

ABSTRACT

University of Gothenburg
School of Business, Economics, and Law
Department of Business Administration
P.O. Box 600
SE-405 30 Göteborg, Sweden

Author: Karl Ydén
Language: Swedish
ISBN: 978-91-7246-271-7
Doctoral Thesis, 2008
275 pages

“War” and the Career System

Military organizations comprise two contradictory logics of action. The logic of conflict revolves around the use of organized violence against an enemy (at close range). The logic of cooperation characterises interaction with friendly disposed parties, in order to secure legitimacy and working exchange relations. Previous research highlight tension between these logics of action, but do not study the mechanisms by which it is managed. The present study describes and analyzes how contradictory logics of action are manifested in the Swedish Armed Forces, and how tensions between the logics are managed.

By examining everyday practices in training of an elite unit, the study shows junior officers training soldiers according to a construction of “the demands of war”. The training manifests a logic of conflict emphasizing physical stamina, endurance, discipline and a marked social distance between officers and soldiers. The study also shows that middle and higher level officers are almost entirely occupied with white-collar work, albeit in uniform. They interact with the environment, displaying a logic of cooperation imbued in the Armed Forces as a peacetime authority and “Government Employer”, subject to institutional pressures.

The study concludes that the logic of conflict in soldier training is largely decoupled from the military administration’s logic of cooperation. The main mechanism producing decoupling is the military career system, in which promotion is a regular feature. Certain positions and assignments are compulsory steps in the career; at low levels training conscripts for “war”, at higher levels carrying out white collar work according conforming to the institutional rules of modern society. The study shows how the career system frames officers’ interactions and produces decoupling between the contradictory logics of action.

The two logics of action sharply mark the career system, but they are also shaped and conditioned by the career system’s emphasis on job rotation. The career system constitutes an institutional logic that creates the means-ends relationships by which rewards, status and power are distributed. The logic of the military career system overrides considerations pertaining to soldier training as well as to effective administration. The military career system, rather than the Armed Forces’ official goals, shapes the prevailing logic of the organization.

Key words: military organization, middle management, career system, soldier training, logic of conflict, logic of cooperation, decoupling, loose coupling, make believe leadership, secondary adjustment, bullying.

“KRIGET” OCH KARRIÄRSYSTEMET

FÖRSVARSMAKTENS ORGANISERANDE I FRED

Karl Ydén

AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

För avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i företagsekonomi som med tillstånd av Handelshögskolans fakultetsnämnd vid Göteborgs universitet framlägges till offentlig granskning torsdagen den 6 november 2008, kl.13.15, i CG-salen vid Företagsekonomiska institutionen, Vasagatan 1, Göteborg.