division of work and responsibility. It also suggests longer deployment periods to achieve continuity over time and that that individual participants are well aware of the overarching and collective Swedish strategy (Ibid. 30-31).

In summary, besides contributing with an analysis of the political circumstances, an overarching description of Sweden's compound albeit uncoordinated effort in Afghanistan as well as an important assessment of the implementation outcome, it supports my findings regarding weak political top-down direction.

Future research

These questions and issues suggest several avenues for further research. First, comparison with cases from other countries is warranted, and the case of the Afghanistan campaign provides several opportunities. A first step would be to compare cases within the same regional command in ISAF. During the period chosen here, several other countries manned PRTs under the German leadership in regional Command North, including Norway, Hungary and Germany itself, a set of cases that, arguably, not only display significant differences, and similarities, regarding national factors such as political system and strategic culture, but also variations regarding the relationship between the force commander and the multinational commander (i.e. German/German versus German/Non-German). Such efforts could then be extended to other regional commands, for example the U.S.-led Regional Command East, which contained thirteen rather than five PRTs from the U.S., Poland, Turkey, Czech Republic and New Zealand, or the Italian-led Regional Command West with four PRTs from Spain, the U.S., Lithuania and Italy. Such comparative studies could provide insight into variance in force commander discretion as well as variations in the character of the national and multinational chains of command. It could also, I strongly suspect, illuminate the difficulties of designing, commanding and conducting multinational operations with relevant effect and efficiency.

Second, there are questions about what happens at the decision making levels above the force commanders. Here, the national chain of command is somewhat of an empirical blind spot. When asked, representatives of both the Government and the Armed Forces Headquarters (as well as fellow scholars!) describe the national chain of command in almost the same manner: an ideal linear decision making process, popularly called "the deploy-

ment snake[125]" where a chain of institutions make a series of decisions. However, the results of this study call for a critical questioning of that notion and a more rigorous investigation of the decision making processes at the strategic level. Research on countries' decisions about participation in military interventions exists (e.g. Edström and Gyllensporre, 2014) but more penetrating inside-out investigations of the involved instances are called for. Here, theory and methods developed in political psychology could prove fruitful, e.g. regarding small group decision making and bureaucratic politics.

With regards to the multinational chain of command, other questions can be asked to illuminate the implementation of international policy. As mentioned above, one issue is the potential significance of differences in nationality between decision makers and commanders in multinational forces. Another is a similarly critical scrutiny of the implementation of ideal, military decision making processes, i.e. how doctrinally dominating process models such as NATO's Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive (COP-D) is actually manifested in multinational operations.

Third, research on political thinking about the use of military force could help to illuminate why political decision makers involve themselves or not in the military's implementation of political decisions. The literature roughly differentiates between two political attitudes towards military matters – civilian interference in war making and benign neglect (e.g. Cohen, 2003) – and a deeper look into the underpinning world views of both attitudes could enhance our understanding of political decision making.

Similarly, and fourth, research on military thinking can be expanded to investigate its influence in policy implementation. Studies such as Gustafson's (Gustafson, 2014) reveal variations of tactical thinking within the officer corps and extended research could further our understanding of how such differences effect decision making and, thus, how it affects policy implementation.

Sweden's military participation in Afghanistan

The second aim of this thesis was to analyze the Swedish force in the Afghanistan campaign in a scientific and structured manner to add to accumulating knowledge about it. This has been achieved in two ways. First, I have compiled and analyzed a range of government documents in a way that has not been done before and drawn conclusions about their influence on force commanders in the field. And second, I have interviewed the whole population of Swedish force commanders in Afghanistan as well as several other respondents both within and outside the force, thereby generating unique

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[125] Insatsormen in Swedish

data about the beliefs and deliberations of a relatively neglected class of Swedish government bureaucrats. The results have been reported and discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

Earlier, I have called for extending the analysis of decision making to the levels above the force commanders. However, in order to further expand our knowledge about Sweden's military participation in Afghanistan a similar extension downwards is warranted. Indeed, my confusion back in 2009 over the disconnect between national political discourse in Sweden and military action on the ground in Afghanistan has not been cured by the insight in to the discretion of force commanders. Instead, increased insight into the inner workings of the rest of the force and its operational conduct in Afghanistan has raised new questions that I believe are equally important to address.

During the course of this investigation it has become evident that several other members of the Swedish force face similar challenges as force commanders do, and it can be assumed that they too hold and develop individual conceptions and beliefs that, reasonably, also come into play in decision making that is of critical importance to policy implementation.

A point in case is company commanders, and in particular the rifle-company commanders (see *Figure 8*) who in many ways can be seen as force commanders in their own regard. As commanders of the PRT's main maneuver unit, they direct the part of the force that actually implements the policies on the ground in their daily face-to-face with Afghan locals and officials. Although their structural setting is very different from that of the force commanders (they are not under the direct command of a national and multinational command, for instance) they too struggle with interpreting the mission and designing an appropriate concept of operations, and may experience a similar type of discretion in that regard. In several cases *they* are the ones who have had to ultimately determine what COIN is and how to "do" COIN in the field. Therefore, studying them and other classes of commanders may not only contribute to our accumulated knowledge about the Swedish force in Afghanistan but also provide bases for comparison between classes and thus facilitate further generalization and theory development, and applying a similar, combined outside-in and inside-out perspective with them in focus might, besides describing the role and policy implementation influence of the company commanders (middle managers?), also further contribute to our understanding of force commanders as superiors. And, of course, a more traditional street-level bureaucracy investigation of the work situation and discretion of Swedish soldiers and their interaction with the Afghan local population would arguably be a welcome complement to journalistic and anecdotal accounts. Presumably, their on-the-spot discretion is very different than the discretion of force commanders and arguably has a very different effect on policy implementation.

Discretion of street-level managers

The third aim of this thesis was to theoretically develop the concept of discretion and apply it in empirical analysis of Swedish force commanders. Departing from the notion that discretion can be best understood as an interplay between the outside-in influence from structural factors and the individual's inside-out perception of those factors and designing an analytical schema based on that notion I analyzed the discretion of force commanders with both perspectives. Of course, this selection can be scrutinized and reevaluated but in general I believe that both the dual perspective attempt and the selected factors have been relevant and useful given the rich empirical matter they produced during analysis. Nonetheless, other structural factors could be considered as future candidates. For example, the corps association and professional identity of force commanders (e.g. armor or ranger) have surfaced as a relevant influence of their perceptions. This finding suggests the need for another level of analytical abstraction than the types of cultural studies of the military that I discussed in chapter 2. Also, professional training and competence may be a candidate for structural factor. As one force commander implied, Swedish colonels have not been educated and trained for state-building and counterinsurgency operations. They have however been trained for other types of warfighting, which appears to have had an important influence on the perceptions of at least some of them.

Even though this first attempt can benefit from critical scrutiny and further development I believe that the approach of combining the holistic with the individualistic perspective is a step forward that holds promise. It constitutes a constructive advance that has proven productive in generating relevant empirical results. I would also argue that the analytical model is general enough to be applied to other cases than Swedish force commanders, both within the military domain and beyond.

Appendix 1

Interview schema

The start-off question was designed to get the respondent talking by telling a story:

> Can you describe why you went to Afghanistan, how you received your mission and how you reflected upon it?

This question had two purposes. The first was to get the respondent describe how he or she actually understood the mission, at any level of abstraction, and the second was to make them assess the quality of the mission in terms of appropriateness, clarity or vagueness etc. Some respondents asked what level of abstraction I was referring to, at which point I urged them to choose themselves. Some started talking about the overarching mission while others choose to talk about their particular unit's mission. This forced me to ask follow-up questions to cover all levels of abstraction. Other prepared follow-up questions meant to probe their answers where:

> How did you come to understand the mission?

> Who did you do this with?

> Is this how it usually works?

> Would others describe your mission in similar terms?

> How did you propagate the mission in your unit?

> Did you reassess this understanding during the time in theater?

These probing questions were meant to elaborate on the respondents' role as commanders and decision-makers and how they reflected and acted as such.

The next question addresses the concept of operations:

> How do you go about accomplishing that mission?

Here, I urged the respondents to focus on their respective level in the organization. To probe this issue, I had a number of prepared follow-up questions:

> How does one know what to do?

> How does it work/what is the mechanism that achieves the mission?

> How did you decide what to do?

> What influenced your choice of conduct?

> Did you change your way to operate during the time in theater?

> How would you characterize what you do?

> Would others characterize it in other words?

> Did you differ from other rotations/units?

I also had a so-called grand tour question, which could be used if the respondents found it hard to answer these questions:

> Please describe a typical operation that is meant to achieve the mission/a particular part of the mission.

The next question is meant to identify any differences in interpretation of the mission and differences in preferences regarding the concept of operations:

For the following two questions I showed the respondent a "black box" illustration, a drawing of their unit (drawn as a square) placed in some operational context. The first question pertained to the expectations on the unit:

> If you look at your unit as a black box, from the outside, one could imagine demands and expectations coming from many different directions. In you experience, what type of demands did others place on your unit?

Here I urged them to reflect with a 360-degree perspective, trying to identify actors above, below and to the side of them. I also followed up with the following question in order to make them characterize this potential pressure:

> How would you describe this pressure, if it can be called pressure, that is? Was it for example trivial, overwhelming or something else?

This question pertained to the type of pressure that is central in Lipsky's theory and leads to the development of coping mechanisms. In order to un-

derstand if and how pressure caused any reactions from the respondents, I asked the following follow-up questions:

> What did this pressure lead to?

> How did you cope with it?

The second question using the black-box illustration pertained to the issue of discretion, to the extent that it had not already surfaced in the earlier questions:

> Again looking at your unit as a box in a larger context, how would you describe your autonomy?

To follow up, I injected certain terms in the discussion for example directions/directives, liberties and independence.

The final question pertained to social relations within the force. Referring to Lipsky's research on the police, I compared the relationship between those units/individuals who worked primarily within the fortified camp and those units/individuals who worked primarily out in the field with the relationships between patrolling police officers and police managers working in the police station:

> How would you characterize the relationship between those whose role is primarily inside the camp and those whose work is primarily outside the camp?

The purpose of this question was to identify any tensions, grounded in difference in interest, which Lipsky identifies as a cause for discretion.

Finally, I asked a number of questions that where relevant at the beginning of the project but that eventually fell out. Even though they are not relevant, I declare them here for purposes of transparency:

> How would you characterize the relationship with the Afghans?

> Is this deployment an appropriate use of your type of military unit? Is this an appropriate way to use Swedish military forces?

> What is success for you and your unit? Will you/did you leave Afghanistan satisfied?

I concluded the interviews by asking the respondents if they had thought about something else that pertained to the issues we had discussed, disclos-

ing that I was particularly interested in any possible discretion on their part in determining the mission and deciding on a concept of operations. This gave them the opportunity qualify their answers and provide additional thoughts.

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