Leadership and Institutional Reform in Consensual Democracies: Dutch and Swedish Defence Organizations after the Cold War

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Abstract

In the last decade change and reform within stable institutions have been more and more associated with leadership. Whether leaders were the initiators of reform or the intervening variable, leadership had a positive connotation. In particular recent research on the relation between crisis and reform concentrates on the single powerful leader or on small leadership teams fostering major organizational changes or reforms in policy sectors. Empirical evidence, especially with regard to leadership in consensual democracies, shows however, that political, bureaucratic or military leaders tend to prevent or even frustrate reforming efforts. Analyzing the abolition of military conscription in the Netherlands in the early 1990s and the conscription issue in Sweden until 2001, this paper shows that there exists a thin line between reforming and conserving leadership, depending on the will of leaders and their ability to play the political structures.

Leadership and (non) reform

After the Cold War, one important institution, which had guaranteed the Western world the security it needed to develop in prosperity during the Cold War, faced growing problems: the armed forces. Practically overnight most of the Western European defence sectors, with their Cold War structures, became seemingly obsolete. The Cold War strategies were no longer suitable in the world of the 1990s, now that their basis, the antagonism of the two superpowers, had vanished. Large territorial armies with heavy equipment were especially subject to increasing criticism. Where they had once contributed to the success of the West as a necessary condition to territorial defence, they had now became obsolete and, above all, too expensive.

Change to armed forces is rather common, but the pace of change since 1989 had been extraordinary. Most armed forces in the Western world had faced serious downsizing. Moreover, change in the security environment and domestic pressure to adapt the armed forces
occurred simultaneously (Dandeker 1999:3). The policy output of most Western defence sectors just did not fit the demands. Almost all Western European countries made similar choices when it came to the restructuring of their armed forces: downsizing and the change from invasion forces to forces with crisis management capacities. Yet, we see differences in timing, pace and the way the forces were manned: conscription or all volunteer. These differences cannot be explained by looking solely at external or domestic pressure. I argue that we have to investigate how national political, bureaucratic, and military leaders fostered or prevented those changes.

Of particular interest is the choice of cases, i.e. Sweden and The Netherlands. Both countries are so called consensual democracies. Reforms, especially in combination with leadership, are considered a rather rare phenomenon in this kind of political system. Most of the research concerning reforms and leadership has been done in Westminster or presidential settings (Cortell & Peterson 1999, ‘t Hart 2000), where the structures are more favourable to powerful leadership. Before turning to the structural constraints for leadership in consensual democracies, some of the existing literature about leadership and reforms will be introduced.

The origins of reform

The stability of Western democracies and the incremental nature of their policy dynamics have been the subject of much research in Political Science and Public Administration. In recent years, more attention has been paid to the notion of change of and within state institutions. A key question that has emerged is how to explain the occurrence of reform within seemingly stable institutions or sectors. Many existing explanatory tools, i.e. (neo-) institutional theories, fall short in explaining those changes, since they tend to focus on explaining continuity (Thelen & Steinmo 1994).

An important explanation for non-incremental change in otherwise deeply institutionalized policy domains is the so-called crisis-reform thesis. In this explanation, institutions, which are normally in stable equilibrium, are destabilized by crisis and face critical junctures that may open up strategic choice opportunities that otherwise are foreclosed. Krasner (1984) calls this ‘punctuated equilibria.’ Translated to the world of governance, this suggests that changes from outside the institution can be, among other things, electoral changes, government cutbacks, technological changes or a changing balance of power (Keeler 1993, Cortell &

\footnote{See for difficulties and differences in welfare state reforms Kuipers 2004.}
Peterson 1999). It is through these critical episodes in an institution’s life that non-incremental change can be initiated. These critical junctures can develop and destabilize existing equilibria, which in turn lead to change (Baumgartner & Jones 1993).

However persuasive this line of thought might be, it is doubtful that crises always lead to change or that change can only be initiated by crises. Cortell & Peterson (1999) formulate two critiques of punctuated equilibrium explanations. To start with, the crisis-reform thesis does explain ‘most visible episodes of state formation and transformation’ (p. 178) but overlooks the cumulative effect of more incremental institutional changes, which are more probable than drastic changes in an institutional life (cf. Lindblom 1979). The second critical observation regarding the notion of ‘punctuated equilibrium’ concerns the understated role of individuals in processes of change. Major changes do not just ‘happen’, not even in the chaos of crisis. It is state officials who decide when and how they aim at changing present institutions. Interruptions from outside or inside sectors trigger an intensified search for solutions, including plans for new policies or major reorganizations that wait for the ‘right’ moment to be launched.

The role of leadership

Not every reform is the result of a crisis and not every crisis leads to reform. It is argued here that the outcomes of crises are contingent upon the strategies political and administrative leaders choose to adopt in a crisis (Boin & ‘t Hart 2000, Boin & Otten 2000). Reforms are ‘deliberate and sustained attempts at non-incremental change in the substance and process of government.’ (Goldfinch and ‘t Hart 2003: 3)

There are two ideal-typical approaches to crisis that have been discerned, i.e. reformist and conservative. The first ‘approach is aimed at re-balancing or re-designing the institutional features of the policy sector in order to ensure a new ‘fit’ with the changed environment. This is essentially an approach of structural adaptation, because the sector authorities attempt to modify processes and structures in order to bridge the performance gap and restore faith in the sector. A conservative approach aims to maintain the institutional essence in the face of change (Terry 1995). The core idea is that incremental improvement rather than radical redesign of existing processes and structures will best enhance the sector’s performance.’ (Boin & ‘t Hart 2000: 21)

Both strategies are worth considering in order to understand adaptations or changes in organizations. In times of turmoil, deterministic constraints loosen up and it is up to the actors to make use of the ‘window of opportunity’. Structures influence or might predispose actors
within a sector to think about reforms. Yet, the tactical and strategic relations between these actors and the influence and steering ability of some of them, are influential on reform courses (‘t Hart & Gustavsson 2002).

Studies by Wilson (1989), Terry (1995), ‘t Hart (2000), Boin (2001), ‘t Hart & Gustavsson (2002), and Goldfinch & ‘t Hart (2003) show that leaders at least sometimes can and do have influence on a policy sector’s future, not merely by coincidence, but in deliberate and intended ways. This study will show that actors, to be more specific leaders, are influential in fostering or preventing reforms. The question then is how leaders might reform a sector or manage to preserve its structure and organizational integrity. The answer is found in the concepts of reformist and conserving leadership.

Reformist and conserving leadership

The key important variable between a change in an institutional environment and ‘reform’ that will be examined in this study is the behaviour of key policymaking actors. According to Cortell & Peterson (1999: 188) ‘agent’s perceptions, preferences and calculations mediate between a window of opportunity and structural change’.

The notion of reformist leadership helps to open the black box of institutional changes. It is the link between a critical moment of an institution and its expected rescue. The public opinion often asks for drastic changes when a sector loses its legitimacy, and the strong and convincing leader is the personification of that change. In other words, reformist leaders are the actors who make use of the ‘windows of opportunity for reform’. Leadership functions as an intervening variable, which makes use of the situation (‘t Hart 1999: 7).


1. The more dramatically reformist leaders portray current events or issues as a serious and acute crisis, the higher the likelihood of reform success.
2. Successful reformers form a cohesive unit, committed to demonstrating leadership in the pursuit of major policy and institutional changes as a way out of a crisis.
3. If reformers develop and employ strategies targeted at persuading their political environment that the proposed changes are desirable and inevitable, as well as practically feasible, they are more likely to be successful.
4. Successful reformist leaders manage to secure early support of implementing actors for their crisis response strategy.
5. The tighter the leadership’s control over the crisis management process, the higher the likelihood of reform success.

The authors emphasize the leader who actively communicates and strives for coalitions. Crises and critical events have to be used by reformist leadership in order to verbally de-institutionalize the sector, if necessary even by constructing a crisis (Kuipers 2004: 205-207). Reformist leaders have to show political will (‘t Hart & Gustavsson 2002: 151, Moon 1995), but also their ability to formulate feasible policy plans. They have to strive for support within the Parliament and/or from bureaucratic and societal ‘veto-players’. Additional, leaders can use their institutional powers to steer the crisis management process in their preferred directions. They can do so by making use of their ability to set the agenda, by selecting people in key positions (especially commissions), and by controlling the flow of information.

Although very appealing, the concept of reformist leadership is a rather rare phenomenon in Western democratic politics. This is not just because of the many obstacles that reformists face. In military affairs, for example, organizational inertia and national sentiments contribute to the delay of the decline of mass armies (Kelleher 1998). Often politicians and civil servants tend to be conservative in their actions. Those actors will not initiate changes without perceiving the need. Even if there seems to be a publicly or politically indicated need for change, some actors will try to stick to the old structures for as long as possible. This study will show that even after the Cold War, when the large territorial forces lost their strategically and public legitimacy, expressed in an ever growing call for cash-in the peace dividend, changes came not as automatically as one might expect. An important concept to understand no or only incremental changes is conserving leadership or administrative conservatorship.

The concept of administrative conservatorship is closely associated with Terry (1995). It refers to ‘the willingness of administrative elites, out of traditional loyalty and moral principles, to preserve authority and distribution of power with regard to the propriety of an institution’s existence, its functional niche, and its collective institutional goals. ... [It] is concerned with the preservation of institutional integrity.’ (Terry 1995: 26) A sector or institution can change; indeed it must from time to time, but not at any price. The administrator has to protect the integrity of the institution, that is, ‘the completeness, wholeness, soundness, and persistence of administrative processes, value commitments, and unifying principles that determine an institution’s distinctive competence.’ (Terry 1995: 27) It is in this sense that the conserva-

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2 Compare Boin et al. 2001
tion of the integrated organization developed because of leadership practices. Terry’s theory helps to understand the preservation and protection by leadership of the institution once it exists. Conserving leadership has to protect the institutional paradigm, preventing a third order change.³

Leadership style: active versus passive leadership

Whether describing conserving or reforming leadership, the aforementioned studies hypothesized leadership as active: leaders define situations or control processes and strive for coalitions. Terry (1995: 25) states that ‘[f]rom an institutional perspective, administrative conservatorship is an active and dynamic process of strengthening and preserving an institution’s special capabilities, its proficiency, and thereby its integrity so that it may perform a desired social function.’

It is, however, arguable whether this activism is the only feasible road to achieving one’s aims as a leader. Depending on the animosity of the institutional environment and the existence of veto-players within and outside the sector, the political space for leaders to manoeuvre is more or less limited. In addition, sometimes leaders do not take the lead, but deliberately choose to let other actors do their bidding. More reasons can be cited, such as bureaucracies or the relative power position of an actor within the sector. To rephrase James Davis Barber, whose famous study “The Presidential Character” defined the active-passive distinction in the analysis of political leadership styles: ‘activist [leadership] may run smack into a brick wall of resistance, then pull back and wait for a better moment. On the other hand, [leadership which sees itself] as a quiet caretaker may not try to exploit even the most favourable power situation.’ (Barber 1972: 8-9)

This study shows that political, bureaucratic, and military leadership in consensual democracies choose different paths to success. The outcome of the leadership’s process depends on the constant interaction between the leaders with each other and their leadership environment. It is a dynamic process during which leaders may change their styles, depending on the situation.⁴

The concept of leadership in this study lies in the tradition of Greenstein’s interactive method, further elaborated by Elgie: “[i]t implies that political leaders operate within an environment which will both structure their behaviour and constrain their freedom of action. At

³ Compare for the concept of ‘third order change’ Hall 1993
⁴ See for a critique on the static character of Barbers typology Elgie 1995: 11-12
the same time, it also implies that political leaders do have the opportunity to shape the environment in which they operate, so giving them potential to leave their mark upon the system.’ (Elgie 1995: 8)

The policy outcome, policy reform or stability, depends on the subtle relation between the different leaders within the sector with each other and their environment. Does the leader lead or is he led by his institutional environment? At which moments is the one or the other more important for the direction that the policy process takes? Or, more precisely, when is the leader actively taking the lead and when is he passive within the system? The degree of leadership and its success determines the environment’s possibility to influence the outcome. Therefore this study concentrates on the question how do leaders try to (prevent) reform and what is the outcome in terms of policy change.

At first sight the possibilities for leadership in consensual democracies seem limited, the ‘hindrance powers’ seem stronger than those in Westminster style political systems. To name just a few: executive power-sharing in broad multiparty coalitions; executive-legislative balance of power; division of legislative power between two equally strong but differently constituted houses; and rigid constitutions that can be changed only by extraordinary majorities (Lijphart 1999: 3-4).

Although consensual politics may limit leadership’s space to manoeuvre, there exists an active problem solving style in the Netherlands and Sweden, which encourages leaders to strive for change.\(^5\) The relation between leadership and its environment is influenced by the needs of the society and the institutional structures. (Elgie 1995: 13) Consensus democracies offer room for dispersed leadership, where formal leadership responsibilities are compartmentalized among the ministers.\(^6\) Yet, it is expected that, in the cases under study, the actual strategies and actions of reforming and conserving leaders will differ from those in majoritarian type democracies.\(^7\) The differences between the political systems are related to the different types and styles of leaders in policy change.

In the case of the Netherlands, the Prime Minister as ‘primus-inter-pares’ is constitutionally much weaker than many of his counterparts in Westminster-type systems. He has little influence on setting the agenda and he ‘lacks the formal powers to give instructions to ministers, to dismiss ministers, or even to reshuffle the government.’\(^8\) Furthermore, the lack of a

\(^5\) Compare for the concept of policy style Bovens e.a. 2001
\(^6\) Compare for that Elgie 1995 for the example of Germany
\(^7\) As in Lijphart 1999, this study uses the terms majoritarian and Westminster democracies interchangeably ‘to refer to a general model of democracy.’ (p. 9)
\(^8\) Timmerans & Andeweg 2000: 381
spoils system in any form brings ministers into office with little political assistance and a high dependency on the civil service. Other constraints imbedded in the political system are the electoral system, which promotes coalitional governments and, due to decentralization tendencies, is a hindrance power to active leadership ubiquitous.⁹

The Swedish system entails similar though somewhat less stringent constraints. The prime minister is more powerful than his Dutch colleague, the more he is also party leader. Party leaders in Sweden are closely involved in every stage of the government formation. The prime minister directly appoints the other ministers of the cabinet and the power of the single ministers is restricted (by and large) to collective decision making of the cabinet. An important factor complicating leadership in Sweden is the strong will of the political actors to seek broad consensus for policies deemed important to the small neutral state’s survival, particularly in defence and foreign affairs.

Systemic constraints in combination with reluctance by the population for power executed single handed, leads to the fact that leadership in consensual democracies might often be exercised by a variety of public servants, whether civil or political. This study concentrates on the level of political decision-makers, their parliamentarian counterparts, civil servants and senior military leaders who might turn formal leader postings into institutional leadership. Above all, it wants to emphasize the passive side of leadership.

Combining types of leadership, i.e. conserving vs. reforming, with styles of leadership, i.e. passive vs. active, leads to a two-dimensional typology of institutional leadership (Figure 1).

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Figure 1: Leadership types and styles

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⁹ All ‘t Hart 2000: 62-63
(I) *Active-conserving leadership.* This resembles the leadership style following Terry’s notion of conserving leadership. Leaders actively try to de-politicise the situation by convincing the environment of the incidental character of the crisis. They persuade their environment that the old structures had proven their values and that changes are undesirable and unfeasible. Dynamically they are striving for coalitions to conserve what is.

(II) *Active-reforming leadership.* This is the type of leadership studied by ‘t Hart (2000), ‘t Hart & Gustavsson (2002), and Goldfinch & ‘t Hart (2003). Making use of the window of opportunity to change by dramatically portraying events, showing resolve and actively striving for strategic support. Goldfinch & ‘t Hart explicitly state ‘that Westminster systems [might be] more conducive to nonincremental reforms because of their ability to produce major political pendulum swings in government, although in many cases federal structures encourage and sometimes force a degree of compromise and negotiation in policy change.’ The institutional setting is favoring leaders who want to change policy on a basis of an individual political vision.\(^\text{10}\)

(III) *Passive-conserving leadership.* This might be a leadership style that is often found in consensual democracies. In those systems, negotiation rather than strong resolve is more rule than exception. In turmoil times the window to change might open by weakening or taking away structural constraints, but that does not mean that leadership can now be exercised in an institutional and political vacuum, or, that all actors want to exploit the situation. Other actors make use of the window of opportunity, most of the time with opposite aims and leaders will not change, cannot change, have no well-defined plans and the skills to conserve. In short, they fail to exercise leadership. Moreover, moral and ideological constraints can prevent actors from making use of critical situations, where often policy seeking is confused with office seeking. This also holds true for the fourth and last type.

(IV) *Passive-reforming leadership.* Coalition governments are the rule rather than the exception in consensual democracies. Active leadership can lead to unrest and political instability. It is wise to reform through consensus and leaders tend to govern with a ‘steady hand’. This expression of Germany’s Chancellor Schröder refers to the avoidance of action that leads to fears and commotion within the population, leading in fact to the opposite effect of (intended) reforms. The rules of the game encourage back

\(^{10}\) Moon 1995: 19
room strategies, where negotiations take place in small circles, rather than in large arenas. Commissions serve to find consensus since leadership in public often makes politicians suspect. Leaders act wisely by waiting to see which way the wind blows. They first have to fathom common ground, before explaining their strategy in public, whether reforming or conserving. Procedural skills seem more important than rhetorical tricks. Those who know how the system works and those who make use of the institutional abilities enlarge their chances for success. As Moon (1995: 20) hypothesized: ‘Innovative leadership in systems with many institutional vetoes seems hard, simply because of the need to mobilize diverse political forces and to either capture or win support from a range of institutions and interests.’ Yet, passive-reforming leadership is more than substantive and procedural managerialism, though those are the skills needed. It is one of the few possibilities in Western consensual democracies to exercise innovative, successful leadership in overcoming structural constraints.

In both countries, documents in the archives of the Ministries of Defence and the national archives have been analysed. Together with official documents, such as the Defence White Papers, and a media analysis, they contributed to the triangulation of data, which increased the reliability of this study. The media analysis mainly served as a historical source. In both countries more than 40 interviews with decision makers, civil servants and soldiers were conducted. These interviews provided a more in-depth analysis than mere document analysis might provide. Where possible, already existing studies have been used to support empirical evidence. All these efforts contribute to as complete a picture as possible of the policy processes in both countries. This process tracing, or historical analysis, enables us to establish causal relations.\footnote{King, Keohane & Verba 1994 85-87; compare also Mahoney 2003: 363-365} The author is, however, aware of the fact that the small number of cases aggravates causal inference about the possible influence of leadership in defence reforms in Sweden and the Netherlands. Nonetheless, it is possible to show or to reject that leadership, at least partially, contributed to the outcome in both countries.

**The fast track: Reforms in the Netherlands**

Just two days before the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9\textsuperscript{th} 1989, the newly elected government of Christian Democrats (CDA) and Social Democrats (PvdA) came into office. Less
than 18 months later the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Van den Broek (CDA), and the Defence minister, Ter Beek (PvdA), presented the Defence White Paper 1991.

In it the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence welcomed the end of the East-West antagonism, yet they still pointed to the danger of the military potential of the Soviet Union and the political and economic instability in that country. They concluded that fostering political dialog and cooperation was important, yet, that ‘the security policy of the government and the allies aims at maintaining an adequate defence …’. (Dutch Defence White Paper 1991: 9)

In addition to the traditional deterrence task of the armed forces within NATO, new operations outside the NATO area took place. The defence of the alliance remained the primary task. Because the time of preparation in case of an emergency increased from six months to two years, depending on different threat scenarios, it seemed a reduction of the active and reserve parts of the forces would be possible.\(^\text{12}\)

Though the security situation required prepared forces, cutbacks were in order. In particular, the Army had to reduce its personnel, most of them conscripts. Notwithstanding a reduction of the drafted personnel up to 20%, the Minister of Defence showed no intention of abolishing conscription. The arguments for that decision, however, barely referred to security.\(^\text{13}\) The Minister of Defence announced the creation of a commission that would consider a reform of Dutch conscription to make it more attractive. The 1991 Defence White Paper represented a first cautious step in the direction of modelling the armed forces in accordance with ‘détente’, yet with a conservative security definition. Insecurity about the prospects of political developments in Russia prevailed. Therefore, the White Paper saw only little chance for extensive reductions of the armed forces and no chance for the abolition of conscription.

Van Brouwershaven (1999: 171) identifies three reasons that the White Paper only indicated small strategic changes: (1) the international environment changed so quickly that long-term planning was useless; (2) as a result, “conservative forces inside and outside the armed forces managed to restrict the changes to cuts in the existing tasks”. (3) The defence organization was not used to fundamental change after 40 years of (static) Cold War. The ‘conservative forces’, van Brouwershaven referred to, were the dominant Minister of Foreign Affairs Van den Broek, who was politically superior to the Minister of Defence (Van Brouwershaven

\(^{12}\) Brouwershaven 1999: 141
\(^{13}\) Firstly, conscription ‘creates a link between the armed forces and society’. Related to this argument is the second one that the throughput of young men provides the military with a conscious feeling of what is happening in society. The third and most important reason was that conscription guarantees well-educated personnel. (Dutch Defence White Paper 1991)
1999: 159), and the top of the Army: together with Van den Broek they were convinced that they should be careful with the initiated changes. (Van Brouwershaven 1999: 163) The newcomer to the sector, the social-democratic Minister of Defence Ter Beek, saw only little chance to put his mark on the paper.

Almost one year after the presentation of the White Paper 1991, the Minister of Defence gave a speech in which he presented his analysis of a new security situation and its possible implications for the future armed forces. It was on March 31st 1992, a few months after the (unsuccessful) coup d’état in the Soviet Union. In the minister’s opinion, the security situation had changed more than most people had expected one year earlier, when the Defence White Paper 1991 had been presented. Most importantly, due to the decline of the Soviet Union, the threat of its forces invading the West had almost disappeared. The Minister expressed the necessity for smaller army. It should be more flexible for use in territorial defence and for peace operations outside any NATO area. In the last point of his speech, the Minister referred to conscription. Although Ter Beek recognised the independence of the commission, he stated that conscription itself was just a means, not an aim.14

The timing and content of the Minister’s speech were remarkable. First, the definition of the security situation is the task of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Minister of Defence, however, had not consulted his colleague, Van den Broek, about this speech; he wanted to avoid any interference with his plans.15 Those plans were mainly influenced by a top civil servant. This civil servant was convinced that the Soviet Union still might have the intention to invade, but that it had no capabilities to do so. And he invested a lot of time to convince his peers and the political top that times were safe to abolish conscription.16

Secondly, the commission on conscription had not been informed, either. The angry chairman of that commission, a senior party friend of Ter Beek, almost summoned the minister to meet with the commission and to explain his statement about the future of conscription. The minister met the commission in June 1992. Even when asked directly, he denied that he

14 Speech Ter Beek 31-3-1992: 37
15 At the same time it was customary within the cabinet to inform the responsible Minister. The Minister of Defence and his assistants came up with a tactical move. They printed the speech with double line spacing so that it covered 45 pages and they faxed it to the ministry of Foreign Affairs just hours before the Minister addressed the NGIZ. His colleague had no chance to prevent or modify the speech. One of the few people outside the inner circle who received the speech seemed to be the CDA defence expert Frinking. Ter Beek: ‘We were together in one coalition, it seemed convenient to me … Passing the speech to Frinkin was a tactical, political game.’ Interview Ter Beek
16 It was Jaques de Winter, the deputy chief of the department policy affairs at the MoD, who had a very pragmatic attitude towards conscription. His direct superior, D. Barth, remembered 10 years later ‘Endless talks, endless models … everything had been done to convince people like me.’ (Interview Barth)
wanted conscription to be abolished. It is interesting to note that in between the speech and Ter Beek’s appearance before the commission, he had changed his mind, as he afterwards admitted. He still supported conscription, but pragmatic reasons seemed to have changed his opinion: the army was not capable of finding enough volunteers to serve abroad. This, however, was necessary and conscripts could not be ordered to serve outside the NATO-area.

Thirdly, none of the military top had been informed about the content of the speech. This exclusion of the military top had been a deliberate move by Ter Beek, too. He wanted to exclude as many senior army officers during the policy process, since too many soldiers already tried to influence the Defence White Paper 1991. Sometimes, in particular with regard to conscription, he did not want to listen to all the generals anymore with their repetitive, old arguments: ‘I knew their arguments. [...] I was astonished myself that I dared to resist those generals, but after that long time at the ministry [two and a half years, JEN] I knew a lot [...] The generals had to realize that times had changed.’

This, however, seemed to be a problem in particular for the Commander of the Army, Wilmink, and for the Chief of the Defence Staff, Van der Vlis. Although the latter loyally implemented the plans of the Minister of Defence once the reforms had been set on track, he had difficulties with abolishing conscription. He committed himself to all models in favour of conscription. Those models were calculated within the Army staff, mainly for the conscription commission’s use and were never used for the public debate. The only alternative future he accepted was a so called mix of professional forces to fight abroad and conscript forces for the traditional territorial defence.

Van der Vlis admitted that the process towards abolition took place without him: ‘it was a political process, I was a military officer, and so I didn’t do anything.’ In his opinion he was unable to turn the pro-abolition stream, which seemed to rise from the end of March 1992. The political stream was so dominant that a soldier had no possibility to stop it. This (structural) explanation of the Chief of the Defence Staff seems much too resigned. He not even tried to stimulate his own staff to discuss the issue. His subordinates knew how he thought and that any discussion was superfluously.

Yet, there were soldiers who were willing to think about an alternative future of the armed forces without conscripts. One was the Deputy Commander of the Army, General Couzy, who

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17 Interview Jager
18 Already in 1988 a Christian-democratic politician, Ton Frinking, urged the former Christian-liberal government to codify this. Interesting: this MP and former Army officer was one of the prominent supporters of abolition.
19 Interview Ter Beek
20 Interview Van der Vlis.
became Commander of the Army in September 1992, and who served as liaison for the commission on conscription. Due to the work with the commission, he slowly changed his opinion and was willing to think about changes of the system. Often his work with the commission seemed to interfere with his official position: the General answered every question of the commission openly, without always keeping the army’s interests in mind.21 His direct superior, General Wilmink, criticized this repeatedly, and told his subordinates that they should think and act more in favour of conscription. It seemed that the commander of the Army feared that, once concrete plans for an all-volunteer army existed, those plans would be implemented.22 And after a young general in the staff of the army commander tried to convince his superior to give abolition a serious thought, Wilmink reacted fiercely. He was so furious that from that moment on no one in the organization dared to talk about the end of conscription either in public or to the Commander.23

In the end, the soldiers had almost no influence on the outcome of the policy process, which was the de facto abolition of conscription. But they were not the only ones. The commission on conscription had no influence on the outcome, either. Exactly 364 days after installation, on September 30th 1992, the commission came with its report. Its conclusions were quite conservative, stating that the world had not become safer since the end of the Cold War and that the future tasks of the armed forces would be dual: quickly deployable and professional units for dealing with smaller conflicts and kept in readiness and trained for large scale conflicts on demand. This was in fact the model favoured by the Chief of the Defence Staff and the commander of the Army.

Yet, the commissions report never had a serious chance. On the day of presentation of the report, almost all political parties rejected the commission’s conclusion instantaneously. Within half an hour after the presentation, the defence expert of one of the coalition parties declared that the report was to be rejected. He and most of his colleagues demanded an end to military conscription.24

This development fitted the plans of the Minister of Defence. Although a supporter of conscription initially, he changed his opinion during the policy process towards the review of

21 Interview Couzy. That Couzy was open and interested is supported by members of the commission (Montfrans).
22 Interview Brinkman. Yet, Van Brouwershaven points to a similar strategy during the making of the 1991 Defence White Paper, though the reasons had been slightly different: they ‘did not publish voluntarily the internal calculated negative scenarios or reduction plans, since they did not believe in free thinking’ 1999: 163
23 Couzy 1996, interview Couzy
24 Though there had obviously been no clear unanimity within the CDA parliamentary group. Hillen and Frinking seemed to have taken action without prior consultations of the whole group. Anonymus interview. Also Interviews with Frinking and Zijlstra
the Defence White Paper 1991. This is why he announced on November 1st 1992 that he were going to propose to the cabinet the abolition of conscription. On 12 January 1993, the Minister of Defence, Ter Beek, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, P. Kooijmans - since January 1 1993 the successor of Van den Broek - presented the Priority Defence White Paper 1993. In this paper, they announced that ‘the government had decided to ‘de facto’ abolish the draft or to postpone it…’ Though it acknowledged the importance and gravity of the idealistic pro-conscription arguments, it argued that several practical and pragmatic considerations had been decisive.

In the end Ter Beek received broad support for his Priority White paper and, above all, Ter Beek succeeded in getting the support by Parliament to strive for the abolition or postponement of the draft by initiating a constitutional change according to advice of the Council of State. As one commentator analyzed it: ‘to Ter Beek the advice of the Council of State that for the abolition of the draft the constitution had to be changed might come as a blessing, since a constitutional change is very time consuming …’ When the debate on the Priority White Paper took place, in May 1993, Ter Beek indeed gained time and political peace that enabled him to receive wide support for his reform of the Dutch armed forces, of which the postponement of the draft was an important part. Conscription would not have been abolished or postponed if the political and administrative leaders had not felt that the security environment had changed dramatically. But above all, these actors had to convince their environment that times had changed, that Europe was more secure. Remarkably, there was almost no public debate. It was only a small circle of political, administrative, and – to a lesser extent – military leaders who changed the future of the Dutch armed forces.

Swedish silent goodbye to general conscription: piecemeal leadership incrementalism

In a manner of speaking, the Cold War ended in Sweden in 1995, when the re-elected social democratic government started to change the armed forces’ structure. Due to its neutrality, the country had relied for decades on its own ability to defend itself. With the end of the bi-polar world order, long-neglected problems in the defence organization came to the fore: old weapons and turgid personnel figures. Those problems had been created by almost twenty years of economies on defence spending.

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25 This announcement took in particular the Chief of the Defence Staff, Van der Vlis, totally by surprise!
28 ‘Hervorming defensie wordt passen en meten’, Volkskrant 13-05-1993
In the early 1990s, financial and economic crises in the country brought power to the bourgeois parties, who finally saw a chance to enact their longstanding defence policy: modernization of the territorial forces and modern air power by weapon procurement at home and abroad. However, continuing financial problems thwarted those ambitions, and when the social democrats returned to power in 1994, the modernization of the armed forces towards small, high-tech forces began.

No matter which party was in power, no matter what defence policy the consecutive governments envisioned, each defence reform plan nibbled away at conscription. The more severe the cuts in the defence budget, the more rapidly the numbers of those actually serving shrunk. This occurred notwithstanding the notion – in particular of social democratic politicians – that the people’s defence should never vanish. The actual figures contradicted political rhetoric. From over 80% of a cohort in the beginning of the 1980s, the number of conscripts went down to less than 25% by the turn of the century, and this tendency has not yet stopped.

As early as the 1980s, but accelerating after the end of the Cold War, the number of army units had diminished from 28 brigades to six. However, military conscription still existed in spite of tremendous economical problems and a restructuring of the armed forces from territorial defence to network centric warfare with improved capabilities to participate in international operations. Throughout the 1990s, different Ministers of Defence came up with suggestions to maintain the institution of the military draft. At the beginning of the new millennium, there was still an ongoing debate in Sweden about the possibility of even enlarging the number of young men and women serving their country and society in a military or civil way.

Swedish defence policy during the first decade of after the fall of the Berlin Wall can be divided into four periods. In the first period, 1989-1991, the social democratic minority government tried – with little success – to uphold the traditional defence policy making of the Cold War. During the second period, 1991-1994, the conservative minority government led by Carl Bildt invested in the heavy equipment of the Cold War forces. During the third period, 1994-1997, the social democrats started to transform the forces towards modern forces, able to participate in peace management tasks. Yet, they still pretended that they strongly supported conscription. It took until 1998, the fourth period that lasts more or less until today, that the Swedish armed forces were transformed radically and that the leaders had at last the tacit understanding that conscription existed only on paper.

Forced by the big financial problems of the late 1980s, fewer and fewer young men of an annual intake were drafted. While at the beginning of the 1980s almost every able-bodied young man fulfilled his duty, at the beginning of the 1990s the proportion of a levy actually serving fell below 75%: only 41,871 of the 57,833 enrolled men.\textsuperscript{29} By 1991, a first inquiry about the future of conscription in Sweden after the Cold War was started. Initiated by the social democratic Minister of Defence, Roine Carlsson, the committee of the ‘1992 Total Defence Duty Inquiry’ never had the task to abandon conscription, but to find ways to reorganize the system. One year later, the committee came with a recommendation to draft only the number actually needed, instead of a surplus with no military use. The surplus of young men who were able to serve but for whom no posting was available should be placed in a training reserve, a pool which would enable the authorities to train them in a short period in case of need. This, however, soon turned out to be an artificial solution.\textsuperscript{30}

Shortly before the conservative government won the elections, the Swedish system of defence policy-making collapsed. Traditionally the government initiates a defence white paper every five years. The military and the parliament, via a special committee, were involved in the planning at an early stage. This highly institutionalized routine guaranteed that the policy process always finished in time. Yet it did not in the beginning of the 1990s. Significant economic problems and the changing world order after the fall of the Berlin Wall put structural constraints on the decision making process. At the same time, the political climate in Sweden was changing. The centre-right parties gained momentum and strategic non-cooperation in the committee served election purposes. This led to only minor reports and to the end of the committee.\textsuperscript{31}

1991-1994: Conserving leadership

To Björck, the delay of the defence resolution 1991 was politically very advantageous. In the hypothetical case that this resolution had been decided upon by the social democrats as early

\textsuperscript{29} RRV 1997:29, p. 178
\textsuperscript{30} The conservative Minister of Defence Björck, who came into office in 1991, quickly dissolved the training reserve.
\textsuperscript{31} Interview Mohr, Björck, Landerholm
as 1991, the conservative Minister of Defence would have been forced to work with it for the following four years. Instead, Björck had the opportunity to put his mark on future policy.\textsuperscript{32}

In the Minister of Defence’s view, international developments were going so rapidly that a defence resolution had to come sooner rather than later. In addition, the economic situation of the Swedish defence industry demanded political decisions.\textsuperscript{33} Whatever resolution had to be taken, one thing was certain: the minority government needed support by either the social democrats or the right-wing populist newcomer, the New Democratic Party.

The bourgeois defence policy maker Björck used threat scenarios in defending the modernization of large territorial forces. According to the proposition of the government, the main task of the armed forces in 1991 was still to resist an armed attack, with short military warning, irrespective of the direction the attack might come from.\textsuperscript{34} To him, the territorial forces of the Cold War had proven their value, and since the developments in the East were far from predictable, it would be wise to stick to those territorial forces – leaner but meaner. Björck turned to procurement of heavy armor and the modernization of the territorial forces. The conservative minority government finally saw a chance to put their plans for a Cold War defence into reality. And the institutional setting to do it was perfect. In addition, the minister of Defence communicated those plans extensively.\textsuperscript{35}

\textit{1994-1997: conservative reflex vs. reforming the forces}

Another financial crisis and severe financial problems in 1992 forced the Swedish government to cut spending. The armed forces were one of the main retrenchment areas, at least in the eyes of the left parties. During the 1994 election campaign, the successful conserver of 1991, Björck, saw little chance to turn this tendency. Instead, he used jeopardizing arguments reacting to the plans of the social democrats and liberals to cut in defence spending.\textsuperscript{36} According to him, further downsizing would endanger Sweden’s security and defence autonomy.\textsuperscript{37} This would lead to Sweden’s membership in NATO. This tactic was aimed at the population’s resentments against another membership, in a year when EU-membership was high on the political agenda. Yet those arguments were too weak to succeed. Firstly, after several finan-

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{32} Interview Björck \\
\textsuperscript{33} Interview Sahlin \\
\textsuperscript{34} 1991/92:FöU12 \\
\textsuperscript{35} Interview Björck \\
\textsuperscript{36} Compare for the concept of jeopardizing argumentation Hirschman 1992. \\
\textsuperscript{37} ”Svägare försvar kräver Natoanslutning”. Alliansfriheten omöjliggörs om vi fortsätter att skära på försvar, skriver försvarsminister Anders Björck” Dagens Nyheter, 13-07-1994
\end{flushright}
cial crises, when Sweden stood at the eve of deciding whether or not to join the EU, defence
did not stand high on the political and public agenda; the future of the welfare state was more
important. Secondly, precisely in the year 1994 the Swedes felt more secure than in the years
before and in the year after.\textsuperscript{38}

Though the social democratic minister of Defence Tage Peterson, 1994-1997, can be con-
sidered an interim minister, he started to transform the forces. Instead of the large forces of
the Cold War, with their heavy equipment, he downsized the forces, aiming at crisis manage-
ment capabilities. With regard to conscription, however, he showed the same conserving re-
flex as did his social democratic predecessor at the beginning of the 1990s. Instead of admit-
ting that upholding conscription was difficult, whether it was general or for a minor group in
society, he even wanted to raise the numbers of those actually serving.

Not in the least place, Peterson’s view clashed with the view of the supreme commander,
Owe Wiktorin. Wiktorin, supreme commander 1994-2000, turned out to be the most influen-
tial actor during the transition of the Swedish armed forces. In particular after the publication
of the defence white paper 1996, he appeared more and more in public and argued with the
minister. The renewal of Sweden’s defence, as planned in the 1995/96 White Paper, stood for
a redefinition of the concept of total defence, aiming at: adaptability, a unified view, interna-
tionalisation, and a democratic defence. The principle of adaptability entailed the end of the
territorial defence. This new concept was more suited to the ill-defined threats of the future.\textsuperscript{39}

Yet, Thage G. Peterson emphasised that the government would preserve a democratic
people’s defence.\textsuperscript{40} It was very important to him that the Swedish population would feel re-
ponsible for and able to defend their country. He was convinced that this would be best
achieved with a defence based on national service. Important arguments were the size of the
country, which needed a large defence; the diversity of recruits, providing the organisation
with a broad range of knowledge and experience; and that conscription satisfied the deep
rooted defence principle in the people. ‘A professional army cannot create the will to resist
and the strength that a national defence system requires.’\textsuperscript{41}

The plans and figures in the defence resolution showed how seriously the defence Minis-
ter took conscription and the people’s will to defend the country. He not only searched for

\textsuperscript{38} Compare Opinion study 2002, SPF, Table 19. In 1994 only 13% of the respondents believed that the future
would be more threatening (compared to 17% in 1993 and 21% in 1995)

\textsuperscript{39} The renewal of Sweden’s Defence: Phase 2, p. 16

\textsuperscript{40} Prop. 1995/96:12, p. 3 (web version). ‘Vi kan aldrig godta att vårt värnpliktsförsvar ersätts av en yrkesarmé.
Därför vill regeringen hejda en utveckling, där allt färre totalförsvarspåhkliga ges grundutbildning, och som därmed
riskerar att leda till en yrkesarmé.’

\textsuperscript{41} The renewal of Sweden’s Defence: Phase 2, p. 19
ways to raise the number of those who fulfilled the duty, whether or not in the military, he even had been aware of the necessity to compensate those who were drafted. To the Minister conscription was the historical and uniting element in Sweden’s democracy. However, it was difficult to bring the policy plans for conscription into reality. The number of military conscripts and those who fulfilled civic duty dropped further and further. By 1997, the year the 1996 defence resolution came into effect, only 25,651 young men had been drafted for active military duty. 1,574 young men joined the civil duty and almost 14,000 young men were allotted to the training’s reserve, but were in fact never to be drafted for any service at all. The numbers of active serving men declined further, as did the size of the armed forces. In years to come, it would turn out that sixteen brigades did not represent the bottom line.

**Major military reforms put pressure on conscription**

In 1997 Von Sydow took office as Minister of Defence. During his term from 1997 to 2002, the Swedish armed forces made the definite transition from the mass army of the Cold War to small, flexible and versatile forces. Those changes had implications for conscription: fewer men were needed for fewer units. One of the effects had been another inquiry on the total defence duty.

In the beginning of his term, it seemed that the Minister did not show much interest in the conscript system, which became obvious when he declined to address the conscripts at the annual conscripts’ council meeting, in March 1997. Until the summer, the Minister of Defence did not noticeably give his opinion about conscription. The ‘Riksrevisonsverket’ (Swedish National Audit Office – RRV), however, did. On 9 June 1997 it published a report about the financial consequences of current conscription practices of the period 1990-1996. Important conclusions were that there was a considerable and growing surplus of conscripts and that there was the risk that the best suited would not be drafted.

The report of the RRV was an important trigger for the Minister of Defence to instigate a revision into the system. Another inquiry into the total defence duty should bring resolve. Before the committee started its work in March 1998, financial problems in the defence

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42 ‘Allt färre får göra sin allmänna värnplikt. ÖB och försvarsministern oense om försvaret ska spara in på materiel eller manskap’ Dagens Nyheter 08-01-95
43 ‘Von Sydow möter värnpliktiga’ Dagens Nyheter 07-03-97 and ‘von Sydow avstod från tal’ Dagens Nyheter 08-03-97
44 RRV 1997:29
45 RRV 1997:29, p. 12-13
budget loomed on the horizon, and they would influence the agenda of the inquiry throughout the years.

In the beginning of December 1997 a financial crisis in the defence budget had been brought to light.\textsuperscript{46} For quite some time - weeks and months - rumours had been spreading, but there had been no confirmation. The alarming figures, a gap of 2 billion crowns for the 1998 budget and an overall shortage of 13 billion crowns until 2002, had been adduced by the opposing moderate party during a debate of the Swedish Parliament on 5 December about the forthcoming budget. Overall, the debate concentrated on the forthcoming defence budget and Von Sydow refused to talk about the financial crisis.\textsuperscript{47} In the weeks and months to come the financial lead to a parliamentary inquiry, which showed a political weak Minister of Defence and a strong Commander-in-Chief.

The crisis was solved by a trade off on conscription: shortening the training time for conscripts. Von Sydow intended to achieve two goals: save money and save conscription. At the same time, the Minister of Defence was careful not to sacrifice conscription entirely. Quite the opposite: the Minister wanted to avoid further reductions of conscripts every year\textsuperscript{48} The Minister even deepened the subject, when emphasising in the spirit of his predecessor, Thage G. Peterson, as one analyst observed, that ‘[i]t is a mistake that one demands a long duty fulfilment from one part, but zero from others who would also be suited.’\textsuperscript{49} But the Armed Forces had other plans: In the beginning of 1998 Commander-in-Chief Wiktorin presented his plans to solve the financial crisis. His most important victim: conscription and the number of draftees.\textsuperscript{50} According to Wiktorin, the armed forces should draft less conscripts and shorten the training. In addition, he demanded publicly a new defence resolution, because the last one from 1996 had been completely outdated.\textsuperscript{51}

The crisis was so serious that it was debated in the constitutional committee of the Swedish Parliament. It is important to note that the search for the reasons of that crisis by the constitutional committee, the following defence committee debate and the parliamentary debate in May 1998, neither led to the dismissal of the Commander-in-Chief nor to the resignation of the Minister of Defence. In fact the Commander-in-Chief came out even stronger and more powerful than before, by announcing the abolishing of the posts of the Commanders-in-Chief

\textsuperscript{46} ‘Analys/försvaret: Militärrocken sitter illa. Försvaret är för stort och kostar för mycket pengar’ Dagens Nyheter 13-12-97
\textsuperscript{47} Riksdagen Protokoll 1997/98:41, 5 December 1997 (Snabbprotokoll), Anf. 35; also Dagens Nyheter 13-12-97
\textsuperscript{48} SVT 18-12-97
\textsuperscript{49} ‘Säkerheten tryggas på sikt’. Försvarets budget. Ett rejält värmpliktsförsvar innebär färre personer i tbildningsreserven, menar Björn von Sydow’ Dagens Nyheter 21-12-97
\textsuperscript{50} SVT 15-01-97
\textsuperscript{51} ‘Pacifisten’ Dagens Nyheter 17-02-97
of the Army, Air Force, and Navy. This became even more obvious, when the next financial crisis within defence presented itself, by the autumn of 1998.

Although Von Sydow had had nothing to tell to the conscripts in the beginning of his term in 1997, he turned out to be a defender of the institution during the subsequent crisis. The policy choices the government proposed had been supported by the traditional social democratic arguments about the role of conscription in and its meaning for society, though even the government had to announce a reduction of the training in the light of the financial crisis in the armed forces.

In the beginning of 1998 the defence commission of the ministry of defence had published its report ‘Swedish Security Policy in the Light of International Change’ (Ds 1998:9). The struggle concerning lacking money fresh in mind the main political and military actors started to quarrel again after the summer of 1998. However the Commander-in-Chief already started the arguments in June. Guided by ‘The renewal of Sweden’s Defence’ and in anticipation of the upcoming security reports, the Commander-in-Chief gave a preliminary view on the new armed forces in June 1998. General Wiktorin demanded publicly from the politicians that for the coming reform plans, which were expected in spring 1999, they would have to choose between general conscription and a full defence industry. After the summer recess and the parliamentary elections (20 September 1998), which resulted in a continuation of the social democratic government under Persson, the Commander-in-Chief repeated his demands and gave his concrete vision on the future armed forces. In the weeks and months that followed, General Wiktorin publicly criticised the government, which announced further reductions of the budget by 9 billion for the next three-years period.

After the 1998 parliamentary elections the social democratic Prime Minister, Persson, found support on the left side of the political spectrum: the Left party and the environmental party became the supporters of the budget from the social democratic government. This cooperation came with its price for the armed forces: a further reduction of the defence budget, which had been a classical demand of all three parties throughout the years.

When it became obvious that the exact amount of reductions had gone up to 9,3 billion, the Commander-in-Chief demanded a ‘conscript-free’ year with only 6,000 conscripts drafted, 27% of the regular planned number of 22,500. The Minister of Defence once again rejected

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52 SVT 16-06-98
53 SVT 16-10-98
the plans of the Commander-in-Chief to draft fewer conscripts.\textsuperscript{55} The latter had been disappointed that after the financial crisis of the previous year, he had the task to come up with a new plan and when he presented it, that plan almost immediately disappeared in the waste bin due to political choices.\textsuperscript{56} However, in the main not as many people seemed to be as alarmed by the Commander-in-Chief’s plans at first sight, as the media wanted people to believe.\textsuperscript{57} The government had to prepare the next year’s legislative proposition that should steer the armed force’s future reductions. Necessary for this proposition had been the postponed overhaul of the security definition. Before the government had the chance to focus on that, the Commander-in-Chief’s words started to have an effect. Contrary to the media’s suggestion, that General Wiktorin’s words didn’t have any effect, the Parliament started to act, which even led to an internal fight between the Ministers of Finance and Defence.

Alarmed by the drastic measures of the Commander-in-Chief, the Parliament’s defence committee tried finding a solution to prevent further reductions of conscription and material purchases. The social democrats tried to find 6 billion crowns with possible support from the bourgeois parties. The proposed solution was an accounting trick, i.e. by writing off the money, which the defence department had loaned from the state to purchase materials. The environmental party’s speaker, who was not even a member of the defence committee, strongly resisted that more money would go to defence: the 6,3 billion crowns had to be used to reduce the state’s financial deficit.\textsuperscript{58} And it appeared that quite soon the environmental party got support from the social democratic Minister of Finance, Erik Åsbrink.\textsuperscript{59} By the end of November, a political solution seemed to be possible: defence could borrow up to 2 billion from its own material estimates.\textsuperscript{60}

Despite the fact that the Prime Minister assured that the decision made by the left parties would have no negative consequences for the traditional broad consensus about Swedish defence policy in the long run, the moderate party remained irritated and rejected the offer of the Defence Minister to talk about the savings. Landerholm, chairman of the parliamentary defence committee, found it useless to talk to the Minister without having an idea of the Minister’s intentions, though the moderates had no intention to leave the defence commission.

\textsuperscript{55} SVT 13-11-98
\textsuperscript{56} Interview Wiktorin
\textsuperscript{57} ”Sparförlaget en katastrof” Moderat oro över ÖB:s planner’ Dagens Nyheter 14-11-98.
\textsuperscript{58} According to TT, referred to in Dagens Nyheter 21-11-98 ‘Pengar till försvaret upprör miljöpartiet’
\textsuperscript{59} ’Motstånd mot dyrare försvar’ Dagens Nyheter 24-11-98 with reference to Carl Bildt, member of the defence committee
\textsuperscript{60} SVT 01-12-98
which still was an important institution since it guaranteed a broad support for Swedish defence policy.

With the budget decision of the left parties, the politicians played the ball in fact back to the Commander-in-Chief, who shortly before Christmas came forward with the proposal to expel 5,000 young men from conscription, which would have brought the figures down to between 17,500 and 18,000. The Swedish Defence Commission’s report about the reformed defence, which served as a base for the next defence resolution, had yet to come.

On 12 January 1999, the Swedish Defence Commission presented its report ‘A Changing World – A Reformed Defence’ to the Minister of Defence. The postponed follow-up of the Ds 1998:9 report was an important document for the overhaul of the current defence Resolution of 1996, serving as a tool to adjust Sweden’s security and defence policy to actual events and setting out the proposition, which should be presented by the government in March 1999.

One important conclusion had been ‘that the commission sees no threat of any invasion of Sweden … within the next ten years, provided that Sweden retains a basic defence capability.’ As a consequence, the wartime organisation could be reduced and the armed forces in general should be more flexible and mobile. The armed forces had to re-structure in such a way, that they would be able to regenerate a territorial defence in case of growing threats. The Commission was in favour of the conscript system. It gave two arguments for that. On the one hand, the need for popular support of Sweden’s defence, which is guaranteed by conscription. On the other hand, conscription served as an important recruitment tool.

And the plans to reduce the numbers went on and it can be concluded that by the end of the 1990s Sweden had made the transition from large invasion armed forces to a small and flexible defence. At the same time, the country had changed the system for manning that defence from general to a specialised conscription.

Leadership and institutional reform in consensus democracies

In this study the leadership’s environment and the type and style of leadership were expected to be influential for the outcome of the policy processes in the Swedish and Dutch defence

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61 Compare Dick Ljungberg in Dagens Nyheter 22-12-98 ‘Få svar om försvar. Besluts skjuts på framtid. Regleringsbrev fastställt’
62 ‘Värnplikten för 5 000 ställs in i sista stund’ Dagens Nyheter 20-12-98
63 English Executive Summary of Ds 1999:2, p. 1
64 English Executive Summary of Ds 1999:2, p. 5
sectors after the Cold War. Yet, as anticipated by Bovens et al. (2001), systemic constraints can differ per sector.

The social democratic dominance in combination with the minority government in Sweden was influential in the process. On the one hand the social democrats had the will to cut defence spending, in particular since they were supported by the leftist parties in the second half of the 1990s, while on the other hand the same social democratic dominance prevented the ‘de facto’ abolition of conscription. Leadership had enough room to downsize and modernize the forces, yet abolition seems to have been a bridge too far.

In the Netherlands reforming leaders had a lot of room to manoeuvre, the more so as the social democratic Minister of Defence had the support of the defence experts of the coalition party and – at a later stage – from his own party, who demanded a broader task for the commission and helped the minister organise majorities. Secondly, although it is very difficult to change the Dutch constitution, it was possible to develop new conscription laws. Actually, the rigid constitution served the reformers in gaining time by keeping the issue off the agenda while the larger reforms of the Armed Forces, the Priorities Defence Paper, was guided through Parliament. In particular in the second example the actions of leadership turned out to be influential. By using the systemic constraints to reach their aims, the leaders managed to almost entirely separate two policy processes, which otherwise might have slowed down the entire process. Instead of running smack into a brick wall, the leaders pulled back and waited for the right moment.

Before turning to the types and styles of the different leaders, it is worth mentioning that constitutional rigidity was the only characteristic in the federal unitary dimension that played a role in the process. Defence traditionally is task of the government, whether it is federal or unitary. In the Dutch case there was some debate in the First Chamber, yet, the main debates took place in the permanent defence or joint defence and foreign affairs commission in Parliament, the so called Second Chamber. In the executive-party dimension almost all characteristics were important for the process. However, although both countries are traditional corporatist and although in both countries the military personnel is organised in unions, corporatism was obviously of no importance.

*Types and styles*

In the two defence sectors central to this study the actions of political and bureaucratic leaders were constrained by their environment. We also found evidence that they had the opportunity
to shape their environment and leave their mark on the system. When looking at figures 2 and 3 we see that almost none of the actors were static in style and type throughout the process, except for the Swedish Minister of Defence, Thage G. Peterson, and partially the Swedish General Wiktorin (throughout the process he remained an active reforming leader).

The two Ministers of Defence Ter Beek and Von Sydow are examples of the changing relationship between the leader and his environment (see figures 2 and 3). In the beginning of their term, both were neither willing nor able to strive for reforms. Ter Beek was a relative outsider in the sector and slowly but steadily grew into office, which is a normal process within political systems. The large-scale reforms actually accelerated this process. Once Ter Beek saw a chance to reform the armed forces, he used his political skills and abilities to overcome systemic constraints. The same holds true for Von Sydow. He tried to change the armed forces as far as necessary within the paradigm of the Swedish defence sector, i.e. territorial defence. Once, however, the system turned out to be too unfavourable to the sectors’ demands, the institution just did not live up to the expectations of its environment, Von Sydow reformed the armed forces. He did so in quite a similar way to Ter Beek by keeping conscription off the agenda/out of the policy stream, with the exception that he did not raise doubts about conscription, but let it silently deteriorate.

**Figure 2: Types and styles of leadership in Dutch defence policymaking towards postponement of draft.** During the process towards the postponement of the draft three episodes can be distinguished. The first period is the making of the Defence White Paper 1991. The relevant actors in this period are marked with a 1. The second period is from June 1991, when
the debate about the White Paper took place in Parliament until the summer of 1992, when the
Minister of Defence was interrogated by the Meijer-commission (2). The last period is from
September 1992 until the parliamentary debate about the Priority White Paper 1993, in May
1993 (3).

![Diagram of Style of Leadership]

**Figure 3: Styles and types of leadership in the Swedish defence sector**

In both cases, politicians were actively involved in sectorial reforms. The environmental
changes were so profound that their implications for the military needed the attention of the
political leaders, this was conceived a crucial condition for both paradigm shifts and paradigm-
matic procedure changes. Organisational leaders could not have implemented those changes
on their own, more legislation had to be involved. One of the consequences was that the po-
litical involvement limited the room to manoeuvre for those military leaders who wanted to
conserve the status quo. This came in addition to the regular environmental constraints military
leaders (and top civil servants) might face, i.e. political loyalty. In the case of conscrip-
tion this holds true for the Commanders-in-Chief Gustafsson (S), Wilmink (NL) and Van der
Vlis (NL). However, in particular, the latter two are examples of leaders who did not even try
to strive actively to conserve conscription, regardless of their environment. Although the
Dutch system of the early 1990s was more unfavourable to reforming or conserving military
leadership than the Swedish system of the late 1990s, the Dutch military leaders limited them-
theselves more than the existing structural constraints demanded. The cases show that personal
choices lead to this self-limitation.
The seemingly inconceivable category of a passive-reforming leadership style turned out to be an important asset for those political actors under scrutiny who wanted to reform the defence sectors in Sweden and the Netherlands. At first those actors had to play the system and their environment, before they were able to take a more active role during the reforming process. However, in both cases conscription remained a sensitive issue. Even in the Netherlands the leaders had to de-politicise the issue as long as possible in order to foster reforms of the armed forces.

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