

# (Re)Inventing the Armed Forces

A Governmentality Analysis of Swedish Military Marketing and Outreach in the Era of Voluntarism

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## Abstract

In 2010, Sweden abandoned its century-old military conscription in favour of an All-Volunteer Force (AVF). The Swedish Armed Forces (SAF) was now exposed to competition over labour, and soldiering was no longer a duty connected to male citizenship. It was a job among many.

This thesis studies the SAF's efforts to cast the military organization as an *attractive* employer and public authority in the era of voluntarism. The aim is to contribute insights into how the Swedish population is called upon to identify as soldiers and supporters of the armed forces in order to enable war preparations and deployments. It does so through a compilation of four research articles, each analysing different sites of military marketing and public outreach, including recruitment campaigns, social media activities and public events. The thesis shows how marketing and outreach promote the SAF as an entrepreneurial and inclusive organisation offering opportunities for personal, professional and corporal development to a wide diversity of citizens. It further demonstrates how the SAF is promoted as both a symbol and guarantor of a responsible and progressive nation/state.

By reading the birth of the AVF as a form of *government through freedom*, this thesis problematises the liberal claim that voluntary military service symbolises a removal of power and government from the private sphere of the individual. Instead, the thesis proposes an understanding of voluntary military recruitment and marketing practices as a *regulating* form of power. This form of power reproduces neoliberal claims of what it means to be a productive and desirable citizen *and* suggests ways to achieve this enterprise through different interactions with the armed forces. Consequently, this thesis brings unique insights into efforts made by the armed forces to render war preparations and deployments not only acceptable but also attractive to the population of a liberal democracy.

## Keywords

Civil-military relations, governmentality, gender exceptionalism, military recruitment, military identity, public relations

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