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**“WE DON’T SEE GENDER, ONLY SOLDIERS!”  
– NEGOTIATING MILITARY IDENTITIES IN  
NARRATIVES ON GENDER, PEACE, AND SECURITY**

**BY**  
**KATHRINE BJERG BENNIKE**  
DISSERTATION SUBMITTED 2021



**AALBORG UNIVERSITY**  
DENMARK



# **“WE DON’T SEE GENDER, ONLY SOLDIERS!” – NEGOTIATING MILITARY IDENTITIES IN NARRATIVES ON GENDER, PEACE, AND SECURITY**

by

Kathrine Bjerg Bennike



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# ENGLISH SUMMARY

October 31. 2000 marked a significant date in work on gender, peace, and security. Until then, women's experiences, perspectives, and the particular consequences of conflict and war for women were more or less absent from military work in peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. However, this was about to change, as the Security Council on this date adopted United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace, and Security, which marked the first of nine UN resolutions as of 2021 that have the intention of bringing gender perspectives to international peacekeeping (and peacebuilding) missions. With UNSCR 1325, gendered implications of conflict, peace, and security, which had been part of feminist activists and Feminist International Relations scholars' agenda for decades (Cohn 2004; Schott 2013; Shepherd 2008; Gibbins 2011) began to gain influence in UN military missions, and later NATO missions, and grew into an element of peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, which today is difficult for member states to disregard.

Being part of the 'friendly' and cosmopolitan-minded North in terms of military work and politically manifesting a commitment to international military work through alliances with NATO and the UN, Denmark situates itself as a military force that albeit its relatively small size, is an active player on the international arena and stresses a commitment to UNSCR 1325 i.e. by being the first country in 2005 to adopt the resolution. Nonetheless, despite articulating a national and institutional position as a frontrunner in regard to gender and military work, Denmark has faced critique from the UN, as well as scholars and practitioners. One of the main points has been the lack of focus on domestic issues with gender equality in the Danish Armed Forces as well as the lack of concrete actions to combat discrimination. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Justice 2014). In the National Action Plan (NAP) from 2020, which covers the period 2020-2024, the Ministries have taken this critique into account and presents an ambition to "walk the talk" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Justice 2000).

These contradicting national and institutional narratives of being a frontrunner on gender equality and at the same time face critique for this particular point in regard to how the Danish military works internally create certain conflicting narratives on military work and military identities within the Danish Armed Forces. These conflicting narratives have the potential to influence the everyday lives of Danish soldiers and their understandings of their military identities, military work, and duties. It also leads to challenges in the negotiations over military identities including the incorporation of other gendered bodies into the force, let alone adapting to management policies at the local level and the potential discrepancies between practice and policy.

This project, therefore, focuses on how Danish soldiers negotiate their military identities and their role as peacekeepers and peacebuilders through the assignments they carry out domestically and internationally. This entails an analysis of narrative negotiations over who is considered qualified to serve in and work as military professionals and what this means for the gendered dynamics within the force. More closely, the project focuses on Royal Danish Air Force and examines institutional, personal, and social narratives including the ways in which these relate to (global/national/local) narratives on gender, peace, and security. This is done through a narrative analysis of official documents from the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force including the 2011 diversity plan, four National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325, and recruitment material. Moreover, I analyze material from webpages of the two Wings; Air Control Wing and Air Transport Wing in combination with the main empirical data of 24 individual interviews with male and female soldiers who are actively serving in the Danish military and who have been on international missions.

Collecting institutional, personal, and social narratives and situating them within a Danish military institution, Danish society, and global actors such as the UN and NATO enables an understanding of the gendered experiences of peace, war, and conflict. Moreover, the Danish exceptional approach to particularly gender equality i.e. a self-image of being a frontrunner on gender equality and at the same time considering the topic a closed case by assuming that gender equality has already been achieved brings forward interesting and conflicting narratives and negotiations. Hence, practice reveals that normative understandings of Danish gender equality may be more multifaceted and ambiguous in reality also in a military setting. Thus, the various narratives, which I locate in this thesis are formed and negotiated at the institutional level as well as the personal level and in combination produce various social narratives on what it means to be a Danish Air Force soldier.

Additionally, the narratives can uncover struggles and resistance towards particular national as well as global narratives on gender, peace, and security, which again open up for a further examination of the ambiguities of military work at home and abroad from a gender perspective. The study brings attention to contextual settings; that is, how space, place, and time i.e. being at home or working at international military bases, influence experiences, constructions, and negotiations of a gendered military identity among soldiers, including negotiations over military masculinities and (gendered) military hierarchies, and how these intersect with other social categories, such as, race, ethnicity, nationality, and rank, age, and class play a large part in unraveling the complexities of negotiation military identities. These narrative negotiations at different levels in the organization therefore have the potential to reveal intriguing and new knowledge on the gendered implications of soldier work.

The topic has been analyzed within Feminist International Relations and Feminist Security Studies over the past 40 years, and within Critical Military Studies over the



past 15 years. In a Nordic context, the topic has also been of investigation, however, the field is still new (and limited) in a Danish setting, especially with a gender perspective. In this sense, the thesis unpacks the particularities of the Danish Armed Forces and brings forward new knowledge of the experiences of Royal Danish Air Force soldiers. Moreover, the thesis elucidates the relevance of including a gender perspective in unfolding the complexities of forming and negotiating military identities in the study of peace and security issues and the research thereby taps into a long-standing debate within the aforementioned bodies of literature, which, over the past many decades, have stressed the importance of a gender perspective in how military work is experienced differently, not only by the different actors i.e. institutions, nations, soldiers and civilians, but also in terms of gendered bodies that perform soldiering.



# DANSK RESUME

Den 31. oktober 2000 markerer en betydningsfuld dato inden for arbejdet med køn, fred og sikkerhed. Indtil da var kvinders oplevelser, perspektiver og de særlige konsekvenser, som konflikt og krig har for kvinder, mere eller mindre fraværende i militært arbejde i fredsbevarende og fredsskabende missioner. Datoen markerer således et skifte, da FN's Sikkerhedsrådet vedtog Sikkerhedsrådsresolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). En resolution som omhandler Kvinder, Fred og Sikkerhed og som markerer den første af indtil nu ni FN-resolutioner, der har til hensigt at indarbejde kønsperspektiver i internationale fredsbevarende (og fredsopbyggende) missioner. UNSCR 1325 har medvirket til at de kønnede implikationer af konflikt, fred og sikkerhed har opnået indflydelse i FNs militære missioner og senere NATO-missioner. Et emne som i årtier havde været på dagsordenen hos feministiske aktivister og forskere inden for feministiske internationale relationer (IR) (Cohn 2004; Schott 2013; Shepherd 2008; Gibbins 2011). Således er det i dag et element af FN's fredsbevarende missioner, som er vanskeligt at se bort fra for medlemslandene.

Ved at være en del af det 'venlige' og kosmopolitiske Nord i forhold til militært arbejde og politisk manifestere et engagement i internationalt militært arbejde gennem alliancer med NATO og FN, placerer Danmark sig som en militær styrke, der omend en relativt lille størrelse, er en aktiv aktør på den internationale arena. Dette tydeliggøres ved fx at være det første land i verden, som i 2005 vedtog UNSCR 1325. Ikke desto mindre har Danmark på trods af en national og institutionel selvpromovering, som værende et forgangsland inden for køn og militær arbejde, modtaget kritik fra FN såvel som fagfolk og praktikere. Et af hovedpunkterne i denne kritik har været et begrænset fokus på nationale tiltag inden for ligestilling i de Danske Forsvar samt konkrete handlinger til bekæmpelse af diskrimination. (Udenrigsministeriet, Forsvarsministeriet og Justitsministeriet 2014). I den nyeste nationale handlingsplan (NAP), som omfatter perioden for 2020-2024 har de forskellige involverede ministerier forholdt sig til denne kritik og beskriver en ambition om at "walk the talk" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Justice 2000).

Disse modstridende nationale og institutionelle fortællinger om at være et forgangsland for ligestilling mellem kønnene og samtidig modtage kritik for netop ikke at inkludere dette i nationale tiltag ift. hvordan det danske militær arbejder internt, skaber visse modstridende fortællinger om militært arbejde og militære identiteter, som har potentialet til at påvirke danske soldaters hverdag og deres forståelse af deres militære identitet, militære arbejde og pligter. Det fører også til udfordringer i forhandlingerne om militære identiteter, herunder inkludering af andre kønnede kroppe, endsige tilpasning til ledelsespolitikker på lokalt niveau og de potentielle uoverensstemmelser mellem praksis og politik.

Denne afhandling sætter således fokus på, hvorpå danske soldater forhandler deres militære identitet og deres rolle som fredsbevarende og fredsopbyggede gennem de opgaver, de udfører på internationale missioner og hjemme på baserne i Danmark. Dette indebærer en analyse af narrative forhandlinger om, hvem der betragtes som kvalificerede til at tjene i og arbejde som soldater, og hvad dette betyder for kønnede dynamikker. Mere konkret undersøges institutionelle, personlige og sociale narrativer inklusiv de måder, hvorpå disse relaterer sig til (globale/nationale/lokale) fortællinger om køn, fred og sikkerhed i Det Danske Flyvevåben. Dette gøres gennem en narrative analyse af officielle dokumenter fra det Danske Forsvar og Flyvevåbnet mangfoldighedsplanen fra 2011, fire nationale handlingsplaner for UNSCR 1325, rekrutteringsmateriale. Derudover analyserer jeg materiale fra websider fra de to Wings; Air Control Wing og Air Transport Wing i kombination med hoved empirien, som består af 24 individuelle interviews med mandlige og kvindelige soldater som aktivt tjener i det danske militær, og som har været på internationale missioner. Kombinationen af institutionelle, personlige og sociale narrativer sat i kontekst af det danske forsvar som en militær institution, det danske samfund samt globale aktører som FN og NATO muliggør en forståelse af kønnede oplevelser af fred, krig og konflikt. Desuden er den danske exceptionalistiske tilgang til især ligestilling, hvor et selv billede af at være forgangsland inden for ligestilling mellem kønnene og samtidig betragte emnet som en lukket sag ved at antage, at ligestilling allerede er opnået, interessant. I praksis kan disse modstridende fortællinger, forhandlinger og normative forståelser af ligestilling dog være mere tvetydige også i militære omgivelser. Derfor skabes og forhandles de forskellige narrativer, som jeg finder i denne afhandling, både på det institutionelle niveau og på det personlige niveau og giver i kombination forskellige sociale fortællinger om, hvad det vil sige at være en dansk soldat i flyvevåbnet.

Derudover kan fortællingerne afdække kampe og modstand mod bestemte nationale såvel som globale fortællinger om køn, fred og sikkerhed, som igen åbner op for en yderligere undersøgelse af tvetydighederne i militært arbejde derhjemme og på internationale missioner. Studiet viser også, hvordan kontekst; det vil sige, hvordan rum, sted og tid, fx at være hjemme eller arbejde på internationale militærbaser påvirker oplevelser, konstruktioner og forhandlinger om en kønnet militær identitet blandt soldater, herunder forhandlinger om militære maskuliniteter og (kønnede) militære hierarkier. Ligeledes påvirkes disse forhandlinger af en række andre sociale kategorier, såsom race, etnicitet, nationalitet, rang, alder og klasse, som hver især kan afsløre kompleksiteten af forhandlinger om militære identiteter. Disse narrative forhandlinger, som finder sted på flere niveauer i organisationen har derfor potentialet til at afsløre spændende og ny viden om de kønnede implikationer af militært arbejde.

Selv om området er blevet analyseret inden for henholdsvis feministiske internationale relationer, feministiske sikkerhedsstudier og kritiske militærstudier i henholdsvis de sidste 40 og 15 år, og også i en nordisk sammenhæng har været genstand for forskningsinteresse, så er feltet stadig nyt (og begrænset) i en dansk

kontekst, især i forhold til et kønsperspektiv. I den forstand bidrager afhandlingen til at klarlægge, hvorledes de danske væbnede styrkers særpræg bidrager eller udfordrer eksisterende forskning på området ud fra en national kontekst og frembringer ny viden omkring militære identitetskonstruktioner og forhandlinger set fra soldater ansat i det danske flyvevåben. Desuden belyser afhandlingen relevansen af at inkludere et kønsperspektiv i at udfolde kompleksiteten ved forhandlinger af militære identiteter i relation til freds- og sikkerhedsspørgsmål, og studiet taler dermed ind i en lang debat inden for de ovennævnte fagområder, som gennem de sidste mange årtier har understreget vigtigheden af et kønsperspektiv i, hvordan militært arbejde opleves forskelligt, ikke kun af de mange aktører, dvs. institutioner, nationer, soldater og civile, men også med hensyn til de kønnede kroppe, der udfører soldatering.



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Kathrine Bjerg Bennike,  
February 2021<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All pictures, used in this thesis, have been taken by the author at the 2018 Air Show.



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## **Appendix A: Interview Protocol (DK)**

## **Appendix B: Interview Protocol (ENG)**



# PROLOGUE

First, we look at the Soldier [the officer draws a box with the word soldier on a piece of paper]. This is the important part! Gender, ethnicity, race, religion, etc. are all irrelevant categories, if you can perform the duties of the soldier (Male Officer in the Royal Danish Air Force).

The above statement was made during my first preliminary meeting with a male Air Force officer and his female colleague at one of the air bases where I later conducted my interviews. I had prepared the meeting beforehand with slides and printed material about the scope of my research, which I presented at the beginning of the meeting, and we were now sitting and discussing the work they carried out at the base and their collaborations with The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). I had been nervous about the meeting, as this was new territory for me as an outsider to the military world and lingo. In addition, I wanted to make a good first impression, as this officer was my gatekeeper to the air base, and therefore to the soldiers, and his acceptance would ensure access to do the interviews for my project.

The officer's comment resonated with my knowledge from feminist IR theory, feminist security studies, and critical military studies on military culture and practices as well as normative ideas in Danish society about gender equality as something already achieved. At the same time, the idea of, "*We don't see gender in the military, only soldiers!*" seemed almost too rehearsed especially with the female junior officer sitting next to him, who had not uttered one word besides her name for the entire hour we had been talking. The male officer's insisting on articulating gender, ethnicity, race, religion, etc. as irrelevant categories also appeared simplified given that these categories have been the object of extensive attention in militaries around the world for some years.

The meeting underlined that the 'gender question' was very much part of the military setting even if articulated as being irrelevant. It also supported my initial feeling that the articulation and perceptions of the seemingly non-gendered duties, and required qualifications of soldiers perhaps had the potential to create ambiguities within military institutions, and/or between the soldiers, whether performing their duties domestically or abroad on international missions; not least as the latter requires transnational soldier collaborations as well as interaction with local populations in conflict-ridden areas. At the same time, the encounter with the two officers made me eager to interview more soldiers, and it supported my assumption that struggles over gender, peace, and security existed within the Danish Armed Forces and that these negotiations were part of creating different narratives on military work and military identities depending on the level of analysis.

I left the air base with a feeling that the research journey I was about to embark on would allow me to gain insights to the everyday lives of soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force working in Denmark and on international missions. Moreover, I sensed that the preexisting expectations I had from studying feminist IR, feminist security studies, and critical military studies about the significance of gender in military work and identity negotiations would hold significant value to the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force.

# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the end of World War II, the Danish Armed Forces has been through a process of changing its focus from primarily being a national defense force to focusing on international assignments and commitments to peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations<sup>2</sup>. The process began more formally in 1948 when Denmark took part in the first peacekeeping operation in the auspice of the United Nations (UN), and the transition has increased, especially since the 1990s with the wars in Kosovo and the Balkans (Forsvaret n.d.; Forsvaret and Forsvarsministeriet 2016). Today, peacekeeping and peacebuilding are dominating types of military assignments, which the Danish Armed Forces takes part in internationally through commitments to the UN and military alliances such as NATO. With this shift in assignments, the Danish Armed Forces focuses on being an active international player and ally in ensuring peace and security in conflict areas around the world with a human rights objective as the cornerstone of the missions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Justice 2014).

This approach links to what Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell (2018) describe as a cosmopolitan-minded ethic towards military obligations, which they argue can be seen in Denmark's commitment to military engagements especially in the post-Cold-War and post- 9/11 eras. A cosmopolitan-minded approach to military work ties closely to the UN and NATO's focus on gender in military engagements. Denmark's larger focus on missions outside Danish borders is therefore also part of an organizational (as well as political) realization that as a modern military, the Danish Armed Forces needs to adjust to new military requirements and tasks associated with peacekeeping and peacebuilding. One of these aspects is the increased focus on the gendered implications of war, peace, and security including how soldiers (a majority being male) and militaries play a significant role in gendered dynamics. An example of these gendered dynamics relates to the fact that women account for the vast majority of those affected by war and conflict, and at the same time, only make up a small fraction of those who make decisions on peace, conflict, and security issues.

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<sup>2</sup> One of the significant peacekeeping operations, which in a number of ways changed Denmark's commitment and recognition as an international military player, was Operation Bøllebank (Operation Hooligan Bashing). The operation was part of the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia in 1994 and it was the first combat operation conducted by the Danish Armed Forces since World War II. (Nielsen, Pyndiah, and Fridberg 2013). The international commitment means that Denmark has had military units from the Army in the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and the Navy has taken part in assignments in the Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf, Gibraltar, and the Gulf of Aden. Lastly, the Air Force has been operating in Afghanistan, Libya, Mali and the fight against ISIL in Iraq and Syria (Forsvaret 2016).

Moreover, when it comes to military bodies and thereby the ones who work and secure peace, female bodies are also a minority, which means that the composition of soldiers has the potential to (re)produce dichotomies between men and women in terms of who are protectors and who needs protection, which leads to unequal power relations in regards to who are given a voice in conflict situations (and settings), and whose perspectives are taken into account and acted upon locally, nationally, regionally, and globally.

A global (and local) awareness of gender in conflict and peace is a result of years of work from feminist scholars, NGOs, and practitioners alike who have stressed the need for gender perspectives in conflict work including during peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on *Women, Peace, and Security* adopted on October 31, 2000 (United Nations Security Council 2000) is a result of these efforts, and is the first UN resolution to actively include a gender (or rather a woman-centered) perspective to war and conflict (LSE 2019; Cohn and Duncanson 2020; Hutchinson 2020; Asante 2020; Shepherd 2020 ). A subsequent of nine UN resolutions have followed since the initial passing of 1325, all with different gender-related focus areas of conflict and peace processes. The 20-year-old resolution is still a significant frame of reference for examining gendered implications of military work today. Given its significance in initiating these conversations on gender in peace and security issues, 1325 is the historical starting point for this project in looking at action plans and task forces on gender at the international and national levels, and therein examine the nexus between the global and the local.

At the same time, in the twenty years since the resolution was adopted, work on gender and the military has developed, and critique of the resolution is part of discussions on how national as well as international actors incorporate gender into their military institutions (Shepherd 2008; LSE 2019; Cohn and Duncanson 2020; Hutchinson 2020; Asante 2020; Shepherd 2020 ). Part of the critique point relates to how gender often is used as a synonym for women, which can render short the implications of gender and gendered bodies. Related to this, UNSCR 1325 was part of the '*Women, Peace and Security Agenda*', with an articulation of *women*. However, a number of scholars within the field of feminist IR (see for instance Myrntinen, Khattab, and Naujoks 2017) work with the framework of *gender, peace, and security* to capture the complexities of gender in itself. In addition, it takes into account the point I made previously that despite women (local women, but also female soldiers) continuing to be particularly vulnerable in conflict settings, arguing from a *gender* framework leaves room for more nuances in discussing gendered issues of conflict including other gendered bodies. In this project, I therefore approach my material from a *Gender, Peace, and Security* position instead of a *Women, Peace, and Security* position.



Given the significance of gender in military work and Denmark's commitment to international assignments with a peacebuilding operations agenda, examining gendered dynamics of the Danish Armed Forces in terms of how soldiers understand gender to play a role in their military work domestically and internationally becomes pressing. More specifically, military work depends on context, or specific places and spaces, i.e. at home in Denmark or on international missions, being at or outside the bases, as well as the difference in assignments relating to services i.e. Air Force, Army, or Navy. Even within the different services, military work takes on different forms and functions depending on rank and type of employment. As the focus in this project is the Royal Danish Air Force, military work depends on work assignments of i.e. a pilot, flight mechanic, or radar observer. Nonetheless, despite differences in particular work assignments, the notion of being a military employee holds particular forms of identity formations, which unites soldiers in particular (gendered) ways and sets them aside from i.e. civilian employees in military institutions.

Military work is thus part of shaping soldiers' negotiations over (gendered) military identities, collectively and individually. This entails how gendered bodies (male, female, and other bodies) make use of forms of (especially military) masculinities and femininities in narrative negotiations over military identities and in relation to military work and soldier duties. This comprises an awareness of the significant functions that gendered dynamics play in the creation of military identities including relations among Danish soldiers, interactions with other international troops abroad, and with local populations in conflict areas. The military identity negotiations and constructions also take place in the crossroads between civilian life and a military carrier i.e. how to combine being a woman, man, mother, father, daughter, son, sister, brother, citizen etc. with performing the role of the soldier in a modern military. These identity negotiations are complex and often blurred and the boundaries are not always as concrete and tangible as the fences that separate the military world from the civilian realities of the soldiers. Moreover, military bodies are changing especially with the increase (albeit slowly) of female soldiers, which is part of shaping negotiations over military identities and the work they carry out. An element in this is the notion that space, place, and time become essential elements for the ways in which the soldiers are able to negotiate their identities including how these are fluid and have the potential to encompass different elements depending on where, when, and how soldiers relate to their military identity. This is for instance the case in regards to being a male or female soldier on deployment where space and place are significantly different to being at home, and where gender can have different meanings depending on the given context and/or situation. Or in the crossroads between family time after work to putting on the uniform in the morning and physically stepping into a compound that by the use of a fence is clearly marked military. A world which is in opposition to civilian life, and where time (i.e. length of service, numbers and length of missions abroad, etc.) carry significant importance for military interactions and the performances of soldier duties.

Additionally, gendered bodies in military work play a significant role in terms of identity formations individually and collectively, and relate to the performance of concrete work assignments and the visual presentation of the military. Hence, soldier bodies are expected to wear the same uniform regardless of gender, which is both due to the practicalities and function of the uniform, but it is also part of a process of creating one unified group that "looks" the same to stress the narrative that gender is irrelevant to soldier work, as long as the soldier can perform the duties required i.e. protection of the nation and securing peace in conflict settings. Nonetheless, as I have stressed this narrative is part of the ambiguities of gendered military identities, since the uniform is made primarily for male bodies, which makes for instance the simple act of peeing on missions more complicated and time-consuming for female bodies rather than male bodies. Hence, the gender-neutral soldier body in fact a gendered body, namely prototypically a male body, which has the potential in certain contexts, spaces, places, and situations to be more or less enunciated and create situations among soldiers that can lead to discrepancies and struggles in terms of understandings of what makes a good soldier and in this create gendered hierarchies in which the male (and white) soldier body is favored.

At the same time, the emphasis on a particular gender (or rather sex) in peacekeeping and peacebuilding assignments from international actors adds to the argument that thinking about gender-neutral soldier bodies is something at least international military organizations want to break with and instead emphasize differences in gendered soldier bodies as something good for especially peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. This creates certain challenges for the Danish military, as the percentage of women serving (7.6%) is relatively low compared to NATO allies i.e. the Norwegian (13%) and American (14%) (The Ministry of Defence 2019a; Forsvaret 2018; Enloe 2016). Moreover, it introduces the idea of the irrelevance of gender in performing soldier duties, which, as I discuss in further detail below, can be particularly pronounced in a Danish context. In addition, there is an expectation from NATO and the UN that Denmark meets and introduces training and policies relating to gender in the national defense as part of the commitment to international missions, thereby reclaiming gender as being of relevance and directly setting guidelines for the Danish Armed Forces.

Precisely because of the shift in the type of tasks and demands from the UN and NATO, the Danish Armed Forces has, over the past 10 years, focused on working with diversification (usually understood as women and ethnicity) to increase diversity, but with mixed results (The Ministry of Defence 2011; Værnsfælles Forsvarskommando 2015). This means that the soldiers working in the Royal Danish Air Force face new requirements and need to negotiate their gendered military identities in relation to national as well as global narratives on soldier work. The UN and NATO are significant components in these discussions, as Danish soldiers often work under the auspice of either NATO or the UN when deployed. Due to this close link between the Danish Armed Forces and these two organizations, resolutions and

actions initiated by the UN and NATO hold significant meaning for examining in particular Danish soldiers' relationship to gender in military work.

Even though the Nordic countries in general have a number of unifiers culturally, historically, and politically concerning gender awareness and comparisons between the Nordic militaries reveal common traits and practices, the approaches to the role of the military domestically and internationally as well as its link to citizenship and the state are somewhat different. One of these areas is commitments to the military alliance, NATO. Denmark, Finland, and Norway are all members, and the former Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg is serving as Secretary-General. Sweden, on the other hand, has maintained a neutrality position. Another significant difference is the countries' respective approaches to conscription. In 2013, Norway opted for conscription for both men and women (Royal Norwegian Embassy in London 2013). In 2010, Sweden transformed to a full professional Army and abolished conscription (Försvarsmakten 2010). However, in 2017, less than five years later, Sweden returned to conscription similar to Norway where both men and women are required to serve (Nielsen 2017; Strand 2019). Conversely, Finland and Denmark have maintained conscription for men, where Finnish and Danish women have the *right* to volunteer for service. A right which was granted to Danish women in 1998 (Sløk-Andersen 2014; The Finnish Defence Forces 2016). Nonetheless, following Kronsell's argument of the interconnectedness between citizenship and civic duties, the continuous male conscription in Denmark could be seen as a democratic equality issue in which Danish women can only perform the role of second-class citizens (Kronsell 2012, pp 30-37).

Different approaches to men's and women's obligations towards the state and military service among the Nordic countries thus speak into a more general debate in the Nordic region about gender equality and Nordic exceptionalism. As Borchorst points out:

In many contexts, the Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Norway and Denmark) have been celebrated for being at the forefront generating social equality and gender equality, and it has been a recurrent theme in the national self representations that gender equality is a hallmark of the region. It has been concluded that they have 'a passion for equality.'[...] The image has been substantiated in large scale quantitative comparisons (Borchorst 2009, 1).

Connected to the above discussions, is the idea introduced previously of the Nordic countries as friendly (cosmopolitan) (Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell 2018) nations with a human rights agenda at the cornerstone of their welfare state systems in relation to social, economic, and political policies (Borchorst 2009; Dahlerup 2018). As I argued at the beginning of this chapter, this image transcends into the Nordic's foreign policy agendas where human rights and contributing to peacekeeping/peacebuilding has been part of the political agenda (and continues to be) (Bergman Rosamond and

Kronsell 2018; Rosamond 2013; Bennike and Stoltz 2015; Daugbjerg and Refslund Sørensen 2017). Hence, the image of being frontrunners particularly on human rights and gender equality issues has been deemed part of the idea of Nordic exceptionalism. As Loftsdóttir and Jensen argue, "*Nordic exceptionalism has been especially spelled out in relation to research on current forms of internationalization, where it is usually taken to revolve around the notion of the Nordic countries as global 'good citizens', peace-loving, conflict-resolution orientated and 'rational'*" (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2016a, 2). The idea behind Nordic exceptionalism is thus a key component in Nordic and national identities of the Nordic states and is part of shaping how the Nordic nations, Denmark included, present themselves internally and externally (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2016a, 1).

Simultaneously, Loftsdóttir and Jensen (2016) discuss how the Nordic countries, Denmark as well, have failed to question their own involvement in colonial and racist activities, despite actively engaging in anti-racist and anti-imperial activities since the 1970s (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2016a, 2). This is also relevant for the Danish Armed Forces in which exceptionalism can be viewed in the case of a particular self-image. As such, the image of a friendly and peace-contributing nation resonates with the description found in written material from the Danish Armed Forces and Ministry of Defense (this will be discussed further in Chapter 4). It is further part of the national Danish context, which influences the identity formations of the soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force in terms of their understandings of the work they carry out as professional soldiers. Moreover, the idea of contributing to peace and being a *force for good* (see Duncanson 2009; 2013) is a military identity trait, which a number of soldiers identify with and attribute value to in their narratives. In this sense, it is relevant to examine how the self-image of a national identity of the Nordics, Denmark included, resonates with the national identity of the Royal Danish Air Force as a military service and its soldiers and influences negotiations of military identities.

Albeit Nordic Exceptionalism has been linked to the Nordic region in relation to social, economic, and political policies, and been part of the Nordic identity as described by Loftsdóttir and Jensen (2016), it is also an idea that is difficult to describe. Thus, as Stoltz argues, Nordic exceptionalism can be viewed as a "*strong metaphor that is weak on analytical capacity*" (Stoltz 2020, 23-43). Hence, Nordic exceptionalism builds on a number of myths about the Nordic region and struggles against inequality through democratization processes and the building of the welfare state (Stoltz 2020; Dahlerup 2018), but where self-reflections over injustice in practice has the potential to take a background position to maintain a particular self-image. Nordic exceptionalism further includes understandings of particular Nordic ways of addressing (intersectional) categories such as race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, and gender. An understanding that is embedded with a shared self-understanding that the Nordics are particularly just, equal, and reflective in combatting social, economic, and political injustices. Nonetheless, the practices of these normative understandings of the Nordic (and Danish) way may be more nuanced, problematic, and, at times,

even contradicting in terms of what is happening in reality (Borchorst 2009; Bloksgaard 2012; Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2016a; Siim and Stoltz 2015). This may include a lack of self-reflection in terms of race and gender, which I address in Chapters 5-6 in regard to the soldiers' understandings of gender issues in particular, but also race and nationality in relation to international missions.

In continuation of this, on a number of topics, Denmark positions itself in an exceptional place among the Nordics and in particular as a Scandinavian country in relation to gender and diversity (Bloksgaard 2012; Bloksgaard and Faber 2004; Thidemann Faber and Nielsen 2015; Rolandsen Agustín and Siim 2015; Dahlerup 2018; Fiig, Rolandsen Agustín, Siim 2022). In her 2018 book, Drude Dahlerup argues that what is especially significant about exceptionalism and gender in a Danish context is the idea of a *Closed Case*. Meaning that even though almost everyone seemingly supports gender equality and adheres to the idea of a particular Nordic way that is *just*, gender equality in Denmark is stagnating and even declining in certain areas and resistance to discuss the topic and potential flaws in the Danish system is common (Dahlerup 2018). In addition, the articulation of gender equality and discussions on this in the public domain are to a certain degree influenced by a normative understanding that there is no need to discuss gender because there are no issues since Denmark as a nation already has achieved gender equality (Borchorst 2009; Bloksgaard 2004; 2012; Dahlerup 2018).

The previous findings (cf. above) of the impact on gender in workplaces and organizations in Denmark provide interesting perspectives to the discussions on gender (and peace and security) in the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force, especially considering that the Danish Armed Forces is one of the largest public workplaces in Denmark, and face continued challenges with diversity i.e. recruitment of women. Bloksgaard (2012) makes the point that the concept of being 'gender-neutral' is often used within Danish organizations to stress a normative understanding that gender is of no relevance for the type of job or the performance of the worker (where, in fact, the opposite is often true in practice) (Bloksgaard 2012, 163). This idea, which Bloksgaard presents, resonates with the Danish Armed Forces' understanding of "*not seeing gender*" but "*just soldiers*". A perception, which my initial quote of gender being "*an irrelevant category*" in the opening section of this chapter also exemplifies. At the same time, the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force management levels are aware of the importance of a gender perspective and the impact this has on the organization, including pressure from international resolutions and collaborators to address this topic, and are actively working to find ways to incorporate diversity (read women) into the organization. This is often done with an operational effectiveness goal in mind similar to global institutions like the UN and NATO's approach to include gender (meaning women) into military operations.

Moreover, whereas the Swedish and Norwegian (and to some degree Finnish) militaries long have been subject to academic interest through a gender perspective, (Bergman Rosamond 2013; Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell 2018; Skjelsbæk and Smith 2001; Rones 2015; Haaland 2010; Kronsell and Svedberg 2012; Strand 2019), Danish research on the topic has until recently been limited, but now slowly growing (Sand and Fasting 2012). Since I began working on this project in 2016, a small number of significant academic work on the Danish military has emerged. This includes: Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell's 2018 article, *Cosmopolitan militaries and dialogic peacekeeping: Danish and Swedish women soldiers in Afghanistan*, which places focus on the dialogic role that female soldiers, in particular, can have in international peacekeeping missions and how this brings forward nuances to the understandings of soldier bodies and qualifications. Beate Sløk-Andersen's PhD dissertation from the same year titled, *The Becoming of Good Soldiers*, which examines the gendered implications and practices among Danish conscripts is another example of a study, which critically examines the Danish Armed Forces through gendered lenses and brings focus on the ways in which gender plays a role in the identity formations among young recruits. In addition, an edited volume published in the Journal of Critical Military Studies in 2017 titled *Becoming a warring nation: the Danish 'military moment' and its repercussions*, focuses among other topics on the complexities of the relationship between being a nation that emphasizes a cosmopolitan-minded approach to conflict and peacebuilding and, at the same time, can be argued to take place in military work that resembles traditional warfare and in this challenge the self-image of being a peacebuilder. Moreover, a second edited volume published in 2018 by Mohr, Sløk-Andersen, and myself on *Gender, War, and the Military* in the Journal Women, Gender, and Research, brings attention to current debates within the fields of feminist IR, feminist security studies, and critical military studies and addresses topics of war, military, conflict, and security through gender lenses.

These publications are an indication of the increased attention to the topic and its gaining interest in Denmark among scholars, practitioners, politicians, and the military itself. Nonetheless, knowledge on how gender is perceived and understood among Danish soldiers; when and how gender matters (or not matters) in terms of performing soldier duties; how gender is constructed and negotiated domestically vis á vis on international missions abroad; and what dynamics, possible differences, discrimination, and unequal treatment it might produce, is still limited, let alone how these understandings are part of the negotiations that the soldiers make use of in their narratives on military identity and work. This thesis contributes to this increasing work and engages in conversations on the gendered dynamics of the Danish military. By approaching this from a narrative angle and allowing male and female soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force to narrate how they understand their military identities and how they approach their work and duties as Air Force soldiers, I bring forward similar gendered identity constructions to what Sløk-Andersen address in her work. However, by approaching these issues from the perspective of professional soldiers

versus conscripts, I am able to grasp the complexities of gendered dynamics in relation to how professional soldiers balance gender in regard to their active lives as soldiers, the interlinks between civilian and military lives, as well as how deployments and interactions with transnational soldiers and local populations shape military identity constructions and negotiations. Moreover, by talking to soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force, who have been deployed on international peacekeeping/building missions, I engage in the discussion that i.e. Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell (2018) bring forward regarding dialogical peacebuilding and question whether these positions are relatable to female soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force or whether job functions, services, and circumstances such as space and place i.e. being mostly inside the military bases, which is often the case for soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force, present different gendered negotiations over military identities and performing military work.

The newfound focus on gender, including attention to cases of discrimination and sexual harassment, in the Danish Armed Forces has also been sparked by the newly established Union for Female Veterans (established July 11, 2017), as well as lessons learned from other Scandinavian countries. One example of this is the 2019 Norwegian report on gender discrimination and sexual harassment, which resulted in a similar Danish examination of the problems. Under pressure from among others, the Union for the Female Veterans, former Chief of Defense Bjørn Bissrup agreed to initiate an assessment on the current state of affairs regarding gender discrimination and exploitation (Nielsen 2019; Müller 2019; “Kvindelige Veteraner – Danmarks Veteraner” n.d.; Øhrstrøm, Eriksen, and Knudsen 2003).

Although the former Chief of Defense acknowledged that there are likely to be dark figures in the number of incidents, he maintained that, in general, the Danish Armed Forces was well capable of handling a diverse personnel group. The exact extent of the problem in a Danish setting is still fairly unclear, as the only extensive report on the matter was made in 2003 (Øhrstrøm, Eriksen, and Knudsen 2003), which until last year only had been followed-up by internal work assessment reports (APVs), without specific attention to sexual harassment and gender discrimination. The results of the new internal assessment from 2019 show that there are still issues with gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the Danish Armed Forces, albeit the numbers are lower than the report from 2003. At the same time, there is a clear gender bias in the results where women to a higher degree report to have experienced discriminatory practices and sexual harassment (Forsvaret 2019; Forsvarsministeriet 2019). Despite the seeming decline in cases within the Danish Armed Forces since the 2003 report, it is fair to assume, given the new report and dark figures from the Union for Female Veterans, as well as experiences from other nations including Norway and Sweden, that the Danish Armed Forces experience similar issues. The idea that the Danish military should be exceptional in this regard and different from other militaries i.e. the Swedish, Norwegian, and British in the implications of the inclusion of other gendered bodies seems unlikely. What might be exceptional to the Danish case, however, is the

ways in which the institution as well as the soldiers relate to cases of gender discrimination and understandings of gender in general in terms of military work.

Several potentially conflicting narratives are therefore present in the Danish military's approach to gender, peace, and security. Hence, the various narratives, which I locate in this thesis are formed and negotiated at the institutional, as well as, the personal level and in combination produce various social narratives on what it means to be a Danish Air Force soldier. Moreover, these different narrative negotiations at different levels in the organization, and which are influenced by local and global voices on gender, peace, and security, have the potential to reveal intriguing and new knowledge on the gendered implications of soldier work.

## **1.1. AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In this thesis, I collect narratives in and across the Royal Danish Air Force and Danish Armed Forces by studying official institutional documents, engaging in conversations with the management, and, as the main empirical data, conduct individual interviews with male and female soldiers. Combined this presents new knowledge as few presiding academic qualitative studies on the Danish military (in this case the Royal Danish Air Force) exist. This is particularly the case in terms of previous research that incorporates a gender perspective (Sand and Fasting 2012). This project, therefore, opens up new insights into the gendered dynamics of military work within the Royal Danish Air Force.

I am interested in how different narratives are part of constructing military identities for the soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force as well as the official institutional narratives of the Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces. This includes analyzing how processes of negotiating military identities (Woodward 2003; Woodward and Jenkins 2011) and what constitutes military work is relational and involves several actors i.e. the soldiers and military institutions. Additionally, the examination includes attention to how negotiations of identities may look different depending on service and context. This means that because identity constructions and negotiations are relational surrounding society for instance the Danish context or international settings on deployments effect the identity negotiation processes (Woodward 2003).

In combination, the institutional and personal soldier narratives offer a more comprehensive understanding of military work and military identity negotiations and illustrate how space, place, and time, for instance through deployments, are part of creating, maintaining, and challenging military narratives. This includes how narratives and presentations of the Royal Danish Air Force and the work they carry out take on different forms depending on where in the organization one is looking i.e. official institutional narratives versus personal soldier narratives.



As I have presented, the Danish Armed Forces (including the Royal Danish Air Force) face a number of challenges in incorporating a gender perspective into the organization, which is evident in different narrative accounts. This is both in terms of the inclusion of other gendered bodies (mainly female soldiers), but also in terms of understanding how gender dynamics for instance among soldiers (male and female; male and male), and also in relation to male and female members of local populations in conflict settings are part of military identity formations and military work domestically and internationally.

By taking an approach to my research of listening (Stern 2005, 2006; Wibben 2011) to the voices of soldiers through narrative interviews, I can examine how the soldiers negotiate their military identities and military work in a way that allows the perspectives of an often overlooked group in the official Danish military constructions and negotiations of narratives on gender, peace, and security. Thus, the soldiers' voices through their narrative accounts take a lead position in the analysis of narratives on military work and military identities, as these are formed and negotiated within the Royal Danish Air Force.

The, at times, disconnect between policy and practice, in this regard on gender equality, can lead to challenges in implementation processes within large organizations (Meyer 1995; Faber, Gemzøe, and Nielsen 2017). This is also the case for the Danish Armed Forces, which is built on particular gendered stereotypes of soldier work and soldier bodies. Thus, the potential ambiguities in narratives between the institution and the soldiers, led me to pursue the following main research question and three sub-research questions:

#### Main Research Question:

*How do the Royal Danish Air Force and Royal Danish Air Force soldiers negotiate gendered military identities and bodies in military work in narratives on gender, peace and security?*

#### Sub-Research Questions:

- 1) How do the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force narrate gendered institutional identities, military bodies, and military work and relate these to global narratives on gender, peace, and security?
- 2) How do Royal Danish Air Force soldiers negotiate gendered identities, bodies, and military work in the everyday crossroads of military and civilian life?

- 3) How do Royal Danish Air Force soldiers negotiate gendered identities and bodies in international military work, including how the particular assignments of the Royal Danish Air Force influence soldier narratives on security and peace?

In section 1.4., I present a reader's guide to the thesis, where I explain in more details the sub-research questions and how they relate to the chosen methods, material, and theories used in the thesis. But first, I introduce my approach to the field and subsequently present the Royal Danish Air Force in more details.

## **1.2. TAKING A NARRATIVE APPROACH**

I approach the thesis through an interdisciplinary focus, including discussions on positionality and methodological choices counting different types of qualitative (and to some degree quantitative) methods of collecting and analyzing data. Hence, the research situates itself within a number of interrelated fields (i.e. feminist IR, feminist security studies, critical military studies, and intersectional research), and takes a field study approach by applying especially qualitative methods, mainly in the form of narrative interviews. I am therefore in line with critical military scholars Victoria Basham and Sarah Bulmer (2017), who argue that there is much to be gained by approaching gendered dynamics within a military setting through the skeptical eyes of critical military studies. This means that in the case of the Danish military and examining the constructions and negotiations of soldier narratives, it is important to give attention to the particularities of the personal stories and the links and disconnects between the empirical data and previously used understandings of masculinities within feminist IR. This is also connected to the fact that military work takes on different forms today, and the soldier bodies, albeit slowly, are changing for instance in terms of the number of female bodies or other gendered bodies that enter the force and become part of the collective soldier body.

Engaging in a study on the Royal Danish Air Force with a particular focus on gendered dynamics and narrative negotiations as components in military identities resonates with research within feminist IR and security studies (see for example Tickner 1988; Halliday 1988; Newland 1988; Cohn 1987; Enloe 2000; Tickner and Sjöberg 2011; Sheperd 2013; Elshtain 1982; Goldstein 2003 [first published 2001]; Hansen 2000). The fields gained attention in a Nordic context from the 2000s and onwards and were in particular initiated by scholars such as Annika Kronsell (2001; 2012; 2014), Erika Svedberg (2001; 2012), Anita Schjølset (2013), and Alma Persson (2013). These scholars, among others, began to focus on the gendered implications of security, militarism, war, and conflict, including how constructions and negotiations of masculinities and femininities are key components in (gendered) hierarchies also within the Nordic militaries.

Linked closely to feminist security studies and feminist IR, critical military studies as a new field merges military study with a critical, and in many cases, feminist approach to examining and investigating the military as an institution, its members (i.e. soldiers), actions, and interventions. This includes how these function locally and globally. Furthermore, within critical military studies, there is a focus on the role of the researcher, which includes reflections of what it means to conduct empirical studies within a military organization and thereby engaging directly with the institutions (Basham, Belkin, and Gifkins 2015). Within critical military studies, there is an acknowledgement of the changes that have happened in modern militaries i.e. to include more gender perspectives (although often very essentialist forms) in work and organizations, and that these changes challenge some of the conclusions and findings previously produced in feminist IR (Basham, Belkin, and Gifkins 2015).

Although gender relations are contextual and intersectionally specific (Christensen and Jensen 2014), the storyline seems to cross over geographical space, place, and time. Basham and Bulmer (2017) acknowledge in their critique that feminist scholars have contributed to building the field in questioning and unraveling the relationships between war, gender, and the military. What critical military studies suggest, however, is that some feminist work risks blind spots in their analyses. This includes, as pointed to by Rachel Woodward and Claire Duncanson (2016), missing the possibilities of changes in gender relations within militaries, which have taken place over the past decade in particular, thereby only seeing one aspect of the gender-military nexus and perhaps missing changes in the power dynamics in military settings today (Basham and Bulmer 2017; Duncanson and Woodward 2016).

I do not argue that feminist IR scholars engage uncritically in gendered dynamics of military work and relations and rely on essentialized ideas. What I do want to point to is that the field of feminist IR given the political agenda and (at times) distance to the empirical cases sometimes miss changes that are currently happening within militaries. Changes that could challenge concepts and dichotomies, which previously might have made sense or at least makes less sense in some contexts today. Hence, by combining feminist IR thinking with a critical military approach, I challenge some of these pitfalls and keep an open mind to the interview material and the stories told by the soldiers. This is done with attention to the need for awareness of the dangers of adopting a militarized mindset and language and becoming blind to the atrocities of war and conflict on a macro (as well as micro-level) due to personal encounters with soldiers and subsequent sympathy to their stories and lived experiences (Basham and Bulmer 2017; Cohn 1987).

By taking a critical military approach to this study, I am able to address military power as a question rather than a fact and in this process with skeptical curiosity problematize the boundaries between what is considered “military” and what is measured as “civilian”. Thereby arguing that the lines are much more blurred in reality and what we consider to be *inside* or *outside* military spheres is intertwined and more indistinct

(Basham, Belkin, and Gifkins 2015; Chisholm and Tidy 2017; Belkin and Carver 2012). Furthermore, this allows attention to soldiers' transition from civilian life to military service and vice versa and in addressing the ways in which the military, *"apparatuses classify and bureaucratize bodies and minds shaped by combat, and the defiance of those classifications by other bodies and the very bodies they seek to order"* (Basham, Belkin, and Gifkins 2015, 1).

By engaging in such examinations, it is possible to examine the "in-between", that is, the places, spaces, bodies (and concepts) that are not exclusively military and not simply civilian thereby exposing tensions and problematizing the military power in multiple displays and forms. This process includes rethinking and problematizing concepts used such as *military power, militarism, and militarization*. This approach becomes relevant in an examination of the Danish Armed Forces, where gendered narratives on military work and identity also rely on different and at times conflicting approaches to understanding what it means to be a soldier and what the armed forces are supposed to do, and how they interact with the surrounding society. In this sense, I argue that the ways in which militaries engage with the surrounding society influence how the soldiers construct their military identities and the narratives they tell each other and outsiders of their work.

Feminist IR, feminist security studies, and critical military studies have a long tradition of critically assessing gender (women), peace, and security. The work centers on narratives on war, conflict, and peace, including how these rely on gendered narratives and even gendered myths about men and women (and other gendered bodies) in terms of i.e. their obligation towards the state and their actions/or non-action in times of war (Elshtain 1987; Yuval-Davis 1997; Cohn 2013; Tickner 1992). These bodies of literature address grand narratives of war and conflict, and by *"framing what we think about war (and peace), they constitute expressions of profoundly gendered constructs, which are continually reconstituted and reinforced"* (Wibben 2011, 103.). To critically reexamine grand narratives and engage in conversations where marginalized voices are heard, is key in feminist IR and feminist security studies approaches to narrative research (Elshtain 1987; Wibben 2011; Sylvester 2013). In this regard, listening to soldier voices in the form of narrative accounts of their military lives is a format by which I uncover narratives of war and conflict, which are seldom given voice in official military narratives, the Danish included, but nonetheless are part of the narratives of Denmark's military engagements.

Taking inspiration from feminist IR, feminist security studies, and critical military scholars means that in my theoretical approach, I engage with and reflect on the reproduction of militarization, the different types of military work, the nexus between civilian and military (at home and abroad), gendered military hierarchies, as well as the constructions and negotiations over military masculinities. These reflections also extend to my thoughts and experiences of becoming acquainted with the military

through collecting my empirical data and the military apparatus, and thus reflections on what this means for the study. In addition, I include these perspectives within a discussion on time, space, and place (Woodward 2003) where the global and the local intertwine and where I argue that Danish exceptionalism addressed earlier has its place. Hence, a critical military approach combined with feminist IR thinking to examine the Royal Danish Air Force fits well with taking a feminist perspective to conduct research and connects with a narrative approach to understanding this topic through institutional narratives combined with individual actors (soldier narratives).

I use a narrative approach (Shenshav 2015) to analyze military identities with the awareness that identities and therefore also the negotiations of these are relational and depend on (gendered) structures of militaries, national contexts, such as the Danish. Moreover, I use an intersectional approach, since I understand negotiations of military identities especially from the soldiers to be depended on categories such as race (whiteness), nationality, rank, religion, ethnicity, sexuality etc. (Christensen and Jensen 2012; 2014). The intersectional approach also means that I understand social categories as element that intersect in different ways and take foreground or background positions depending on space, place, and time (Higate 2003; Woodward 2003).

The main empirical data is the personal soldier narratives, which consists of 24 approximately 90 minute long interviews with soldiers employed in the Royal Danish Air Force, who have been on international peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. The soldiers, 12 men and 12 women, rank from privates to officers with the youngest soldiers in their mid-twenties and the oldest just past 60 years of age, and all interviews were carried out in 2017 at Air Control Wing (ACW) and Air Transport Wing (ATW).

At the same time, and as mentioned earlier, I combine personal narratives from the soldiers with the official *Institutional narratives* produced by the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force. Furthermore, I make a distinction between *Institutional narratives*, *Personal narratives*, and *Social narratives*. This distinction, which I will elaborate on below, is important for how I approach my data and my analysis, as these narratives function on different levels and have different actors.

- The *Institutional narratives* refer to the narratives produced by the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces, which are found in recruitment material, action plans, diversity plans, and other official documents produced by the Danish military and the Ministry of Defense.
- The *Personal narratives* refer to the personal soldier accounts collected in my interviews with military personnel in the Royal Danish Air Force.
- The *Social narratives* refer to shared narratives found in the personal narratives of the soldiers and in the institutional narratives produced by the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces; narratives that

include reflections on what it means to conduct military work and be part of a military institution.

Common for all three categories of narratives is that they rely on/take inspiration from global as well as national narratives on gender, peace, and security. These different narratives are part of shaping the various narrative accounts (the institutional, personal, and social) and likewise are components in the narrative negotiations that take place among the soldiers, in relation to the institutional narratives, and the creation and connection to the social narratives. In this way, macro and micro-narratives come together to create meaning for the soldiers in terms of their military identity and the negotiations are part of creating common and individual military identities in the Royal Danish Air Force and among the soldiers.

To examine differences and similarities between these narrative accounts, I apply Political Scientist Shaul R. Shenhav's work on social narratives (Shenhav 2015). Shenhav makes a distinction between collective and social narratives and discusses the relevance of using the latter concept to capture the complexities of narratives that combine both individual and collective narratives in the case of military work. In this sense, Shenhav argues that the concept of social narratives takes into account that the social domain is not simply, *"an aggregation of stories but rather the product of the multiplicity dynamic, namely the process of repetition and variation through which narratives are being reproduced at the social sphere"* (Shenhav 2015, 17).

Shenhav's concept of social narratives allows me to include perspectives from the institutional narratives and the personal soldier narratives in presentations and negotiations over social narratives of the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces. Following Shenhav's logic, it is possible to situate contemporary events experienced by the soldiers and addressed in the institutional narratives, for instance, relating to contributions to international missions by which the narratives come to unfold *"social events in a time frame that extends beyond their temporal boundaries, giving the audience a sense of continuity and familiarity with episodes and occurrences that they personally would never have experienced"* (Shenhav 2015, 11). In this way, I understand the interview material (text) as a way to uncover the realities of the soldiers i.e. how they experience their role as professional soldiers in relation to the military institution as well as surrounding society, which combined make it possible to understand phenomena such as identity formations and negotiations and how these are relational and depended on context and intersectional categories. This means that I view the interview text as a reflection of lived experiences of the soldiers, and, although I am aware, that I, as a researcher, am part of the interview setting and therefore also part of how the narratives are constructed in the sense that the soldiers may tell their stories in different ways depending on the audience, I still see the interview material as a reflection of the soldiers' realities more than analyze the interview text with the intention to understand how such narratives

are co-produced by the one telling the story (the soldier) and the person listening (the researcher).

Using qualitative data in the form of narrative interviews builds on the idea that soldiers' experiences (in the form of personal narratives) provide valuable information for understanding how military work and identity are constructed and negotiated at the local level and how these support and/or challenge institutional narratives on military work and identity within the Royal Danish Armed Forces. Additionally, narratives are sites for identity constructions and consists of both grand narratives of war and peace, as well as personal narratives, which have the potential to reveal elements of conflicts, which are seldom given voice in grand narratives (Wibben 2011; Sylvester 2013). Engaging in a narrative approach to unlock discrepancies and ambiguities of the gendered narratives of war, conflict, and military institutions aligns with the endeavor in this project to bring forward narratives from individuals at the bottom of the organization and situate these within institutional and social, as well as global and national narratives on gender, peace, and security (Wibben 2011, 103).

As I have already stressed, spaces, places, and time are essential elements in the negotiations and constructions of military identities. Moreover, a number of intersectional categories such as race (in this project mainly whiteness), ethnicity, religions, rank, and age intersect with gender and are part of the concrete negotiations that the soldiers engage in through narrative accounts of their military identities as well as the work they carry out. In addition, I argue that the national context has a large influence on soldier identities and is part of creating both institutional, personal, and social narrative of who the Royal Danish Air Force is and what they do. As Haaland argues, soldiers are first and foremost homeland defenders whether they are deployed on a UN peacekeeping mission or a NATO mission (Haaland 2010). The national context of Denmark and the understanding that gender equality is a closed case is an important element to address in the narrative negotiations. In the following section, I, therefore, introduce the Royal Danish Air Force more closely and bring forward some of the particularities of this service within a national context.

### **1.3. THE PARTICULARITIES OF THE ROYAL DANISH AIR FORCE**

The Danish Armed Forces is the largest public workplace in Denmark with 20,420 employees as of July 2019 with 4,944 categorized as civilians (which includes doctors, electricians, chefs, teachers, engineers, journalists, IT-people) (The Ministry of Defence 2019c). The Danish Armed Forces still has mandatory conscription for men, whereas women have the option (right) to serve (Borgerservice 2016). The

current Danish conscription period is four months<sup>3</sup> and is referred to as basic training<sup>4</sup>. After four months, young citizens are required to be available for duty for up to three months for a five-year period. The availability refers to any total defense situation that Denmark might find itself in. It is important to stress, however, that individuals who have served their conscription period for the 4 months are unable to be deployed and are not required to engage in further training/education within the military (Forsvarsministeriet 2006) (Borgerservice 2016). In this sense, the conscription period is considered safe training without dangers and potential risks of combat (Sløk-Andersen 2018, 16). This perspective is important to keep in mind when discussing the conscription system versus a professional military in a Danish context. As well as the difference between conscripts and professional soldiers, the latter being the focus of this research and for whom the armed forces is a career choice, which entails deployments to conflict areas and potential in high-risk situations with latent serious consequences as part of their jobs.

Three services make up the Danish Armed Forces: The Air Force, the Army, and the Navy. The Army is the largest service with approximately 8,000 military employees (Forsvarsministeriet 2016). During the period of conducting research and collecting data for this thesis (beginning January 2016), the attention to the annual military spending among NATO allies has become a highly debated topic, especially with the U.S. enforcing the minimum of 2% of GDP. Thus, when I initially reported the numbers for the Danish military budget, it was around 21 billion DKK (approximately 3.1 billion \$USD<sup>5</sup>), which is equivalent to approximately 1.2% of the annual Danish GDP (Forsvarsministeriet 2016) (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation 2019). However, in 2019 the budget has increased to 23.6 billion DKK (approx. 3.5 billion \$USD (Defense Ministry 2019). In the coming years, Denmark is committed to raising its military spending to 1.5% of the GDP in 2023, up from 1.35% planned this year (Gronholt-Pedersen 2019).

Despite the increase in budget, the numbers still illustrate that the Danish Armed Forces is a small force with a relatively small budget compared to other NATO allies i.e. the U.S. or Germany, and it is still not at the 2% GDP that NATO requests. Nonetheless, as presented previously, the Danish Armed Forces is an active member of the UN, NATO, and a number of other coalitions, and since 1948, Denmark has participated in peacekeeping and peacebuilding under the auspices of the UN and NATO (Forsvaret 2016).

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<sup>3</sup> Few exceptions to the 4-month duration of the conscription period exists.

<sup>4</sup> The training includes: weapons training, field service, first aid, firefighting, and environmental education.

<sup>5</sup> Following NATO standards, the figures are accounted for in both the national currency (DDK crones) as well as in US Dollars.



The Royal Danish Air Force is the second-largest force with approximately 3,380 employees and has the highest number of women serving at 9.6% compared to the Army's 7.2% (Forsvarsministeriets Personalestyrelse 2016a) (see numbers in Table 2 as well as figure 3-4)<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, women have been present in the Royal Danish Air Force since 1953 via the Women's Aviation Corp (non-military positions). The Royal Danish Air Force was also the first of the three services to appoint Denmark's first female general in 2016 (Finnedal VFK 2016). Nonetheless, despite the historical presence of women in the Royal Danish Air Force, it was not until 1992 that women were allowed to serve as fighter pilots, despite the ban on women in combat had been lifted in 1988 for all services (see Sløk-Andersen's work on women's entry into the Danish Armed Forces from 2014).

Moreover, the Royal Danish Air Force is a comparatively new service (70 years old) and the youngest of the three services. Royal Danish Air Force has a unique set of assignments and relies heavily on machines and a highly technologically-specialized workforce to solve assignments domestically and internationally instead of large quantities of workforce. Moreover, the Royal Danish Air Force carries out a number of different tasks domestically and internationally on a regular basis, with short deployments and highly specialized personnel making their military work and lives different from a large part of the work the Army carries out (Flyvevåbnet 2019).

In this sense, most of the assignments that the Royal Danish Air Force carries out differ significantly from those of the Army in terms of physical strength. Furthermore, the Royal Danish Air Force is often used for international assignments, as Denmark's contribution to international tasks under the auspices of NATO or the UN often takes the form of transportation via the Hercules Planes, Air control, or Fighter Jets. In terms of examining gendered narrative negotiations, the Royal Danish Air Force makes an interesting case, as this service, in particular, is not conducting physically straining work in the same format as the Army. Hence, notions and perceptions often presented against women's enrolment in the armed forces (i.e. the physical superiority of men makes them better soldiers) have the potential to be less relevant meaning that traditional gender ideals may be approached and/or challenged in a different way, including ideas of military masculinities. Furthermore, narratives on gendered military bodies are potentially negotiated in different ways and through different strategic narratives in order to place themselves as soldiers within the hierarchy of the

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<sup>6</sup> When I initiated the project in January 2016, the total number of women serving in the Defense was slightly lower. Hence, the Danish Armed Forces as a whole has seen an increase in personnel and especially the Army has seen an increase in the number of women serving in military positions. The numbers in 2016 were respectively Army: 451 (5.6%), Navy: 183 (7.2%), Air Force 299 (9.6%) and total: 933 (6.8%). The Royal Danish Air Force is the only one of the three services that has not seen an increase in the number of female military personnel. This indicates that the institutional narrative produced by the Royal Danish Air Force about being ahead of the other services in regard to attracting women may be subject to some changes in the coming years (The Ministry of Defense 2019c; 2019a).

Royal Danish Air Force, but also within the Danish Armed Forces as a whole and in relation to other international troops.

### **1.3.1. WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?**

Since 1991, Danish soldiers have been active in military missions abroad, which underlines Denmark's contribution to military alliances and international organizations in the form of military power and willingness to contribute to solving international conflicts and crises (see Table 1). However, what also becomes apparent from Table 1, and is plotted on Figure 1, is that the ratio of women to men from the Danish Armed Forces deployed on international missions is very low (5.7% women compared to 94.3% men), and furthermore has remained fairly constant since 1991. To obtain a more accurate ratio, I extracted the total number of unique men and women deployed on international missions from the Danish Armed Forces from 1991 to December 31, 2018, and as seen in Figure 2, the overall ratio of deployed women only amounts to 6.2%, whereas the number of male soldiers is 93.8% (The Ministry of Defence 2019b) segmenting the overrepresentation of deployed male soldiers in the Danish Armed Forces.

International mission	Unique deployments* pr. mission			Deployments in total
	Men	Women	Total	
<b>Balkan</b>	12810 (96.3%)	492 (3.7%)	13302	20254
<b>Kosovo (KFOR)</b>	9150 (94.1%)	570 (5.9%)	9720	13763
<b>Afghanistan (i.e. ISAF)</b>	10187 (92.8%)	793 (7.2%)	10980	19997
<b>Iraq/Syria**</b>	7420 (94.3%)	450 (5.7%)	7870	11563
<b>Lebanon</b>	959 (90.0%)	107 (10.0%)	1066	1495
<b>Gulf of Adén (i.e. Ocean Shield)</b>	1290 (91.8%)	115 (8.2%)	1405	3149
<b>Libya</b>	467 (94.9%)	25 (5.1%)	492	629
<b>Syria (OPCW) ***</b>	452 (93.4%)	32 (6.6%)	484	738
<b>Mali</b>	387 (93.7%)	26 (6.3%)	413	529
<b>Baltic States</b>	711 (94.3%)	43 (5.7%)	754	900
<b>Other Missions ****</b>	-	-	-	4145
<b>Total since 1991</b>	<b>43,833 (94.3%)</b>	<b>2,653 (5.7%)</b>	<b>46,486</b>	<b>77,162</b>

*Table 1: Deployed Personnel from the Danish Armed Forces, from 1991 to December 31, 2018. (The Ministry of Defence 2019b). \*Unique deployments are measured per international mission. If a soldier has been deployed to several different international missions, he/she will be displayed as a max of one unique deployment on each international mission. E.g. if a soldier has been deployed to KFOR three times, the table will show him/her once as deployed in the rubric for Kosovo, but all three deployments will be counted in deployments in total. \*\* All contributions to Iraq and the fight against IS in Syria. \*\*\* Removal of chemical weapons. \*\*\*\* Includes UNMISS (Sudan), UNIKOM (Kuwait) and UNMEE (Ethiopia/Eritrea). Gender segregated data and the number for unique deployments are not available on Other Missions.*

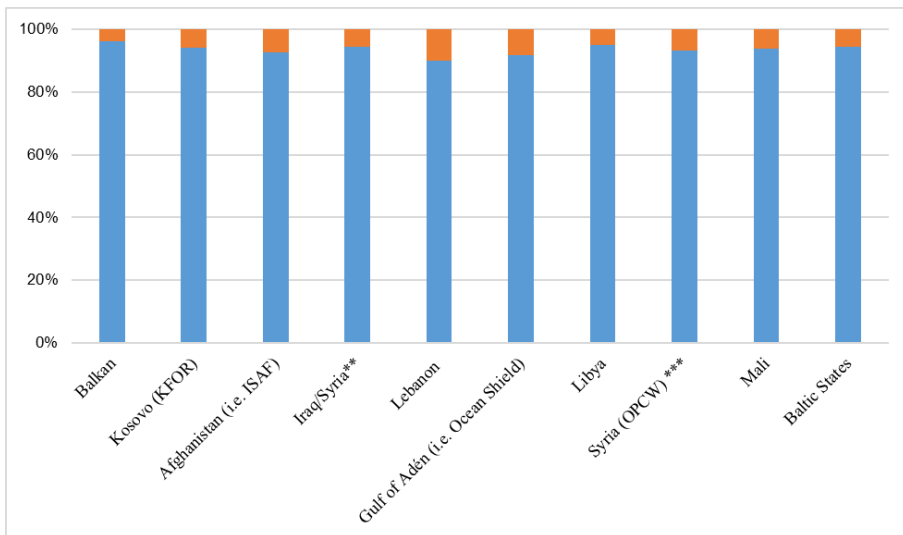


Figure 1: Ratio of men (blue) and women (orange) deployed on different international missions in the Danish Armed Forces from 1991 – 31 December 2018.

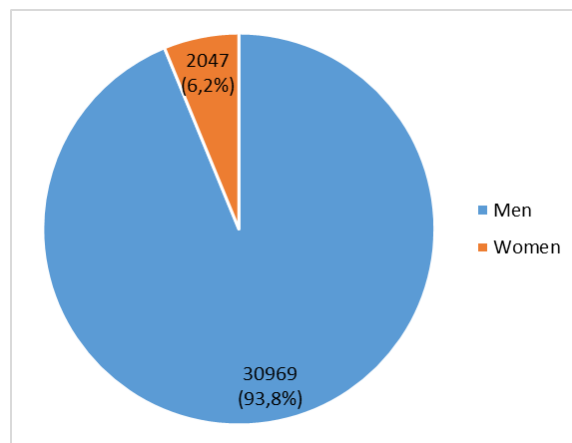


Figure 2: Unique deployments by Danish Armed Forces 1991- 31 December 2018 across all missions in Table 1 (other missions excluded). If a soldier has been deployed to several different missions, he/she will count only as one as a unique deployment. In total 32,953 personnel took part in at least one of the missions.

To investigate whether the low ratio of deployed women is caused by an overall low ratio of women employees in Danish Armed Forces, a preference of deploying males on international missions, or a combination, I compared the ratio to the total number of women serving in the Danish Armed Forces in military positions, which is 7.6% as of 2019<sup>7</sup> (The Ministry of Defence 2019a). Based on this, it is apparent that the Danish Armed Forces mainly consists of males, and the low ratio of women deployed on international missions is mainly a result of the overall low ratio of women in the Danish Armed Forces. Furthermore, the ratio of women serving in Danish Armed Forces is low compared to some of the NATO allies, for instance, the USA (14%) (Enloe 2016), Norwegian Armed Forces (13%), and Swedish Armed Forces (18%) (The Ministry of Defence 2019a; Forsvaret 2018; Försvarsmakten 2018). To investigate the ratio of women further, I extracted the number and ratios of women serving in service-specific military positions under the Danish Armed Forces, which can be found in Table 2.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Army</b>	<b>Navy</b>	<b>Air Force</b>	<b>Total</b>
Officers	193 (8.9%)	48 (6.4%)	64 (7.1%)	305 (7.8%)
Sergeant group <sup>8</sup>	138 (5.4%)	39 (6.1%)	95 (8.9%)	272 (6.1%)
Private First Class	317 (7.4 %)	123 (8.5%)	170 (11.6%)	610 (8.5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>648 (7.2%)</b>	<b>210 (7.4 %)</b>	<b>329 (9.6%)</b>	<b>1,187 (7.6%)</b>

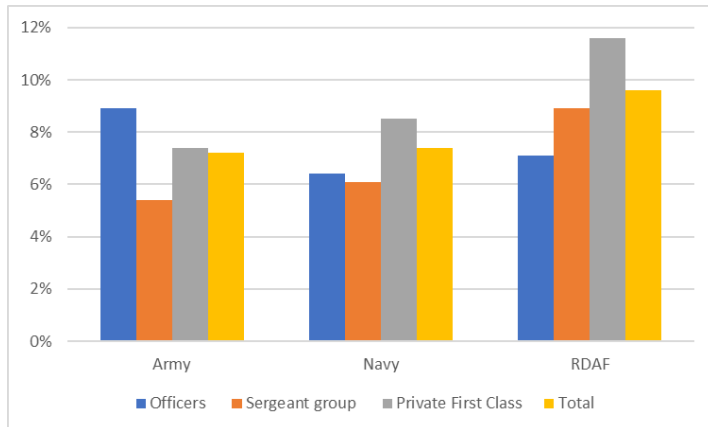
*Table 2: Number of women military employees serving in service-specific military positions under the Danish Armed Forces (January 1, 2019). Percentages are calculated based on the total number of Military Employees (The Ministry of Defence 2019a).*

Based on Table 2, it is apparent that the ratio of serving women differs somewhat between the service-specific military positions under the Danish Armed Forces. Figure 3 visualizes the differences between the services and the percentages of women military employees between the individual service and the Danish Armed Forces in

<sup>7</sup> The number was 6.8% in 2016, when I began this study. Hence, despite having fewer women serving than some of the other NATO allies and other Nordic militaries, over the past three years the Danish Armed Forces has managed to increased their female military staff (Forsvarsministeriets Personalestyrelse 2016).

<sup>8</sup> In this study, I use the three rank categories: Officer, Non-Commissioned Officer and Private First Class. However, as the table is based on numbers from the Ministry of Defense, the group Sergeant in this connection encompass Non-Commissioned Officers.

total. Royal Danish Air Force (Total) has a slightly higher ratio of women (9.6%) compared to the Army (7.2%) and Navy (7.4%).



*Figure 3: Ratio of women military employees serving in Danish Armed Forces (January 1, 2019) based on service.* Percentages are calculated based on the total number of Military Employees (The Ministry of Defence 2019a).

To investigate whether there were differences in the ratio of women across rank in the three different services, Figure 4 depicts the data in a rank-centric manner and shows that the largest ratio of military women in the Danish Armed Forces is found in the Royal Danish Air Force among the Private First Class rank category. However, while the Royal Danish Air Force has a higher ratio of military women serving, these are mainly in the Sergeant Group and Private First Class, and the Army has the highest ratio of female officers. This indicates that while the Royal Danish Air Force was the first service to promote a woman to the rank of general, overall, the service is performing similarly/worse than the Army and Navy when it comes to promoting women to the rank of officer. This is emphasized by the fact that the ratio of women in the Royal Danish Air Force is higher than in the other services.

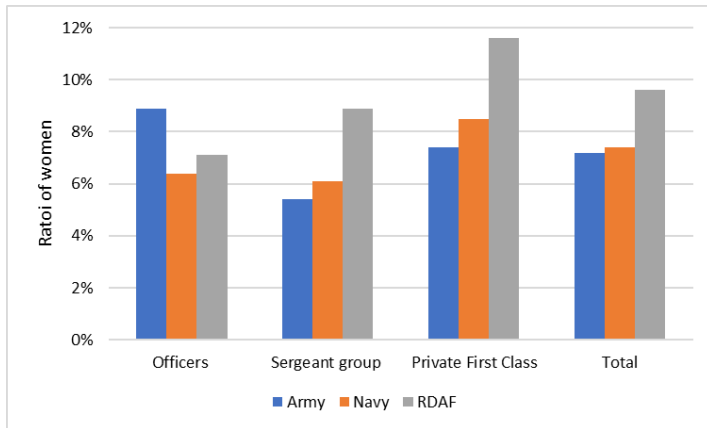


Figure 4: Ratio of women military employees serving in Danish Armed Forces (January 1, 2019) based on rank. Percentages are calculated based on the total number of Military Employees.

To conclude, despite a focus on attracting more women to the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force, the number of women serving as professional soldiers continues to be low, which makes Danish soldier bodies primarily male and in addition mainly white. Hence, as a collective, the variety in soldier bodies in the Royal Danish Air Force (and the Danish Armed Forces) in general is limited. As I will discuss in the analytical Chapters 5 and 6, this may influence the ways in which gendered military identities are negotiated among the soldiers and presented in soldier narratives. Moreover, other gendered bodies may become more apparent, since the norm is to a large degree homogenous in the form of white, male, heteronormative bodies leading to narrative negotiations and struggles in personal soldier narratives as well as in relation to institutional narratives on gender, peace, and security.

### 1.3.2. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO AIR TRANSPORT WING & AIR CONTROL WING

The Royal Danish Air Force is divided between five primary wings located in Karup, Aalborg, and Skydstrup, respectively. In this study, *Air Transport Wing (ATW)* and *Air Control Wing (ACW)* have been selected as cases for examining my research questions (a further description of the selection of interviewees for the study and access to the military is found in my methodology in Chapter 3).

The selected two Air Force wings are located at two different air bases in Denmark and undertake different assignments specific to each of the wings. However, a commonality for both wings is that neither of the two (their military personnel included) are part of airstrikes, as would be the case with the pilots at the base in Skydstrup where the fighter jets are located. On the contrary, much of the work that

ATW and ACW carry out is done remotely in what may be characterized as low-risk missions where most of their work is done inside the bases. In the case of ACW and their radar, and for ATW via their Hercules planes, the missions carried out include aid and airdrops in peacekeeping/peacebuilding missions (The Danish Defence 2018; 2015).

This description is not to diminish the potential dangers that deployments always carry for the involved parties, personnel at ATW and ACW included. However, it is intended to situate the military work that these soldiers carry out within a military context in which they, as soldiers, are less at the front lines compared to, for example, infantry soldiers. This proximity to a conflict setting is an important part in the construction of military identities, which I will elucidate in the Analytical Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Moreover, for both wings (which also applies to most of the Royal Danish Air Force) deployments are shorter, but with intervals that are more frequent compared to the Army or Navy. This also means that, unlike the Army where the soldiers prepare for an international mission for several months before deployments, Royal Danish Air Force soldiers require less preparation time before deployments. This makes the Royal Danish Air Force flexible in terms of contributions to international missions, for instance with the Hercules plane to the UN missions.





*Air Control Wing*, as the name indicates, is in charge of all surveillance of air transport in Denmark and monitors air space on a 24-hour-basis via their radar systems. The wing has approximately 370 military employees and is in charge of securing Danish borders in the air and, on a daily basis, control the 2,500 flights that pass through Danish air space. The soldiers at ACW gather large quantities of data from the radar and are in close contact with the fighter jets in case unknown flights invade Danish airspace. It is at the ACW radar observation facilities that Danish fighter jets are contacted when/if Danish air space is compromised (The Danish Defence 2018). Especially in recent years, ACW has been active in surveillance of air space in and around Syria.



*Air Transport Wing's* motto is *Fortis, Firmus Undique*, which means strong, reliable, everywhere (The Danish Defence 2015). Similar to ACW, ATW reveals their work assignments in their name. ATW employs approximately 400 military staff and the wing takes care of a broad and diverse portfolio of assignment within air transport and servicing the airbase on a day-to-day basis. Their core assignments is to carry out the Danish Armed Forces' air transport and airborne surveillance operations. Hence, ATW is in charge of all military transport- and surveillance flying and requires specialist knowledge and trained personnel. Especially, the C-130J Hercules plane is often used as a military contribution in domestic as well as international assignments, where large quantities of cargo, evacuation of injured civilians and military personnel need to be transported in, at times, unstable contexts. Besides the Hercules plane,

ATW is also home to the CL-604 Challenger plane, which makes routine environmental and surveillance flights in Denmark (The Danish Defence 2015; 2019)

As the short descriptions indicate, the type of military work that soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force carry out is unique in terms of their domestic work in Denmark as well as on international missions where they are mainly situated at the bases and only on few occasions leave the bases to carry out their assignment<sup>9</sup>. Since the Royal Danish Air Force largely exists of specialists who besides the basic military training are not expected to perform the same type of physically demanding work as i.e. the Army, the Royal Danish Air Force makes an interesting case in examining traditional military ideas of the masculine and physically strong soldier in narratives, both personal, institutional, and social.

Feminist IR studies have often centered on Army personnel who participate in direct combat; described as a group of soldiers who look for adventure and who have signed up for military service to prove themselves and become "real" men (Enloe 2004). However, military employees in the Royal Danish Air Force represent a unique group of soldiers within the Danish Armed Forces. As mentioned, the soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force are often excluded from direct combat, their jobs often require less physical strength than Army work, and their mission assignments often have more character of peacekeeping and peacebuilding than actual combat<sup>10</sup>. These aspects call for potentially less masculine characteristics and performances within an organization that historically (and still today) has been dominated by male bodies and masculine ideals (Duncanson and Woodward 2016). Hence, in regard to the research question of this project in which an analysis of military identities is key, the negotiations over military masculinities also become an essential part in discussing military identities and military work for this particular group of professional soldiers.

In addition, Albrecht and Nissen (2018) stress the complexities of differentiating between keeping, building, and securing peace. They argue that the missions that Danish soldiers have and continue to take part in, for instance in Afghanistan and Iraq under the auspice of NATO, could easily be deemed part of traditional military war-actions rather than fit within a narrative of building peace (Albrecht and Nissen 2018). As I am interested in narratives produced by the institution (Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force) and the individual soldiers, I have chosen to include UN military work as well as NATO missions. I will therefore not engage in a conversation of whether a particular mission may be categorized as a traditional UN peacekeeping

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<sup>9</sup> Exceptions to this happen i.e. the 2013 mission to Mali, where the soldiers from ATW stayed at a nearby hotel and drove back and forth to the base, where they worked.

<sup>10</sup> The pilots who control the fighter aircrafts are excluded.

mission, but rather focus on the stories that the soldiers tell about their military work and how this affects their military identity negotiations.

Therefore, when I refer to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, I use these in a broad sense. This means that the peacekeeping missions, which are part of soldier narratives, are not limited to UN peacekeeping missions. Instead, I apply the terms of keeping, building, and securing peace in conflict settings more broadly. This is done to make room for the nuances that the soldier narratives produce and to be sensitive to the fact that time, space, and place are essential components in the soldiers' narratives, which also influences the type of missions they were deployed to. Hence, for the soldiers, the actual mandate and labeling of the missions were not a particular focus point as such, but the assignments, the places, and the encounters with local populations and other soldiers influenced the narratives. Moreover, several of the soldiers had been on missions mandated by the UN and NATO, and all the missions were significant elements in their stories of being soldiers at home and abroad. By allowing the soldiers to reflect on their missions in more broad terms under an umbrella of keeping, securing, and building peace, I aim is to be true to the narratives of the soldiers and place these within the framework of the military institution of the Danish Armed Forces and its commitment to allies i.e. the UN and NATO.

#### **1.4. A READER'S GUIDE TO THE THESIS**

As this introduction has presented, I make use of a theoretical and methodological framework that situates my study within the research fields of Feminist IR, Feminist Security Studies, as well as Critical Military Studies. In the following section, I present a reader's guide to the thesis, including how to read the theoretical, methodological, and analytical chapters in relation to my main research question and my three sub-research questions.

In the Theoretical Chapter 2, I in particular discuss the gendered nature of military institutions and how these are part of shaping narratives and therein identity formations and negotiations of the bodies that carry out military work. I present three military narratives that relate to how military institutions, such as the Danish and Danish soldiers make use of gendered military narratives in their identity negotiations.

In Chapter 2, I present Duncanson's narrative of *Forces for good(?)*, which she first introduced in her article from 2009 *Forces for Good?: Narratives on Military Masculinity in Peacekeeping Operations* (Duncanson 2009) and later worked with in her 2013 article *Forces for Good?: Military Masculinities and Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq*. I use this military narrative in the analysis to see if this particular way of narrating military identities and military work resembles the narratives found in the Danish military and especially in the Royal Danish Air Force.

Albeit Duncanson uses the narrative in a British military context, I argue that the *Forces for good* narrative has the potential to capture personal as well as institutional narratives relating on gender, peace, and security in a Danish context as well. Thus, although I recognize that there are differences between the Danish and the British militaries both in terms of size, organizational structures, and history as well as the national contexts, the Danish and the British militaries are both members of NATO, the UN, have been part of the coalition of the willing, and Danish soldiers have been deployed to a number of the same peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions as the British.

Thus, as military allies to NATO, the British as well as the Danish military work under similar codes of conduct in terms of what military work entails on international missions, which the narrative on being a *Force for good* in military work places emphasis on. Furthermore, the narrative is connected to the institutional narrative of being a cosmopolitan-minded military force with a human rights agenda at the cornerstone of international engagements (Rosamond Bergman and Kronsell 2018). At the same time, examining the narrative of *Forces for good* in a Danish setting, may, at the same time, reveal some of the Danish nuances to being good peacekeeping and peacebuilding soldiers, and how this effects a narrative of being a *Force for good*.

I, therefore, use the narrative of *Forces for good* to examine more closely the military identities and military masculinities among the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers. This includes how negotiations of individual and shared military identities through a narrative that addresses understandings of different forms of masculinities relate to changes in hegemonic masculinities of military work by peacekeeping and peacebuilding soldiers. The *Forces for good* narrative, therefore, enables a discussion on the complexities of military work and the distinctions between keeping, building, and securing peace.

Additionally, I examine the narrative of the Band of Brothers in a Danish military context (MacKenzie 2012; 2015) to stress the gendered dynamics and implications of gendered bodies in military work, as well as, examining if/and how this narrative is expressed in a Danish setting. This includes how changes in gendered bodies through the increase of i.e. female soldiers has the potential to challenge the collectiveness of the soldiers and test the Band of Brothers.

Lastly, I make use of the *warrior* narrative, which Daugbjerg and Refslund Sørensen (2017) argues is present in a Danish setting and is in some ways in opposition to the narrative of being a *Force for good* in peacekeeping and peacebuilding work.

These three (gendered) narratives on soldier work are part of the narrative framework, which makes the basis for the analysis of Royal Danish Air Force soldier's negotiations over military identities and the different (military and gendered) narratives they use these negotiations.

In Chapter 2, I also present and discuss the work of critical military study scholars Paul Higate (2003) and Rachel Woodward (2003). Their work on military masculinities and specifically their argument on how negotiations and constructions of military masculinities are reliant on space, place, and time is applied. This aspect is particularly important for examining the soldiers' constructions and negotiations of military masculinities when they work in a Danish context and when they are deployed on international missions. This includes attention to how these contexts influence narratives on gender, peace, and security. In Chapter 2, I, therefore, explain in more detail the advantages of addressing military masculinities through this particular lens, and how this approach is useful in examining soldier narratives through interview material.

Another important concept, which I present and discuss in Chapter 2 is *hegemonic masculinity* and how it connects to examining *military*, *militarized masculinities*, *militarized bodies*. This entails a discussion on the ways in which these concepts are produced, challenged, or changed in combination with analyses of the relationship to gendered bodies. Connell first coined the work on hegemonic masculinities in 1977, and since then, the concept has been adopted, evaluated, reworked and challenged. Nonetheless, it still continues to part of the discussions over forms of masculinities (including military masculinities) and in particular hierarchies between masculinities (and femininities) as well as how this links to gendered bodies (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, Connell 1995; 2016; Messerschmidt 2008; Messerschmidt 2012; Duncanson 2009; 2013). This section will, therefore, include a discussion on how the concept of hegemonic masculinity can be applied in the context of the Danish Royal Air Force.

In order to do this, I use Duncanson's work (2009; 2013) on gender, militaries and masculinities, which is influenced by Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity. Duncanson's approach includes attention to the particularities of military identities and military masculinities. This entails awareness of how the concepts of hegemonic, dominant, and dominated masculinities are contextual and may be viewed and understood within the framework of a military institution and in particular for this project in the context of the Danish military.

Moreover, in relation to analyzing the soldier narratives and the negotiations over masculinities, including how hegemonic forms are shaped and negotiated in different contexts, I combine this with Enloe's concept of militarization and militarization of masculinities. One of the key points in Enloe's conceptualization of militarization and militarized masculinities, is that these processes are relational and almost impossible to separate from civilian life. In fact, Enloe argues that the process of militarization relies on society to support the military by i.e. accepting and partaking in militarization of everyday life (Enloe 2014; 2000; 2016).

As stressed, contextual settings become important in connection with international collaborations and assignments, where different military personnel with diverse cultural backgrounds, training, and norms of military work and identity are present. Gender functions as the main social category in this project, but through an intersectional approach, I explore how categories such as nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, and age are part of the soldiers' narratives (Christensen and Jensen 2012; Henry 2017). I therefore focus on *intersectionality* in relation to how I understand and examine gender and gendered power relations. In order to bring this point forward, I employ sociologists Ann-Dorte Christensen and Sune Qvotrup Jensen's (2012; 2014) approach to intersectionality in a Danish context including their argument of contextualization as essential in an intersectional analysis.

In Chapter 3, I motivate my choice of data and the limitations to the data. In this section, I also present my choices for selecting the Royal Danish Air Force as my empirical case. In addition, I describe how I gained access and gathered the data for the study.

In Chapter 3, I also present the design of the study counting the chosen method as well as my mode of analysis. The chapter also addresses the ethical questions and reflections on engaging in study where the main data is based on the lived experiences of soldiers and where many of them have traumatic experiences from conflict settings during deployment. Additionally, the ethical reflections also extend to the complicated matter of asking about gender without invoking resistance towards the topic or (re)producing gendered stereotypes. Hence, in Chapter 3, I discuss my approaches to this and explain how these, for instance, through the use of a timeline can be given attention.

Given the focus in my research question and sub-research questions to examine and analyze negotiations over military identities and bodies in military work in institutional and soldier narratives, the theories and methodologies have been chosen based on this focus.

My research question and three sub-research questions determine the structure of the analytical Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Although the three sub-research questions overlap, sub-questions 1-3 are particular for separate chapters in the thesis. For clarification, the research and sub-research questions are as follows:

Main research Question:

*How do the Royal Danish Air Force and Royal Danish Air Force soldiers negotiate gendered military identities and bodies in military work in narratives on gender, peace and security?*

Sub-Research questions:

- 1) How do the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force narrate gendered institutional identities, military bodies, and military work and relate these to global narratives on gender, peace, and security?
- 2) How do Royal Danish Air Force soldiers negotiate gendered identities, bodies, and military work in the everyday crossroads of military and civilian life?
- 3) How do Royal Danish Air Force soldiers negotiate gendered identities and bodies in international military work, including how the particular assignments of the Royal Danish Air Force influence soldier narratives on security and peace?

*Research Question 1)* is introduced in *Chapter 4*. In this chapter, I first introduce global narratives on military work and military identities in relation to gender, peace, and security and situate these within the national institutional narratives of the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force. The material mainly consists of documents produced by the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force, which enable a document analysis of how global and national narratives on gender, peace and security are identifiable in the material, which the Royal Danish Air Force and Danish Armed Forces rely on in their institutional narrative accounts of who they are as a military force domestically and internationally.

*Research Question 2)* is primarily answered in *Chapter 5*, where my interview material is the main data, which brings forward the soldiers' perspectives through their narratives on military work and military identity. I link personal soldier narratives to the institutional narratives analyzed in Chapter 4. This enables the identification of personal, institutional, and social narratives of military work and identity, and how these are connected to narratives on gender, peace, and security as identified in the previous chapter. Focus is primarily the national Danish context, and identity construction is in focus. This includes how this process of negotiating military identities rely on different categories i.e. gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, rank, age, and sexuality (Christensen and Jensen 2012), which intersect.

These categories can reveal inequalities in power dynamics among the soldiers and in relation to the institution. The main theories used in this chapter are forms of masculinities. This is combined with an intersectional approach that can reveal how masculinities take different form, position, and expression depending on context as well as social categories. This further entails how the soldiers view the Royal Danish Air Force as a particular type of military service, which is in contrast to, especially, the Army.

Theoretical work on civilian versus military life is used to analyze the soldiers' reflections on how they negotiate the crossroads between civilian and military life (Enloe 2000; 2004; Woodward 2003; Basham and Bulmer 2017).

*Research Question 3*) is introduced in *Chapter 6* where I examine how the contextual setting of international deployments influence narratives on gender, peace, and security. The material used in this chapter consists of interviews with soldiers and particularly their reflections on deployments and the experiences of working in low- and high-risk settings, for example as peacekeeping and peacebuilding soldiers. The theories used in this chapter are especially focused on space, place, and time in combination with understandings of individual and national security (Woodward 2003; Higate; Duncanson 2009).



## CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I introduce the theoretical and conceptual framework for the thesis. As I have stressed in the introduction, I use feminist security and international relations theories as well as critical military studies. These complimentary, however, also slightly different approaches to studying the armed forces, provide the foundation for my theoretical considerations. Thus, it is with a feminist curiosity and an openness to understand the complexities of working with empirical material in the form of interviews with soldiers that I explore the benefits and boundaries of feminist IR, feminist security studies, and critical military studies. This includes how these bodies of literature can aid my analysis of examining how constructions and negotiations of military identities and military work relating to narratives on gender, peace, and security can uncover the ambiguities of gendered institutional narratives as well as personal soldier narratives in the Royal Danish Air Force.

### 2.1. THE MILITARY AS A GENDERED INSTITUTION

A multitude of gendered understandings of military work and military identities exist including perceptions of peace, war, conflict, and the institutions and bodies that carry out these tasks. These understandings can be located in various settings including state militaries, insurgent groups, international organizations, etc. and emphasize the blatantly gendered implications of particularly military work and military institutions. As such, international security and war are, by default, gendered, which is the key to understanding the gendered dimensions, not in terms of how these necessarily relate to gendered-bodies, but how feminization and masculinization are part of gendering international relations, war, and security, and therein also global and local narratives on gender, peace, and security.

Laura Sjoberg (2012, 2015) makes the point that new gendered bodies in military work challenge narratives on military work and identity and test narratives on gender, peace, and security. This means that women's increased enrollment in militaries contest inherent assumptions about *just warriors* and *beautiful souls* (Elshtain 1987), and the notion of *male protectors* and *female victims*, which have been, and to some degree continue to be, part of military narratives, despite resolutions such as UNSCR 1325, which urges the increase of women in military work (Sjoberg 2012; 2015). These changes stir up narratives over legitimacy and the role of masculinities and femininities in constructions and narratives on military identities (Sjoberg and Via 2010; Sjoberg 2015). The tensions occur because militaries as organizations rely heavily on specific narratives on gender and gendered bodies and traditional gender roles and gender identities have played a significant part in shaping militaries as

institutions and in motivating soldiers who go to war. These traditional gendered stereotypes include ideas of men as *just warriors* and women as *beautiful souls* or *the protector and the protected*, which means that the protection of women traditionally is performed by the masculine, which is assigned the male body, and, at the same time, the role of the protected is defined as the feminine and assigned the female body (Sjoberg 2015). Emerging global narratives on gender, peace, and security for instance produced by the UN and NATO, which stress that women can perform the role of the soldier and protector as well as men, questions inherent understandings of what militaries do, how they function/work, and which bodies that can perform soldiering and ultimately, what a military identity is. Nonetheless, global voices make use of particular understandings of gendered bodies and military work in which certain normative understandings prevail; one being a binary approach to gendered bodies and the other being the emphasis on female soldiers as good peacekeepers and not necessarily good warriors (Goldstein 2003; Elshtain 1982; MacKenzie, King, and Haring 2013; MacKenzie 2015).

Gendered narratives of state militaries signify awareness of the many ways in which masculinities and femininities influence war, security, and peace processes through power relations and inherent gendered stereotypes. Sjoberg's research in the U.S. armed forces supports this and demonstrates that women's inclusion in the military cause tensions and challenges the legitimization of the military including how masculinities and femininities are at play in understanding and negotiating military identities (see also Goldstein 2003; Elshtain 1982; MacKenzie 2015; 2012). As I discuss in the analytical Chapters (4, 5, and 6), gender, peace, and security play a part in the Danish narratives on military work and military identity as well as negotiations over military identities among the Danish soldiers and in the institutional narratives produced by the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces. Moreover, the traditional understandings of gendered bodies and their role in military work i.e. what type of military work that women and men can carry out are also detectable in the Danish soldier and institutional narratives.

Militaries have traditionally been viewed as a prototypical space for the creation of masculinities, and a place where practices and expectations related to masculinity(ies) are produced and maintained, especially those related to hegemonic masculinity (Carreiras 2006; Parpart and Partridge 2014). Almost all militaries are largely male-dominated, including the Danish Armed Forces, and have traditionally and historically been a place where "*boys became men*" through a narrative of the warrior and protector of the nation (Yuval-Davis 1997), supported by the idea of the 'other' being *women and children* (Enloe 2000).

Simultaneously, a contextual awareness is essential when analyzing gendered practices and understandings of masculinities and femininities, and how they influence people, places, and organizations (Christensen and Rasmussen 2015). Regional differences exist between the Danish Armed Forces (and other Nordic

militaries) and their role in society compared to, for example, the U.S. military. These differences are part of how gender plays out within the organization and in the surrounding society. This includes the composition of the militaries e.g. conscripts or professional soldiers, the size of the force, budgets, assignments, and the societal understandings of masculinities and femininities.

As I discuss in the introduction, in a Danish setting, gender equality has been on the agenda especially since the 1970s and the gender equality index in Denmark is generally higher than e.g. the U.S. (Hernes 1987; Borchorst 2009; Martinsson, Griffin, and Nygren 2016). Gendered dynamics might therefore take different forms in Danish society than the in U.S. or British. Moreover, the size of the i.e. U.S military and its position in society with special deals for veterans including education, housing, flights, etc. is not seen in a Danish context; cementing that the status and influence of the military in society is slightly different in Denmark than the U.S. These regional differences are important also in theorizing about the roles of masculinities in military work as well gendered (power) dynamics since a large part of the early (and even current) work on militaries, securities, and gender take an Anglo-Saxon approach. This means that the concepts of *militarization*, *militarism*, and *military masculinities* mainly have been developed within the context of Anglo-Saxon societies. Nevertheless, I argue that a number of the concepts have the potential to reveal gendered power dynamics in military work in a Danish setting, albeit with an awareness of the regional differences in terms of national gendered practices and understandings. One of these concepts and theoretical tools is Enloe's work on militarization (Enloe 1983; 1989; 2000; 2004; 2016).

In her extensive work on militaries and gender, Enloe brings close attention to the concepts of *militarism* and *militarization*. Enloe stresses that militarized masculinity is present outside of military bases and that this presence in surrounding societies is part of creating and maintaining gendered implications of the military (Enloe 1983; 1989; 2000; 2004; 2016). Militarization happens on multiple levels and has become an integral aspect of social life in general. This is linked to Enloe's point that the military plays a large part in international politics, including how a militarized way of thinking, based on military culture, is favored and is part of setting the agenda for international politics. At the same time, this understanding influences the everyday lives of not only people who are connected with the military (e.g. spouses of military personnel, civilians working for the military) but also civil society in general (Enloe 1983, 2004, 2016). The militarization, not only of masculinity, but also of society, cultures, institutions, even food products, and apparel is essential in analyzing and understanding global politics (Enloe 2000). In this sense, militarization becomes part of legitimizing the military and a necessary component for the organization to maintain its power within society (Enloe 1983, 1989, 2000).

The militarization of society is further reflected in the military vocabulary used in everyday talk by non-military civilians. Another example is how militarization

happens at all levels of society, transcending the lines of military institutions and into the everyday lives of citizens (Enloe 2000). As argued above, an awareness of the Anglo-Saxon focus in Enloe's work is important for the application of the concept in a Danish setting, and attention to the Danish context is evident to keep in mind. At the same time, I argue that her observations transcend especially Western state militaries as these are linked through global and regional collaborations and alliances i.e. the UN and NATO (Enloe 2016). This means that comparative elements exist between Western militaries and the role they play in international politics and in terms of how state militaries, in general, are part of Western societies and discussions about gender, peace, and security. Being an active military ally to these organizations, this includes the Danish Armed Forces as well. I, therefore, make use of Enloe's concept especially in examining the dynamics of how military practices, language, and culture transcend the boundaries of military compounds, and how it affects societies and lives outside of the military settings. This element is especially relevant in examining how the soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force negotiate and understand their military identities and how it relates to their everyday lives in Denmark inside and outside the bases. This also speaks into how military identities are influenced by the context in which they are negotiated and constructed and in this the boundaries between what is military and what is civilian i.e. being physically inside or outside the fences, but in more salient ways also how military identities are negotiated in relation to other factors such as a national identity and a private identity of being i.e. a mother, father, brother, or spouse.

The importance of language, which Enloe stresses as important in examining how militaries influence surrounding societies, relates to how researchers, myself included, address the topic theoretically as well as empirically. Feminist IR scholar Carol Cohn's (1987) early work on defense, women, war, and security has especially centered on analyzing how language is part of shaping and controlling how we understand men and women's roles in global politics and war. Her article from 1987 *Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals* based on observations made among defense intellectuals and military personnel, concludes that language used in defense and security issues is gendered and full of sexualized metaphors. In this regard, Cohn problematizes some of the methodological issues that feminist scholars are concerned with, namely how you, as a researcher, relate to your own proximity to the study, and in the process, are aware that you might be adopting the language that you to begin with reviewed and found problematic for understanding a certain topic. Cohn states that:

My own move away from a focus on the language is quite typical. Other recent entrants into this world have commented to me that, while it is the cold-blooded, abstract discussions that are most striking at first, within a short time "you get past it - you stop hearing it, it stops bothering you, it becomes normal-and you come to see that the language, itself, is not the problem." However, I think it would be a mistake to dismiss these early

impressions. They can help us learn something about the militarization of the mind, and they have, I believe, important implications for feminist scholars and activists who seek to create a more just and peaceful world (Cohn 1987, 714).

Cohn's experiences working among defense intellectuals provide important reflections on the power of language and how the militarization that Enloe (2000; 2016) brings attention to can become part of everyday language and even lose some of its seriousness. This is understood in the sense that words, which normally belong in war, conflict, or crises situations, become incorporated into everyday life and in this process are normalized and legitimized. This makes it more difficult to address atrocities associated with militarization, war, and conflict. As Cohn states, the way militarization is taking place in our minds is done through a process of listening and learning to speak the language (Cohn 1987, 715).

The notion that language surrounding war, and in Cohn's empirical data, nuclear weapons, is sexualized and that war and security thereby are highly gendered topics is relevant for a study of the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force. Hence, staying critical and at the same time adopting and "learning to speak the language" is a challenge to researchers who engage closely with the subjects we investigate (Cohn 1987; Basham and Bulmer 2017; Eriksson Baaz, Gray, and Stern 2018). In my analysis of the soldiers' narratives, I, therefore, adhere to Cohn's cautiousness of maintaining a critical perspective and not to dismiss the early impressions I receive from my first encounters with the military. In the methodology section (Chapter 3), I engage in a further discussion about the methodological considerations of doing this type of work and how I, as a researcher, relate to these including the insider/outsider dilemma in collecting empirical data in the form of interviews. In line with this, Enloe's critical work on militarization, space, place, and gendered identities resonates with the aim of critical military scholars. That is, to be "*critical about military power is to be 'skeptically curios' about its character, representation, application, and effects*" (Basham, Belkin, and Gifkins 2015, 1).

Arguably, militarization has not become less prominent or dominant with the inclusion of women in state militaries. A connection which feminist IR scholars have stressed links to the relationship between the nation, citizenship, the military including how this impacts notions of masculinity(ies) and femininity(ies) along with the aforementioned idea of protectors of the nation and the protected or as Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) argues, "*constructions of nationhood usually involve specific notions of both 'manhood' and 'womanhood'*" (Yuval-Davis 1997). A link which Kronsell (2012) and Zarkov (2007) have argued is related to the connection between womanhood and the maternal body and nation-building symbolized with the female body given birth to the nation (Kronsell 2012; Zarkov 2007; MacKenzie 2015).

The narrative of legitimate protectors of the state, nation builders, and the gendered understandings of what it means to be a citizen and the expected contribution to the

state (men as protectors and soldiers, and women as birth givers to new citizens) prevails to a large extent today, Kronsell argues. Moreover, it is part of the current debate about women's participation in the armed forces (Kronsell 2012). These discussions, which feminist scholarship is engaged with along with the changes at the policy level for example via the UN and NATO regulations, are part of the debates on military work and military identities including what it means to do soldier work today. It further addresses narratives of being peacekeepers, peacebuilders, or simply warriors, and whether it makes a difference for the narratives produced by the institutions as well as the individual soldiers.

Militaries today including the Danish Armed Forces are subject to changing work assignments in their collaborations with other nations and requirements from alliances and global institutions such as NATO and the UN. These collaborations are part of creating, maintaining, and challenging certain understandings of military work, for instance, which bodies can perform soldiering and which abilities are important in different military contexts. However, as cases from the Norwegian and Swedish militaries illustrate gendered stereotypes in regards to masculinities, femininities, and hierarchies prevail in state militaries despite increasing attention by national and international actors to challenge inherent understandings of what militaries do. This includes attention and awareness of gender and an increasing number of women serving in the militaries (Kronsell 2012; Rones 2015). Moreover, both male and female soldiers are part of maintaining particular militarized identities within militaries, and as Rones' (2015) suggests, the Scandinavian countries are no exception to this process. This also means that women within militaries contribute to the reproduction of qualifications for serving in militaries, which are based on traditional narratives on military work, for example, physical requirements and toughness.

An important component to address regarding changes in narratives on gender, peace, and security, and their influence on military work and identity, is the hierarchies within the military organization, production of military norms, and how these transcend the organization. Military norms relating to the required competences and skills for best performance of soldiering might thus take different forms depending on the institutional level of the organization. Rones (2015) argues that this process constitutes narrative struggles between management and soldiers regarding requirements to perform soldiering. There might be a high degree of consistency between top-down military management documents and the soldiers concerning the goal of the force to work as a unit, but at the same time resistance towards top-down requirements to change traditional requirements and criteria of evaluation. Rones argues that a military management's wishes to include a wider combination of skills and qualities than traditional ones associated with being a soldier can be resisted by soldiers on the ground. This leads to narrative struggles at the different levels within the organization and influences the ways gender, peace, and security influence military work and identity. The gendered implications might then be that women are welcome to serve as long as they meet traditional requirements set forth by the

military. If the requirements are widened, it might change and even jeopardize the power resources that individuals at the top of the current hierarchy hold and thereby challenge their place in the military hierarchy (Rones 2015). This dynamic has been pointed to by a number of feminist IR scholars and is part of the discussions on women's roles in militaries and whether it is a cause for gender equality or simply reinforcing gender stereotypes (Duncanson and Woodward 2016). It also addresses the complexities of discussing gender, masculinities, femininities, and gendered bodies within a military context in which there is still a large focus on physical abilities and a standard of thinking of the ideal military body as masculine.

In addition, the growing number of particularly female military personnel and their presence in militaries have led to questions on how to understand gender and gender relations, including masculinities and femininities, and military codes of conduct (Carreiras 2006; Dittmer and Apelt 2008; Enloe 2016; Cohn 2013). Feminist scholars have analyzed this connection and debated the role of state militaries, violence, militarization, war, and conflict, and addressed how women serving in armed forces are linked to the feminist "cause" (Duncanson and Woodward 2016). Duncanson and Woodward link this change in the feminist debate to the development of the policy of gender mainstreaming, which through the 1990s and the 2000s gained momentum in government work, among organizations like NATO and the UN and within the European Union (Lombardo 2005; Lombardo and Mergaert 2013). The policy of gender mainstreaming was launched at the UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (United Nations 1995). The policy aimed to ensure gender equality by identifying structures or institutions, which prevent gender equality. The policy of gender mainstreaming has a focus on diversity rather than an emphasis on the binary of sameness versus difference (Duncanson and Woodward 2016).

In their article *Regendering the military: Theorizing women's military participation* from 2016, Duncanson and Woodward argue that two broad overall fables about women's inclusion in militaries exist, which each have their strengths and weaknesses. One of the two predominant arguments/fables relate to the "rights-based argument", which is essentially the idea that equality between men and women can only be achieved if women have the right to participate in the military on equal terms as men (including combat) (Segal 1982; 1995; Snyder 1990). Connected to the right-to-serve argument is also the position that women's full participation in the military is about equal civic responsibility and duty. Hence, these scholars argue that women's right to participate in military service is as much a democratic question about equal participation and responsibility to the state, as it is a question of gender equality (Kronsell 2012). The rights-based feminist scholars argue that for women to be equal to men in society their involvement in the military (on all levels) is necessary, as the symbolic link between citizenship and military service is inevitable in gaining full and equal rights and status within society. Scholars advocating for this view also argue by means of instrumental benefits of women's participation in the military. Hence, an increased number of women could result in making the military more democratic and

less hierarchical; leaving room for more voices to be heard, including individuals at the micro-level. Moreover, it would make the force more compassionate and fit better to the assignments that militaries undertake today, for example, peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations (Duncanson and Woodward 2016).

A counter-argument is presented by feminists who stress that women's involvement in the military (and ultimately war) is opposing the goals of feminism. These feminist scholars have a less positive attitude toward the benefits of women participating in militaries (including combat) and argue that an increase in the number of women in militaries will neither mean progress for women nor a more peaceful international order (Cockburn 2007; Enloe 2016). The argument is that women in militaries face discrimination and need to perform even better than their male colleagues to be accepted due to gendered stereotypes, leaving no sign of progress in terms of female equality. Moreover, even though militaries increasingly use language on gender equality and women's rights, women are still not treated equally within the organization and do not receive the same type of civic acknowledgement for their service. Instead of fighting for the right to serve in the military, these feminist scholars argue that women should focus on political rights and challenging the understanding of what citizenship means, and its link to state security. The ultimate goal is to change the militarization of society through different means instead of legitimizing it by advocating for women's right to fight in the military; a cause which these scholars believe will never result in gender equality (Cockburn 2007; Enloe 2016).

These two general views are significant for the way in which the field of feminist IR and security studies have developed over the past three decades. Where mainstream analyses have focused on women's capabilities in terms of war and combat roles, the feminist debates have included a discussion on whether women should or should not participate in militaries and war actions (Duncanson and Woodward 2016). The discussion addresses an old debate within feminism about the link between masculinities and femininities and the connection to sex-bodies. By arguing that women should not engage in military actions and instead advocate for peace, anti-militarist feminists are buying into the argument that women are inherently more peaceful than men. Critics have used this particular argument to ban women from entering the military, as their femininity rendered them unfit for military training (Creveld 2000). This position, however, ignores diversity among women in terms of experiences and aspirations and, as the anti-militarist feminist acknowledge, it is this particular idea that prevents women in general from being taken seriously in public life. At the same time, the militarization, which continues to take place within and outside of the military, is a concern to these scholars.

The feminist fables are problematized by Stern and Zalewski (2009) as well who question what the basic storyline, which runs through a great deal of feminist research on war, militarism, and gender is based on.



This development in feminist theory, the conviction that the central theoretical and political task must be to displace gendered binaries, led to some agonizing, as it did not seem to generate an obvious practical strategy to replace that of inclusion or reversal in order to further the other equally important element of the feminist project, that of an emancipatory political movement (Duncanson and Woodward 2016, 6).

Hence, from the 1990s, a number of feminists have reasoned that the field (feminism and feminist IR as well) needs to move beyond the inclusion and reversal, as argued by Duncanson and Woodward, and instead begin to deconstruct the notion that important differences exist between men and women; this means going beyond applying men and women as useful categories. Moreover, this debate continues as increasingly more women enter state militaries, and with global actors such as NATO and UN encouraging (gender)diversity among their member states' troops and incorporation of gender mainstreaming in military institutions (often interpreted by national militaries as an encouragement to increase the number of women in armed forces). Denmark is one of the member states, which has focused on increasing the number of women in the Danish Armed Forces inter alia through diversity plans over the past 10 years (The Ministry of Defence 2011; Værnsfælles Forsvarskommando 2015). Moreover, as an active member of the UN and NATO, Denmark takes part in operations led by both institutions and is, furthermore, responding to gender mainstreaming requirements set-up by the UN and NATO within the Danish military (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Justice 2014). Moreover, the fact that an increasing percentage of women take part in military assignments and a number of them have been quite successful within the organization makes it essential to remember these women in the discussions on whether women should or should not enroll in militaries (Duncanson and Woodward 2016).

## 2.2. MILITARY IDENTITIES, BODIES, AND MASCULINITIES

In this section, I further examine the link between military identities, bodies, military and militarized (and hegemonic) masculinities, and how I apply these to my empirical data. Firstly, identities are principal for how individuals construct, negotiate, and present themselves and the groups they belong to/and do not belong to. Identities are essential in the stories we narrate about who we are, what we do, and where we belong. At the same time, identities are fluid entities that change over time, take different forms, and are situated in local contexts (Jenkins 2004; Walker 2010). An identity is a process, which includes a *being* and a *becoming*, as well as a *doing* (Woodward and Jenkins 2011) which means that identities are never in a final stage or fixed, but rather in constant movement and negotiation with the surroundings. This means that,

[...] identity is the human capacity – rooted in language – to know ‘who’s who’ (and hence ‘what’s what’). This involves knowing who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they

think we are, and so on: a multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals and as members of collectivities (cf. Ashton et al. 2004). It is a process – identification – not a 'thing'. It is not something that one can have, or not; it is something that one does (Jenkins 2004, 5).

This said, identity(ies), military included, is a difficult concept giving it fluidity and constant change, as well as, different epistemological approaches to the concept. At the same time, identity is a concept which despite the at times vagueness and many interpretations is something that we all ascribe meaning to and use on a daily basis. This also means that identity is a commonly used word/concept by scholars but also by society, organizations, institutions, and individuals alike to describe and narrate a particular understanding of what we are/are not, what we do/do not, with whom, why, and in which ways (Jenkins 2004; Walker 2010).

Within the military organization, individuality and therein an individual identity is an interesting component. As Woodward and Jenkins argue, as an institution that is hierarchical and more commonly known for its ability to create a collective where the individual soldier is second best to the unit, understanding how individual military identities are constructed, negotiated, and performed provides insights to the organization on a micro-level. This can reveal how identities are formed and which identities the soldiers relate to in their professional lives and at the crossroads between civilian and military lives (Woodward and Jenkins 2011).

As I have stressed in my introduction, approaching this study through interviews and a narrative method means that I as a researcher can bring forward voices of the individual soldiers at the micro level of the organization. This approach brings forward important perspectives and processes of identity negotiations and formations and permits an examination that pays attention to how changes in military bodies and military assignments due to national and international requirements are experienced differently depending on where in the organization one is looking. Nonetheless, this perspective is still rarely given attention (Woodward and Jenkins 2011). This is not to say, that scholars within feminist IR, feminist security studies, as well as critical military studies have not engaged in work on military identities (see for instance Sasson-Levy 2008; Duncanson 2009, 2011; Higate 2003; Walker 2010; Basham and Bulmer 2017), but merely to stress that examining military organizations from a top-down perspective leaves much unexamined in terms of processes of identity negotiations and constructions, which is significant for how soldier work is performed and to what ends.

I concur with Woodward and Jenkins (2011) that examining military identities needs to place emphasis on exploring the subjectivities that are the personal military identities which are negotiated on a daily basis by those who participate in deployments. Following this argument through an interpretative approach, I understand identities to be socially constructed and processes which are shaped by

space, place, and time and which take on different expression, position, and engage in different power relations depending on context, but also social categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, age, sexuality, religion, etc. Thus, as argued by Woodward and Jenkins (2011),

While recognizing the contingency of identity, much work starts from a focus on pre-existing core sociological categories, and works within a standpoint theoretical tradition (Brekhus, 2008). The research task, therefore, is the ascription or allocation of attitudes, explanations and behaviours to analytic categories predetermined by the researcher, with the ultimate purpose of understanding identities within the context of various configurations and relations of power (Woodward and Jenkins 2011, 256).

My approach to identity negotiations and constructions, furthermore, links closely to the role of narratives and how these are ways of presenting a particular identity in a given situation through. This can be through the use and emphasis on specific words and associations and constructions such as *us versus them* or a particular noun such as being *a specialist* in military work. Hence, in my analysis of Royal Danish Air Force soldiers' military identities, I see the soldiers' military identities as being part of the complex negotiations human beings constantly engage in via our surroundings through social relations and interactions over "who we are" and "what we do" – and equally important who are *not*. This means that the connection between "*agency and structure as well as individual and social identity produces a complex relationship between identity and the places we inhabit during our lives*" (Walker 2010, 53). The individual and the collective identity markers are thus intertwined and linked closely through common narratives, which become the building blocks from which we create our individual identity and the collective identity. It is also in the encounters with other members of our group (collective identity) or non-members that we reinforce, negotiate, rebuild the narratives of who we are and what we do; that is our different identities (Jenkins 2004; Walker 2010). This process may lead to narrative struggles internally and externally both as a group and as an individual member (Shenhav 2015; Biton and Salomon 2006; Phoenix 2016; Phoenix and Sparkes 2009).

Since identities are relational and constructed, different components are part of creating our identities, this can include gender, race, age, nationality, and ethnicity, etc., which all play a part in the stories we tell about ourselves and the stories that others tell about us. These different social categories, which are part of the narratives of who we are, create social hierarchies within the groups we belong to and not belong to and among different groups (Jenkins 2004). Because identities are shaped by contexts and social interactions, the narratives that help shape these identities become important for an analysis of what military identities are, how they are constructed, negotiated, and potentially resisted.

As discussed by feminist IR scholars, as well as critical military scholars, the gendered nature of military work and consequently military identities is essential to discuss. Some of these military identities may relate to an identity of being *just warriors*, *legitimate protectors of the state* (Duncanson 2009; Whitworth 2004) a *warrior culture* (Rones 2015), a *Band of Brothers* (MacKenzie 2015), or *the exceptionalism of the Nordic and Danish militaries* (Kronsell 2012; Bergman Rosamond 2013; Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell 2018). What these different and connected identity markers may suggest is that military identities are closely linked to contextual settings, to national identities, but also global narratives on military work including what it means to be defenders of the state and which bodies are considered "right" for this type of work.

In a military setting, the questions of a military identity and performing a military identity (or doing, as Jenkins (2004) and Woodward and Jenkins (2011) argues), is linked closely to understandings of gender and, in particular, masculinities; which includes militarized masculinities. Moreover, grand narratives of war including sites of security and insecurity (Wibben 2011; Stern 2006) also form military identities. In this way, the personal soldier narratives reveal processes of military identity constructions, which rely on narratives on war and peace. This further means that the contextual settings and understandings of security and insecurity link to the articulation of types of military work, which the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers carry out as high or low-risk missions. This becomes significant for the military identity negotiations the soldiers have among themselves, with other Danish services, with other international troops as well as local populations in a conflict area.

Additionally, as I have discussed in the previous sections, understandings of gender, masculinities, and femininities within military institutions link closely to specific gendered bodies; bodies which traditionally have been male. This means that military bodies constitute a significant part of examining military narratives on work and identities. Moreover, physical bodies play a visual role in the performance of soldiering and the demarcations of military and civilians through military uniforms and equipment. These are significant elements in the processes of negotiating military identities.

### **2.2.1. THE COMPLEXITIES OF MILITARY BODIES**

Continuing to the discussions on military bodies in relation to constructions over military identities and negotiations over masculinities, I want to emphasize the significance of the ideal soldier body and how this influences soldiers' understandings of requirements within the organization to successfully perform military assignments. Focus on the ideal soldier body means that individuals who do not conform to this ideal risk not only being placed lowest in the local hierarchy, but also deemed unfit for the job, bullied, or accused of receiving special treatment by management (Belkin 2012; Rones 2015; Duncanson and Woodward 2016). Rones (2015) argues that

soldiers who are unable to live up to the ideal military body, but still serve, are presumed to jeopardize the symbolic value of the uniform. Given the traditional focus on male bodies, women serving strive to fulfill the requirements of the ideal and chosen military body in order to become one of the guys in an awareness that acceptance relies on the ability to hold the qualities of the ideal soldier (Rones 2015; Carreiras 2004; Carreiras and Kümmel 2008; Mathers 2013). Notwithstanding, other gendered bodies and in particular female bodies stand out in a military setting and are subject to gendered narratives, which sets them aside as atypical and in opposition to the “ideal” soldier body. At the same time, the discussions over ideal soldier bodies and the link to male bodies are somewhat challenged with new forms of military work i.e. in relation to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, where the UN and NATO have advocated for the significance of female soldiers – aka female bodies (UN 2000; NATO 2018; Jennings 2011). These changes in recommendations from global actors such as the UN and NATO make room for the inclusion of other gendered bodies with the emphasis on the relevance of diversity, however mainly understood as male and female bodies that hold inherent gendered differences, which combined increases the operational effectiveness. However, this focus also leaves rooms for narrative negotiations and potential struggles among soldiers in the construction of military identities within military hierarchies, which for centuries have been dominated by particular sets of military masculinities that emphasizes the male, white, and straight body (Persson 2011; MacKenzie 2012, 2015; Parpart and Partridge 2014).

Relating to the discussion over ideal bodies, differences in work assignments and services are also relevant to discuss. Hence, the tasks, which soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force versus the Danish Army undertake, are different and therein potentially also their understandings and negotiations over military masculinities. The ideal soldier body might therefore take slightly different forms depending on service. Nonetheless, classic military skills and appearances such as being physically fit, tough, straight, and male are still dominating in the narratives of what a soldier ought to look like and how they should behave. In this regard, the ideal military body, or lack of living up to the ideal body, is not only something that female soldiers are subjected to. As this study demonstrates via interviews with Royal Danish Air Force soldiers, these requirements are also articulated in relation to male soldiers who fail to live up to the ideal. These ideals are closely linked to understandings of what military work is, including on deployments. In this regard, individuals who have been deployed to war zones and have been placed in situations where physical abilities were paramount for survival might articulate physical requirements to a higher degree. Hence, traditional military ideals such as men as protectors (Yuval-Davis 1997) and physically strong, which militaries have made use of for centuries become part of narrative struggles among the soldiers over the ideal soldier body for military work in the Royal Danish Air Force.

These perceptions of soldier work, which are based on traditional understandings of military work, may for some soldiers be combined with concrete experiences from

working in the field. In this sense, maintaining a particular military narrative of the strong, male (straight) soldier can be part of a personal narrative based on lived experiences combined with a social narrative of military work that is based on traditional military and militarized ideas of masculinity. This also means that aspects of time and place (that is working at home at the base in Denmark or being deployed to i.e. Afghanistan) have the potential to challenge narratives of military bodies and military work.

Haaland (2008; 2010) concurs with these findings and argues that the valued qualifications soldiers are expected to hold are linked to masculinities. However, in her work on the Norwegian military, Haaland argues that aggressiveness was often not mentioned as an important quality for the deployed soldiers to encompass (Haaland 2008; 2010; 2016). Conversely, the most valued qualities were endurance, a good sense of humor, and the ability to take initiative. Nonetheless, Haaland argues that the Norwegian armed forces still saw themselves as a military, which includes maintaining war-fighting skills as a priority (Haaland 2008). The findings in Haaland's work have parallels to the ideas Rones (2015) presents on a professional military, which embraces the military masculinity, and ideas of performing tasks, which are associated with the military, such as, taking part in conflicts, wars, and security issues. At the same time, it encourages values of being a good and a strong leader and taking initiative. The studies from Sweden (i.e. Kronsell 2012; Persson 2013) and Norway (Rones 2015; Haaland 2008; 2010; 2016) connect well to the general debate on how the military and militarized masculine culture and ideals are still present within modern militaries in the Nordic countries. The question is how the culture will remain or change over the years with the continued focus on the gendered mechanism of state militaries, wars, security, conflict, and of peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

## **2.2.2. MILITARY AND MILITARIZED MASCULINITIES**

In discussions over gendered identities in the Royal Danish Air Force, a distinction between military masculinity(ies), militarized masculinities, and hegemonic masculinity(ies) is important to keep in mind. Although the concepts are connected, there are differences and important nuances. As Higate (2003) argues, military masculinity is often thought to refer to features of a warrior ethic with references to a heterosexual (white) male soldier who embodies a type of masculinity that entails physical toughness, aggression, and stoic commitment, and who can overcome any enemy that he may face (Higate 2003; see also Belkin 2012). Military masculinities refer to, "*a particular set of gendered attributes typically found within the institution of the armed forces*" (Higate 2003, 29). These characteristics, including performance and ideology, are centered on violence, aggression, and rationality (Higate 2003). At the same time, although these traits may be forms of classic views on military masculinities, they are not fixed, but context-dependent and change in time, space, and place (see also Woodward 2003 on locating military identities). Militarized

masculinities are closely linked to military masculinities, but with the nuance that this refers to the process in which masculinities become subject to militarization in which military norms become part of the traits of the individuals who perform and hold a militarized masculinity. Moreover, militarized masculinities may not simply be found among soldiers, but is as argued by Enloe (2000; 2016), part of the process in which a militarization happens on different levels in society and among individuals, both civilian and military.

Hence, over the past decades, military masculinities as a concept has been applied by a number of scholars from various disciplines including feminist IR and security studies, military sociologists, critical military studies, gender studies, organizational studies, geography, etc. (Enloe 2000; 2004; Higate 2003a; Belkin 2012; Basham and Bulmer 2017; Henry 2017). The early work on military masculinity focused primarily on formal military settings such as national and state militaries. In this sense, seen through feminist scholarship, military masculinity was a concept that was carried, possessed, and produced through a socialization process within the military and part of the military culture (Higate 2003). This also means that in the early forms of its use, it was looked upon as a singular form of gender practice and linked closely to Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, building on the notion of one hyper and dominant form of masculinity, which was idealized (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2012; Beasley 2008). Nonetheless, the concept has evolved over the past years with more disciplines and scholars introducing and applying/and challenging the concept (I explain in further detail the concept of hegemonic masculinity in the section below). This means that there has been a move from military masculinity to military masculinities and militarized masculinities to encompass a wider form of masculinities and acknowledge that masculinities are fluid and take different expressions depending on context and the gendered bodies, who perform and display masculinity (Higate 2003; Duncanson 2009; Parpart and Partridge 2014; Henry 2017).

As an example, Enloe's (2000; 2004) work on militarization and military masculinities as discussed previously has been groundbreaking in conceptualizing the gendered nature of military work and identities; this includes the use of the concept of hegemonic masculinity and its relationship with the military and military bodies. Higate's 2003 edited volume *Military Masculinities: Identity and State* is another example of how the different, but interlinked fields of feminist IR and critical military studies have engaged with the concept of military masculinities. The edited volume from 2003 provides one of the first edited attempts to describe and conceptualize military masculinities in a broader context and looks at the connection between men and military and bring in aspects such as space, place, and time, differences in rank and tasks, and how these influence military masculinities (Higate 2003). Moreover, Higate (2003) brings attention to differences in military masculinities and exciting hierarchies and argues that the reasons for joining the armed forces today are less a question of fighting for honor and dying for one's country. Thus, in some ways,

contradicting at least some of the gendered notions of feminist IR in explaining men's attraction to military work. In his studies of the British armed forces, Higate found that male soldiers actively resist those particular masculine ideals (of honor and sacrifice). Higate continues that for this group, hegemonic military masculinity may be learned/and adapted hesitantly, but nonetheless carried out to perfection to accommodate the needs and demands of instructors and peers within the context of basic military training.

[...] these identities may however quickly be subjected to more benign occupational interests, perhaps involving working on "big boy's toys" such as tanks and fighter aircrafts. For these individuals it is likely that face-to-face violence is of secondary importance; deconstruction can be wreaked on the battlefield from a safe distance, where hyper-masculinity is not so obviously invoked (Higate 2003b).

Higate brings emphasis to how military values and expressions take place outside formal military settings. Moreover, new forms of military work driven by revolutions in military affairs (Serhat and Ozan 2017) have led to the use of i.e. drones in warfare as well as more technology-heavy equipment, which means that some of the physical demands are changing and new skills with a focus on technology are required. This includes in particular Air Forces, the Royal Danish Air Force included, which since their founding have been driven by a specialist mentality. These changes are part of challenging classic military hegemonic form of masculinity; making it clear that military and militarized masculinities exist in the plural and that they take different forms and expressions depending on contexts and bodies (Higate 2003a; Henry 2017; Parpart and Partridge 2014). Moreover, this adds to the particularities of identity formations including how they rely on a connection to other groups or distancing groups or particular forms of i.e. military masculinities.

The concept of militarized masculinities has become an integral part of feminist political and scholarly inquiries into militarization with the focus on how masculinized military bodies produce political and gendered power dynamics. At the same time, the concept of military masculinity or masculinities has undergone criticism recently from, among others, critical military scholars. As an example, feminist scholar, Marysia Zalewski (2017), argues that especially the way in which the concepts are used by scholars, feminists included, can be problematic. Zalewski argues that the terms within feminist research have become too comfortable concepts, meaning that there is a lack of critical evaluation of how concepts are used today to describe military gendered identities, in particular male-gendered identities.

What do or did feminists and critical scholars really expect to achieve through the successful infiltration and deployment of the idea of military masculinities? Less violent soldiering? Probably. Less frequent wars? Possibly. Less aggressive governments? Perhaps. And of course so much more and other than any of these more obvious sites, it is a concept which



is integrally connected to a wide range of feminist hopes and ambitions (Zalewski 2017, 200–201).

Zalewski makes the point that the concept might have fallen into the “trap” of gaining popular acceptance within and outside academia to the point where the concept is no longer critically examined in its own right. It thus leads to encompassing a static take of masculinities and gender relations, despite these being fluid forms similar to discussions on intersectionality (see, for instance, Kathy Davis 2008). The challenge is that by using the concept uncritically, military masculinities as a concept might risk appearing in only one form, which renders short differences among military personnel, among geographical settings, between bodies, etc. Hence, Zalewski poses the question:

What does the concept of military masculinities look like when removed from the male body? The connection between militarized bodies and men has clearly become less reliable given the increased presence of female soldiers. The prior undoubtedness and strength of the association between ‘male military bodies’ and classic imaginaries of male muscularity – aggressiveness, strength, heroism, and ‘manly’ behaviors, epitomized in the idealized figure of the ‘military man’ – can no longer hold (Zalewski 2017, 200–201).

Zalewski’s point about disconnecting military masculinity from the male body poses an interesting aspect on how to apply the concept in a military context such as the Royal Danish Air Force where fewer physical abilities to a wider extent than, for instance, in the Army are required in everyday job performances. Additionally, the composition of military personnel is changing both with the increased number of women entering the force, but also in terms of diversity in the form of sexuality, race, and ethnicity in modern militaries (Duncanson and Woodward 2016). This also means, as Zalewski stresses, that soldiering can be done as well (or poorly) by a wide range of gendered and ‘othered’ bodies, which then challenges the previous connection that feminist scholars have stressed between manhood and militarism (Zalewski 2017).

The disconnect of military masculinities from the male body poses interesting empirical, theoretical, and analytical questions for how to use and understand gendered bodies performing (militarized) masculinities in the armed forces and the Royal Danish Air Force is no exception. If a woman can perform as well (or badly) the tasks of the soldier and the concept of militarized masculinity does not depend on male bodies to be carried out, or embodied, what does this then mean for the concept itself? It could mean that the application of the concept is less relevant to describe only male behavior (and a specific male behavior) in the military, or perhaps this was never the intention of the concept? Hence, I use the concept not simply to describe how male soldier bodies create military identity(ies), but as a concept that reveals the complicated and at times conflicting processes of creating gendered identities for men

and women (and other gendered bodies) in the Royal Danish Air Force. In addition, the concept of military masculinities is used to analyze the different ways in which the soldiers narrate their military identities in relation to each other, the institutional narratives of the Danish Armed Forces, and the social narratives of being a soldier in the Air Force. Hence, I argue that military (and militarized) masculinities, despite their pitfalls, has the potential to reveal ways in which masculinities within military settings are negotiated on a personal level for the soldiers and through institutional narratives, which combined bring forward the nuances and ambiguities of discussing military work and identity in a modern military such as the Danish. Moreover, the Danish context in which the notion of having achieved gender equality is common (Bloksgaard 2012; Borchorst 2009; Fiig; Rolandsen Agustín and Siim 2022) brings forward interesting nuances to examining military masculinities within the Royal Danish Air force and makes room for new approaches to the concept where these national narratives come to affect the understandings and applications of the concept. Hence, these points are paramount for how the concept is used in this project.

Lastly, and going full circle to the first argument of this subchapter on bodies and masculinities, the nuances to the discussions on military masculinities and their relevance to this project relates to Higate's (2003) points about the particularities of the Air Force in constructions on military masculinities. Higate refers to the masculinities found in the British Air Force (RAF) as deviant military masculinities and argues that "*the relatively gentler nature of the RAF differentiates it from tougher British Army regimes, where the ideology of violence is more likely to be found*" (Higate 2003, 31). This distinction, which Higate points to between the Air Force and the Army, is also articulated among the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers. In a number of cases, the Air Force soldiers create their military identity in opposition to the other services especially the Army, and in this process, I argue, negotiate different forms of masculinities. One common frame of reference in this process is to be a specialist rather than a soldier. Creating an 'us' versus 'them' in which there is a focus on being specialists is thus part of the strategic battles over hierarchies and a way for the soldiers to position themselves at a particular level of the internal military hierarchy.

Notwithstanding, associations between different forms of dominant and subordinate masculinities and military identities are part of various analyses on gender, peace, and security issues relating to actions and actors (i.e. soldiers). I argue that applying the concepts as theoretical and analytical tools are useful in unfolding gendered negotiations over military identity in the Royal Danish Air Force; albeit with awareness to the aforementioned pitfalls.

### **2.2.3. HEGEMONIC MILITARY MASCULINITIES**

The interest by critical military scholars to examining and developing the concepts of military masculinities, militarized masculinities, and the connections to intersecting categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, class, etc. should be seen within the

past decade's increasing number of (feminist) scholars focusing on men's studies (and masculinity studies). A concept, which has gained a significant role in this regard, is *hegemonic masculinity*. The concept was first introduced by R.W. Connell in 1977 and has been adopted by a number of scholars doing feminist work; making the concept widely used in understanding the role of masculinities, femininities, and gendered hierarchies (Christensen and Rasmussen 2015). Moreover, it has been closely connected to militarized masculinities (Myrntinen, Khattab, and Naujoks 2017; Chisholm and Tidy 2017; Zalewski 2017).

In its original form, hegemonic masculinity is centered on the notion that a hierarchy exists among different forms of masculinity and that this is part of creating power dynamics and power relations among men (and women) (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Christensen and Rasmussen 2015). The idea behind the concept of hegemonic masculinity is that a specific masculine form is more powerful/-dominant than other forms and, at the same time, the concept entails that masculinities need the dichotomy of femininities to function. Connell and Messerschmidt explain the concept in the following way:

Hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men. Men who received the benefits of patriarchy without enacting a strong version of masculine dominance could be regarded as showing a complicit masculinity. It was in relation to this group, and to compliance among heterosexual women, that the concept of hegemony was most powerful (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832).

In addition, hegemonic masculinity as a concept has been subject to critique over the past 15 plus years and is challenged even by scholars who initially advocated for the concept (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Despite the critique and continued development of the concept, it holds important gendered aspects for analyzing and understanding masculinities (and femininities) in the Royal Danish Air Force and how this is part of shaping gendered military identities for Danish soldiers. However, there is a need for a contextual awareness in the application of the concept, as gender norms and gender hierarchies take different forms depending on the contextual settings (Christensen and Rasmussen 2015) (a further discussion on the contextual setting and relations to the Danish soldiers is found in Chapter 5). Thus, I argue that the understanding among the Danish population of being aware of gender (in)equality (Borchorst 2009; Dahlerup 2018) influences the ways in which forms of hegemonic and military masculinities are constructed and negotiated within and among Royal Danish Air Force soldiers. Hence, the contextual setting, which Christensen and

Rasmussen (2015) emphasizes becomes an important component for how masculinities are negotiated in the Royal Danish Air Force and this again affects the soldier narratives on military work and identity.

In Messerschmidt and Connell's revision of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, they also stress the above point of the importance of context and in particular highlight two points, which they discard. The first one is that the model for social relations surrounding hegemonic masculinities is too simplistic. The model tried to locate all masculinities (and femininities) by a single pattern of power, which they called the "global dominance" of men over women. Connell and Messerschmidt argue that at the time of the formulation of the concept, this idea was useful for preventing the idea of different masculinities collapsing into a selection of opposing lifestyles. However, with the knowledge of the field today regarding gender relations this approach clearly dictates that this was an inadequate way of understanding the relations between groups of men and different forms of masculinity. Moreover, it is insufficient for understanding women's relationship with dominant masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 847).

Another critique that Connell and Messerschmidt address is that of specific traits associated with hegemonic masculinity:

The notion of masculinity as an assemblage of traits opened the path to that treatment of hegemonic masculinity as a fixed character type that has given so much trouble and is rightly criticized in recent psychological writing. Not only the essentialist concept of masculinity but also, more generally, the trait approach to gender need to be thoroughly transcended (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 847).

Based on their reevaluation and responses to critique, Connell and Messerschmidt state that four main areas need reformulation for further use of the concept. These are: *The nature of gender hierarchy, the geography of masculine configurations, the process of social embodiment, and the dynamics of masculinities*. Despite Connell and Messerschmidt's 2005 paper, which reexamined the concept, disputes about hegemonic masculinity linger among scholars doing feminist work, and also by Connell and Messerschmidt. At the same time, the concept continues to find its way into research and analyses particularly of military masculinity. With a focus on the four points emphasized by Connell and Messerschmidt, I argue that the application of the concept in a Danish setting has its relevance. This includes using the concept in examining different expressions of military masculinities among Royal Danish Air Force soldiers. Hence, the idea that masculinities are dynamic and related to geographies, and I add time and space, is significant for how I identify and use the concept in this project. As Woodward (2003) stresses, masculinities are reliant on geographies, which also means that hegemonic masculinities within a given situation has the potential to change over time, space, and place. An element that is especially useful in this project, where the soldiers' narratives reflect negotiations over military

identities in different contextual settings i.e. at the bases in Denmark, abroad on international missions as well as in their civilian lives. In Chapters 5 and 6, I provide examples from the interview material where these negotiations become explicit.

In line with my own continued use of the concept, British feminist IR and critical military scholar Duncanson (2009; 2015) argues that the concept of hegemonic masculinity and military masculinities remain important in understanding gender dynamics in military work. In her research on British soldiers in peacekeeping operations, Duncanson demonstrates that changes in military assignments alter and challenge militarized masculinities and the narratives surrounding these. The narrative of *the protector* and *legitimization of force* is, according to Duncanson, challenged in peacekeeping assignments and thereby the type of masculinity that is predominant in militaries, or at least presumed to be the highest hierarchical system of masculinities. Duncanson states that the concept when first introduced was unique in the sense that it dealt with gender as dynamic and relational and that it is still useful, however, with some modifications. Thus, Duncanson stresses that:

[...] when hegemonic masculinity is applied in empirical cases, it is most often used to demonstrate the way in which hegemonic masculinity shifts and adopts new practices in order to enable some men to retain power over others. This is especially so in feminist International Relations, particularly studies of military masculinities, where shifts toward “softer” military masculinities such as the “tough and tender” soldier-scholar demonstrate to many feminists merely the “flexibility of the machinery of rule [...]”. I challenge the pessimism of these accounts of military masculinity (Duncanson 2015, 1).

The inter-relational aspect of hegemonic masculinity is right at the core of the use of gendered narratives applied to soldiers with the use of *just warriors*, *legitimate protectors of the state*, *beautiful souls*, and *maternal body of the nation*. And as Duncanson states, feminist IR scholarship has been analyzing and debating these gendered relations for the past four decades. Duncanson (2009; 2015) maintains that hegemonic masculine culture is found among soldiers, both male and female. The culture rewards strength, aggressiveness, and heterosexuality and, according to Whitworth (2004), it creates unemotional detachedness towards the enemy (Duncanson 2015; 2009; Whitworth 2004). A number of scholars have referred to these traits as being part of the warrior brotherhood (see, for example, MacKenzie’s 2015 work on the Band of Brothers in the U.S. military).

What these discussions mean for this study is the acceptance that masculinities (and hegemonic masculinities) are relevant for narratives on military work and identity in the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force, and that hegemonic forms of masculinities exist in military settings. However, as highlighted by the outlined discussion, the concept takes different forms and understandings on gender, peace, and security might challenge the hegemonic understanding of masculinity within the

armed forces. Moreover, the hegemonic masculinity ideal is dependent on a contextual setting, for example, being at a Danish base or on an international mission in Afghanistan and Iraq, and which service the soldiers represent. The application of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in this study, in light of the scholarly discussions, is therefore based on the understanding that the concepts themselves need to evolve and that they in this process might take different forms. Hence, the application of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in this project is seen through an analysis of military and militarized masculinities in the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force and how these are negotiated and challenges among the soldiers and in their narratives of who they are as individuals and as a collective Air Force service separate from the Army and the Navy.

#### **2.2.4. BROTHERS, WARRIORS, AND FORCES FOR GOOD**

The shift towards peacekeeping and peacebuilding in military work cemented through global narratives on gender, peace, and security as presented by the UN and NATO with an increased focus on especially female soldiers and the attention to gendered dynamics in peace and conflict might challenge certain military narratives, for instance, that of a *Band of Brothers* and the close link to a warrior culture (Rones 2015; Persson 2011). This further means that the dichotomy of training combat soldiers and having a peacekeeping/building agenda creates certain identity issues for the Nordic nations on a normative and practical level. In this sense, the political dimensions of military work and the special role that the military plays in a government's foreign policy are essential to the narratives that the state creates about their militaries (which influences the institutional as well as the personal soldier narratives). Hence, the question of being a warrior nation as well as a peacekeeping and peacebuilding nation is a political issue, which is part of foreign policy discussions and raises issues in relation to feminist approaches to peace and security (see for instance Aggestam and Bergman Rosamond 2016 work on Sweden's feminist foreign policy).

Additionally, and as discussed previously, military institutions rely on gendered narratives to maintain and justify their (at times violent) actions (Sjoberg and Via 2010; Cohn 2013). These narratives have often been linked to a dichotomy between the protectors and those in need of protection (Enloe 2000). Linked to these narratives and their connection to gendered bodies is the narrative of a *Band of Brothers*. The *Band of Brothers* refers to an all-male military unit that stands united and protects each other when defending their country. The narrative is part of the understanding of the gendered roles of men and women in military work and conflict (MacKenzie 2015). There have been references to a "Band of Brothers" for centuries, making it an old military narrative, and the myth of the Band of Brothers gained hegemonic status in relation to U.S. military identity in the decades following the Vietnam War (MacKenzie 2015).

MacKenzie (2015) has examined this particular idea within especially the U.S. armed forces and argues that the *Band of Brothers* narrative has, and continues to, play a significant role in how the collective military body is perceived and understood by the military and the soldiers. The *Band of Brothers* narrative is a particular military narrative, which, according to MacKenzie, is part of discussions on security, warfare, nation building, and issues of peacekeeping and peacebuilding (MacKenzie 2015). The traditional role of state militaries has been to protect the nation and to fight in wars when the safety of the nation or its allies is threatened. However, to legitimate the use of violence against other nations/and ultimately other individuals in war (and the risk of civilian casualties), gendered stories and myth about “real” men, “good” women, and “normal” social order are necessary. “*One could call the constant perpetuation and dissemination of such gendered ideals a militarized masculinity complex*” (MacKenzie 2015, 4). MacKenzie’s work demonstrates that the Band of Brothers is not just a narrative, but a myth, and especially, “*within the past fifteen years, “Band of Brothers” has come to represent and signal multiple ideals associated with the all-male combat unit*” (MacKenzie 2015, 11). Moreover:

Men fight for many reasons, but probably the most powerful one is the bonding—‘male bonding’—with their comrades...Perhaps for very fundamental reasons women do not evoke in men the same feelings of comradeship and ‘followership’ that men do. In turn, combat cohesion was heralded as essential to troop effectiveness, but was also defined largely as male bonding, which by definition excluded women from cohesion. [...] The Band of Brothers, then, is not simply a myth about an all-male unit; it is a myth about a white, heterosexual man and his nonsexual bonds with his comrades (MacKenzie 2015, 151).

The Band of Brothers narrative is also relevant in a Danish setting where the military per default has been mainly white and (at least openly) heterosexual. Hence, the narrative of the Band of Brothers is interesting to examine in a context of a Danish military that seemingly presents itself as inclusive and open-minded to other gendered bodies, but where the reality continues to be that the majority still are white, heterosexual men. In Chapters 5 and 6, I engage in a discussion about how it is possible in the soldier narratives to find similarities to the type of brotherhood that MacKenzie presents.

The obvious gendered connotations in the narrative of Band of Brothers takes on a different form in a similar, but slightly different military narrative. Namely the narrative of *the warrior* and *a warrior culture* (often embodied by male soldiers). The narrative is used in militaries and found across nationalities and continents (see, for instance, Enloe 2000; Kronsell and Svedberg 2012; MacKenzie 2015) and the warrior culture is present within the Scandinavian militaries as well (see, for instance, Bergmand Rosamond 2013; Kronsell 2014; Roness 2015; Daugbjerg and Refslund Sørensen 2017). In a Danish context, the warrior narrative is presented and demonstrated in the work by Daugbjerg and Refslund Sørensen (2017), where

especially Denmark's contributions to the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq and being part of the coalition of the willing demonstrates this particular warrior approach to military work, albeit the official narrative is one of a more cosmopolitan-minded nature. Thomas Randrup Pedersen in his PhD from 2017 stresses a warrior narrative in his ethnographic studies among Danish Army grunts as well where these narrative understandings of being part of a group of soldiers, who go abroad on international military missions to fight a common enemy through violent means, are part of the narratives of being an active military soldier (Randrup Pedersen 2017). Segmenting that the narrative of being a warrior is a part of the military identity that not uncommon in a Danish military setting, although, as I will demonstrate through my interview material, the particular service of investigation is an important factor to take into account in how military narratives, including the warrior one, becomes part of a soldier identity as well as a social identity of a service or the military as a whole.

The warrior narrative holds a lesser emphasis on the male gender and could therefore have the potential to be a more neutral terminology. In an effort to be more inclusive and gender-neutral, the U.S. Navy SEAL has in its updated initiation rituals removed the word *brother* and replaced it with *warrior* (Moore 2020). This change demonstrates an awareness within military organizations that words matter in negotiations and constructions over military identities (Cohn 1987), and can be seen as a continuation of the points presented by Woodward and Duncanson (2016) that the modern military has developed in terms of gender awareness at least at a management level and that changes like these may be an expression of a type of gender mainstreaming even within one of the toughest military branches of the U.S. military. Nonetheless, although the word *warrior* might be less gendered in the sense that the reference to a brotherhood is more disguised, the militarization of the word seems to be enhanced. At the same time, the changes in practices might be less flexible and require more work than simply articulating these social narratives in different ways. Additionally, in a Danish setting, the word camaraderie or soldier bodies might be more articulated than *Band of Brothers*. However, I argue that the idea behind this of an all-male soldier body is still present and challenged by the inclusion of 'other' bodies. Hence, the point made by MacKenzie about a feeling of comradeship and 'followership' resonates with the Danish context as well.

As introduced, Duncanson's concept of *Forces for good(?)* presents yet another military narrative, which is linked to the two previous of the *Band of Brothers* and the *warrior*, but which brings forward other nuances to the gendered implications of conflict and peace in military work and identity. The *Forces for good* narrative enables a discussion on the complexities of military work and the distinctions between keeping, building, and securing peace. As discussed briefly, Duncanson's work is influenced by Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity (originally introduced in 1977). Duncanson (2009; 2013), among others, has revised the problematic use of masculinity in conflict and war, but argues that although peacekeeping masculinity can be problematic since it relies on feminization and racialization of the 'Other', the traditional linkages between militarism and masculinities are challenged by peacekeeping masculinity (Duncanson 2013). Paraphrasing Duncanson, one may



argue that a variety of masculinities exists in the armed forces but because the hegemony of the warrior model has remained and certain men dominate within the military, including a pressure for men to conform to this ideal, the critique from feminist IR scholars has remained about the ill use of military force to secure peace. However, as Duncanson argues this is one of the reasons why it is important to continue to analyze and discuss military masculinities and gendered practices within the armed forces in order to *“consider not just whether alternative military masculinities are being constructed but whether they challenge the hegemonic model”* (Duncanson 2013, 65).

Therefore, Duncanson (2013) argues that peacekeeping masculinity can also be *“considered part of a ‘regendered military’, which may be a necessary component of successful conflict resolution”* (Duncanson 2013, 65). Duncanson further argues that *“Masculinities [...] as the work of Connell and others has shown, are multiple, dynamic and contradictory, due to their being actively constructed – they are processes, not character types”* (Duncanson 2013, 65). This means that it is possible to find different forms of masculinities in military settings in which other types of characteristics are stressed i.e. authority and rationality at the Officer level compared to physical strength among the infantry soldiers. At the same time, these characteristics are not linear but reliant on context and other intersectional categories as well as service (Duncanson 2013, 65). In addition, Duncanson makes the compelling question of seeing peacekeeping as emasculating or peacebuilding as masculine. Again, challenging the normative understandings of what it takes to be a real soldier, and in this, the struggle for the hegemonic model over military masculinity. A form of masculinity, which might be challenged with the new forms of assignments, which the military takes part in today. Thus, as Duncanson argues, *“when soldiers valorize peacekeeping tasks as masculine, they are not only asserting that there is another way to be a ‘real man’: they are asserting that it is the way”* (Duncanson 2013, 69).

The points that Duncanson (2013) brings forward regarding the active constructions of masculinities that is, masculinities are processes rather than character types resonates with my approach to analyzing military identity formations among the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers, and how these are negotiated and constructed in international conflict areas. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 5, the soldiers interviewed in this study emphasize characteristics and skills that rely on other forms of masculinities than ones that are dependent on physical strength and toughness, in line with Duncanson’s study. This is also found in Higate (2003) and others’ work on the differences in military masculinities (Higate 2003b; Woodward 2003; Duncanson 2013; 2015). I, therefore, focus on the crossroads between space, place, and time in which narratives on gender, peace, and security become evident or take more salient positions. Duncanson’s argument of the variety of masculinities in the military and emergence of a peacekeeping masculinity, which is less reliant on force, strength, and aggressiveness and more attentive to creating peace through other skills such as

compassion, logical sense, and advanced knowledge, are interesting when discussing masculinities in the Royal Danish Air Force. As Duncanson argues from her empirical evidence from Army soldiers in the British military:

[...] the soldiers experienced a tension between the desire to do what they learned to be most effective in bringing about peace and the desire or demand to be manly [...]. One is that peacekeeping practices are inferior, frustrating and less manly pursuits than real righting. The other is the many attempts to position peacekeeping as thoroughly masculine behavior (Duncanson 2013, 69).

The first theme, thereby, underpins traditional gender discourses and the idea of the hegemony of traditional warrior masculinity (Duncanson 2013). In the second theme, it is possible to begin a subversion of this particular connection to the traditional and begin to construct an alternative military masculinity, which is associated with peacekeeping. The military identity and subsequent form of dominant masculinities found in the narrative produced by the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers might be examples of how certain military services and functions are better suited for peacekeeping and peacebuilding assignments in which the need for aggressiveness and traditional military skills of physical strength are less important. Moreover, this may lead to fewer narrative struggles over military identity and military masculinities and the need to negotiate these in relation to national and global understandings of gender, peace, and security.

Duncanson's approach to examining and discussing constructions and negations of military masculinities fits with my own approach to examining military masculinities as I too am informed by Connell's (and James Messerschmitt's) work and rework on the concept of hegemonic masculinity(ies) (Connell 1995; Connell 2016; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2008; Messerschmidt 2012). In my examinations on the particularities of military identities and, in this, also military masculinities within the Royal Danish Air Force, the concept of hegemonic, dominant, and dominated masculinities is therefore used to explain how these may be viewed and understood within the framework of a military institution and the context of the Danish military.

## **2.2.5. A PEACEBUILDING SOLDIER**

Feminist IR scholars have particularly examined the "new" role of the soldier in missions articulated as peacekeeping and peacebuilding to detect whether changes in gendered practices including military masculinities are happening (Duncanson 2013; Baumgärtner 2014; Higate 2007; Mazurana, Raven-Roberts, and Parpart 2005). The problematic link between military masculinities and peacekeeping, as a number of activists and feminist IR scholars have stressed, links to the evidence of military participation in sexual exploitation and unhindered aggression against civilians in mission areas. The argument is that this exemplifies the ill use of military forces to

create peace since the behavior of soldiers is connected to a particular form of military masculinity that is associated with practices of strength, toughness, and aggressive heterosexuality, which again is considered hegemonic in Western armed forces (Whitworth 2004; Zarkov 2002; Parpart and Partridge 2014).

As discussed above using Duncanson's terminology of *Forces for good*, the role of peacekeeping/building is complex and full of contradictions for Danish soldiers. This becomes evident in my analysis of the soldier narratives on military work and military identity in Chapters 5-6. The Royal Danish Air Force soldiers relate to their work in different ways, however, a common notion is that they are there to help; i.e. being *forces for good* (Duncanson 2009; 2013). In a Danish context (and in many others as well), the same soldiers perform the role of peacekeepers/builders as well as traditional hyper-masculine warriors depending on missions. This means that the soldiers need to balance these contradicting roles.

The peacekeeping assignments, even within militaries themselves, are viewed as less aggressive missions, less dangerous for the soldiers, and are feminized to some degree; one reason being the emphasis on the importance of female troops in this type of assignment (Persson 2013; Haaland 2008). The argument is linked by the narratives of the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers in which comments such as "this is a low-risk mission", or "this is not really unsafe" were articulated by a number of my interviewees. The increased focus on peacekeeping by the UN, including a focus on female soldiers with the operational effectiveness argument in mind (Jennings 2011), has led to the transformation of military issues in important ways. One aspect is that gender equality is no longer a marginal political or administrative issue but concerns the very core of military work and operational efficiency. However, at the same time, as Persson (2013) argues, militaries are running the risk of rebuilding or maintaining gendered divisions of labor within their forces. Persson further stresses that:

As the focus on peacekeeping increases, a new division of labour emerges. It is closely connected to the local interpretation of Resolution 1325, and means among other things that women are increasingly being recruited for very specific positions where their gender is turned into a crucial resource (Persson 2013, 38–39).

Interestingly, women's involvement in peacekeeping and peacebuilding is a double-edged sword in regards to gendered stereotypes and notions of what it means to be a soldier and what constitutes a good soldier. The debate has had certain feminists wondering whether women's enrolment in state militaries is something that they should support and encourage even in peacekeeping missions (see discussion in section 2.1.1.). Moreover, women's involvement in state militaries has, in some cases, been part of enforcing gendered stereotypes, as peacekeeping and peacebuilding have been seen as military assignments, which require that the soldiers demonstrate compassion, less violence, and communicative skills, which are often feminized and

ascribed as female qualities and to be performed by female bodies (Sion 2009; Persson 2013).

Senior Gender Adviser to the UN, Nadine Puechguirbal, argues that despite peacekeeping missions being considered a different form of military assignment than national defense missions, the hyper-masculine culture and the gendered narratives of the protector and the protected prevails in the peacekeeping mindset among soldiers. Thus, women continue to be viewed as a group that needs protection, which denies women agency in peace processes (Puechguirbal 2010). This debate is linked to the concept of 'othering'. A process that the local population, and/or women in the military are subjected to and which stresses a relationship between the hegemonic masculine warrior peacekeeper and the less masculine racialized other. This link is among others set forward by scholars who take on a colonialist lens in their analysis of peacekeeping missions. The hierarchy among masculinities allows peacekeeping men to access power over local men (with reference to the colonial powers) and are part of exploiting the local population (Dittmer and Apelt 2008; Myrntinen, Khattab, and Naujoks 2017). This element of military work, which Dittmer, Apelt, Myrntinen et. al. address is relevant for the part of my analysis that examines how Royal Danish Air Force soldiers negotiate their military identities (including negotiations of military masculinities) when they are abroad on international missions and engage with other military forces as well as local populations. Hence, which power dynamics are at play and how the soldiers situate themselves and their work within a context of conflict, and where they constitute an outside force, which by means of the power of the UN and or NATO can execute power over the local population. This perspective also speaks into Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's original essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* From 1985, in which she makes the case of the disproportionate gendered power dynamics that take place between the global North and the global South in which the white man is considered the savior and the brown man the 'other'. Hence, by arguing from historical and ideological factors, Spivak presents the argument that people who inhabit the periphery fall short in being heard (Spivak 1988). Within feminist studies and also military studies, Spivak's famous phrase of "*white men saving brown women from brown men*" (Spivak as cited in Cooke 2002), has resonated with the critique I presented above of white, male soldiers and their superior role in terms of local men given their military (Dittmer and Apelt 2008; McBride and Wibben 2012; Myrntinen, Khattab, and Naujoks 2017). Spivak's points further emphasize the power relations that shape international military missions, peacekeeping and peacebuilding included, and where the discussions over securing, keeping, and building peace through foreign troops add to the complexities of the relationships between foreign soldiers and the local populations they are supposed to help.

This point about the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers' reactions towards their work while on international deployments relate to these discussions and further resonate with Dittmer and Apelt's (2008) studies of German peacekeepers in which they argue that Western peacekeepers may be viewed as "thoughtful" and "European", whereas

the local population (and especially the local men) is characterized as “uncivilized” and “backwards”. This is part of creating a particular dichotomy between *us and them* and states the presumed superiority of the white peacekeeper (Dittmer and Apelt 2008). Moreover, it is part of the struggle to maintain the hegemonic and superior hyper-masculinity that the armed forces hold and demonstrate towards local populations. An example of this has been in relation to cases of sexual exploitation of local women and girls (and power dynamics and struggles that are at play), which a large part of the literature on peacekeeping focuses on and which has been a key concern by the UN (Higate 2007; Mazurana, Raven-Roberts, and Parpart 2005).

As stated previously, much of the literature concerning peacekeeping missions, including academic articles, books, and reviews, the UN report, and independent NGO reports, demonstrates that sexual exploitation is a common occurrence in areas where peacekeeping operations take place (Enloe 2000). Moreover, this has been part of the discussions on UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent nine resolutions and continues to be a focus area in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding work. Some of the scholars who have demonstrated this type of behavior are political scientists Catherine Lutz, Matthew C. Gutmann, and Keith Brown (Lutz, Gutmann, and Brown 2009). They argue that systematic patterns of sexual exploitation, for many years, have emerged in areas where peacekeeping missions have taken place. The exploitation of local populations by peacekeeping soldiers takes different forms; some include the exchange of UN food supplies or money for sex with young girls (and sometimes boys), but there are also cases of sexual assault. These incidents demonstrate the complexities of peacekeeping missions and the contracting aspects of having soldiers in charge of peacekeeping operations. It also demonstrates how the military is highly reliant on hyper-masculine traits of domination, power hierarchies, and how a culture of masculine privilege is in place, which in its basic form grants men power over women and gives them the “right” to exploit local women for sexual encounters (Lutz, Gutmann, and Brown 2009).

The peacekeeping missions are right at the center of the transition of a cultural and political situation, with political, economic, and cultural powers and issues at play (Lutz, Gutmann, and Brown 2009). The issue of exploitation among the local population by (mainly) male peacekeeping soldiers demonstrates the importance of analyzing the role of masculinities and femininities in conflict settings and war. The behavior of male privilege of sexual exploitation is sometimes referred to as normal behavior for soldiers, and something that one might try to prevent through top-down policies, orders, and training, but that it is something that is natural for men and cannot be completely prevented (Mazurana, Raven-Roberts, and Parpart 2005; Higate 2007; Lutz, Gutmann, and Brown 2009). The issue is that a gendered analysis is rarely applied in this type of work and discrepancy between the soldiers’ actions and the policies on sexual exploitation occur when the desired attitude of respect toward women and codes of conduct (emphasized by the UN) threatens a warrior character of militarized masculinity (Whitworth 2004).

As such, one of the reasons for favoring female peacekeepers has been based on the assumption that the presence of female soldiers will make male soldiers behave better and reduce the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse of the local population. However, as social scientist Johanna Valenius argues, assuming that the presence of female soldiers will make male soldiers less likely to engage in sexual exploitation, means that the organizations and military are placing the burden of hindering this misconduct on the female soldiers rather than making the male soldiers, who engage in this type of conduct, question their own behavior. Moreover, the premise assumes that women are inherently more peaceful than men, and also that they do not conform to the hyper-masculinized ideal that is present within the military. As studies show, female soldiers often adopt the masculinized culture of the missions (in an attempt to fit into the unit), and thus instead of having a presumed 'civilized' effect on their male colleagues, they are part of maintaining the same type of ideal (Valenius 2007; Enloe 2004; Higate 2007).

In line with this argument, a study with interviews conducted with Nordic peacekeepers in Bosnia-Herzegovina showed that female peacekeepers, instead of stopping and condemning the behavior, often overlooked the misconduct of their male colleagues. An effort to contest this behavior among peacekeeping soldiers might, therefore, need to be approached from a different angle where the military itself and its practices and culture of gender norms and ideals are challenged. This also includes the assumptions that scholars and UN practitioners hold (Valenius 2007; Simic 2009). As argued by Valenius, this process requires that we understand that gender mainstreaming (including UN officials) is an attempt to help understand and challenge the system of femininities and masculinities and the power hierarchies, and where gender should not be understood as a difference between men and women (Valenius 2007).

Although this study does not focus on sexual exploitation of the local populations by Royal Danish Air Force soldiers, debates on UN gender courses and interactions with local populations are part of my conversations with the soldiers, and this becomes evident in their narratives of their military service abroad. Furthermore, this component of peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions is part of the discussion on Danish exceptionalism in regard to gender norms and the self-image of being front-runners in terms of gender also in military work (Borchorst 2009; Dahlerup 2018). At the same time, my data challenges some of these assumptions and perceptions through the soldier narratives. Hence, as I discuss in Chapter 6 in particular, the articulation of gender in UN missions (and to some degree NATO missions) by top-level officials is part of the soldiers' everyday lives abroad, but also something which they find problematic, challenging, and difficult to discuss and relate to.

### 2.3. INTERSECTIONALITIES IN MILITARY NARRATIVES

Rank, age, and job functions are particularly interesting concerning military work in the Royal Danish Air Force. In this section, I pay closer attention to discussions on militarized masculinities in combination with intersectionality to engage more thoroughly with the role gender plays in narratives on military identity in combination with other categories such as age, rank, nationality, sexuality, ethnicity, race (whiteness), etc. The discussion in this section centers on how different social categories are part of creating gendered identities within the military and how contextual settings (time, place, and space) influence these and to what degree social categories intersect with military work and identity constructions.

Intersectionality in its original form was first introduced in 1989 by the American lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw (Crenshaw 1989) as a response to white feminists' analyses and discussions on gender disparities, which according to Crenshaw lacked a clear race perspective, rendering short the experiences of black women (in Crenshaw's case especially black American women). The concept of intersectionality in its basic form, "*calls our attention to the fact that any situation, person, or research phenomenon can be understood only in terms of intersecting and overlapping contexts and social forces such as gender, race, age, sexuality, class etc.*" (Ackerly and True 2010, 30). This means that women's inequality is experienced differently depending on whether you are a white middle-class woman or a black middle-class woman and so forth. Social structures thus influence women's, as well as men's, lives in a variety of ways that differ depending on the contextual setting. The particular focus on overlapping and intersecting contexts makes intersectionality a useful tool in analyzing various (interrelated) power structures, which a hierarchal organization (dominated by masculine traits) like the military entails (Ackerly and True 2010).

Feminist scholars have praised the concept of intersectionality and consider it an integral part of doing feminist work. At the same time, the application of the concept varies a great deal, which is also partly due to intersectionality being applied in a number of different fields today. Often, it is used as an analytical tool rather than a theoretical (and political) concept. This has led to critique especially from black feminists, who argue that by removing the political aspect of intersectionality, the core idea of the concept is missing; to create awareness of racial injustice and the intersection of gender. Nonetheless, the concept is applied by sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, etc. as an analytical tool to address how intersecting categories play a role in relation to power dynamics/relations, identity formations, social injustices, gendered inequalities, and a sense of belonging. Christensen and Jensen (2012) argue that intersectionality in this sense has become a "traveling concept", which takes on different meanings and expressions depending on the contextual setting (Christensen and Jensen 2012). At the same time, as Kathy Davis argues, even within the feminist community, confusion, and disagreement on how to apply the concept exists:

Some suggest that intersectionality is a theory, others regard it as a concept or heuristic device, and still others see it as a reading strategy for doing feminist analysis. Controversies have emerged about whether intersectionality should be conceptualized as a crossroad (Crenshaw, 1991), as 'axes' of difference (Yuval-Davis, 2006) or as a dynamic process (Staunæs, 2003). It is not at all clear whether intersectionality should be limited to understanding individual experiences, to theorizing identity, or whether it should be taken as a property of social structures and cultural discourses (Davis 2008, 68).

As the quote by Davis suggests, the concept, and the scholars who apply it, takes differing approaches in their application, which at times lead to disparities within the scholarship and across disciplines on how to understand and use intersectionality. Moreover, this begs the question of how the concept/idea/analytical approach has gained such momentum, especially among feminist scholars given the apparent lack of consensus on what the concept entails as a theory or an analytical approach. As argued, the concept emerged in the U.S. with a strong focus on gender and race issues and structural power relations. When the concept initially was used by researchers in Scandinavia, it was especially post-colonial gender researchers, particularly within the humanities and social sciences who adopted the concept (Christensen and Jensen 2012). From this setting, the concept traveled onto other fields, such as gender researchers, in political science and sociology. The concept was then used (and argued to encompass this aspect) to critically examine the interplay between the macro and the micro-level by linking structures and institutions with identities and lived lives (Christensen and Jensen 2012).

The methodological approach to intersectionality is often debated and, in this, the use of categories and how they intersect. As Christensen and Jensen (2012) argue, the number of categories used in a given analysis is up for debate, and there are certain challenges to approaching this. Building on the work of Hancock (2015), McCall (2005), and Phoenix (2006) among others, Christensen and Jensen state that:

In any specific analysis it is necessary to select a number of categories or establishing *anchor points as a strategic choice*. This makes the analysis manageable, but also makes it possible to focus on the categories that are deemed most important for a specific research question at a specific time (Christensen and Jensen 2012, 112).

At the same time, Christensen and Jensen point out the dangers of categorizing all social categories in the same way, that they work and influence individuals and identities in the same ways and are affected by structures in the same manner. On the contrary, it is important to keep in mind that these are different categories and that gender and class work and influence individuals as well as institutions in different ways and are dependent on contextual settings.



Marsha Henry (2017) argues that while intersectionality might be used to pay close attention to differences and identities in their plurality and interconnectedness such as the military and military contexts (and in examining militarized masculinities), there is a danger of missing Crenshaw's point of intersecting oppressions, and also the category of race. Hence, when using intersectionality to examine the privileged, e.g. white soldiers in the global North, the power dynamics of an intersectional perspective shifts (Henry 2017). These debates relate to the points made in Chapter 2.2.3. on peacekeeping soldiers and the relationship between the white (male) soldier and the 'othered' brown man (Spivak 1985; Cooke 2002; Dittmer and Apelt 2008; Myrtilinen, Khattab, and Naujoks 2017). As Henry argues:

There is a complex relationship between identity, positionality, and power, and this is especially brought out in studies of marginal military men. Intersectionality as a concept can sensitize researchers to the fact that not all 'margins' are equally placed in the gender order, nor are all men positioned similarly in the global order. And the axes of difference that contribute to oppression may individually provide an opportunity for the exercise of hegemonic power. In this way, using intersectionality to help in the analysis of women's and men's marginalization or vulnerability in a given context does not always provide a full picture of the nature of power more broadly speaking (Henry 2017, 194).

This perspective, which Henry brings into the discussion, is an example of how intersectionality continues to be used in various ways within the scholarship and how this causes concern and disputes between scholars with different takes. In terms of this project, Henry's point about the power aspect of intersectionality is interesting and raises issues about how to analyze and understand militarized masculinities within the Royal Danish Air Force given that the soldiers are part of different contexts, where ideas of power relations (global North and global South) comes into question. In the process of analyzing how Danish soldiers negotiate masculinities depending on contextual settings and how this intersects with other categories and power hierarchies, Henry's point resonates and gives ground for reflections on hierarchies of gender and other social categories and the roles these play in personal and social military narratives. Intersectionality as a concept is also part of forming my awareness of the fact that my empirical data - this being white male and female soldiers - experience these categories differently among each other and in comparison to for example black or brown soldiers. In Chapter 3 (Methodology), a longer discussion on the choices made in terms of categories for this particular project is presented.

## **2.4. SOLDIER NARRATIVES IN SPACE, PLACE, AND TIME**

As the Royal Danish Air Force takes part in assignments nationally and internationally, the soldiers' experiences of military work include transnational aspects, which influences their personal narratives as well as the social narratives of

the Royal Danish Air Force as a collective. This aspect connects closely with concepts of space, place, and time and how these concepts intersect with gendered constructions of narratives produced by the military itself (institutional narratives) and among the individual soldiers (personal narratives). In this section, I take a closer look at aspects of *space, place, and time* by including perspectives on how these concepts are part of shaping how soldiers experience their work domestically and abroad, inside or outside the fence, first deployments/latest deployment, the context of the deployment peacekeeping or peacebuilding, or both. Thus, this chapter addresses how narratives are shaped by contexts, and how individuals (such as soldiers) are part of carrying these narratives and memories of deployments from one place to another. Moreover, it connects to the previous section in regards to how intersecting categories play an important role in negotiations over military identities, including how they may take center stage or more of a background position depending on the context. One very concrete example of this being the national identity of the soldiers. A social mark, which is embedded with the understandings of Danish exceptionalism, and which can become particularly articulated or challenged in settings, where the context of Denmark is further away and ideals and practices are in place and prevail.

In my approach of time, space, and place in examining military institutions, I take inspiration from in particular Woodward (2003) and her take on military masculinities in regard to space (abstract) and place (locations). Woodward is informed by feminist geography in her approach to space, place, and location and argues that:

Gender identities [...] are not neutral to space, but shape the ways in which different social spaces are perceived and the ways in which they are discursively constructed and politically controlled. Furthermore, gender identities are themselves shaped by the geographies in which they operate. It is this conceptualization of the geographical constitution and expression of gender identities that guides this exploration of the "locatedness" of military masculinities (Woodward 2003, 46).

Woodward makes the point that gender identities, including military identities, take different forms depending on locations and time, and that this is an important aspect to include in an analysis of how gender influences military work and military identities among personnel and with regard to how the organization addresses gendered expectations. In Woodward's work on military masculinities among members of the British Army, she finds that depending on where the soldiers are, at home or the bases, as one example, changes how he/or she perceives military masculinities. Woodward argues that the models of military masculinities, which the military constructs take inspiration from traditional male activities practiced in the public sphere, such as physical training in the Army's ranges. At the same time, the military has a strict policy on cleanness and tidiness, which can be found in the domestic context, often associated with femininities and not so often linked to prototypes of military masculinities. However, these are aspects that all recruits are expected to learn and practice. That is to keep the barracks and sleeping quarters clean, to maintain a high

level of personal hygiene and tidiness in terms of the uniform and obedience towards senior officers. Linking back to some of the first theoretical discussions in this Theory Chapter, the connection between bodies, masculinities, and military identities are also of particular interest in Woodward's approach to examining military masculinities and thereby fits well within the conceptual framework of this thesis. Hence, Woodward stresses that the body plays a significant role in the process of conceptualizing gender identities in terms of how they are formed and not least performed. Hence, "*the politics of social space are embodied within the individual. The body, the surface on which gender identities are inscribed, performed, and often resisted, operates in and reflects social space*" (Woodward 2003, 51).

In this sense, the body also becomes a place in which military masculinities are shaped and performed, meaning that the different physicalities that construct and reflect gender norms produce a certain way of being/- and performing in a certain space. It is, therefore, through the body that the transformation takes place. Woodward's argument is consequently that the bodies and environments (spaces and locations) reproduce each other and that the relationship between the body and a given space therefore also is reflexive. As Woodward (2003) argues, "*the training areas and the barrack rooms produce the soldier's body, and this in turn is reinscribed and projected back onto those places*" (Woodward 2003, 51). The body must, as a result, demonstrate and display an idealized view on the right type of masculinity or femininity in a given context.

The transformation of the body, which Woodward describes, happens in the process of making a civilian into a soldier. One aspect of this is the physical shaping of the body, which the basic training program is intended to create, and wearing a uniform is part of this transformation from being a civilian to becoming and performing the role of the soldier. It is in this process of training the uniformed body that gendered identities are created, which dictates the right and wrong ways of doing soldiering. In the Danish case, the four-month conscription period is often viewed as a way to initiate this transformation. The ones who pass the test are allowed and encouraged to continue in the armed forces (see, for example, Sløk-Andersen's 2018 PhD *The Becoming of Good Soldiers* on how conscript soldiers are formed into soldiers during their four-month training). Like in Woodward's case of the British Armed Forces, the Danish Armed Forces also has brochures that describe how this basic training will make you a "real" soldier, somebody who makes a difference in the world, and in defending the nation. For this particular time and space, the conscription period in the case of the Danish soldiers can be seen as a specific period when the soldiers first encounter military training and (gendered) norms and narratives. The process of gendered military identities for the soldier begins at the first meeting with the armed forces, and recruits are commonly told that there is no gender in the armed forces, only soldiers (i.e. my initial meeting with an Officer as described in the introduction). This period is unique in the sense that the young soldiers, who aspire to build a military career, have to prove themselves worthy of the physiological, psychological,

and moral standards and codex of the institution and transform not only their bodies, but also their minds to function within a military context. Woodward stresses the importance of recognizing the:

[...] inherent fluidity and instability within constructions of military masculinities. The hegemonic models of military masculinity – the warrior-hero, the squaddie, and so on – are highly contingent. Within the armed forces, there is growing recognition of the fragility and implausibility of these models (Woodward 2003, 52).

Similar to the points made by Woodward about the particularities of space, place, and time in the construction of military identities, Haaland argues that the domestic education that soldiers, and in her empirical work Norwegian soldiers, receive is part of forming their military identity, which they then bring with them on international missions. Haaland argues that “[...] *the performance of internationally deployed forces is always closely connected to national training procedures and values embedded in a national military culture.*” (Haaland 2008). The international operations that Norwegian forces take part in are often part of UN or NATO led operations (the same as Denmark), which means other international troops are cooperating and local forces and populations to relate to and work with. In regard to analyzing and understanding how soldiers work and interact internationally, Haaland argues that it is important to understand the soldiers’ national training. Thus, all forces are “*educated, trained and equipped by national armed forces, national military cultures are likely to be the prime source of influence on how these forces act and the values they carry with them into peacekeeping missions*” (Haaland 2010, 542). This point emphasizes the significant role of context (Christensen and Jensen 2012) in the negotiations over identities and the narratives that describe these. This also means that the Danish national context in which the narrative of being gender-sensitive and having achieved gender equality forms the national context, which Haaland argues to play a key role in how soldiers identify i.e. UN troops, NATO troops, or Danish troops. Haaland thus argues that when examining the experiences of peacekeeping forces (in her case, the Norwegian) it is necessary to examine and take into account the national military culture in the given country (Haaland 2010; 2008). The different contextual settings, which professional soldiers work in, either in their own country or on deployments, influence their negotiations over military identities. At the same time, Haaland argues that the national context of the soldiers has a profound influence on how they perceive and adopt other narratives of military work and identity, for instance, those relating to gender, peace, and security.

At the same time, the soldiers carry with them embodied experiences of war and conflict through time, place, and space and through these experiences are subject to different understandings of gender, peace, and security in the various contextual settings i.e. UN bases with training in gender equality. Moreover, as a number of the soldiers, I interviewed for this study, had been on several deployments to different contexts throughout their career in the Royal Danish Air Force, the element of time

and their own procession and experience of military work developed. In this sense, the points made previously about the importance of an intersectional analysis of the negotiations of military identities seen through narrative accounts is important, as different social categories can take different positions in the narratives and negotiations depending on contextual setting i.e. being at home at the barracks or working at an international base in Afghanistan. Moreover, as pointed to by Stoltz (2019), space, place, and time are essential in understanding how memories of conflict and war travel, for instance, through the lived experiences of soldiers and how this influences norms (and I add narratives) on, for example, masculinities in a given context (Stoltz 2019).

Moreover, in terms of location, space, and place, and the fluidity of gendered identities, including military masculinities, the different services and job functions within the armed forces set the scenes for different types of masculinities and femininities and negotiations over dominate forms and performances of masculinities (Higate 2003b; Persson 2013). Haaland (2010) argues that Norwegian units deployed abroad are much closer to a national interest-based culture than a UN peacekeeping culture and subsequent ideas on gender, peace, and security. Thus, returning to the debate on military work and identity, and the influence of international assignments in connection to NATO or UN led operations, Haaland's analysis is interesting to the case of the Royal Danish Air Force and the various contextual settings that Danish soldiers are expected to work in. Even though the UN within both the Norwegian military and Norwegian society receives legitimacy, UN peacekeeping missions are unpopular among the military. Some of this is based on an understanding (and for some) experiences of the UN missions being run badly (Haaland 2008, 2010). This is in part due to a civilian interference in the military chain of command, but also the difficulty associated with having commanding officers from non-Western cultures. The key point, Haaland argues, is that the Norwegian officers do not see themselves as global peacekeepers. Thus, their military identity is primarily linked to Norway and the Norwegian military, and as Haaland states: "*in that sense they remain homeland defenders even though they are deployed abroad quite frequently*" (Haaland 2010, 550).

The identity formation that Haaland is describing is interesting in the execution and also legitimization of the Nordic forces' presence in peacekeeping and peacebuilding assignments. If the Nordic countries are advocating for a peaceful and cohesive world order, but the soldiers maintain an identity of Norwegians, Swedes, or Danes, are they then advocating for a world-order based on Nordic terms and ideals, rather than universal UN principles? Moreover, what does this mean for collaboration among various nations in peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions and narrative struggles over military work and identity?

## 2.5. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical and conceptual framework, which sets the basis for how I analyze my data in the Analytical Chapters (4-6). A key point is that my framework is informed by feminist security, feminist IR, and critical military studies. The approaches, which these related but slightly different bodies of literature examine, bring forward the particularities of the military in relation to narratives on gender, peace, and security. This includes how these are negotiated in personal as well as institutional narratives of military work and military identities.

The Feminist IR scholarship is paramount in unfolding the overall theoretical discussion and dilemmas on gender, peace, and security over the past 40 years and in signifying the importance of gendered lenses in this type of work. Given the often overarching discussions on gender, peace, war, and conflict, feminist IR approaches and discussions are often formed on a macro-level, which at times risk a distance to the experiences of some of the actors at the micro-level i.e. the soldiers performing military work and constructing their military identities individually and collectively with their fellow commands and in response to the institutional narratives.

By including the points and approaches from critical military studies, I stress the attention to the connection between the researcher and the field as well as being observant to the changes that have happened within militaries over the past two decades particularly with regard to gender awareness as well as an openness to be critical of processes of militarization and military identity formations. This aids in a focus on the particularities of the lived experiences at the micro-level, which enables a voice to these individuals, and furthermore supports my own positionality as a researcher doing work in a military setting with military personnel. Hence, through a critical military approach, I am able to reflect on this in different ways given critical military scholarship's more nuanced approach to military work and its actors compared to some branches of feminist IR, especially anti-military feminists.

To achieve this focus, I especially adhere to the thoughts by Basham and Bulmer (2017) about proximity to the research field especially in interview situations with military personnel. These thoughts and approaches to analyzing this type of data are relevant for my entire analysis, however, in particular in Chapters 5 and 6 where I engage in analysis of the interview data and discuss the soldiers' narratives on military work and identity through the *sub-research question 2 and 3*. At the same time, feminist IR scholar Cohn's (1987) notion and cautionary about the potential of researchers to adopt militarized language linked with the ideas is also something, which I keep attention to in my analysis and which also informed who I approached

by interviewees in the interview situation and subsequently how I described their experiences.

I argue that concepts of military masculinities are useful tools to describe and analyze masculinities and especially male-gendered identities and behavior within a military institution and often in reference to those which are more extreme and violent; albeit with the intention to critique which feminist IR and critical military scholars have raised in the use of i.e. the concept of hegemonic masculinity. The concept of *hegemonic masculinities* within a context of the armed forces is also related to ideas of militarization and I especially apply Enloe's concept of militarization including the militarization of masculinities. I further maintain that in theorizing and subsequently analyzing military identities and military masculinities in the Royal Danish Air Force, the significance of bodies is an essential component. As such, the body in itself holds a number of gendered militarized ideals, which signifies understandings of military work and military identity. Higate (2003) and Woodward's (2003) work on military masculinities and specifically their argument of how negotiations and constructions of military masculinities are reliant on space, place, and time are essential in my analysis and approaches, which I make use of in understanding and examining the different narrative accounts and identifying understandings of gender, peace, and security. Moreover, Higate and Woodward's attention to space, place, and time is particularly important in this project, as the soldier narratives include accounts from working in Denmark and the airbases and, at the same time, narratives of military work and identity constructions while on deployments.

As I stressed in the introduction and discussed further in this chapter, Duncanson's concept of *Forces for good*, is especially used in this project to examine the complexities of military peacekeeping and peacebuilding work, which Royal Danish Air Force soldiers engage in and bring forward the soldier's perspectives on gender, peace, and security and how these understandings relate to negotiations over military masculinities. Since, Duncanson's work is informed by Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity (initially introduced in 1977), combining her work with Connell's initial work and in particular more recent work (2016), in which focus is on the *constructions* of hegemonic masculinities in different spaces and places rather than simply *achieved* hegemonic masculinity, I discuss the complexities of masculinities and the gendered hierarchies which exist in military settings, which the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers find themselves in.

Moreover, the *Forces for good* narrative connects closely the link between the institutional narratives and the soldier narratives, and by applying this concept, I discuss both shared social narratives between the different levels of the organization as well as going into a discussion on how being a *Force for good* also has the potential to create ambiguities in the ways in which soldiers negotiate their military identities for instance in their reflections on military work abroad. Thus, the *Forces for good* narrative especially aids to answer *sub-research question number 3*.

An intersectional approach in unfolding military masculinities and gendered hierarchies is necessary in order to create a deeper foundation for understanding the various nuances that different social categories play in these constructions of i.e. sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, age, and rank in combination with gender. In particular, Christensen and Jensen's (2012) reworking of Crenshaw's initial articulation of the concept from 1989, in which they bring attention to the particularities of the Danish context. This includes how an application of the concept relies on contextualization of different categories including which concepts are especially prevailing in a Danish setting and in analyzing Danish soldiers. This means being attentive to how specific categories are reliant on space, place, and time, which again allows for an examination of military identities that goes beyond a question of male and female soldiers, and thereby also examines the various gendered hierarchies that exist in military settings i.e. between different services, between different national troops, and between men i.e. in terms of being straight or gay, being physically or mentally superior, etc.

In the following chapter, I turn attention to my methodological considerations and the methods used in collecting data for this project. Moreover, given my commitment to a feminist agenda and staying curious about the complexities of military identity constructions and negotiations as well as how norms on gender, peace, and security translate, adapt, or are being contested, my methodological approach is also informed by feminist thinking. Hence, I adhere to Haraway's idea of situated knowledge (1988) and I understand research especially qualitative and with a focus on narratives to be influenced by my own approach to study the subject in a given manner.



## CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The aim of the following chapter is to introduce and develop my epistemological starting point for investigating this topic, my method of approach, data collection, and method of analysis. The project is based on feminist IR, feminist security studies, and critical military thinking, which influences the chosen theories, methods, my identity as a researcher and role in collecting and analyzing data. In this chapter, I discuss what this means for my approach to studying this topic. The project makes use of data in the form of documents such as budgets, legislation, action plans, and policies produced by the Royal Danish Air Force, Danish Armed Forces, and international institutions such as the UN and NATO to identify institutional narratives within the Royal Danish Air Force. I combine this with qualitative data from narrative interviews with military personnel in the Royal Danish Air Force, which constitute the personal narratives in the thesis. In combination, this data collection allows me to locate institutional, personal, and social narratives on military work and military identities within the Royal Danish Air Force and examine how narratives on gender, peace, and security from global and local voices influence narrative negotiations at different levels in the organization.

### 3.1. EXAMINING MILITARY NARRATIVES: THE ROYAL DANISH AIR FORCE

I choose to approach the topic of military narratives through a case study of the Royal Danish Air Force. This means that the study and empirical data in the form of interviews include respondents from the Royal Danish Air Force only. Consequently, the two other services of the Danish Armed Forces - Army and the Navy - are not included in this particular study. There are a number of theoretical and methodological reasons for selecting just one service, and in this case, the Air Force was the target of investigation, which I explain in the subsequent section. The data provides firsthand knowledge on how military personnel understand and negotiate their narratives on military work and identity in relation to gender, peace, and security in domestic as well as international contexts. This includes how these processes are gendered and how these are negotiated in relation to institutional as well as national and global narratives on gender, peace, and security in military work.

The Army, Navy, and Air Force represent three different services within the Danish military and carry out significantly different assignments (both historically and in terms of present assignments and culture). Given these historical and present differences between the services and the limited previous academic studies on the

Danish military with a gendered focus, I decided to limit the study to one service and make a case study of the Royal Danish Air Force.

The decision to focus on the Royal Danish Air Force was based on desk research on the different services. In the process, I examined statistical data for the entire armed forces and the individual services. As the statistical data presented in Chapter 1 illustrates, the Army is by far the largest service in the Danish Armed Forces and has the highest number of female soldiers serving. However, in terms of the percentage of female military employees by service, the Air Force exceeds the Army with 9.6 % compared to the Army's 7.2 %. Of note, when I initiated the study, the percentage of women serving in the Army was only at 5.6% and thereby significantly lower than the Air Force (The Ministry of Defence 2019a; Forsvarsministeriets Personalestyrelse 2016).

Besides employing the highest percentage of women per service, the Royal Danish Air Force is also unique in the sense that it was the last service in which restrictions applied to the assignments that women could perform in the military (Sløk-Andersen 2014). Moreover, the Royal Danish Air Force is a comparatively new service (70 years old), and, as previously outlined, a service with a highly technologically specialized workforce. In this sense, most of the assignments that the Air Force carries out differ significantly from those of the Army in terms of physical strength and endurance.

As I discuss in Chapter 1, the Royal Danish Air Force is divided into five primary wings (see Table 3), which are located in Karup, Aalborg, and Skrydstrup, respectively. In this study, the two wings *Air Transport Wing (ATW)* and *Air Control Wing (ACW)* (bolded in Table 3) are selected, as the wings, where I conduct my interviews.

Wing	Location
Fighter Wing	Skrydstrup
Helicopter Wing	Karup
<b>Air Control Wing (ACW)</b>	<b>Karup</b>
<b>Air Transport Wing (ATW)</b>	<b>Aalborg</b>
Air Force Training Centre	Karup

Table 3: *The five wings that make up the Royal Danish Air Force and their geographical locations. Bold indicates interview wing and location.*

In addition to examining gendered military identities (and gender composition), I was interested in examining how space, place, and time influence soldier narratives on military work and identity through deployments to international peacekeeping and

peacebuilding missions and how this affects the ways in which gender, peace, and security become part of narrative accounts. The Royal Danish Air Force is regularly used for international assignments, as Denmark's contribution to international tasks under the auspices of NATO or the UN often is carried out in the form of transportation via the Hercules planes or air space surveillance. By selecting the Royal Danish Air Force as my case study, I am, therefore, able to talk to soldiers who have taken part in these types of missions over a period of time.

In terms of conducting a study on gendered narratives, visible and invisible gendered stereotypes, as well as gendered dynamics within military settings, the Royal Danish Air Force makes an interesting and unique case, as this service, in particular, has less physically straining work compared to the Army. Notions and perceptions laid forward against women's enrolment in the armed forces i.e. *the physical superiority of men makes them better soldiers* might be less relevant, or at least takes different forms in the Air Force. However, at the same time, traditional norms and narratives on gendered notions of legitimate protectors of the state could still prevail. I am, therefore, interested in examining whether gendered understandings and practices relating to military work and military identities are detectable among individual military employees in the Royal Danish Air Force as well as in the institutional narratives, and why this might or might not be the case.

A downside to selecting one service is that the findings are limited and unique to the Royal Danish Air Force. However, the study builds the grounds for further individual and comparative studies within the Danish Armed Forces and between other national Air Forces. Moreover, the study provides novel and valuable knowledge on the production of military narratives on work and identities in relation to gender, peace, and security, and how these narratives might take different forms depending on bodies as well as time, space, and place.

### **3.2. TAKING A FEMINIST APPROACH TO EXAMINE GENDER, PEACE, AND SECURITY**

The first work on feminist IR centered on applying feminist thinking and feminist epistemology to the field, demonstrating the relevance of including these perspectives and the benefits of broadening the spectrum of what IR theorists focus on; thereby drawing attention to "adding" women's experiences to the field and challenging the assumption that *counting* women is enough to make a change. Rather, as researchers within IR, we need to ask questions about *where* women are, *what* their roles are, *who* they are (Tickner 1992; Enloe 2004; Cohn 2013). This includes an analysis of who and what is silenced, (dis)empowered and understanding that a gender analysis is needed in order to uncover complexities in global politics from warfare to peacekeeping, conflict resolutions, and peace processes (Peterson 1992; Tickner and Sjoberg 2011; Cohn 2013). Feminist IR scholars are committed to taking a stand and look to examine the gendered hierarchies and the role of a global patriarchal system.

While early feminist thinking centered on inequalities between men and women, a broader lens of analysis is applied today. New theories on gender equality include debates and analysis on intersecting categories such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, and age. Moreover, queer studies and "the man question" have become more pertinent and added to the debate and analysis on gendered hierarchies and the roles of masculinities and femininities in global politics (Parpart and Zalewski 2008; Tickner and Sjoberg 2011; Weber 2015; 2016).

The variety of interrelating aspects of doing feminist analysis is one of the reasons why most feminists (myself included) apply concepts of femininities and masculinities in plural. Femininities and masculinities are normative concepts, which are interdependent and hierarchical, and various forms of femininities and masculinities exist along with hierarchies and just as importantly, between these. Moreover, masculinities and femininities are, besides normative concepts, analytical tools, which feminist researchers apply in their analysis of the gendered relations of, for instance, state militaries (Tickner and Sjoberg 2011), this includes this author as well. In my study, I therefore use femininities and masculinities in the plural form to enable an analysis of differences in masculinities and femininities within various contexts and to address hierarchies, which exist not only between femininities and masculinities, but also within the concepts themselves. For instance, how dominant hegemonic forms of masculinities challenge other types and expressions of masculinities in military work and identity formation; and also, in addressing how these hegemonic expressions of masculinities take various forms depending on the contextual setting (further discussion on masculinities is presented in the Theory section Chapter 2).

### **3.2.1. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Feminist research ethics encourage the researcher to be attentive to understand and take into account the relationship between the researcher and the studied topic (Ackerly and True 2010). As a feminist researcher, I am reflective on various power dynamics at play in terms of the epistemological starting point, choice of theories, and in regard to analyzing data particularly in human interactions (e.g. interview situations). Ackerly and True explain it as:

[...] a feminist/informed research ethic entails a self/reflexive commitment to revisiting epistemological choices, boundaries, and relationships throughout the research process. Most importantly, committed to the politics of every stage of the research process, the feminist researcher guides her work with a research ethic (Ackerly and True 2010, 37).

As Ackerly and True point to, awareness of my own part in the narrative of this project is essential for conducting ethical research, which both can inform and produce new

knowledge, and at the same time create fresh insights that uncover and/or create blind spots and disadvantages.

Relating feminist research ethics to this project, an awareness of my own researcher identity is essential for how the data is approached and the theories are chosen. I am trained in a Western institution and have throughout my studies been introduced to feminist IR scholarship, which has influenced my approach to traditional IR theories and traditional military studies. This has resulted in a choice to approach this topic from a critical position and be precarious towards traditional military literature; literature, which may tell a different narrative on military work and military identity, but which, I argue, lacks concrete measures and engagement to address the gendered components of military work and identity. Points, I argue, are better captured in feminist IR and critical military studies literature. The aspects to take into account in this type of work relate to my own gender identity, gender expression, age, education, physique, whiteness, and nationality, as all these aspects become part of the narrative of conducting research on gender within an institution that traditionally has been dominated by masculine values and ideals. From a feminist position, my aim is to be aware of how these intersecting categories influence the interview setting and my interpretation of the data. Another facet in this process is the feminist agenda in which I aim to challenge the assumption of the male as the dominating viewpoint, which means that my own gender challenges underlying norms of the male being the objective.

Another aspect is the question of gender identity (including that of a researcher and an informant), which leads to a number of questions in terms of studying gender in general. Within the past years, queer research has gained attention within especially feminist research; challenging early ideas and struggles that feminist activists and scholars have been fighting for (including debates on binaries, sameness, difference etc.) (Weber 2016). In this sense, queer research challenges binary understandings not just on how individuals in practice experience their abilities to unfold and gain acceptance for gender and gender expressions, but how the scholarship and institutions recreate gendered binary notions, which hinder a more nuanced and non-essentialist approach to understanding gender, gendered bodies, and the intersection with masculinities and femininities. This is also the case for military narratives on gender, peace, and security, and subsequently military narratives on work and identity.

In terms of understanding gender in state militaries, the emerging field of queer IR theory brings important points forward in the production of empirical data and in analyzing and theorizing data. The ideas in queer studies are important components for challenging and changing how ideas and theorizations on gendered identities are pushing understandings of sex, gender identities, sexuality, and masculinities and femininities. Queer research has, for example, expanded the way we talk about sexuality, sex, and gender and moved the field to not only talk about LGBT rights, but rather LGBTQI+ rights with the aim of being inclusive of gender identities and

sexualities. Queer theory poses challenges to research on gender in the sense that the categories, which have been used to describe biological gender, and (misleadingly) often used interchangeably with gender, are *men and women*. This means that most statistical data focuses only on sex and not gender identity as markers; maintaining the binary of man and women (Weber 2016). Hence, individuals who do not conform to fixed categories, such as man or woman, are left out of various types of data collection. Particular narratives on gender exist within institutions such as the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force, and, as is discussed in the analysis, these narratives on gender rely heavily on essentialist ideas. These perspectives are important in the armed forces in terms of which bodies are expected to perform military work and represent military identity.

One might argue that the choice in this study to maintain the binary male and female soldiers in terms of selecting informants is preventing an analysis of gender identities in a wider form and thereby assuming that there are only two genders (Rahman 2014; Weber 2015; 2016). However, the binary of men and women in terms of selecting informants is based on the categories that the military is presently working with, which is the case for most databases currently. Hence, in locating my informants, it was not possible to add more categories in terms of gender than *men and women*, as the military would have been unsure how to find these individuals in their systems, as they, at this point, do not include other categories of gender identification. However, despite dividing the informants between the male and female soldiers (based on sex), it does not result in the lack of analysis of gendered identities in a more complex sense on my part. The analysis will thus include reflections on the ways in which the soldiers perform and understand masculinities and femininities, as well as how gendered identities are performed and understood within the organization.

This position of being feminist but interviewing (and perhaps even understanding) military personnel, is a situation that many critical military scholars find themselves in (myself included). As argued previously, Cohn's work has added to the early feminist understandings that the narratives surrounding war, and in Cohn's empirical data nuclear weapons, is sexualized and that war and security thereby are highly gendered topics, but also that methodologically it can be challenging to address these problems in relation to proximity to the field (1987). As Cohn states,

Listening, it becomes clear that participation in the world of nuclear strategic analysis does not necessarily require confrontation with the central fact about military activity that the purpose of all weaponry and all strategy is to injure human bodies [...]. Learning to speak the language reveals something about how thinking can become more abstract, more focused on parts disembedded from their context, more attentive to the survival of weapons than the survival of human beings (Cohn 1987, 715).

The field of critical military enables these methodological reflections to become part of the theoretical work on understanding and examining military identities and

military masculinities (see Eriksson Baaz, Gray, and Stern 2018; Cohn 1987; Basham and Bulmer 2017). Hence, what differentiates critical military studies is the close commitment to fieldwork and this commitment can offer an engagement to “*rethink how difficult it is for the military to reconstitute itself and to ask different questions*” (Basham and Bulmer 2017, 63). The close encounter with the military and military personnel, which many critical military scholars experience, brings along certain concerns and contradictory feelings regarding the critique one might have as a critical researcher towards the military and military power. These encounters can invoke conflicting feelings “*from unease and confusion about the nature of critique, to joy about the opportunities of openness to those we research*” (Basham and Bulmer 2017, 65). The relationships which you build as a researcher with the interviewees (military personnel), might, therefore, also challenge your own critical views on military power, military institutions, and the people working for the organization, and ultimately render short your critical perspectives on military practices, power relations, and ideals.

Approaching this topic also methodologically through critical military enables these particular reflections on the construction of concepts and ideas in military work more deeply. This is possible through a direct engagement with my empirical data in which I am in direct contact with military institutions, military personnel (in the form of fieldwork e.g. interviews, observations, etc.). This means that the relationships between the researcher and the military institution and military personnel take different forms. This allows a messier type of deconstruction of the military institution, military powers, military bodies, and notions of masculinities and femininities (Basham and Bulmer 2017). An approach, which fits well with my approach to studying the Royal Danish Air Force through mainly interviews with active soldiers, and through their stories decipher the complexities of the negotiations of military identities.

### 3.2.2. THE INSIDER/OUTSIDER DILEMMA

An awareness that various power dynamics influence the process of data collection, including the actual interviews, and the subsequent analysis, choices of themes and topics, is essential in conducting this work. In this process of accounting for potential power dynamics and imbalances, the notion of being an insider or an outsider in conducting interviews is a point that many qualitative researchers find themselves in. Moreover, the definition of being either an insider or an outsider is not always straightforward and may vary depending on which factors grant you the position of an outsider versus an insider. Hence, it is possible to hold both positions, which again complicates the power dynamics at play in the interview setting and the subsequent analytical work. The complexities of the power dynamics of the insider/outsider dilemma, and the changing role and how these are depending on different social categories such as race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, and gender has resulted in what Patrica Hill Collins deemed the *Outsider Within* position (Collins 1986). Hill

Collins initially introduced the concept in regard to her own experiences of being an African American woman in American society and the experiences of female African Americans over the years. This included their special status as both insiders to their white "families", but also an acute awareness that they would never fully be members of their white "families" and in this sense were outsiders within. Hill Collins argues that "*Black women's experiences highlight the tension experienced by any group of less powerful outsiders encountering the paradigmatic thought of a more powerful insider community*" (Collins 1986, 29).

I do not argue that I, in my research, take an *outsider within*-position, however, there are elements of being both an insider and an outsider in my encounters with my interviewees and Hills Collin's point of the tensions and power dynamics at play is a significant part of these shifts between being an insider and an outsider. In this project with a focus on soldiers, one of the clear divides between the insider and outsider position is linked to the idea of being civilian versus military. Hence, given my lack of military training and practical familiarity with the organization, I take on the position as an outsider in conducting the interviews as well as in terms of interpreting the data. The divide between military and civilian in a Danish setting is enforced by military bases, wearing uniforms, knowledge of military skills and operations and belonging to a select group of citizens who hold different powers and responsibilities toward the security of the state compared to other Danish citizens.

At the same time, Danish soldiers do not live at the bases (only during their training), which is the case in a number of other countries i.e. the U.S., Germany, or the U.K. (Enloe 1989; Leonhard 2017; Woodward 2003; 2003). In this sense, the soldiers change from a military setting to a civilian setting on a daily basis, unless they are deployed, and their children attend the same daycare, schools, etc. as civilian Danish children. In this sense, the clear cut between civilian life and military life may be less articulated in a Danish military setting, which again may influence the insider/outsider connection to civilian versus military status. At the same time, as I discuss in the analysis, it is clear that the soldiers are aware that their military training and work influence their behavior and thought processes even outside of the barracks. Additionally, the military bases are fully secured with fences and guards to make sure that civilians without permission are not granted access to the military compounds; segmenting the clear divide between the military and the outside civilian world (see more in Chapter 5).

The outsider position enables me to explore perspectives, which an interviewer who have personal connections/affiliations to the military (i.e. a soldier, spouse, family member, veterans, etc.), might not be able to see because personal affiliations may influence and clutter observations and impressions experienced during the interviews, or create a certain loyalty to the institution and its members. In this sense, I am not personally embedded in the military institution and have no personal issues at stake in my approach and potential critique of the organization. Furthermore, the position



of an outsider allows me to ask questions, which might seem obvious to individuals working in the organization or having had military training, or affiliated in other regards, but when reflected upon in an interview could provide valuable information to understanding the research questions.

At the same time, this approach constitutes different power dynamics to take into account. The military is an institution, which is highly based on rank and an understanding that hierarchies are important. Having no military rank of my own, I am not in a position where I rank higher or lower than the interviewee. At the same time, my lack of military training and personal experience in terms of being on international military missions might cause distance in terms of how well the informants believe I am able to understand and comprehend their lived experiences. Moreover, there might be language or situations, which an insider would analyze and understand differently. In order to accommodate for my lack of military training, I have familiarized myself with studies on the military. Moreover, I have a contact in the military, who serves as a mediator/interpreter of information, which I find puzzling.

Whereas I might consider myself an outsider in terms of my professional perspective i.e. lack of military training, my different choice of profession, and lack of practical familiarity with the military, I am an insider in regard to my own nationality as a Dane. Moreover, I share the same ethnicity, as most of my interviewees, which also includes an element of race, or more precisely whiteness, as the majority of the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force are white. This common reference in terms of nationality and ethnicity and our familiarity with Danish norms and practices serves as a shared reference for the context of, for instance, the military in Danish society. This means that societal aspects, which the interviewees bring forward in relation to gender equality, family relations, educational system, divorce ratings, etc. are acquainted references between us. References, which may bind us together in this process create a sense of sameness, despite different occupations. This national context and shared frame of reference is also an element in understanding the particularities of Danish exceptionalism in the personal (as well as institutional) narratives and how these speak into a national narrative on gender equality, where the notion of having solved gender inequality is commonly understood as being the case i.e. “a closed case” (Dahlerup 2018).

Understanding the contextual setting for the interviewees is thus both challenging, as I was unfamiliar with the soldiers’ work, practices, and experiences of being part of a military institution and, at the same time, a feminist approach to science requires an awareness of these aspects, which, at times, in practice might be difficult. That is, how do you actually position yourself in a situation where you, as an outsider, are able to understand the context of another individual? In my interviews, I experienced how it felt to be in these types of interview settings where I was unfamiliar with my informants’ everyday professional life. The insider/outsider dilemma played out both

to my advantage (at times), but I also (at times) sensed the difference between the soldiers' profession and mine explicitly.

One example of my lack of insider knowledge is in discussions of traumatic experiences from deployments, where I fall short in having experienced the same type of emotions and traumas that they have. At the same time, the soldiers were willing to share these experiences, which might have been encouraged by the professional outsider perspective; somebody without a rank and outside of the internal hierarchy willing to listen to their stories (Baker et al. 2016). This aspect of the vulnerability of conducting interviews with active (or veteran) soldiers in relation to trauma is something that I ethically took into consideration. I did not directly ask my interviewees about traumatic experiences. Instead, I asked about the transitions from different contexts; that is returning from deployment, the intermediate time at home, and the next deployments, and if there were any significant situations/incidents which had made a particular impact on both their professional as well as personal life (both in a good and bad way). It was in these situations that the soldiers would open-up for experiences that included traumas such as loss of colleagues, their own fears, PTSD, and the significant impact some missions had in terms of returning home to "normal" life after a deployment. In these situations, I made sure to display sympathy by nodding, uttering reassuring words, taking a break, or simply letting them finish telling their stories. All the interviewees who expressed these aspects of traumatic experiences did, however, convey that they had received help to process these experiences and were open about how it had affected them professionally and personally.

### **3.2.3. CHOOSING ONE CATEGORY IN A MULTITUDE OF SOCIAL MARKERS**

My curiosity for engaging in work on the military is informed by feminist thinking particularly within IR and critical military studies, where gendered implications of conflict have been a primary concern for many feminists doing work on war, peace, and security. The primary category of investigation in this project is *gender*. This means that the choice of this particular category is informed by theoretical and empirical work by feminist IR and critical military scholarship who have stressed the need to address gendered complications of war, peace, and security. This includes the role of state militaries and the soldiers working for these institutions (Cohn 1987; Peterson 1992; Sylvester 1994; Tickner and Sjoberg 2011; Enloe 2016; Basham and Bulmer 2017).

Moreover, I am interested in gender, peace, and security in military work, which especially took center stage from an international perspective, after UNSCR 1325 was introduced in October 2000 and continues to with reference to this and the nine subsequent resolutions, action plans, and changes in military work. As mentioned earlier, the resolution calls attention to gender in particular in terms of the tasks,

assignments, and goals of international missions; missions, which also Denmark and the Royal Danish Air Force take part in under the auspice of the UN and NATO (Earl 2015; United Nations Security Council 2000). Hence, theoretically, as well as empirically, gender has been assigned a significant part in understanding the role of militaries and soldiers in security, conflict, and peacekeeping/and-building situations. As I write in the introduction, UNSCR 1325 marks the historical starting point of the thesis in looking at gender, peace, and security in institutional narratives on military work and identity as well as a component in the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers' narratives. However, an interesting empirical find is that despite UNSCR 1325 taking a clear position in national action plans, as well as the Danish Armed Forces' diversity plan, in the interviews the only soldiers who were familiar with the resolution were management personnel, who worked with diversity within the organization. Hence, my initial idea to relate the soldier narratives directly to UNSCR 1325 in terms of a clear frame of reference was missing. However, it supports my idea that the different institutional levels i.e. the Ministry of Defense and the Royal Danish Air Force work on these topics through a top-down approach, but without this leading to awareness of particular significant UN resolutions on gender, peace, and security. This also makes approaches to study institutional as well as personal narratives relevant in unrevealing differences and negotiations over military identities and how these relate to gender, peace, and security. Moreover, it supports the idea that social narratives are created in a combination of voices from the top and the bottom (Shenshav 2015), but that several social narratives can exist and that these are negotiated continuously and by different actions in time and space.

The acknowledgement of the intersection of categories means that in the interpretation of the interviews with the soldiers, awareness of other categories, which the informants might bring into play such as sexuality, race, ethnicity, age, nationality, religion, etc. are addressed through their links to gender. This means that the project addresses the intersecting ways in which gender plays a role in understanding the Royal Danish Air Force and the soldiers working in this organization. The intersecting categories, which in particular have played a role in the soldier narratives, have centered on nationality, age, sexuality, rank, and whiteness (see further introduction to intersectionality in Chapter 2). The choice to look at gender as the primary category calls attention to the methodological considerations for how to talk about gender, without asking about gender. I will address this aspect in the following section.

### **3.2.4. LET'S TALK ABOUT GENDER...BUT HOW?**

The limited qualitative work on the Royal Danish Air Force, especially regarding gender issues, means that inspiration for my interview protocol etc. with this particular group of informants in a Danish setting was limited/to non-exciting. For this project, I, therefore, find inspiration from scholars within the field of feminist IR and critical military studies who conduct interviews with individuals who either are members of state militaries, paramilitary groups, or resistance movements (McEvoy 2009; Persson

2011; Kronsell 2012; 2014; Rones 2015; Baker et al. 2016). Moreover, I take inspiration from qualitative work on gender within sociology (Acker 1990; Højgaard 2010; Bloksgaard 2012) This combination has served as inspiration for the interview protocol and the process of conducting the actual interviews.

One of the feminist IR scholars I have looked towards in terms of inspiration for the interview protocol is political scientist Sandra McEvoy's work on paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. McEvoy has interviewed women in para-military groups in Northern Ireland with the aim of addressing gendered aspects of the conflict. McEvoy's interview protocol and approach to asking questions on sensitive topics that include violence, suffering, and personal loss has been used as inspiration for formulating questions for the Danish soldiers, as these were topics, which I expected might surface in the interview setting. Conversations with McEvoy in terms of approaches and interview technique during my research stay at Wheelock College (now Boston University), Boston, Massachusetts in 2016 have been part of the preparations for the interviews. This includes attention to the sensitive nature of asking these questions and establishing a good connection between the informant and me as an interviewer (McEvoy 2009; Conversations with McEvoy 2016-2017). Nina Rones' work with the Norwegian military resembles some of the work that this project undertakes in a Danish setting. Rones' approach to working on military identities with gender as a primary marker serves as inspiration as well, especially in terms of selecting relevant themes that enable conversations about military identity, military collectiveness, and military assignments through gendered lenses (Rones 2015). In addition to the interview questions, I made use of a timeline which served as a practical tool for enabling a conversation with the interviewees about their time in the military and to discuss significant events professionally and personally throughout their career. This method proved helpful in the interview settings and allowed me to get a more holistic understanding of the experiences of the individual soldier (I elaborate on the timeline method later on in this chapter).

Critical military scholars, Catherine Baker, Victoria Basham, Sarah Bulmer, Harriet Gray and Alexandra Hyde have all conducted interviews with military personnel. In their article from 2016 titled *Encounters with the Military*, they share some of their experiences, concerns, and challenges while conducting interviews and in the process of analyzing the data. Baker et al. (2016) address the issue of being true to the research questions, a feminist critique of the military, and, at the same time, being honest and able to engage in conversations with individuals from the military (Baker et al. 2016). These concerns are true for working with soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force as well, and given my critical theoretical framework towards military literature, military institutions, and military work, remembering aspects of proximity and engaging openly-mindedly in the interviews gave grounds for more open discussions with the interviewees. The timeline method also enabled this process, and the soldiers could then narrate their stories at the beginning of the interview without my presupposed ideas of military work. This process made the interview more interactive and provided

nuanced discussions on military work and identity, which I might have missed through a structured or simply semi-structured interview. One of the points, which Baker et al. put focus on is the language used in military settings, and how this transcends the interview settings. This was also true for the interviews I conducted in which military abbreviations on specific missions and military positions etc. were common throughout the interview.

The interpretation of my own experiences of this aspect of the interview and what this means for the feminist agenda of engaging in this work stresses the need to carefully distinguish between speaking the language of the institution and not losing the means to critique the institution by adapting their vocabulary (Cohn 1987; Baker et al. 2016). In line with Cohn's arguments, after a while of conducting my interviews, I myself became used to the checks at the gate and the uniforms did not invoke the same feelings of slight discomfort in me when I approached the different airbases. My association with weapons, airplanes, and high fences was not as terrifying and foreign as they were to begin with and neither was the vocabulary used by the military personnel I met and interviewed. In other words, I gradually socialized into the military vocabulary and culture, as described by Cohn (Cohn 1987).

Baker et al. further address the issue of conducting fieldwork and being a civilian in a military setting, and how this affects the questions and answers. The authors touch upon the issue of reproducing the very questions you as a researcher aim at challenging. As Bulmer points out in the article:

[...] in asking questions about gender and sexuality I was reproducing the very discourses and subjectivities I wanted to challenge. This problem has been discussed by others (Stern and Zalewski 2009) but I'm not sure we've got closer to engaging with it. I sought to actively destabilize the gendered terms I was using in my asking of certain questions and in gently challenging my interviewees on some of their responses (Baker et al. 2016, 9).

The experiences put forward by Baker et al. were useful in conducting the interviews for this study and helped in the process of analyzing the data and placing it within a broader field of research on gender, military, peace, conflict, and security. In my initial meetings with the military, in order to be allowed to conduct the interviews, the format and general content of the interview was presented to the superior officers at the airbases. In these conversations, there was already an articulation of the gendered aspect of the interview themes from the top-level individuals. In the interviews, however, I tried to limit my own subjective understandings of gendered concepts by articulating the interview as me wanting to hear about soldier stories domestically and abroad. This enabled a more general discussion at first about military work, where the soldiers both consciously and unconsciously discussed gendered aspects of military work and military identity.

### **3.2.5. HOW TO TALK ABOUT GENDER WITHOUT ASKING ABOUT GENDER**

Bloksgaard's (2012) work on examining gender in organizations, particularly in Denmark, also served as inspiration for formulating my interview protocol and reflections on how to do a study on gender norms relating to narratives on military work and identity. Some of the common implications of addressing gender in a Nordic context is the high level of gender awareness in the population and the historic roots of the women's movement and focus on social policies, including gender equality policies and legislation (Siim and Stoltz 2015). As I discussed in the introduction, Nordic exceptionalism and in particular Danish exceptionalism is influential in discussing gender in a Danish context, the military included (Borchorst 2009; Dahlerup 2018). The dominant narrative that gender equality is a closed case (Dahlerup 2018) makes it often viewed as not having an impact on work-life and following that logic making it irrelevant to examine. However, according to Bloksgaard (2012), statistics on gender tells a different story and confirms that gender does play a significant role in modern work-life. Bloksgaard addresses the narrative of modern work-life (in the Western world and particularly the Nordic context) as being perceived as "gender-neutral", referring to the idea that gender bears no particular significance within work organizations (Bloksgaard 2012).

Bloksgaard's research confirms a gender-segregated workforce in Denmark, where especially women work in the public sector and men in the private sector. However, the military might be one of the exceptions, as only 7.6 % of the employees in military positions are women (the number is higher for civilian employees). Bloksgaard's point about access to discussing and analyzing the relevance of gender in Danish organizations can prove difficult even within an organization where the majority is male. Thus, the method of approach and how questions are asked becomes especially important. One key point, which Bloksgaard and a number of other scholars describe, is the notion that gender takes place at different levels within an organization. Therefore, it might take different forms, which influences the interaction processes relating to discourses and practice (Bloksgaard 2012; Acker 1990).

When engaging in work with the Royal Danish Air Force an awareness of the structures of the institution is important along with including material on policies, legislation, and practices to contextualize the interviews with the soldiers. Because gender happens on multiple levels and is relational, the interview setting creates challenges in terms of asking about gender and the data that the researcher is able to collect. Requiring informants to reflect on consequences of gender in their work-life or gendered meanings of assignments might create/produce artificial questions/or questions that reproduce gendered stereotypes. Even though this is not the intention of either the interviewer or the informant, talking about gender in this way often relies on discussing common frames of reference in terms of gender stereotypes. Hence, methodologically asking about gender can be complicated (Højgaard 2010;

Bloksgaard 2012). This is also true for this project, as diversity plans and a focus for the past ten years on increasing women in the armed forces has created discourses within the organization on the gender balance, or lack thereof, which the individual soldiers are aware of.

Danish researcher Lis Højgaard discusses some of the challenges of interviewing about gender and the risks of unintentionally reproducing gender stereotypes and provides suggestions on best to avoid this process when using interviews as a method to discuss gender (Højgaard 2010). Højgaard argues that there is often a discrepancy between the practical levels and the discourses on how gender is constructed. This means that women and men have cultural ideas of how to behave in relation to work-life or family-life, but how people actually act might be very different. This is based on the idea of gender ideology or gender strategies (Højgaard 2010; Bloksgaard 2012).

Højgaard (2010) argues that the researcher's gender identity becomes evident in the interview situation and is much harder to disregard/hide than class background and/or nationality. Hence, it is important to take this into account when analyzing the data. Williams and Heikes concur and argue that:

Interviews, like any other interaction, always take place in a gendered context – the context of either gender similarity or gender difference (...) gender is constantly 'there'. The question is therefore not if gender makes a difference but, rather, how gender matters?" (Williams and Heikes 1993, 282).

The interview situation is an interaction between the interviewer and the informant, and is especially with the narrative approach to be perceived as a form of conversation. Because this is a social situation between two individuals with backgrounds and understandings of the world (which might or might not be similar in terms of social expectation), it is a setting where people's presentation of themselves and how they perform (gender) identities come into play (Butler 2007[first published 1990]). This awareness is adamant to take into account in asking questions and analyzing the data (Højgaard 2010). Additionally, because the interview situation happens between two individuals, it is by default a situation of power relations. Additionally, the interviewer has the most power in the sense that the interviewer is the one asking the questions and determining the agenda of the interview. It is also a situation where masculinities and femininities are at play because of this power dynamic as a consequence of the topic and the researcher's identity (Bloksgaard 2012). The attention to the informant's display of masculinity is thus both a finding in terms of understanding how the informant relates to the questions, but also the intertextual aspect becomes significant in terms of interpreting the data. The Nordic countries have a high level of gender awareness, which means that soldiers (both male and female) in the interviews will be aware of social discourses and practices related to gender in Denmark (Bloksgaard 2012; Siim and Stoltz 2015; Borchorst 2009). The researcher's job is thus to decipher gender ideologies and detect gender practices and strategies.

Gender expression is a visual component between me as the interviewer and the soldiers as the informants. This means that the gender and gender expression of me as the researcher as well as the informant becomes part of the interview situation. This aspect of the interview situation is thus evident and difficult to set aside and in one way or another will influence the data (Højgaard 2010; Bloksgaard 2012; Williams and Heikes 1993). Given the high awareness of gender relations and gender equality issues in Denmark, my gender expression as a female researcher engaging in an interview setting with military personnel may take different forms and the conversation might take different offsets depending on the gender and gender expression of the soldier. That is, the female soldiers might introduce other topics to me that their male colleagues find irrelevant or that are not part of their everyday life given their gender and gendered expectations of the institutions.

This was, for example, the case in discussions on having a military career where especially the women brought up the aspect of training, deployment, pregnancy, and maternity leave as hard to balance and something that especially the young female officers found difficult to handle. Moreover, the male soldiers might be more reluctant to express concerns of opinions, which are gender discriminatory. Nonetheless, my experience from the interviews is that the soldiers had understandings and articulations of the "correct" understandings of gender equality and discrimination relating to gender equality norms in Danish society and the organizational guidelines. At the same time, in the interview, they expressed concerns/frustrations with discourses on gender equality. This included both male and female soldiers. Additionally, some of the female soldiers were reluctant to participate in this study because they did not want to be tokens for gender equality and women's experiences in the armed forces. These experiences from the fieldwork connects to the discussion on Danish exceptionalism and by examining this in a Danish military setting provides interesting perspectives to how gender and gendered military identities are negotiated among the soldiers and in relation to the institutional narratives.

I began all the interviews with a practical exercise where the soldiers drew a timeline of their career in the military. Our conversation took this as a starting point instead of a gendered question. This way, I could initiate the conversation on topics that the soldiers had pointed to in terms of their military career and this way initiate the conversation on a more general aspect of military life and place the gendered element of the conversation we were having in the background. Hence, after the timeline or while depending on how much information the interviewee provided, I would ask about demographics i.e. civil status, children, how long they had served, etc. The first questions after the timeline exercise would then concern motivations for joining the Royal Danish Air Force. One of the first questions would thus be: *"Can you tell me about some of the considerations you had for joining the armed forces?"*

In this sense, the visual element of the timeline combined with a question that did not explicitly involve gender were part of my approach to avoid reproducing gendered



stereotypes in the interview setting and subsequently the answers the interviewees were giving me.

### 3.3. A NARRATIVE APPROACH TO STUDY MILITARY IDENTITY AND WORK

Common for human societies, this being nation states, ethnic groups, tribes, etc. is that they often share narrative(s) of who they are and where they come from, which often sets a directive for where they are going, as a group and/or individual (Biton and Salomon 2006). The shared narratives, which frequently are accompanied by symbols, such as a flag, or a national anthem, are part of a set of beliefs about who you are as an individual and the group you belong to and the story of why you belong/or do not belong to a certain group (Biton and Salomon 2006). These shared narratives are often the building blocks in nation-building, and these narratives of a people have gendered components, such as protector of the nation (embodied by the male citizen) and life-giver of the nation (embodied by the female citizen) (see for instance Yuval-Davis 1997 Gender and Nation). This means that the process of creating and maintaining certain shared narratives is a gendered process, which is part of maintaining a certain understanding of normative ways of living. Some scholars within narrative research refer to these larger normative narratives of a group as canon narratives, which become part of creating a shared history and a sense of common identity (Bo, Christensen, and Thomsen 2016).

Within narratives research, different vocabulary is used to refer to shared narratives. Some scholars refer to these shared narratives as *collective narratives* (Biton and Salomon 2006), or *group narratives*. In addition, Shenhav brings forward the notion of *social narratives*, which, as I have described earlier, include a variation on the idea of shared narratives in which the shared narrative to a larger extent takes into account the surrounding society, where the narratives in the social domain are not only made up of stories, but “*rather the product of the multiplicity dynamic, namely the process of repetition and variation through which narratives are being reproduced at the societal sphere*” (Shenhav 2015, 17). Shared narratives are essential components in militaries’ existence, credibility, and legitimacy in a state and are part of telling a particular story of how this institution fits within a given society/state and in a global community of alliances and collaborations with other nations. The narrative approach to conducting research thus enables an analysis of the narratives, which make up militaries both the official institution and the individuals (soldiers) who work for the institution. I, therefore, choose to apply a narrative approach to conducting the interviews as well as structuring the analysis. Moreover, I focus on institutional as well as personal narratives, which permits an analysis of how institutions, as well as individuals, rely on particular narratives on military work and identity in their constructions of a (shared) military identity; a military identity, which I argue is influenced by global and national narratives on gender, peace, and security.

Conceptualizing and theorizing what constitutes narrative research (or as some refer to *life stories*) continues to be debated within the field of life stories and narrative research. According to Goodson and Sikes as quoted in Adriansen 2012, "*a life story is concerned with understanding a person's view and account of their life, the story they tell about their life*" (Adriansen 2012, 41). Moreover, as Adriansen explains, "*In life history research, the intention is to understand how the patterns of different life stories can be related to their wider historical, social, environmental, and political context*" (Adriansen 2012, 41–42). The field of life story research is large and often dependent on discipline. Some scholars researching life stories are more interested in how stories are told rather than connecting the stories to the relationships with lived lives. Other scholars pay close attention to the content of the story. Other scholars yet again, and this includes me, find the connection between how the stories are told, what is told, and the links to other stories, shared narratives, norms, and practices in society interesting (Shenhav 2015). For this particular reason, Shenhav makes the distinction between a *story* and a *narrative*. Following Shenhav's logic, a story is the "*chronological sequence of events derived from a narrative, as well as the characters involved in them*" (Shenshav 2015, 20). A narrative, on the other hand, is the succession of the events (Shenshav 2015, 19).

The field of narrative research has developed in regard to material used to collect narratives i.e. text versus interviews, and how scholars analyze, combine, and make sense of narratives. Within narrative research, there has been a debate on whether big narratives or small narratives are of most relevance for narrative research in understanding human interaction and social practices. Briefly said, the small stories focus on biographic life-stories, where individuals are asked to provide their own account of their life stories often with a focus on the everyday (Phoenix and Sparkes 2009; Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou 2013).

On the contrary, scholars advocating for big stories argue that social life and individuals are best understood when people talk for a longer period of time about their own life and the larger incidents which they have encountered (Phoenix 2016). The lines between the big and small stories have become less divided as the field of narrative research has progressed and both approaches are now often used in combination. Moreover, as Ann Phoenix (2016) points out, often small and big narratives do not counter each other, but rather complement and provide a richer understanding of social and identity formation for individuals and general narratives in social life.

[“...] telling stories about ourselves to others is one way in which our identity may be accomplished or performed. Importantly, this interactional and performative element of identity construction through the use of narrative, as various scholars have noted (e.g. Butler, 1990, 1993; Connell, 1995; Holstein and Gubrium, 2004; Laz, 2003; Phoenix and Sparkes, 2008) is intricately connected to the social contexts within which it occurs.

This would suggest that while shaped by broader social narratives, the cultural resources that people draw upon and utilise when describing their lives, and ‘doing identity’, is done so with some degree of reflexivity” (Phoenix and Sparkes 2009, 220).

Even though there is consensus in narrative research that big and small narratives can function together, there is a difference in what they are and how they are analyzed in the dataset. As mentioned, the big stories focus on the biographical content, such as personal and previous experiences, which become known in a research interview. This means that in terms of analyzing the big narrative in an interview, the focus is on the individual’s biographical story where the interviewee is asked to reflect on and tell their life story in general and the experiences and incidents, which have formed their lives. This enables the researcher to see how incidents in the interviewee’s life have been part of forming his/her identities.

### 3.3.1. MY APPROACH TO NARRATIVE RESEARCH

As I discuss in the theory section, I see narratives as ways of constructing, negotiating, and presenting identities, both individually and collectively. In my approach to narrative research, I connect the personal soldier stories to the wider historical, social, and political contexts. I do this by combining narratives of the institutional and the individual soldiers’ stories to locate shared social narratives of military work and identity. This also includes examining narrative struggles, which take place at different levels of the organization, and which are linked to national and global narratives on gender, peace, and security. I make a distinction between, *institutional narratives*, *personal narratives*, and *social narratives*. This distinction is important in understanding how I approach my data and my analysis, as these narratives function on different levels and have different actors. The *institutional narratives* refer to the narratives produced by the Royal Danish Air Force and Danish Armed Forces, which are found in recruitment material, action plans, diversity plans, and other official documents produced by the Danish military and the Ministry of Defense. The *personal narratives* refer to the personal soldier stories, which I collected in my interviews with military personnel in the Royal Danish Air Force. The *social narratives*, on the other hand, refer to shared narratives found in the personal narratives of the soldiers and in the institutional narratives produced by the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces; narratives, which include reflections on what it means to conduct military work and be part of a military institution. This includes an analysis of how these narratives are influenced by global, national, and local narratives on gender, peace, and security.

An analysis, which combines different narratives, enables an understanding of what it means to be a soldier in the Royal Danish Air Force, including which gendered narratives are part of creating certain identity markers and how these are negotiated, change, and/or take different forms depending on contextual settings e.g. being in

Denmark or on international missions. Moreover, the narratives depend on the actors at the different levels of an institution, such as the Danish Armed Forces.

Like my theoretical and conceptual framework, so is my methodological approach to narrative research informed by feminist IR and security studies as well as critical military studies. I place this research in the line of other feminist scholars, who have conducted critical work on narratives on gender, peace, and security through gendered lenses (see for example Elshtain 1982; Stern 2005, 2006; McEvoy 2009; Wibben 2011; Stoltz 2020). As Wibben (2011) argues, narratives are essential as they provide a key way to make sense of the world around us including how to express intentions, legitimize actions, and not least produce and make meaning of the contexts we find ourselves in. At the same time, narratives in their various forms are places of power by which we not only investigate, but also invent a particular order of the world (Wibben 2011). Narratives also "[...] *police our imagination by taming aspirations and adjusting desires to social reality (though narratives can also be disruptive when they do not "fit" into a particular social, political, or symbolic order)* (Wibben 2011, 2).

Thus, as argued, feminist IR scholars adopt narrative approaches to analyze traditional IR issues and reveal important gendered war and conflict narratives, which have persisted for centuries about gendered bodies and the roles of masculinities and femininities in war and conflict. Elshtain's study on *Women and War* from 1987 is one of the early works that apply a narrative approach to study these topics and her work reveals interesting perspectives to why we produce narratives on war,

"They invite us to enter a war of words, to familiarize ourselves with the text and the texture of wartime experiences" - so that we may take part in the experience of war, not so much to extend our sympathy but to "appropriate their experience, to draw it within the familiar circle of our understanding" (Elshtain 1987 as quoted in Wibben 2011, 102).

This means that through narrative accounts, it is possible to examine how men and women (and other gendered bodies) are presented, the roles they are assigned, how they live up to these, the intention and meaning with the way narratives are produced and negotiated, and whether men and women are assigned the same roles, if/and if not why. War narratives are, therefore, not a new phenomenon, but something that feminist scholars have used for decades to elucidate the ways in which particular stories about war and conflict are told and retold by societies and individuals. It has also been a way for feminist IR to critique the overrepresentation of men's perspectives as the stories of war. This focus has also transcended into fiction. For instance, Svetlana Aleksijevitj Nobel prize-winning book from 2013 *War Does Not Have a Woman's Face* in which she traces and critically examines the emotional history of the Soviet and post-Soviet individuals through carefully collected interviews (Aleksijevitj 2015 [first published 2013]).

Narratives on war and conflict also rely on particular myths, which help to tell particular stories about the agents in the narratives. An example of this is the Band of Brothers, which I discussed in Chapter 2 (Mackenzie 2009; 2015). Myths, as well as, narratives, connect closely to contextual settings (Wibben 2011), which means that the contextual setting in which the narratives I locate play a significant role. Moreover, as I introduced in Chapter 1, the idea of a particular Danish way of approaching gender equality (Borchorst 2009; Dahlerup 2018; Stoltz 2020) issues also relate to narratives on military work – and therein understandings of war, conflict, and peace processes.

Narratives and identities are closely connected since narratives provide an outlet for telling a particular story of who we are in relation to other individuals/groups and how we understand our own identity(ies). In this process of deciphering these identities, personal narratives become important components in understanding conflict and security issues, as these personal accounts can reveal particular understandings of gender and security issues which are lost at the larger narratives produced by institutions or states. As Wibben argues, a number of feminist scholars have demonstrated how listening to marginalized voices in conflicts reveal important lessons on (in)security for individuals including everyday accounts and experiences from conflict settings. A process, which speaks into an increased focus on human security rather than state security simply and where *“narratives of security, told from outsiders’ standpoints, offer a very different account of security than the dominant state-centered security narrative”* (Wibben 2011, 99-100).

White Danish soldiers are traditionally not considered marginalized voices and at least not in the same ways as i.e. the cases presented by Wibben (2011) for instance Stern’s studies of Mayan women’s narratives of war (Stern 2005; 2006), where her informants on a number of levels and in significantly more insecure settings are deprived of a voice. However, my point is that the Danish soldiers’ voices in their particular context of the Danish military are given less attention in relation to gender, peace, and security issues from an institutional point of view, where the institutional and top-levels have been active in articulating particular narratives about the institution on gender and security issues. As my interview-material reveals, given the chance, the soldiers are eager to provide their perspectives to the discussions both within the institution, but also in more general terms in relation to how the Danish military operates internationally and the roles they play as soldiers. Moreover, these personal narratives offer similar, but also counter-arguments to institutional narratives on military work in a Danish context. Hence, *“personal narratives are especially interesting because they ‘allow us to attend to the collective and the personal, the intersubjective and the individual’”* (Mattingly et al. 2002 as cited in Wibben 2011, 2). Listening to personal narratives on soldier work and their military identity negotiations, I am able to understand the processes of militarization, military masculinity negotiations and understandings of gender, peace, and security from a different perspective, which brings lived experiences into institutional, national, and global debates about soldier

work. Moreover, it provides important revelations to how social narratives are produced and maintained in a military institution.

### 3.3.2. INSTITUTIONAL NARRATIVES

As mentioned above, narratives tell stories about who we are, what we do, and how we act. They give insight into the ways in which individuals and/or institutions represent themselves to the outside and members of their groups/communities. As such, I apply the term *institutional narratives* when referring to the narratives produced by the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces. By default, institutional narratives include shared narratives, as they refer to a group, community, or collective, which represent a larger group of individuals.

Institutional narratives are a common strategy used by organizations to create a shared identity to tell a story of who they are as a group. As argued by Meyer (1995), narratives transfuse organizations and function as a way to, “*convey information, communicate the culture, and orient members to organizational goals and ways of life*” (Meyer 1995). According to Meyer, this also means that narratives are significant for the creation of an individual’s sense of organizational reality. Thus, an organization or institution’s main resource of influence and persuasion are the values or norms produced and maintained by the institution (Meyer 1995).

Institutional narratives are also a way for organizations like the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces to assimilate new members. In the military, this process is systematically assured by the hierarchical structure of the organization and specific tasks associated with certain ranks and services. Moreover, the institutional narratives on military work and military identity produced by the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces are part of creating stories that advocate expected procedures in the organization “*by illustrating both praiseworthy and unacceptable behaviors, reflecting the values operative in the organization. [...] stories display values in the characters and their fates. [Thus] narratives also serve to unify groups and legitimize their power structures through their advocacy of certain values*” (Meyer 1995).

Although, institutional narratives represent official shared stories of the institution, and which values are key identity markers, narrative negotiations happen at the institutional level as well as the individual level and in combination with the two. Moreover, narratives on military work and identity produced by global actors, such as the UN and NATO, influence/and challenge institutional narratives on gender, peace, and security in terms of how modern militaries are expected to operate, which is also true for the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force. As Meyer points out:

The struggle to agree on a set of values, however, is ongoing within any organization. Signs of such struggle can be found in competing interest

groups and the narratives which enact the world view of each, along with the narrative expression of values which would become contradictory if fully carried out. The key set of values advocated by organization members generates narratives which are shared by and unify organization members, yet may also foster narratives which show how organization members attempt to negotiate contradictions inherent in organization life (Meyer 1995).

Relating Meyer's ideas to this project, the Royal Danish Air Force represents a certain sub-group within the Danish Armed Forces, which carries certain norms and values unique to the Royal Danish Air Force, and which, at times, may conflict with the overall institutional narratives or with other sub-groups' norms, for instance, those produced by the Army. Moreover, even within the Royal Danish Air Force, sub-groups exist between the different branches of the Royal Danish Air Force, for example, ACW or ATW or between pilots and flight mechanics. Even though each sub-group (small or large) have certain unique values significant to their formation, each of these have been through (and continue to do so) a process of negotiating contradictions in the environment as well as between subgroups within the institution. This means that an institution like the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces will often hold values that unify and divide members at the same time. A narrative analysis can, thus, uncover an institution's values and create a more comprehensive understanding of a particular culture (in this case military culture within the Royal Danish Air Force) relating to both the aspects which unite the group and the points that create struggles (Meyer 1995).

### **3.3.3. SELECTING DOCUMENTS FOR INSTITUTIONAL NARRATIVES**

As I stressed in the introduction given its significance in the work globally as well as locally on gender, peace, and security issues, as well as the development of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, the UNSCR 1325 is the historical starting point for this research. This historical limitation, however, means that Denmark's contributions in military work including peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions prior to 2000 are not emphasized in the analysis. Hence, although some of the soldiers refer to missions prior to 2000 as part of how they narrate their career in the Danish Armed Forces, the documents selected for the analysis of the institutional narratives are based on material dating from 2000 and onwards. This includes the NAPs on UNSCR 1325 as well as NATO documents, which also address their commitment to the resolution.

The institutional narratives are located in Chapter 4, where I also situate them within global and national narratives on gender, peace, and security. The material used for the institutional narratives has been selected from the Danish Armed Forces' own homepage, the Ministry of Defense, Royal Danish Air Force's Facebook and Instagram pages, including local sections from ATW and ACW. The documents include UNSCR 1325, NATO documents on UNSCR 1325, in particular, NATOs

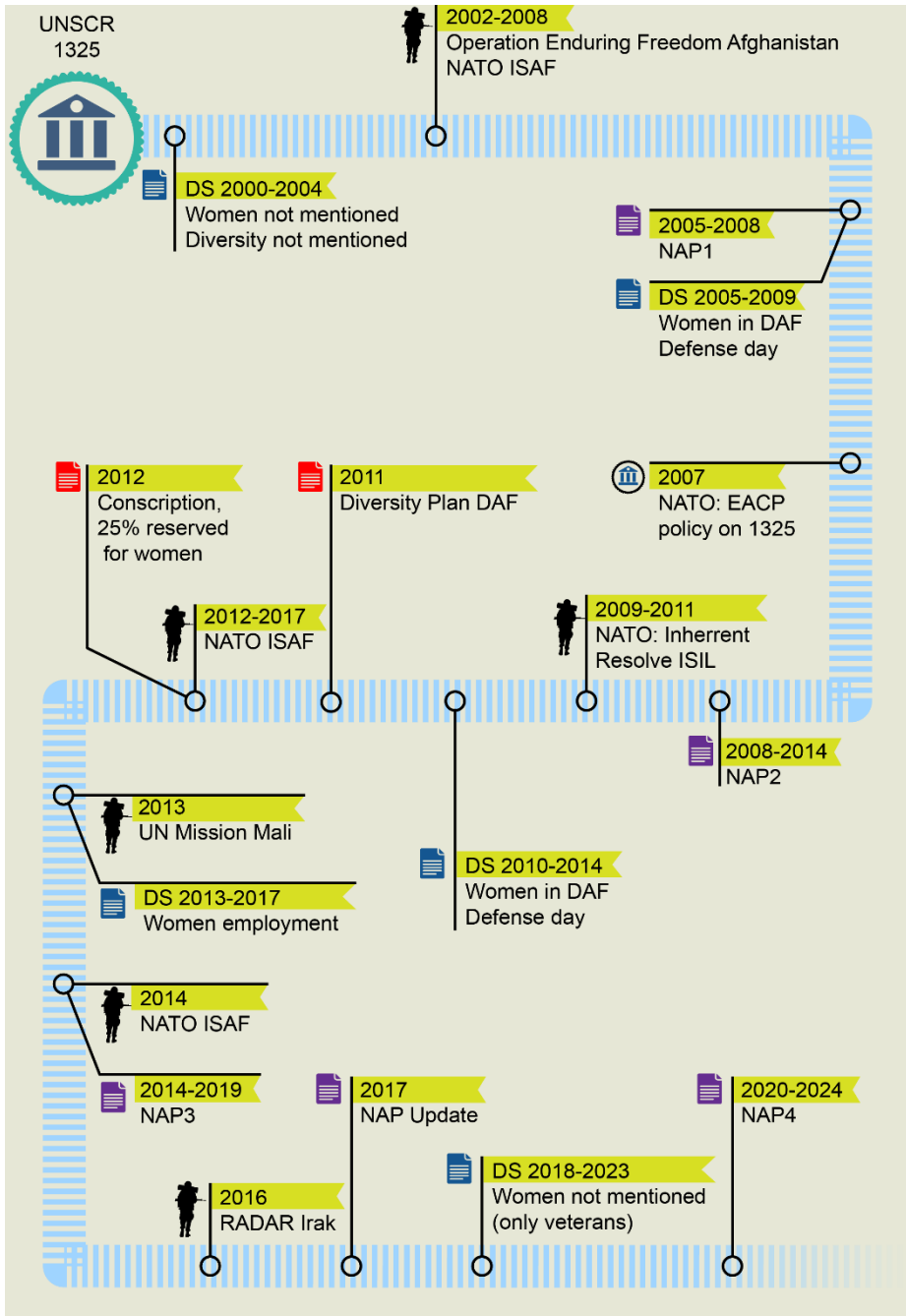
2007 NATO/EAPC policy, four existing Danish National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325 from the periods 2005-2008, 2008-2014, 2014-2019, and 2020-2024. Additionally, the Danish Diversity Plan from 2011 is included. The 2011 diversity plan is the most extensive plan, which the Defense has produced on diversity issues within the organization to date and is still in 2021 referred to on their website as their main work in terms of policies and initiatives on the matter. Additionally, the document is still actively used in the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force's work on diversity within the force. In addition, to these specific documents with a gender/diversity perspective as a main topic, the Danish Armed Forces recruitment material is analyzed including their material on *Women in the Defense*, which specifically targets new female recruits.

The different underscore material is used in combination to locate institutional narratives on military work and identity in order to detect which narratives guide and influence the institutional understanding of themselves and how they wish to present themselves externally, as well as internally. Hence, this data, and subsequent analysis of this data, provides a framework to analyze and discuss the narratives, which soldiers bring forward in their individual interviews.

The documents are all produced by institutions and are representations of official statements from these organizations and function as political documents for external representation more than concrete plans for internal use. As such, the material is not working documents in the form of workplace assessment reports for internal use only in the Danish Armed Forces, Royal Danish Air Force, but instead set guidelines in terms of which values the institutions rely on and count as essential for their institutions. Moreover, the documents include visions and missions for how they view their organizations and the key areas they need to focus on. As argued throughout, the national context is important for how narratives (institutional and personal) are negotiated and presented. This also means that in addition to examining NAP and in particular looking at national responses to UNSCR 1325, examining other documents, such as the Diversity Plan from 2011 as well as the different material such as text from webpages of the different branches, and recruitment material, and newspaper articles as well as statements from the Female Veterans' Union can provide additional important reflections on the particularities of the Danish context and in this sense avoid a sole focus on the UNSCR 1325.

In order to demonstrate the process of these documents in time, Figure 7 below is a timeline on gender equality policies within the Danish Armed Forces and illustrates initiatives since 2005 with the first NAP as a response to signing onto UNSCR 1325. The timeline further demonstrates the connection between these initiatives and defense settlements and the focus in terms of gender (especially women).





*Figure 7. Timeline of the different initiatives and actions, which have influenced the Danish Armed Forces (and Royal Danish Air Force) as an institution over the past 20 years in relation to incorporating a gender and equality focus. DS: Defense Settlement, NAP: National Action Plan.*

The overview, or timeline, illustrates how the NAP on 1325 mark initiatives from the Danish Armed Forces to work with gender in the organization. Moreover, the NAPs, the Defense Settlements, and Defense budgets align and demonstrate the connection between reports to the UN in the form of NAPs and commitments to military alliances such as NATO in which there is also a focus on gender (women), peace, and security.

At the same time, through my analytical work with the interviews, it became clear that UNSCR 1325 was a document, which mainly lived at the institutional level, not something, which the soldiers were familiar with. This finding reveals concretely how working with institutional as well as personal narratives on issues of gender, peace, and security is important in the examination of processes of creating military identities and understanding military work domestically and internationally. At the same time, and as will be discussed in the analytical chapters, a number of the soldiers were familiar with the UN's focus on gender and expressed particular opinions about it in relation to their own experiences from UN missions. However, they did not associate these practices with a particular significant resolution, a turning point in time (2005 when the first Danish NAP was produced), its content or objective, and how it had influenced their own institution's formulations and responses to allies in NATO and the UN. Hence, the only informants, who were familiar with 1325, were individuals who worked with diversity in the institution on management levels. This reveals interesting perspectives on how to methodologically work with military organizations including how contextual settings become important in the analysis of narratives of gender, peace, and security. This finding does not render the resolution (or the subsequent nine resolutions) insignificant in the analysis of institutional and soldier narratives. On the contrary, it signifies how listening to voices at all levels of the organization can reveal discrepancies between the top and bottom of the hierarchy. As I discuss in Chapter 5, the personal narratives on the UN and gender practices also connect closely to the aforementioned understandings of gender equality in a Danish setting, where the idea of the Danish as more equal compare to other nations prevails the personal soldier accounts.

### **3.3.4. PERSONAL NARRATIVES**

As described in the previous section on institutional narratives, stories are important parts of creating collectiveness for groups and individuals alike and can be significant tools to convey values, which an organization is built upon. Personal stories of soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force provide unique perspectives on the narratives of military work and military identity within the Royal Danish Air Force, as these individual narratives tell stories from the local level of the institution by means of

their personal experiences of working within the institution. The soldiers are thus daily part of maintaining/and or challenging the given institutional norms and practices.

A narrative approach to conducting interviews enables a more unstructured process, which allows the soldiers to provide their narrative (perspective) of the past, the present, and the future in regard to their military work and identity in domestic settings and as part of international missions abroad. The interviews combine elements from a thematic interview approach in the structure of the interview guide, in combination with a more fluid approach in the process of the interviews. The narrative approach to the structure of the analysis and the narrative interview approach provides the foundation for examining how the interviewees reflect on experiences from different contextual settings, and how these experiences affect their narratives on military work and identity, and how these are shaped national and global narratives on gender, peace, and security (Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou 2013). This approach provides alternative perspectives to the institutional narratives produced by the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force.

Moreover, the individual stories travel with the soldiers through time and space, and the soldiers thereby become carriers of narratives about military work and identity through their own personal work-life within the institution. The personal accounts provide knowledge and content to the institutional narratives on military work and identity, including which narratives are present, changed, or challenged through time and space. In addition, the individual soldier narratives about the organization, their work, and professional identity can also express resistance to hegemonic narratives as can be found in formal documents by the organization. Alongside the institutional narratives produced at the top-level and vocalized in documents etc., the individual accounts provide insights into the lived experiences of soldiers.

### 3.3.5. SELECTION OF INTERVIEW MATERIAL

The interviewees for this study are employees from ATW and ACW. The study aimed for an equal division between men and women, which meant that 12 women and 12 men take part in the study. In total, I conducted 24 interviews with soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force, which ensured that I have enough interviews to allow an analysis on common themes and experiences (as well as differences) among the soldiers.

The soldiers' ages vary from mid-twenties to late-fifties/early sixties. The interviewees are anonymous, and participants are mentioned on the basis of gender, rank, and age. The rank is further limited to three categories *Private First Class* (Konstabelniveau), *Non-Commissioned Officer* (Befalingsmandsniveau), and *Officer* (Officerniveau). This broader categorization of ranks among the informants is applied to ensure anonymity due to the low number of women serving in the force. An example of a reference is: *Jan, male officer in his 40s*. In the study, men and women

from all ranks (divided into the three previously mentioned levels) participate and the interviewees hold various positions within the force ranging from pilots, flight mechanics, and flight-controllers to supply officers.

To ensure the anonymity of the participants, biographical accounts of the individual soldiers are not included in this project. Moreover, when referring to the soldiers in the project, the demarcations will at times change, for example, name and age, to ensure that it is not possible for internal and external readers to identify the individuals. I strived towards a division of soldiers with majority and minority backgrounds. However, there were certain challenges in relation to this, as the number of individuals with minority backgrounds in the Danish Armed Forces is very low. This meant that in practice, I ended up with interviewees, who all had majority backgrounds and were all white.

The respondents were selected in collaboration with a contact person at ATW and ACW, respectively, to make sure that the sample of interviewees matches the characteristics of the preferred interviewees. As the interviews are conducted with individuals in their capability of employees of an organization, the approval of the organizations is crucial. Nonetheless, this also creates biases in terms of obtaining access to the individual soldiers. The interview setting is listed in Table 4.

<b>Service</b>	<b>The Royal Danish Air Force</b>
<b>Divisions</b>	Air Transport Wing (ATW), Aalborg. Air Control Wing (ACW), Karup.
<b>Missions</b>	International peacekeeping & peacebuilding missions.
<b>Number of respondents</b>	24 military employees in the Danish Armed Forces (12 men and 12 women).
<b>Rank</b>	Officer, Non-Commissioned Officer, Private.
<b>Timeframe</b>	Spring 2017 (interviews from March 2017 to June 2017).
<b>Interview locations</b>	Aalborg (ATW) and Karup (ACW).
<b>Interview duration</b>	Approx. 90 min.

Table 4: *Overview of the Interview setting, format, and informants.*

Although I will not provide individual bios for each of the interviewees in order to ensure their anonymity, I will briefly discuss the soldiers' ways into the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force to give insight into some of the motivating factors that influenced these soldiers' choice to pursue a professional career in the armed forces. Hence, whereas serving in the U.S. military opens the doors to better healthcare services, free education, early retirement, and other economic benefits (Enloe 2016), free healthcare, and education are available through the Danish welfare state. This means that joining the Danish Armed Forces provides no additional benefits in terms of social programs and funding. Moreover, the Royal Danish Air

Force is not necessarily a classic military choice with guns, tanks, and extensive physical training as part of the everyday portfolio as presented in a recent PhD study by Pedersen on Danish grunts (Pedersen 2017).

As discussed in the Theory section (Chapter 2), Higate (2003) argues based on his studies in the British Armed Forces that joining the military today is not so much a question of wanting to fight for honor and dying for one's country, and that these norms and values to a large extent are resisted. It is more the thrill of working on *big boy's toys like fighter aircrafts and tanks and the camaraderie that excites* (Higate 2003). To a certain degree, Higate's points resonate with narratives of the soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force and their reflections on why they joined and their understandings of military life and their own military identities. It became clear that there were a variety of reasons as to why the soldiers had joined the Royal Danish Air Force, however, none of the motivating factors at first included a desire to serve the nation with honor and sacrifice.

Some of the interviewees had joined by pure coincidence, whereas others had pursued a profession within the Royal Danish Air Force to become pilots. The variation in the stories of the soldiers' motivational factors and their entry into the Royal Danish Air Force can also be seen as a reflection of the diversity in the assignments, that members of the Royal Danish Air Force carry out and the various military positions that the Royal Danish Air Force have to offer. Despite the differences in the individual stories and motivational backgrounds for joining the Royal Danish Air Force, there were especially five categories that were common for a large number of the interviewees (and some of them overlapped). These included: 1) the dream of becoming a pilot, 2) family connection to the military, 3) prior education in a technical field 4) desirable working conditions/hours, and 5) specific assignments of the Royal Danish Air Force Officers.

The five categories each represent parts of the individual soldier narratives on their military identity. What is interesting about the categories is the lack of an articulated desire to become part of an organization where you can (and at times expected to) perform masculinity in a traditional and hyper-masculine manner, and where, as Enloe (2004) argues men have the potential to become first-class citizens by living up to their civic duties. This might indicate that there is something else at stake for the individuals who choose the Royal Danish Air Force (and perhaps the Air Force in general), which influences both military identities and gendered practices and understandings of masculinities and femininities. In the analytical chapters, I go into a further discussion on the individual stories and how these reveal aspects of military identity and military work.

### 3.3.6. SOCIAL NARRATIVES

As mentioned, narrative studies have a rich history expanding various disciplines and research fields. In addition, the terms used to describe especially collective narratives or stories vary from group narratives to *social narratives*. I use the latter term in this project, as I find that social narratives add dimensions to understanding the process in which both institutions and individuals make use of these common understandings of who they are and what they do.

Shenhav (2015) argues that social narratives enable an analysis of the idea of personal narratives with a collective narrative for a social group, organization, etc. Shenhav questions how narratives travel from one person to another and thereby become social narratives. This includes how, *"stories are used to 'mobilize others and foster a sense of belonging' [...] Such effects highlight the interface between the individual and the collective and show that the process of storymaking 'links the individual mind to a social reality'"* (Shenhav 2015, 3).

Shenhav argues that the term *social narratives* adds another dimension to the collective, which allows the researcher to combine individual and collective stories to a larger degree. Shenhav makes the point that by applying the term *social narratives* instead of *collective narrative*, the term resonates better with the view within social sciences that *"society is not a sum of individuals, but a distinctive entity that transcends the individual members"* (Shenhav 2015, 17). Moreover, the term *social narratives* is in line with the theoretical understandings about the role of narratives in human society, and that *"narratives in the social domain are not merely aggregations of stories but rather the product of the multiplicity dynamic, namely the process of repetition and variation through which narratives are being reproduced at the societal sphere"* (Shenhav 2015, 17):

Narratives in the social domain can situate contemporary events in a broad temporal context of social experiences and involve the individual in a story of collective agency, invoking such emotionally loaded constructs as "our military unit," "the nation," or "our state". Thus, narratives enfold present social events in a sense of continuity and familiarity with episodes and occurrences that they personally could never have experienced (Shenhav 2015, 11).

The idea of social narratives, as presented by Shenhav as an approach of narrative analysis, is useful in these types of interviews, as the soldiers in their operations are expected to perform, work, and think as a group in which trust and a collective identity are important elements in succeeding (Forsvarskommandoen 2013). Moreover, the idea of an organization producing and maintaining a particular narrative is something that feminist IR scholars have been studying in terms of the military (see also discussion above). They have argued that a particular mindset of a collective masculinized identity and an overall militarization has been enforced within and

beyond the military itself. This is supported by both actors within the organizations and actors outside of the military (Enloe 2004; 2016). As Enloe argues:

To become militarized is to adopt militaristic values (e.g. a belief in hierarchy, obedience, and the use of force) and priorities as one's own, to see military solutions as particularly effective, to see the world as a dangerous place best approached with militaristic attitudes. These changes may take generations to occur, or they may happen suddenly as the response to a particular trauma (Enloe 2016, 18).

In addition, Shenhav (2015) talks about what it means that a particular story is told by a group. He poses the question, "*Are social narratives created top-down, by social elites, or bottom-up, through individuals' stories? Or, how do social narratives change over time and with changing issues?*" (Shenhav 2015, 18). This notion of how narratives are produced and for what purpose is a relevant and beneficial analytical element in this project. Narratives in the social domain can situate contemporary events in a broad temporal context of social experiences and involve the individual in a story of collective agency, invoking such emotionally loaded constructs as "our military unit," "the nation," or "our state". Thus, "*narratives enfold present social events in a sense of continuity and familiarity with episodes and occurrences that they personally could never have experienced*" (Shenhav 2015, 11).

I argue that top-down social elites, in my case the Royal Danish Air Force, the Danish Armed Forces, and international organizations like the UN and NATO, produce social narratives. However, at the same time, these social narratives are challenged, maintained, and given new meaning and expression through personal soldier narrative within the institutions. This creates a dialectic situation in which individuals, as well as institutions, become bearers of narratives of how to do military work and what a military identity is (and is not). In the interview material, the social narratives can be located when the soldiers discuss and refer to particular ways in which they understand the Royal Danish Air Force to hold certain values. These accounts are identified in the interview material and relate to analysis both in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. More concretely, the social narratives can be identified through pronouns i.e. *we* or *us* or *the Royal Danish Air Force*, or when the soldiers describe the Royal Danish Air Force through a certain vocabulary in opposition to the other services or other nations. Furthermore, I consider the social narratives to be the combination of perspectives from the personal to the institutional in link to the surrounding contexts. This gives a broader and more complex understanding of the social narratives of military work and military identity in the Royal Danish Air Force. In addition, this brings forward narrative negotiations between the different levels in the social narratives.

### **3.4. GAINING ACCESS AND ESTABLISHING CONTACT**

Levels of access pose questions of bias in any work that involves the collection of empirical data. This is particularly true for conducting interviews with individuals still working and thus representing a particular institution, in this case, the Danish Armed Forces. As I wanted to interview individuals who were still in active service, I needed the military's official participation in the study, as this particular institution has certain security precautions relating to national security and the individual soldiers' security, which need to be taken into account. The goodwill of the military was an important component for establishing contact with the soldiers to ensure that the interviewees were not violating codes of conduct by participating in a study about their workplace without the organization's acceptance.

The method used to establish contact with the Royal Danish Air Force was done through the use of a formal gatekeeper, whom I knew through fellow acquaintances and was employed at the officer level in the Royal Danish Air Force and had access to leadership levels within the organization due to the individual's rank at the time of my initial inquiry. The gatekeeper contacted the units ATW and ACW on my behalf, and through this contact, I was able to speak directly with the leaders of these units and receive positive responses for taking part in the study.

Prior to conducting the interviews, two preliminary meetings took place (one at each airbase in Aalborg and Karup) between military officials and myself to agree on the terms of the interviews and to discuss the project in further detail. At the meetings, it was concluded that the interviews would not need to go through security clearance, as the topic would not jeopardize national security. This further meant that the anonymity of the soldiers within the organization was assured since superior employees or other military personnel would not have to approve the interviews by reading the transcripts. At the meeting, it was further agreed that participation in the interviews was voluntary for the soldiers.

There are strict codes of conduct for military personnel related to discussing their work with non-military outsiders. The approval of the military meant that the individuals I interviewed would not compromise these codes of conduct and their contracts, which was a crucial element in the ethical considerations for participation. The approval from the military officials, therefore, also meant that I could gain access to the interviewees at the two airbases ATW and ACW through an administrative employee who had access to personnel records and would provide me with a list of interviewees who were willing to participate in the study. As importantly, a study on military narratives in relation to work and identity without the approval of the organization would have resulted in a different type of study where the soldiers could be placed in potentially challenging positions regarding loyalty towards their workplace.



At the same time, I wanted to talk to individuals with different ranks and genders, and a collaboration with the military aided this process; through human resources, they were able to make sure that individuals from all three levels were part of the study. As this information regards sensitive personal information, it is only available through the military's own systems. It was, therefore, necessary to have the military mediate the contact to the soldiers who fulfill the characteristics, and using a gatekeeper was, therefore, a chosen method of approach. This, however, meant that the military could potentially target individuals who they knew represented the views and values that the organization stands for (Kristiansen and Krogstrup 1999; Seidman 2013). The armed forces' motivation for granting me access is further enhanced by external pressure, nationally and internationally, to report on gender equality within the organization. Hence, the Royal Danish Air Force also saw this study as an opportunity to engage in collaborative work with an external educational institution, which would grant them validity in their assessments to external, as well as internal, partners. These potential biases are of course important to take into account in this work; however, it is still important to stress that the study is conducted in collaboration with the military in terms of establishing contact with respondents, but that the study is independent and not conducted on behalf of the Royal Danish Air Force. This point makes an essential difference in terms of bias and potential influence on the analysis for this study. This also entails that the Royal Danish Air Force is not part of designing the research study or the interview protocol.

To accommodate for the bias, an agreement was made that two individuals at the airbases would find personnel who have the characteristics I had identified for the study i.e. gender, rank, age, participation in international missions, etc. (see Table 4) and send a list to me with email addresses from which I could then choose individuals and make contact and further arrangements for interviews. All contact with the soldiers after I had been given the list with potential interview names was done through email communication with me only. A consent form was sent by email individually to the informants prior to the meeting, which informed them that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the interview at any given time without further notice. Upon request, the informants were given the chance to see the interviews in written form.

An alternative method to avoid the bias described above could have been to hand out flyers and let the individuals contact me. However, given the hierarchical structure of the organization and limited access to the military bases without proper clearance, it seemed less likely that the military would agree to this. Furthermore, I find it important that the soldiers know that their workplace has approved the project and are positive towards engaging in this work. This type of account of potential bias is thus also common when working with formal organizations like the military (Kristiansen and Krogstrup 1999; Seidman 2013). It is often a precondition for engaging in these types of investigations and studies, and despite the potential bias as described above, I still find this approach to be the best suited for this type of study as it allowed me to

gain access to the military bases, the military administrative level, as well as the individual soldiers. Hence, in this sense, on top of the individual interviews, I was able to observe while conducting the interviews at the bases and have conversations with management personnel, who could convey some of the institutional narratives as well.

In order to be respectful towards the interviewee's time, the interviews took place at the bases in Aalborg and Karup to ensure less inconvenience in terms of transportation for the interviewees. At the same time, this was their home field in the sense that I was the outsider and they were the ones with the familiarity of the place. However, a challenge to conducting the interviews at the bases was that the soldiers would be on duty, which meant that there might be limitations in terms of the topics they would discuss or the answers they would give. To accommodate for this, I arranged to have the meetings in remote locations on the bases. At ATW, this meant that I was allowed to use a conference room located separately from the main building. The only other individuals who were present in the building, besides me and the interviewees, were civilians employed at the base, and we were provided with a remote room for the interviews to ensure that the conversation was private. In addition, I made sure that there was enough time between the interviews so that the soldiers who took part in the study did not overlap. At ACW, I was able to borrow a conference room from the military YMCA (KFUM soldier home) across the street from the base. The YMCA was a place where the soldiers would meet to relax between shifts, and it had a more cozy feeling. In this way, I created an interview setting in which the interviewees felt comfortable. Like at ATW, the private conference room at the YMCA ensured that the conversations were uninterrupted and private.

At the same time, conducting the interviews while the soldiers were still at work made the distinction of civilian and military between the interviewees and me visual, as the soldiers would still be in uniform. Hence, the conversation might have been different had we talked at a local pub after hours. However, this distinction was also something that I was interested in exploring; how do the soldiers relate to their uniform while wearing it. In this sense, conducting the interviews at the bases also served a different purpose, namely that I could observe the soldiers in relation to how they wore their uniforms, how they walked, approached their surroundings and me. Hence, conducting the interviews at the bases (and the YMCA) while the soldiers were on duty enabled me to reflect on these non-verbal aspects in combination with the stories they were telling me.

### **3.4.1. UNLOCKING SILENCES IN SOLDIER NARRATIVES**

All of the interviews are conducted in Danish, as this was the first language for all the interviewees. For this reason, the interview protocol is also written in Danish. An English version of the interview protocol is available in Appendix B (Appendix A includes the Danish version of the interview guide). Any material, including quotes,

used in the project, or other forms of presentation (written or oral) is translated by the author.

The interviews are narrative, semi-structured in-depth interviews. I chose this approach, as I wanted the soldiers to narrate their stories of military work abroad and domestically and their views on military identity and not be constrained by my own known or unknown expectations of military work (Ackerly and True 2010). At the same time, I also had certain themes that I wanted to touch upon in the interview, which the semi-structured method ensured. The interviews had a duration of 90 minutes for each individual interview, which provided enough time to allow the interviewees to narrate their story without interruptions and incorporate certain themes, which we would discuss as well. To enable the narrative aspect of the interview by letting the soldiers tell their stories, I applied a timeline in the interviews. Timelines are a common method in qualitative research, which, for instance, sociologists make use of in biographical interviews with a focus on life stories, and through this method, capture an individual's own account and understandings of his/her life (Adriansen 2012).

The intended output of the life story interview can vary and so can the format of timelines. This means that timelines take many different (graphic) forms and can be more or less interactive elements in the interview setting. As mentioned, these differences are also dependent on disciplines. Where scholars within sociology and anthropology have a rich history of applying various forms of timelines in their research (Adriansen 2012), within the fields of feminist IR and critical military studies, the use of timelines as an interview technique is more limited. This is not to say that interviews as such are an unfamiliar method among feminist IR scholars (McEvoy 2009; MacKenzie 2015; Mathers 2013; Sjoberg and Gentry 2007). However, in my engagement with the Royal Danish Air Force, I felt I needed a tool to begin the conversations other than semi-structured interview questions. The reasoning behind this was based on the lack of preceding studies to guide the interview questions and the personal unfamiliarity with the type of work and life of soldiers employed in the Royal Danish Air Force.

Moreover, the decision was based on my hesitation to include gender as a term/concept early on in the interviews, which might have produced/reproduced assumptions on gender in the armed forces (as I discussed in the section *How to Talk about Gender without Asking About Gender* above). The main aim of the interviews was to let the interviewee express her/his understandings of the role of a soldier in the Royal Danish Air Force, the work she/he carries out, and the relations among soldiers and the institution thereby unfolding the personal and shared narratives of Royal Danish Air Force. This also meant that I wanted to talk about gender, without talking about gender (Bloksgaard 2012). The timeline, therefore, functioned as a means for addressing the topic in a way that created a less fixed conversation on gendered narratives, practices, and understandings.

In their study on military identities in accounts from British military personnel, Woodward and Jenkins (2011) make use of an auto-driven photo-elicitation method in order to facilitate communication and sharing understanding between researcher and respondents, which they argue is in contrast to more “conventional interview formats structured around the exploration of predetermined identity categories and concepts, photo-elicitation can rely more directly on the respondents’ shaping of the interview around their pre-selected images” (Woodward and Jenkins 2011, 256).

I used the timeline as a similar approach to both create a setting where I through their words and narrations become familiar with the military institution and how they viewed this and in addition unfold the experiences in an effort to let the interviewees be the narrators and in this sense avoid stirring a forced focus on gender. However, at the same time given the institutional narratives on gender as well as global voices and a societal context of Denmark, I was interested in the gendered dynamics and if/and how they influenced the soldiers’ narratives on military work and military identities. Although I agree with Woodward and Jenkins (2011) that engaging in studies where the aim is to examine identity constructions and negotiations at the individual (as well as institutional) level, approaching this through preexisting categories may lead to conversations that examine identity negotiations in a particular way. At the same time, given the context of the interviews and the recent focus by management, it seemed that choosing not to discuss gendered elements of military identities and military work would create particular silences in the interviews and the narratives. The timeline and relying on the work by Højgaard (2010) and Bloksgaard (2012) on how to talk about gender, without (re)creating gendered stereotypes or placing too much emphasis on this from my part became a central part of the methodological approach.

### 3.4.2. HOW DID I GO ABOUT IT?

After having discussed the format of the interviews: informing the participant of the length of the interview, anonymity, who I was, my field, etc. (information which I had also provided in written consent forms prior to the interview in connection with arranging a time and date for the interview), I began the interview by presenting a piece of paper with a timeline (see Figure 5 for example). The timeline was designed with a simple vertical line with the first point being *Start date* in the Danish Armed Forces, the next being *First deployment*, the third being *latest deployment*, and the last *being today*. I deliberately left space in between the 4 points to make sure that there was room for the participant to write his/her own comments on the paper. In addition to marking the four points, I asked the participants to write and reflect on times during this period that had been significant. This could be related to work, for example, getting a promotion, being away on deployments, or more personal turning points e.g. becoming a parent, experiencing trouble in intimate relationships, or loss of friends/colleagues in connection with professional life and personal life.

A number of the interviewees were clearly nervous about the interview situation, but many of them began to feel more relaxed as they started to write on the timeline, and often remembered funny stories or difficult periods/situations from their career. In this sense, the timeline functioned as a way to ease the interview setting and make the interviewees more relaxed. A number of the soldiers found it interesting to see their career chronologically lined up on the paper and reflected on their time in the force and different stages in their career. The timeline also functioned as written field notes along the storyline, making small commentary entries, which post-interview led me to remember why a particular entry was important for the interviewee. Figure 5 is an example of one of the timelines made by Laust a male officer in his 50s-60s.

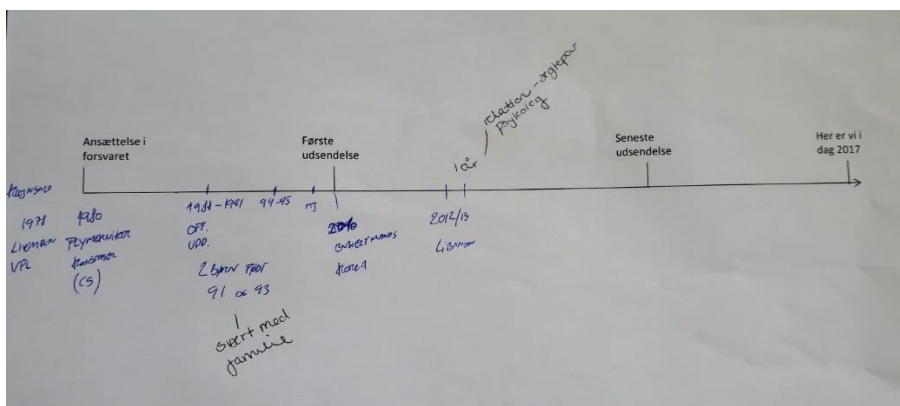


Figure 5: Example of a timeline made by Laust, Officer, in his 50-60.

In other situations, the piece of paper with the timeline functioned in its basic capacity: a piece of paper to drawn on for clarifications, for instance, in terms of geographical locations. Having the piece of paper created a common understanding between the interviewee and me, as I was able to grasp better the message he/she was trying to uncover. As an example in Figure 6, one of the soldiers, Jens, drew a map to get his message across to an outsider (me). The timeline in its capacity as a piece of paper was thus able to facilitate Jens' demonstration of a clear understanding of soldiers and the classic masculine connotations related to the work of soldiers; thereby unlocking some of the gendered understandings and silences related to soldiering and work in the Royal Danish Air Force.

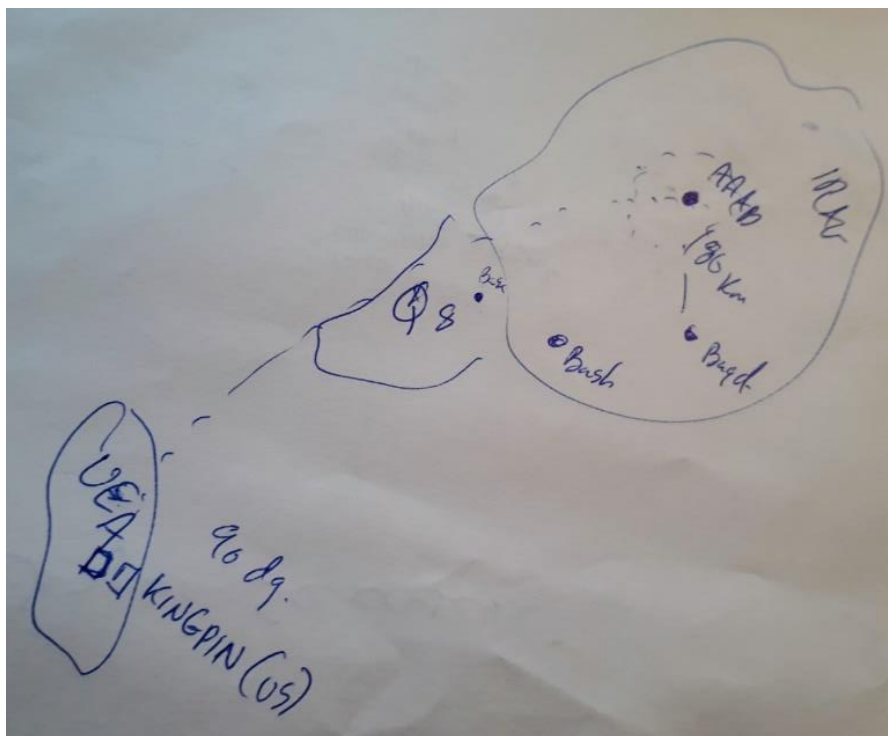


Figure 6: An example of a different use of the timelines, here used by Jens, Officer, in his 30-40, to help explain different geographical situations

The timeline functioned as a communication channel and collective memory between the interviewer and the interviewee. Hence, in the case of the interview with Jens, he clearly felt that the paper, at least for the time of the interviews, was as much his as it was mine. This is in line with Adriansen's experiences of using timelines in interviews. As Adriansen writes:

The paper [timeline] serves as a 'collective memory' where the story can be seen both by the interviewer and the interviewee. It is easy for both parties to return to an issue already discussed and this can be linked with other events along the way. Whether the interviewee is participating in writing or not, she/he is usually engaged in following how the story unfolds on paper. This is quite different from an interview where the interviewer writes notes on a piece of paper that the interviewee cannot see (Adriansen 2012, 44).

As mentioned by Chisholm and Tidy (2017), the collective memory aspect of researching the military especially through direct contact with individuals, for example, via interviews, makes the boundaries between being part of the military

institution and being the outsider less fixed. At the same time, the intimate interview situation enables a different type of dialogue, which is able to uncover silences relating to the gendered power dynamics in the military. Bulmer and Jackson (2015) also reflect on this in regard to the critique that narrative data might lack the ability to critically analyze the military as an institution. However, as they state:

For us, this debate suggests that critique comes from outside, or is at least “activated” outside the production of the narrative itself. However, we argue that the mode of research praxis we have engaged in is inherently critical. Through our conversations, we continue to “re-evaluate and disrupt what we have been taught” (Jackson 2004, 686) by questioning ourselves (Bulmer and Jackson 2015, 10).

As was the case with Jens and Laust, I often found that the points/times the interviewees referred to as troublesome were closely connected to work. As critical military studies scholars argue, this is one of the reasons why working with and studying the armed forces requires reflections on how you, as a researcher, address personal experiences related to conflict, war, peace, etc. while trying to stay critical towards practices etc. (Chisholm and Tidy 2017). Relating to this, I experienced that the timeline had the potential to unlock some of the silences of losing a colleague as a dramatic aspect of deployments and the life as a professional soldier in the Royal Danish Air Force.

Additionally, the timeline functioned as a method of uncovering silences on gender equality and discrimination. The officer I interviewed, Jan, was in the process of filling in the timeline and reflected on the different entry points he was making. Having already asked him to include significant turning points on the paper, Jan started to talk about the second turning point in his career in the force:

The most significant turning point occurred when I came home, and I had been repositioned. I was at one of the airbases at that time, and my wife calls me and says: “What is this? Are we moving to another airbase, or what?” And I didn’t know at that time. What do you say? I actually got quite irritated because, at that point, I was probably getting too old to apply for the Police Academy and then they pulled a stunt like that on me! It was sort of a small turning point relating to [gender] equality. Because it turned out that it was a woman, who was returning home [from a deployment] with her husband and she was assigned the position at the airbase where I belonged because he worked there and she needed a job. And then they [the Royal Danish Air Force] were like, “You can relocate to this other airbase, right?” (Jan, Officer, in his 40-50s).

As the different examples demonstrate, the use of a timeline enables conversations, which have the potential to uncover silences in a more naturally occurring way than only using semi-structured interviews. The timeline initiated the conversation we had

for the remainder of the interview and provided a sense of familiarity and trust among us, as the interviewer and interviewee, and a common ground for the questions I wanted to talk about in the interviews.

Besides creating a method of initiating the conversations, the timelines also had a practical element post interviews. As these were 90-minute long interviews in general, having the timelines afterward helped to separate the different stories and remember their uniqueness. Nonetheless, contrary to the many positive sides of using a timeline in this type of interview, there are also a number of aspects, which an interviewer needs to be aware of before applying the method. For instance, the interviews tend to jump from point to point based on what the interviewee writes on the timeline. This might challenge the structure of the interview questions and make it somewhat more difficult to remember the interview questions by heart, including whether all questions have been answered. However, this is helped by actively looking at the timeline during the interview and referring to the different assignments the interviewee lists, and continue to talk about these. In some cases, the interviewees were caught up with discussing a specific point, which they remembered in relation to an incident on the timeline. This at times meant that the timeframe for the interview was challenged. In these cases, I, at times, tried to guide the conversation towards some of the topics we had discussed, or I wanted to ask about, in order to gently stay focused on the overall topic of the study. In a few cases, the participants showed little interest in engaging in filling out the timeline and would let me write on the paper instead, leaving me to add the information, they were providing me. In these cases, I quickly dismissed the timeline and rarely used it again in the interview. Instead, I took a starting point in some of the semi-structured interview questions I had prepared.

Based on my work with timelines in this project, I stress that they enable conversations with soldiers on topics that might be difficult and that included embedded silences. At the same time, the individual stories, which came to the surface based on incidents the soldiers remembered in the process of writing can be situated in larger narratives of war, peace, and security and how this is gendered. I, therefore, argue that using timelines in interviews with soldiers provided insightful understandings on topics of interest for feminist IR scholars as well as critical military studies researchers.

### **3.5. MODE OF ANALYSIS**

As mentioned above, I apply a narrative approach to the analysis by working with individual and institutional narratives on military work and identity within the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force (Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou 2013; Shenhav 2015). This is done through interview material and selected documents, which are described in further detail in the previous sections. I combine the narrative approach with a thematic analysis, which is based on theoretical themes identified based on my theoretical and conceptual framework of feminist IR and critical military studies, as well as initial desk research on the Danish Armed Forces



and Royal Danish Air Force through reports, action plans, conventions, etc. in combination with my main research question and three sub-research questions. I chose this approach as it allows me to place focus on narratives on gender, peace, and security and how these are part of understanding military work, also in a Danish context. Hence, the narrative approach and thematic analysis work closely with my overall research question and sub-research questions and aid a structure in my work that is guided by my research questions, and which, at the same time, allows for the empirical data to unfold in expected and unexpected ways.

The theoretical themes provide the framework for the interview guide and the formulation of the questions in the interview guide. These theoretically informed themes in combination with empirical themes, which emerged after I had collected the interviews and began to code the data, form the thematic analysis of the data. In the following section, I explain how I approach the coding of the interview material, including the thematic method. The overall themes from the interview protocol are as follows in the table below:

<b>Interview Protocol Themes</b>
Demographics and background.
Upbringing, family background (military connection), relation to the geographical area they are based.
Personal and family life.
Work-life and career: motivation for applying to serve in the Royal Danish Air Force.
Capabilities and performances.
Colleagues, ranks, and hierarchies.
Masculinity, femininity, and military identity.
Peacekeeping and peacebuilding assignments.
Home and away.

*Table 5: Overall Themes in the Interview Protocol*

My narrative approach to conducting this project by examining individual, institutional, and social narratives includes an awareness of how these narratives intersect, challenge, and create stories on military work and identity in different settings/contexts through time and space. After I had conducted the interviews, all 24 interviews were fully transcribed. I then uploaded all the full transcripts to the computer software program Nvivo, which I used to organize and code the interview data. The initial codes were based on four theoretical themes:

1. The ideal soldier
2. Military identities and assessments of competences/skills
3. Military hierarchies
4. Space, place, and time

I expand the four themes in my coding with more notes, which emerge in processing the interview data. This process means that I am able to include codes, which prevail in the different interviews, and at the same time link them to the theoretically based themes. A number of the empirically based codes overlap in themes and furthermore expand into smaller codes. Coding in Nvivo provides an overview of the vast amount of transcribed interview material, which allows me to identify common themes in the soldiers' narratives and in selecting which themes I found most relevant to investigate further in the analysis and how they relate to my theoretical and conceptual framework.

Moreover, in the process of coding the interview data, themes emerged from the interview data, which made me reconsider some of my initial theoretical starting points, and in this process, critical military studies and its methodological approach became useful in linking theory and empirical evidence. Hence, in this sense, the process of coding the data becomes a dialectic process in which the theoretical framework is being challenged based on some of the findings, which adds nuances and new understandings of theoretical and methodological approaches and concepts. The list of themes based on theoretical, as well as empirical, evidence is listed in Table 6. There is no chronological or hierarchical order in the themes, and they are simply listed as individual, however, interlinked themes.

Head Note	Sub-Note
<b>Biological gender</b>	Woman; Man; Sex
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Danish; Diversity; Cultural differences; Nationality
<b>Family</b>	Civilian life; Generation
<b>Femininity</b>	Soft
<b>Peace and war</b>	To make a difference- something worth fighting for; Use of resources; UN; Fear and insecurity; Conflict; Life and death; NATO; Peacekeeping and peacebuilding; Politics and war; Security national; Security individual; Injuries; Illness; Traumas
<b>Community</b>	Deprivation; Civilians; Care; Us and them; Soldier life; Trust; Safety
<b>Demobilization</b>	Adjustment period after deployment
<b>Gender</b>	Discrimination; Fatherhood; Gender without significance; Gender-based discrimination and harassment; Gender roles; Equality; Diversity; Motherhood; Queer; Sexuality; Silences
<b>Power</b>	
<b>Masculinity</b>	Bad boy; Physical; Tough
<b>Military identity</b>	Ideal soldier; Identity outside the force; Team spirit; Military culture; The Role of the Uniform; Values
<b>Organizational changes</b>	
<b>Soldier</b>	Age; Work life; Abilities; The Air Force; Physical demands; Community; Hierarchy; The Army; Not a real soldier; Career; Qualifications; Military and civilian educations; Respect; Collaboration; Pride; The Navy; Training
<b>Place</b>	Home; On the base; Deployment

*Table 6: List of themes used in the coding of the interviews based on theoretical as well as empirical evidence.*

Several of the overall themes expand within the particular code and add nuances. Moreover, a number of the code and sub-codes overlap in terms of categorizing the interview material. Hence, some of the same interview codes belong to one of several of the codes. In the following Table 7, I have extended the codes from the notes in Table 6 and categorized them further into different themes.

<b>Theory based codes</b>	<b>Empirically based codes</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Discrimination, gender without significance, gender identities, gender (in)equality, gender-based violence/discrimination, diversity, queerness, sexuality, inclusion, exclusion
<b>Gender &amp; masculinities</b>	Physique, toughness, boys' culture, softness, comrades, biology, man
<b>Gender &amp; femininities</b>	Woman, care
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Danish, diversity, cultural differences, nationality
<b>Peace &amp; war</b>	Making a difference, use of resources, UN, NATO, fear and insecurities, conflict, life and death, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, politics and war, injury, sickness, trauma
<b>Security</b>	Low-risk missions, high-risk missions, individual security, national security, international security, human security
<b>Military identity</b>	Ideal soldier, identity outside the force, team spirit, military culture, role of the uniform, values
<b>Space, Place, Time</b>	Home, on base/outside base, deployment.
<b>Soldier</b>	Age, work life, qualifications, Air Force, physical demands, collectiveness, hierarchies, Army, not real soldier, career, capabilities, military and civilian educations, motivation for employment, respect, collaboration, pride, Navy, training
<b>Family</b>	Civilian life, generations, fatherhood, motherhood
<b>Collectiveness</b>	Deprivation, civilian, care, us and them, soldier life, trust, safety
<b>Organizational changes</b>	Gender composition, self-identity, competences, politics of gender
<b>The Royal Danish Air Force</b>	Technical service, specialist, less masculine, unique.

Table 7: Unfolded and categorized codes from Table 6.

As Table 6 and 7 demonstrate, the empirical and theoretical themes worked in combination in examining the interview data. Moreover, my research questions become important for how I approach the findings in the data and help guide the analysis of the narratives.

Given my focus on soldier narratives on military identities and work in relation to gender, peace, and security narratives, the themes on gender, masculinities and femininities as well as space, place, and time play a significant role in the analysis. My analytical chapters therefore center on: *International, Regional & National Voices on gender, peace, and security* (Chapter 4); *Negotiating Gendered Military Identities* (Chapter 5); and *Going to War or Building Peace?* (Chapter 6). All of the

chapters make use of the interview material, however, Chapters 5 and 6 are the chapters where the personal soldier narratives take center stages and are used as the primary data. In Chapter 4, the main material is the underscore documents, which I describe under the section on institutional narratives. Moreover, theoretically and conceptually, all chapters relate to critical military studies and feminist IR as well as Nordic and Danish exceptionalism as a common theme, which transcends the chapters as is an essential part of the contextual setting.

In addition, as I have argued throughout this methodological chapter, narratives on war, conflict, and gender are part of the critical examinations, which feminist IR and critical military studies engage in. Identifying these narratives in my interview material is thus done by locating war, conflict, and gender narratives (and myths), which feminist IR scholars have worked with previously, for instance, mothers as beautiful and peaceful souls, who give birth to the nation (Elshtain 1987; Yuval-Davis 1997), *warriors* (i.e. Rones 2015; Persson 2013; Daugbjerg and Refslund-Sørensen 2017), *Band of Brothers* (MacKenzie 2009; 2015). I combine this with the national context of Denmark in relation to national narratives on gender equality and the notion (or myth) of Danish exceptionalism (Borchorst 2009; Dahlerup 2018; Stoltz 2020 pp 23-43; Fiig, Christina, Lise Rolandsen Agustín & Birte Siim 2022).

The national context in relation to working with gender in a military institution also led me to look at the work by Danish researcher Betina Rennison<sup>11</sup> and her work on women in leadership positions, where she identifies five overall codes, which represent the different stories about women in organizations (Rennison 2012). A number of these stories, or codes using Rennison's terminology, are identifiable in the narratives produced by Danish Armed Forces, Royal Danish Air Force, and the soldiers concerning the role that gender plays within the organization and in particular the role that women play or have come to play in the Royal Danish Air Force & Danish Armed Forces. The codes are not fixed in the sense that one code/story is the truth or that an individual/or institution is required to make use of just one code. They are, however, codes that describe the different positions that especially women hold in organizations and how the organization and its members male/female perceive their presence in the armed forces; codes which I argue applies to the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force as well. In the following section, I discuss these eight narratives in more detail and situate them within the analytical framework of this thesis.

### **3.6. EIGHT NARRATIVES ON GENDER IN THE ROYAL DANISH AIR FORCE**

In order to adjust the codes to the context of the military, I have modified the five initial stories/codes, which Rennison uses in her work, and adapted them to the stories

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<sup>11</sup> Rennison's five codes are: Biology, Talent, Usefulness, Exclusion, Freedom, quotas from the EU (Rennison 2012) [author translation]

and narratives I identify in institutional and personal narratives in this thesis. It is clear that a number of the same stories within the Royal Danish Air Force overlap with Rennison's findings. This may be linked to the contextual setting of Denmark meaning that some of the stories are generic and part of overall national narratives/discussions on gender equality and diversity in Denmark. Hence, a number of the stories are relatable and can be found in different branches that have worked with increasing the number of women i.e. other public workplaces such as universities or in private companies.

At the same time, in conducting the work for this thesis, I found it necessary to include three extra codes/stories to encompass the institutional and personal narratives I encountered in my material. Moreover, I approach these codes through a narrative understanding of negotiations and constructions over identities and argue for the use of the narrative terminology instead of codes. I do this by following the argument by narratives researchers such as Biton and Salomon (2006) and Shensav (2012). This results in the following eight different stories:

1. Biology/physique  
Physique is vital in military work, and biology is an important part of this. Most women are not as tall and strong as men and thus more often than men unfit for (classic) military work.
2. Talent/qualifications  
Everything is about finding the best soldier for the job. Gender is not important; it is all about qualifications. The problem is not that the military does not want women to join, but that women themselves look for jobs in other sectors that appeal more to women.
3. Operational Effectiveness  
Women and men are different, and we need to use these differences to make military work and missions more effective.
4. Diversity/exclusion  
We need diversity because it is discriminatory if we do not have this as a practice. It is women's right to serve, but not an obligation.
5. Freedom to pursue a career in the armed forces  
This one is linked to the previous story of how women (like men) are free to define their gender and how they want to be soldiers and that it is their own barrier that prevents them from becoming successful in their profession.
6. Quotas/regulations – UN and NATO

The regulations come from the outside and influence how the problem is to be solved i.e. pressure from NATO and the UN to include more women enforced by requirements to have a certain percentage of women serving.

7. Protector/protected

Overall women need to be protected and they are more vulnerable in military work. The protection is carried out by their male colleagues. This story relates both to the biological code, but also to qualifications and physique when the male body in military work is considered superior and the norm.

8. Band of Brothers - female bodies disrupt the hegemony of the soldier body

The female bodies challenge the hegemony of the military by having other gendered bodies and sexuality, which have other needs and demands i.e. the size of the uniform, different facilities, pregnancies, menstruations, which are all part of changing the previous hegemonic soldier body as male and straight (and in the Danish case mainly white).

There are a number of intersecting and conflicting narratives on gender (and peace and security) in the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force, which include the narrative that women with their bodies to a certain degree disrupt practices, norms, and cultures within the force including what a military identity entails. The above eight categories/codes exemplify these challenges and how different narratives are used to explain, for instance, issues with discrimination and how different understandings of gender are part of shaping how the soldiers and the Royal Danish Air Force as an institution relate to the changes in their organization over the past 15 years with the increase of female soldiers.

The story/code 1) *Biology and physique* is a classic narrative within military work and used in the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force, however, with the difference that the Royal Danish Air Force requires less physical strength than Army work. Nonetheless, it is still an element that is part of the gendered codes in the Danish military and that continues to be present despite different and less physically demanding work assignments in the Royal Danish Air Force. This particular code is closely connected to the next code on 2) *Talent & qualifications* and the idea of not seeing gender, but just the soldier, as I have discussed previously. Number 3) *The operational effectiveness* and the 6) *quotas from the UN and NATO* are examples of the influence of global actors into the narratives and stories of soldier work (and the entry of female soldiers) in military work today, and an example of how these in a way can be assigned to external pressure and not necessarily something that the Danish military is keen on, but due to pressure from important collaborators, the stories are incorporated into the Danish context.

However, this also means that if they fail, the ownership can be placed on external actors and not be seen as a proper Danish narrative on gender equality. On the

contrary, if it turns out to be a successful way of addressing more women in the armed forces, the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force can please both their external partners and achieve more diversity. Number 7) *The protector/protected* and 8) *Band of Brothers* stories are unique to military narratives as these rely on traditional ways of understanding the roles of men and women in war and conflict, as exemplified by feminist IR scholars for the past 30 years (see discussion in the Theory Chapter). What is interesting for this project is that even in a contextual setting, which has a high focus on gender equality, at least articulated, i.e. Nordic exceptionalism, these traditional narratives on women's roles still prevail.

These categorizations, therefore, also lead to the question of whether there continue to be issues within the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces in relation to discrimination, what format, and how soldiers relate to these given the aforementioned idea of having already achieved gender equality. In this sense, cases of discrimination and sexual harassment are part of challenging this self-image for the soldiers as well as the institution. Especially over the past two years, increased attention has been given to the gendered implications of the Danish Armed Forces.

Moreover, progressing through the first interview questions and drawing the timeline, my conversations with the soldiers reveal experiences with gender discrimination and sexual harassment as part of their everyday lives as soldiers. Some of the soldiers were familiar with the 2003 report and others were unaware of its existence. Most of the interviewees, however, knew of or had experienced issues relating to this topic in their career, and articulate some of these in their stories on working in a military context in Denmark as well as on missions abroad. An analysis of the negotiations over military identities through gendered lenses therefore also rests on awareness of examining cases of discrimination in everyday practices within the Royal Danish Air Force. In order to do this, I make use of five thematically interlinked categories of gender issues and discriminatory practices within the Royal Danish Air Force based on the experiences of the soldiers I interviewed. Like the eight narratives/codes on gender in the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces introduced in the method section, the five themes listed below relate to these and bring forward more nuances to the particularities of examining gender within a military institution, such as the Danish.

1. Women disrupt the military culture with their bodies
2. Having the "right" physique
3. Uncomfortable realities – Is it really this bad?
4. The Worst cases are in the past
5. Space and place: Deployments set other boundaries

Whereas the eight narrative codes I identified with reference to Rennison's (2012) work encompass personal as well as institutional narratives on gender (and in particular women) within the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force, the



above five themes are based on the personal soldier narratives and their particular experiences only. Despite an articulation from management that gender discrimination and harassment is mainly a thing of the past, the soldiers I interviewed either had experienced incidents or knew of cases. In Chapter 5, I address the first four themes, whereas theme number five relating to deployments and other boundaries is discussed in Chapter 6.

In the following analytical chapters, I thus take a closer look at some of these implications and what these mean for the self-image of being front-runners and for the narrative negotiations that the soldiers as well as the Royal Danish Air Force (and the Danish Armed Forces) make use of in military work and identity discussions.

### **3.7. CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

A feminist epistemological starting point is the basis for my approach to studying narratives on military work and identity on gender, peace, and security among Royal Danish Air Force soldiers as well as the Royal Danish Air Force (and Danish Armed Forces), as military institutions. This approach also informs my choice of theories, methodologies, and methods, and I adhere to an epistemological starting point in which I understand gender to be socially constructed in combination with other social categories, and as a fluid entity that changes in time, space, and place.

As I have discussed in this chapter, the study is primarily qualitative through the analysis of narrative interviews with soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force in combination with desk research on official documents, action plans, conventions, recruitment material, etc., which is part of forming the institutional narrative in combination with interviews with senior officers from task forces in the Royal Danish Air Force on diversity. As mentioned, I approach the topic with the intention of addressing narratives from different levels –top to bottom – national – international in order to examine how different actors, in different contexts, negotiate military identities and military work and how this may lead to discrepancies and ambiguities on understanding gender (peace and security) in a military context.

As the primary data for this study is interview material, accessing this data and coding is a large part of doing the qualitative work needed for the project. As such, gaining access to an institution, which is normally off-limits to the public, has been one of the first hurdles to overcome. In relation to this, and as I discuss, accessing an official institution through the official channels albeit with a gatekeeper also means that there are a number of biases to keep in mind i.e. which soldiers are allowed to participate and their loyalty towards their workplace. Furthermore, as I have no military training of my own, my positionality as an outsider to the military world and lingo is a constant in my investigation of the armed forces. At the same time, through my nationality, ethnicity, and upbringing in Denmark, I am an insider in relation to the contextual setting of Denmark as the place for where the soldiers work on a daily basis, and in

this sense, familiar with social structures and practices in Danish society. I, therefore, embody both an insider and an outsider position in regard to my informants, which allows me to stay curious towards the military as a particular institution in Danish society and the work they carry out, including their gendered practices, and at the same time, being able to understand the national context in which the soldiers work.

Lastly, engaging in feminist work in which critically examining gendered practices and understandings is part of the investigation, the means to create a setting that allows for this type of conversation can be tricky. I, thus, make use of different tactics, including the use of timelines to engage in conversations that can lead to unveiling gendered narratives as well as practices, but without reproducing gendered stereotypes.

## CHAPTER 4. GLOBAL AND NATIONAL NARRATIVES ON GENDER, PEACE, AND SECURITY

As argued previously, I approach my material through a narrative analysis of institutional, personal, and social narratives. These narratives are produced by different actors and take on different forms, have different foci, and strategic meanings. I argue that the personal soldier narratives, as well as the institutional narratives produced by Royal Danish Air Force and Danish Armed Forces, are negotiated in relation to national, as well as global narratives, on military work on gender, peace, and security as found in UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. In the following, I therefore address and emphasize some of these global and national narratives in military work. In addition, the national context and therein domestic societal narratives on gender and gender (in)equality influence the negotiations over military gendered identities and military bodies (Woodward 2003; Christensen and Jensen 2012; Bo, Christensen, and Thomsen 2016). In continuation of this, I argue that institutional narratives are significant for the shared identity of an organization such as the Danish Armed Forces. Narratives tell stories of who makes up an organization, what the organization (and its members) stand for, and how the members are expected to act/practice. This is also true for a military organization like the Danish Armed Forces (and the Royal Danish Air Force as a service within the Danish military “family”). I approach this through my first sub-research question and based on a document analysis:

*How do the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force narrate gendered institutional identities, military bodies, and military work and relate these to global narratives on gender, peace, and security?*

### 4.1. GLOBAL VOICES ON GENDER, PEACE, AND SECURITY

The global and local are closely connected in military work and practices through commitments to the military alliance of NATO and international organizations like the UN. This means that the link between different contexts (the global and the local) is cemented through common conventions, articles, and action plans, which influence how these institutions collaborate. It further means that global narratives on gender, peace, and security articulated by i.e. the UN and NATO in action plans and conventions have the potential to become part of institutional narratives on militaries produced by the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force and

furthermore influence the personal soldier narratives on gendered military identities and bodies. At the same time, the negotiations of military narratives may take different forms depending on the level of analysis, which means that global narratives on gender, peace, and security can influence the institutional narratives in other ways than what may be found in the personal soldier narratives.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I analyze these different narrative negotiations, however, in this Chapter 4, I want to introduce and discuss global and national narratives, which influence the soldiers' every day. This section, thus, introduces specific globally negotiated policy documents. The documents entail descriptions of gender, peace, and security issues in ways that construct specific narratives on military work and military identities. The main documents are the Beijing Platform for Action from 1995, the UNSCR 1325 convention from October 2000, and NATO documents, and online material from both institutions (a further discussion on the selection of the documents is found in the Methodology Chapter 4).

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from 1995 marked the beginning of addressing gendered implications of war and conflict by the UN, and over the past two decades, the UN has addressed the disproportionate and gendered ways in which war and armed conflict affect especially women (UN Women n.d.; United Nations 2002, 2). Building on initiatives and actions introduced in 1995, UNSCR 1325 (and the subsequent related UNSCR 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, and 2422) has been part of launching a global conversation about the importance of gender in international politics, creating a global exchange of the importance of acknowledging gendered issues in times of conflict and war. UNSCR 1325 has thus been part of shaping global narratives on gender in relation to peace and security issues including responses, requirements, and advice from the UN and NATO to militaries like the Danish Armed Forces (Cohn 2004; Cohn 2013; True 2010; Schott 2013; Shepherd and Ferguson 2011; Persson 2013; Detraz 2012).

With the adoption of UNSCR 1325 on October 31, 2000, the UN officially recognized women's and girls' rights and called for gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping (United Nations Security Council 2000). The implementation of UNSCR 1325 marked a victory for activists and feminist scholars, who, for many years, had been fighting to put women's rights, voices, and roles in conflict on the international agenda and pushing for the acknowledgement that war, conflict, and peace processes are gendered (Persson 2013; Detraz 2012). The resolution is unique in the sense that it conceded that, "*civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict*" (United Nations Security Council 2000) and in reaffirming women's significant role in the prevention of conflicts and in peacebuilding (United Nations Security Council 2000). Additionally, UNSCR 1325 urges member-states to "*expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel*" (United Nations Security

Council 2000). Especially the latter part of expanding the role of women as military observers, civilian police, etc. has been interpreted by a number of militaries as an encouragement to increase the number of women soldiers in state militaries.

A key point of the resolution is to focus on the disproportionate ways in which women and girls are affected by war (and the lack of focus on this) (Cohn and Duncanson 2020; Hutchinson 2020; Asante 2020; Shepherd 2020). In the first quote, there is a clear story of the vulnerability of *womenandchildren* in war and conflict and how the UN as a global institution needs to consider these experiences in their work. The quote also makes the classic connection, as Enloe (2014) has pointed out, of placing women and children in the same group -*womenandchildren*; thereby making women's experiences and their agency equivalent to those of children and, in addition, homogenizing them into one group, when in fact they may be both boys and girls (and other genders as well).

This point links to one of the primary critique points of the resolution, and the UN's general approach to this topic, namely the language used to discuss gender by the UN. The resolution's interchangeable use of "gender" as a synonym for women (and girls) displays a limited perspective of analysis of the gendered complications of war, conflict, and peace. As an example, this approach to gender does not facilitate an analysis of the power dynamics between men and women locally, relations between local men and foreign troops, changes in family dynamics because of conflict, including the relationship and power dynamics between partners, children, parents, etc. (Detraz 2012; Willett 2010). The quotes entail a binary understanding of gender in the form of women and also reproduce a narrative of the need to protect women, and in this way, ensure their rights, for instance, to participate in aspects of peace and security initiatives. This portrayal of women in conflict and war leaves out women as perpetrators of violence or conflicts and places women in a category of being in need of protection. I argue along with feminist scholars such as Cohn (2004; 2013), Detrez (2012), and True (2010) that this understanding of women in conflict creates a limited global gendered narrative of gender relations, masculinities, and femininities at play in conflict – as well as peace processes. At the same time, through initiatives made in UNSCR 1325, the UN requires that all peacekeeping personnel receive training on the particular needs of women and urges the increase of women in these missions by the member states as well as UN personnel based on an operational effectiveness paradigm (Jennings 2011; United Nations Security Council, 200, 0387. SCR 1325). Danish soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force have been a part of this training, which I will discuss the particularities of in Chapters 5 and 6 in regard to the soldiers' negotiations of military identities and experiences of working for the UN on international missions.

At the same time as the UN creates a narrative of women being vulnerable in times of conflict and war, the UN also encourages women to take a more active part in the prevention and stabilization of conflicts; for instance through the deployment of

female peacekeeping soldiers. This approach creates certain contradicting narratives on gender, and in particular women in conflict and war. On the one hand, women are considered to be vulnerable and in the same category as children and presented as the citizens in need of protection. On the other hand, the UN makes the connection between successful peacekeeping missions and female (women) military observers, civilian police, human rights experts, and humanitarian personnel. Relating this to narratives on military work and military identity, there is an idea from the UN that women's representation in peacekeeping could resolve some of the needs of women in conflict because of their gender. This again speaks into a binary understanding of gender and, in addition, links genders (in this case only men and women) to certain military traits, which assume that women would be beneficial in issues of conflict that evolve around human rights and the protection of women's rights and not be upscaling conflict with their presence. A narrative-based solely on their gender and assumed feminine traits that the UN link to female bodies of being more peaceful and compromise seeking.

This approach to gender in conflict and peace links closely the idea of operational effectiveness (Jennings 2011). The idea that women (because of their gender) are better at performing certain military work, which is linked to peacekeeping and not direct combat, and that the missions with the participation of more women will become more successful is a common reference. These narratives, however, create limited room for maneuver for men and women in armed forces – not to mention for individuals who do not conform to binary gendered identities, as their military identity and military work becomes linked to a biological gender. For some soldiers, this might not be cause for concern or frustration, as their gender and the role/military work that they are expected to perform aligns with their own gender identities and the expectations they have of military work. However, for some, this understanding of gendered bodies and subsequent narrative of military work and military identities by the UN creates limited space for the soldiers to take on different types of military work. For instance, this could be a female soldier who is eager to become a sniper in combat-heavy war zones or a male soldier who prefers to work with communication aspects of military work and thereby risks challenging normative understandings of masculinities or femininities and sex bodies. Or the soldier who does not conform to gendered binary roles and therefore struggles to perform the "right" or expected type of gender in a given situation. At the same time, the modern military makes use of this new narrative of military work and its link to gender in their recruitment of personnel, as it is part of telling a different story about military work: a narrative that includes a less violent and aggressive take on the missions, which soldiers take part in (Jennings 2011).

Another international organization, which is part of creating global narratives on gender, peace, and security, and which exhibits a large influence on the Danish military context, and thereby also military narratives, is the military alliance NATO. As a large military alliance, the role of NATO is different in terms of the creation of

narratives, as they, given their status as a military alliance, take an active part in war and conflict with military force. However, over the past 10-15 years, NATO has been through a process of adopting global narratives on gender, peace, and security in a response to a number of the UN resolutions (Earl 2015; NATO 2018). In particular, UNSCR 1325 has been a key element in NATO's approach to gender mainstreaming within the organization and the narratives they have created in terms of the type of military work they carry out and their responses to gendered implications of military work and security issues among their member allies and the missions in which they partake.

In addition, in December 2007, NATO and its partners' commitment to UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions was cemented through the formal NATO/EAPC policy (NATO 2018). In this sense, NATO has introduced their take on the resolution in working documents, articles, work assignments, training, etc. As an example, the 2007 policy states regarding commitments by allies and partners and objectives that:

2.1. NATO's partnerships make a clear and valued contribution to Allied security, to international security more broadly and to defending and advancing the values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, on which the Alliance is based. Commitment to these values remains fundamental to NATO's partnership policy. Allies and partners remain committed to fulfil in good faith the obligations of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (NATO 2011)<sup>12</sup>. [...] There is a firm recognition that women have a crucial role to play in dealing successfully with the security challenges of the 21st century (NATO 2011).

Moreover, the commitment to UNSCR 1325 and the implementation of this into the organization has, according to NATO themselves, become a central part of their wider policy objective of enhancing security and stability (NATO 2011). The commitment to 1325 also includes a complete implementation of the principles of the resolution and making these a part of the identity and DNA of NATO in their everyday practices, military structures, and in all "*relevant aspects of NATO-led operations and missions*" (NATO 2011). This is seen in the five points below where similar language and vocabulary from the resolution has made its way into NATO's own documents i.e. the work to promote "*gender equality and the participation of women*" (point 4) and the limited distinction between *gender* and *women*.

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<sup>12</sup> "Over the years, the policy has been updated, related action plans have strengthened implementation and more partner countries from around the globe have become associated with these efforts.

At the 2014 Wales Summit, Allied leaders acknowledged that the integration of gender perspectives throughout NATO's three essential core tasks (i.e. collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security) will contribute to a more modern, ready and responsive NATO" (NATO 2018; n.d.).

1. NATO and its partners are committed to removing barriers for women's participation in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and to reducing the risk of conflict-related and gender-based violence.
2. NATO Allies and partners in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) launched work in this area in 2007 with the adoption of a specific policy to support implementation of UNSCR 1325.
3. Gender is an important focus of NATO's cooperation with other international organisations – in particular the United Nations – and civil society.
4. NATO is also taking action within its own organisation and structures to promote gender equality and the participation of women.
5. The NATO Secretary General has appointed a Special Representative to serve as the high-level focal point on all aspects of NATO's contributions to the Women, Peace and Security agenda (NATO 2018; n.d.).

As the quotes from the 2007 policy shows, the same global narratives on gender, peace, and security as found in the UN are detectable in the NATO policy. There is, however, in the NATO policy document less use of the word peacekeeping, but a focus on defending and advancing values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. At the same time, it is important to stress that these are official documents and that these articulations and understandings of women (gender), peace, and security from the UN to NATO are happening at the top-level or the global-level of the organization/alliance. This means that, based on these documents, it is not possible to detect how and if these ideals have been approached in the national militaries that make up the NATO alliance (Denmark included) and, in addition, into the practices and personal narratives of the NATO soldiers who carry out the missions mandated by NATO. Nonetheless, the quotes from the NATO documents do indicate the official focus areas and intentions of NATO, which they promote to their allies and that, at the global level, certain understandings of gender, peace, and security are prevailing among global (Western) institutions. Although the proclaimed intentions have been to expand the knowledge on gender issues (including discrimination, violence, and lack of representation) in peace and security measures, there is still a fairly binary approach to gender and how this connects to peace and security issues.



## 4.2. A 'FRIENDLY' AND GENDER EQUAL MILITARY NATION?

The position among the Nordic countries to be leaders in advocating for a peaceful world order and being identified as 'friendly' nations and front-runners in anti-war politics, and encouraging solidarity in international politics with an emphasis on unity and global awareness as key factors in their security frameworks links to a human rights agenda based on cosmopolitan practices (Bennike and Stoltz 2015; Kronsell 2012; Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell 2018). It is, therefore, no surprise that the Nordics have been active in peacekeeping operations under the UN (and, in Denmark and Norway's case, NATO as well). Particularly Sweden and Norway have been pushing and advocating for a peacekeeping agenda in legitimizing their militaries (Persson 2013; Jennings 2011) and, to some degree, Denmark has, as well. At the same time, Denmark has been part of more traditional military assignments, such as the war in Afghanistan and Iraq and most recently in Syria and Libya (even though the latter two have been classified as humanitarian interventions). Additionally, Danish scholars Peter Viggo Jakobsen and Jens Ringmose (2015) argue that among the nations contributing to the NATO led mission in Afghanistan, the Danish government has succeeded in maintaining the highest level of public support, while suffering the highest number of fatalities per capita (Jakobsen and Ringmose 2015). Hence, as I have argued throughout, the contextual setting of a country that for the past 50 years has had a focus on gender equality with gender equality reforms and discourses, influences the soldiers' narrative constructions and negotiations on gender (and peace and security), although the practices may be more multifaceted than official narratives want to convey.

Denmark is a comparatively homogeneous society with stable democratic institutions based on a welfare model, which developed especially in the 1960s (Hernes 1987; Borchorst 2009). This also means that the Danish state has focused on enabling support for social equality, including gender equality. This includes the formulation and implementation of gender equality legislation at the national level particularly for the Danish labor market (European Institute for Gender Equality 2018; Udenrigsministeriet 2018b). As such, Denmark is largely (at least at the official policy level) in compliance with the international women's rights framework and gender equality as a goal for a modern democratic state and with state responsibility to ensure progress in this area. The commitment to gender equality can, at times, challenge the recognition of structural factors of gender-based discrimination, as well as differences among men and women. This includes intersectional social categories that interlink with gender such as race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, or gender expression (Crenshaw 1989; McCall 2005; Christensen and Jensen 2012; Collins 1986). Equality plans with a larger focus on diversity are attempting to incorporate more intersecting categories with gender, but biological gender is still the main social category applied in gender equality plans. One example of a new approach to gender equality is Denmark's first action plan on LGBTI issues, introduced in the spring of 2018 (Udenrigsministeriet 2018a).

As a public institution, the Danish Armed Forces as a representing branch for the Danish State, domestically and abroad, is required by law to adopt domestic gender equality laws and encouraged to introduce diversity plans for the organization in their military work. However, as discussed previously and as I will discuss further in Chapters 5 and 6 this process may present diverging points at the policy level and practice levels respectively and the presumed self-image of gender equality in Denmark is at times challenged. This duality of practice and policy in a Danish context is supported by research, which has demonstrated that Danish organizations are struggling to work on becoming more (gender) equal (Ventegodt Liisberg 2017).

A national focus on social policies and gender equality over the past 50 years has shaped not only the Danish state but also its population's awareness of gender. Thus, when addressing any gendered aspect in a Nordic context (in this case gender and state militaries), the historical background of feminist movements, gender equality reforms, and the influence of the welfare model is essential. In the 1970s and 1980s, Denmark introduced a number of legislative rules and laws, which applied to all public and private institutions in Denmark, including a law on collective agreement, which cemented equal pay for equal work (Haslund-Christensen 1988; Sløk-Andersen 2014). At the same time, the Danish Armed Forces opposed to include women in all positions of the organization and were at first granted dispensation from the Ministry. Nonetheless, in 1988 (10 years after the law was finalized), the dispensation was revoked and women were able to serve in all roles in the military on equal terms as men (Haslund-Christensen 1988; Sløk-Andersen 2014). In addition to national pressure, global and regional trends on gender equality have been part of Denmark's path to introducing gender equality reforms, also in the military. Most notable, the 1975 introduction of Denmark's first Gender Equality Board was highly influenced by tendencies within the UN and the other Nordic countries (for instance the first UN women's conference held in 1975 in Mexico City (UN Women n.d.; Sløk-Andersen 2014).

Gender awareness and a focus on social policies are often linked to the development of the Nordic welfare states, where the goal has been to create a state that would address and challenge social inequalities, including gendered disparities through policies and legislation (Hernes 1987; Martinsson, Griffin, and Nygren 2016). The welfare state and the focus on especially gender-sensitive reforms are closely linked to the women's movement, which since the 1960s, has been part of shaping and influencing the public and private spheres in the Nordic countries (Hernes 1987). Another factor advancing gender equality among the Nordic countries was the transformation of the institutions themselves, and that the social policies that were introduced had the potential to be "women-friendly" (Hernes 1987). Hernes' analysis of the Nordic countries led to the notion of *state feminism*, which has come to symbolize the substantial influence that the Nordic women's movement has had on the Nordic welfare systems in general and in the development of social policy. The context of a welfare state with focus on challenging gender disparities between men

and women has also resulted in awareness of gender ideals and breaking with traditional roles of men and women in society - publicly and privately. These changes also challenge and influence understandings of masculinities and femininities and the links to gendered bodies. This process of creating “women-friendly” societies has not been unproblematic and continues to cause challenges; one example being that the binary approach of woman-friendly nations leaves room for a number of other problematic issues relating to gender and diversity.

In continuation of this discussion, Siim and Stoltz (2015) argue that the pursuit of equality is one of intense drive but that it can also be problematic and challenging at the same time:

Social equality became a core value in the Nordic welfare states as these emerged in the middle of the twentieth century. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden have all been characterized as having a passion for equality where social programs attempt to transform ideas about social justice into reality (Siim and Stoltz 2015, 20).

Despite the potential to be gender-sensitive and “woman-friendly” (as argued by Hernes in her work from 1987), the Nordic region has, in recent years due to i.e. global processes, experienced challenges towards gender equality and diversity in general (Siim and Stoltz 2015). As Siim and Stoltz (2015) stress migration and seeing immigrants as equal citizens in the Nordic welfare models have created tensions and challenges to gender equality regimes, which again challenge normative understandings and self-images of being gender-sensitive (Siim and Stoltz 2015). Similar points are made by Martinsson, Griffin, and Nygren (2016) about the Swedish case in which they argue that the Nordic model of gender equality “*has been constructed as very successful in both national and international discourses [but that] this cherishing of the gender-equality norm is also highly problematic*” (Martinsson, Griffin, and Nygren 2016, 1). However, having a mantra of being gender sensitive as a nation can ignore the pitfalls of the gender-equality model and (re)produce a large variety of problematic norms, which may be difficult to challenge if the consensus is that the status quo is one of equality (Martinsson, Griffin, and Nygren 2016 pp 1-22).

Moreover, Johanna Kantola and Mieke Verloo (2018) suggest similar tendencies and place focus on complexities of gender equality and approaches to gender equality reforms, policies, etc. in the Nordic region. Hence, despite often ranking high in gender equality indexes and having a history of gender equality reforms (Borchorst 2009), the Nordic region, Denmark included, faces challenges in regard to understanding and challenging certain gender equality regimes. Notwithstanding, a normative idea of Nordic exceptionalism (and also Danish exceptionalism) persists in the region in regard to a self-image of having gender equality (despite the aforementioned potential problematic (re)productions of unequal gendered and racial systems) (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2016; Barse 2018). As I discuss in the analytical chapters, the understanding of being gender-aware, sensitive, and global front-runners

are deeply embedded in national understandings and narratives of what it means to be a Dane and thereby also a Danish soldier.

As demonstrated, like many other countries, the Nordic militaries continue to be highly male-dominated sectors despite political goals of recruiting more women. This is especially the case for the Danish Armed Forces, which has the lowest number of women serving in military positions compared to the other Scandinavian countries. As mentioned previously, the Danish Armed Forces employ only 7.6% women, which is lower than i.e. the Norwegian (13%) and Swedish (18%) militaries (The Ministry of Defence 2019a; Forsvaret 2018; Försvarmakten 2018). The legacy of the Nordic women's movement and their success in transforming policies and challenging gender regimes is consequently an important factor in examining gender in the Danish Armed Forces. Thereby, taking this historic context into account in understanding and interpreting narratives from Danish soldiers, who, compared to a number of the other NATO allies, have been brought up in a society, which, to a large degree, articulates gendered differences as systemic issues and something that the state needs to address. Nonetheless, as I will discuss in the analysis, Nordic and especially Danish exceptionalism in regard to gender equality and being friendly nations has its problems and the narrative and self-image may, in fact, be more multifaceted (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2016; Barse 2018; Martinsson, Griffin, and Nygren 2016).

#### **4.2.1. NATIONAL RESPONSES TO GENDER, PEACE, AND SECURITY**

National Action Plans (NAPs) on UNSCR 1325 are produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Justice<sup>13</sup> and are key responses to the UN on gender, peace, and security issues. This type of document is particularly useful with regard to unpacking gendered narratives on military work relating to security and peace and the particular ways in which the Danish state and the Danish military respond to and address this topic globally and locally. This first section of the analysis will focus on detecting domestic *gender equality* narratives before moving on to narratives on *peace and security*.

Denmark was the first country in the world to adapt UNSCR 1325 and has to date produced four NAPs (2005-2008, 2008-2014, 2014-2019; 2020-2024). The first NAP from 2005 focused on the protection of girls and women's rights in peacekeeping where Danish troops are deployed and in increasing the participation of Danish female soldiers in peacekeeping operations. The latter point included a focus on increasing the gender balance in the recruitment of staff to the Danish Armed Forces (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and Ministry of Defence 2005). Focus was thus on the country's involvement in international conflict resolution and less on domestic initiatives or gendered violence/discrimination (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and Ministry of Defence 2005). Aligned with international gender equality

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<sup>13</sup> For the second NAP the National Police Force was also included in the process.

ideals, the 2005 NAP mentions gender mainstreaming as an approach to accomplish gender equality and in this sense makes sure of both the tools set out by the UN as well as a similar understanding that women and girls are particularly vulnerable in conflict processes. This is exemplified in the quote below in which i.e. the protection of women and girls' rights is a focus area:

At the national level an assessment on how the Danish Defence can strengthen its implementation of UNSCR 1325 will be conducted. The assessment will be based on the three prioritised focus areas (I. Increased gender balance in the recruitment of staff members, II. Protection of women's and girls' rights, III. Increased participation and representation of women in peace building and reconstruction processes) and will aim at the incorporation of gender perspectives in the mandates for the international operations, training of the troops in mainstreaming gender perspectives and identifications and development of other instruments, which can contribute to the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into the military operations as well as "best practices" of other countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and Ministry of Defence 2005, 4).

Although, there is a focus on mainstreaming gender and, in this, recruitment of female staff for the Danish military, focus is mainly on the international aspect of how Denmark can aid other countries and improve the rights for women and girls abroad. At the same time, the 2005 NAP is brief, which means that extensive narratives on military work and identity are limited. This supports the findings by Bergman Rosamond in her 2014 analysis of the Danish approach to UNSCR 1325, in which she argues that the 2005 NAP commits Denmark to the promotion of the objectives of UNSCR 1325 within the UN, OSCE, NATO, and EU frameworks. At the same time, Bergman Rosamond argues that the brief format of the NAP leaves room for improvement in terms of actual plans of action and policies (Bergman Rosamond 2014).

The second NAP from 2008 is more aligned with the UN document and addresses a number of the issues raised in the resolution. A new component in the NAP is acknowledging gender-based violence as a consequence of war and providing protection for girls and women in conflict and enhancing the recognition of the special needs and rights that women and girls have both prior to, during, and after armed conflict (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, and Danish National Police 2008; Bergman Rosamond 2014). Additionally, the 2008 NAP recognizes that experiences of war and conflict are different for men and women arguing that if the resolution is to be effective, gendered inequality, and dynamics of war, conflict, and peace need to be taken into consideration. Tickner and Sjöberg (2011) among others within feminist IR and security studies stress the need to apply a comprehensive gender analysis to understand the complications of war and conflict. This includes an awareness of how gendered bodies experience conflict differently and that masculinities and femininities are part of shaping gendered hierarchies and therein

influence power dynamics in conflict and peace processes (Tickner and Sjöberg 2011). Thus, by making a distinction between gender, men, and women, the Danish ministries are demonstrating a further step towards a broader understanding of gender equality and gendered implications of war (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, and Danish National Police 2008; Bergman Rosamond 2014). This point is further emphasized in the following quote:

Gender equality is a priority for the Government of Denmark, both at home and abroad and its corresponding vision is to create equal opportunities for all women and men. The goal is for women and men to be considered equal and be granted the same rights and opportunities. In this, the Government aims to ensure that diversity and individual freedom are respected.

Internationally, Denmark's policy is to contribute to international security responses to violent conflicts and subsequently, to take part in addressing the humanitarian and governance crises that these cause. This is rooted within a view to provide protection, while promoting human rights of women, men, boys and girls.

National ownership, partnership with national authorities, and democracy are expressed through the equal participation of men and women, as well as in the participatory and rights based approaches integrated into Danish development assistance. In conflicts and recovery from conflicts, these values find expression in promoting and safeguarding the right of women to participate in shaping actions towards equitable peace (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, and Danish National Police 2008, 8).

As the abstract from the 2008 NAP demonstrates, a clear articulation of being gender sensitive as a country is part of the national narrative presented. Hence, there is a narrative of a nation that is gender equal and includes this in actions and commitments to themselves and international collaborators, such as, the UN or NATO (Bergman Rosamond 2014). Although, the authors of the NAP are not the military itself but the Ministry of Defense, and thereby the government, the narrative of military work and military identity in relation to gender is implicit in the text. However, when considering the context of the document as a response to UN missions and work on gender, peace, and security (work that the Danish military, to a large extent, carries out on behalf of Denmark), the narrative that prevails is one that is linked to a high standard of gender equality, humanitarianism, and safeguarding.

In the 2014 NAP, there is a stronger articulation on gendered narratives in peace and security settings, and being the most comprehensive of the three plans it includes detailed accounts of initiatives, objectives, and actions. This also includes accounting for previous critique points from the UN (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of

Defence, and Ministry of Justice 2014). As such, the NAP begins with the following statement:

A strong international engagement and the promotion of gender equality are two key policy priority areas for the Danish Government. Both have the aim of protecting the rights of the most vulnerable and contributing to the creation of peaceful, prosperous and just societies. The Government believes that there can be no sustainable peace without the full and equal participation of women. Women are first and foremost a great resource for their communities and countries – and in all efforts to achieve sustainable development and peace (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Justice 2014, 4).

Here is a clear articulation of gender equality as a key component in Denmark's commitments to UNSCR 1325. Moving on to a second quote from the 2014 NAP, these link to understandings of military work/commitments and also the shared social identity of the Danish Defense:

The promotion of the women, peace and security agenda is a cornerstone in Denmark's foreign, security and development policy. We know that inclusive and equal societies are essential to prevent continued violence and foster sustainable peace. Therefore, the full and equal participation of women at all levels of conflict resolution, peacebuilding and reconstruction is the only way to ensure that societies emerging from conflict are built on fundamental respect for the rights, needs and contributions of women and girls. The principles of protection and participation therefore go hand in hand (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Justice 2014, 7).

With the plan from 2014, Denmark repeats its unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral commitments to UNSCR 1325 with the goal of ensuring rights and security for women within and beyond its borders (Bergman Rosamond 2014). Bergman Rosamond argues that Denmark still lacks concrete action towards UNSCR 1325, especially in terms of domestic changes in gender-based violence. The critique that Bergman Rosamond raises is supported by Pirjo Jukarainen & Eeva Puumala. They especially address the lack of administrative and financial support for implementing initiatives related to UNSCR 1325 along with the limited collaboration with civil society and organizations in Denmark (Jukarainen and Puumala 2014). Although Jukarainen and Puumala did not include the latest NAP in their 2014 study, some of the critique points are still relevant, for instance regarding the limited (but growing) number of national initiatives on UNSCR 1325. This also includes a lack of awareness and support of the resolution within civil society and the absence of including NGOs in the hearing process and formulation of the plans (Jukarainen and Puumala 2014; Bergman Rosamond, 2014).

In the NAP from 2020 covering the period 2020-2024, the bar is set higher for how Denmark is to act nationally and internationally in regards to the Women, Peace, and Security agenda including responses to UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent nine resolutions. One point, which is significant about the 2020 NAP is the recognition of the previous lack of concrete actions and that Denmark needs to "walk the talk" in order to maintain a position as a leader in terms of gender, peace, and security. In the report as well as on the Ministry's webpage there is thus a clear articulation that a consistent theme in the NAP is a focus on internal issues. In this sense, the Ministries acknowledge the critique previously put forward by the UN and external assessment committees and aspire to improve especially the points on internally emphasizing policies and actions to becoming more gender equal one example being in regards to gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment. Thus, in the report, the Ministries asset these issues by stating that, "*We affirm our zero tolerance towards gender based discrimination of any sort, both among our collaborator as well as within our own ranks. Focus is on both prevention as well as support for victims and that the perpetrators are held accountable*" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and the Ministry of Justice, 2020, 10 [author translation]). This formulation should also be viewed in response to the increased focus on sexual harassment in the Danish Armed Forces, which the Defense and the Ministries here express a wish to combat through different initiatives. Moreover, the newest NAP illustrates how Denmark, despite critique on previous actions towards the topic, still considers itself among global leaders on this topic and sees this as a clear and important part of the foreign policy agenda and security issues.

We want to do our part in strengthening and mainstreaming a gender perspective in international missions and peace- and stabilization efforts. Moreover, we will work towards making sure that all relevant state organs that we participate in (NATO, EU, and the UN) reinforce their focus on and deliver relevant and concrete results in relation to women, peace, and security (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and the Ministry of Justice, 2020, 9).

The scope of the NAPs is in line with how the Danish military (and the Nordics in general) are often perceived as cosmopolitan or "friendly" nations; stressing a global commitment to security and collaboration (Bergman Rosamond 2013; Bergman Rosamond 2014; Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell 2018). At the same time, the NAPs demonstrate a macro-level approach to gender equality that often misses some of the dynamics, challenges, and complications that happen on the micro-level, where the actual implementation of the policies and initiatives are taking place, and resistance towards global narratives on gender equality may occur. The resistance that influences narratives at the local level on military work and identity. These narrative struggles over military work and military identities for the institution (the Royal Danish Air force and the Danish Armed Forces) and the individual soldiers are discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6.



#### 4.2.2. INSTITUTIONAL NARRATIVES ON GENDER

Another example of the links between global and local narratives on gender, peace, and security is found in the Ministry of Defense's 2011 Diversity Plan. The Diversity plan includes all institutions under the auspice of the Ministry of Defense, including the Danish Armed Forces, and presents national narratives on particularly gender and gender equality measures, but also in recognition of the international commitment of the Danish Armed Forces' narratives on peace and security:

It is the foundation of the Diversity Policy of 2011 of the Ministry of Defence that the tasks given are best solved with a diverse employee group, comprising a multitude of abilities, competences and perspectives. In order to be able to recruit from a large pool of potential employees, it is a goal for the ministry and the defence to interest a large number of women, as well as men, in military employment (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Justice 2014, 28).

Despite being a decade old, the plan is still the most comprehensive Diversity Plan for the Danish Armed Forces to date and addresses diversity in a broad format; including a focus on the gender composition of the force and with a specific aim of attracting more women to serve in the Danish military. The plan includes 14 actions to improve diversity in the Danish Armed Forces, especially in terms of gender and ethnicity (The Ministry of Defence 2011). As an example, the definition of diversity and the reasoning behind it is expressed by stating that:

The Ministry of Defense's diversity plan places focus on the value of diversity in solving assignments, where differences are a resource, which contribute to solving the assignments better. Diversity to us means differences. A diverse workplace is a workplace where differences are accepted and used as a strength. This also means that all people regardless of gender, age, skin color, politics, religious orientation, sexuality, nationality, social and ethnic backgrounds are granted equal possibilities. The Ministry of Defense's goal with the diversity plan is that individual services and units within the Ministry work with diversity based on the same principles (The Ministry of Defence 2011, 9) [author translation].

The plan entails a handbook, a website, and additional material to be used in the different services in an effort to create a more diverse and inclusive environment (The Ministry of Defence 2011). The plan is inspired both by global requirements to incorporate gender mainstreaming in international assignments and internally in the organization and is a response to local laws urging the Danish Armed Forces to introduce more diversity and gender awareness (as addressed previously).

According to the Danish Armed Forces' own action plans (including the Diversity Plan from 2011), the force has for more than a decade had a special focus on gender

(mainly understood as women) and ethnicity with the aim of promoting policies to increase diversity and equality in the military. This has, in part, been done by attempting to attract a higher number of women and individuals from ethnic minority groups. Nonetheless, despite attention towards enhancing equality and diversity in the Danish Armed Forces, the military is still struggling to change the gendered composition of the force and attract individuals from ethnic minorities, let alone address gendered aspects of the institution, which might be influencing why these changes fail to happen (Schaub et al. 2012).

The Diversity Plan mentions UNSCR 1325 specifically as an example of how Denmark takes part in placing gender equality on the international agenda in war, peace, and security situations. The Diversity Plan refers to the commitments mentioned in the NAPs to include more women in the Danish Armed Forces' international operations. One of the arguments behind this approach is based on the idea that Denmark should contribute to global gender equality by demonstrating that men and women are capable of serving in the same jobs and that women have the same possibilities as men. This is also part of a foreign policy ideal that achieving peace and security should not be solely done by winning territory with weapons, but also through example (The Ministry of Defence 2011). The Ministry has an ambition to restate international standards for gender equality (for instance a UN human rights agenda). At the same time, the Ministry is arguing that the Danish Armed Forces is living up to the goals of diversity and equality in their own institution by allowing women to serve alongside men. The Ministry argues that this enables Danish soldiers to function as role models for local populations in their deployments in international assignments (The Ministry of Defence 2011). Functioning as role models to local populations is not stated as a defined goal, but is mentioned as a positive bi-product of focusing on diversity and gender equality in the Danish Armed Forces domestically. In this sense, the national and institutional narrative of being gender-sensitive and a front-runner in addressing gendered issues of conflict and security issues seem to be a strategic narrative that the Danish Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defense want to stress. This also connects to the narrative of being *exceptionally* good at addressing these topics in a domestic as well as international setting. As I will discuss in the analysis, this social narrative may be challenged by personal narratives and in particular in relation to certain practices within the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force.

In terms of policies and legal barriers for women to serve in the Danish Armed Forces, the military exhibits gender equality at a macro-level. However, the percentage of women serving in the Danish Armed Forces is still only 7.2%, and the percentage of women who have taken part in deployments since 1991 until today amounts to just 6.2% (see Chapter 1 for overview of deployments for Danish soldiers). This means that the actual number of women in international assignments is relatively low, which might render short the notion of being good gender equality ambassadors by demonstrating that men and women can serve in the same functions. Moreover, there

are few scholarly accounts of the gender dynamics between the Danish soldiers, especially in international military work abroad. Hence, there are few accounts of whether Danish female soldiers experience discrimination when deployed on international assignments and whether they feel equal to their male soldiers. This study suggests that the experiences of female soldiers are more complex and include gendered practices and examples of discrimination by Danish and other troops on deployment. Thus, the institutional narrative presented by the Danish Armed Forces (and the Ministry of Defense) is multifaceted and embedded with a number of gendered complexities. I discuss further these complexities through the embodied experiences of male and female Royal Danish Air Force soldiers in Chapters 5 and 6.

Influenced by global voices in the UN and NATO, the Ministry of Defense and the Danish Armed Forces have included an *operational effectiveness* approach to their gender equality plans. This approach relies on the understanding that “female soldiers” because of their gender have other abilities than their male colleagues and thus can perform different roles in conflict qualifications, which, following this logic, are crucial for the success of a peacekeeping and peacebuilding mission. This assumption relies on essentialist and inherent understandings of men and women and their abilities to perform soldiering, which prevail in organizations such as the UN and NATO (Jennings n.d.; Basham 2009). At the same time, the operational effectiveness and working with a zero-tolerance for discrimination and harassment based on this approach and normative understanding of gender (and perhaps even sexual orientation) may, according to Basham, result in discrimination of some recruits and can be part of maintaining certain binary understandings of social cohesion within the force. As Basham puts it:

[...] for armed forces, maintaining operational effectiveness is as real and as dangerous as it gets. This is not in dispute here. But an effective reading reveals how operational effectiveness is also intertwined with power relationships. It is a “line drawn internally within the network of institutional mechanisms through which social and political order is maintained (Basham 2009, 739).

Linked to this idea of maintaining social cohesion and certain normative understandings of gendered bodies and ways of soldiering, women’s participation in the Danish Armed Forces continues to be considered *a right* and not *a duty* with reference to the Danish military’s continued practice of mandatory conscription for men only. As Kronsell (2012) argues, this discussion of rights and duty is closely connected to understandings of civic duty towards the state and serving in the military. This link is being challenged by differentiating the practices between women and men. Moreover, it symbolically and practically manifests that men and women’s obligations towards the state are different, even in Denmark anno 2021. This approach to military work and bodies entails conceptual overlaps with international understandings of gender presented by NATO and the UN. At the same time, the

continued male only conscription challenges the notion that women are equally important for military work.

Political attention to increase the number of women in the Danish Armed Forces resulted in making this a specific goal for the Defense settlement for the period 2010-2014 (Folketinget 2009). One of the results was to grant women preference to 25% of the conscription total. These were to be shared with young men who had taken the extra measure to be in excellent physical shape. The idea behind the action was to grant access to young individuals who were especially motivated to serve. The Danish military concretized this to increasing the number of women in the force, which meant that women who volunteered to serve were considered especially motivated based solely on their gender (Folketinget 2009; Værnsfælles Forsvarskommando 2015). In contrast, men who were deemed especially motivated were chosen based on their exceptional physique; again, cementing the different institutional approaches to men and women's military work.

This approach is quite interesting as Denmark (including private and public institutions) is often opposed to the form of gender mainstreaming that includes quotas and affirmative action. As Rolandsen Agustín and Siim (2015) argue Denmark rarely invokes quotas but typically takes the path of voluntary practice with regard to gender mainstreaming and gender equality (see also Fiig, Rolandsen Agustín and Siim 2022 on Denmark and the use of quotas). The arguments for voluntary practice differ slightly depending on the sector. However, Rolandsen Agustín and Siim stress that despite increased use of quotas in the other Scandinavian and Nordic countries, as well as an increased debate on the use of quotas in the EU, Denmark still favors a method of gender equality that is based on voluntary processes (Rolandsen Agustín and Siim 2015). The Ministry of Defense and Danish Armed Forces' decision to favor women and set a specific quota for women is thus unusual within a Danish context. However, the reasoning behind the adoption of this practice may be because it resonates with the requirements and practices of global collaborators such as NATO and the UN thereby speaking into global narratives on military practices relating to gender equality and gender mainstreaming efforts.

As I have argued, the global has the potential to influence the local (and vice versa) in military work, and the narratives produced to explain this both on a personal and institutional level. Since 2000, the Danish Armed Forces (when UNSCR 1325 was introduced) has been through a process of incorporating policies and action plans on gender, peace, and security into their own institution. This process has happened simultaneously with international missions, as international and national action plans and defense budgets with specific focus areas can be traced back to global focus areas on gender, peace, and security as these can be found in UN and NATO documents.

### 4.2.3. INSTITUTIONAL NARRATIVES ON PEACE AND SECURITY

Just as the section above elucidates how the Danish Armed Forces creates and negotiates institutional narratives of being gender-sensitive and even a frontrunner internationally in this regard, the Danish Armed Forces also actively narrates a particular story of who they are in terms of their military commitment to securing and building peace and security, domestically and internationally.

Linked to the discussion of the Danish Armed Forces' role in peacekeeping/building in contrast to war-making internationally, Daugbjerg and Refslund Sørensen (2017) make the argument that Denmark has become a warrior nation with reference to a more active military foreign policy in recent years, especially visible after 9/11. According to their study, the warrior narrative is in contrast to the peace narrative of the period 1945–1989, when the Scandinavian welfare states evolved, and Danish foreign policy was marked by peacekeeping and mediation politics. Denmark was seen as part of the friendly North and a good international citizen (Daugbjerg and Refslund Sørensen 2017; Bergman 2006). Daugbjerg and Refslund Sørensen argue that the shift can be seen in that defense of the homeland is no longer restricted to national borders, but takes place in different parts of the world (Daugbjerg and Refslund Sørensen 2017). The narrative of *protecting from afar*, which Daugbjerg and Refslund Sørensen refer to is detectable in the Danish Armed Forces' recruitment material for their military educations in which the protection of Danish values is a core element. One of many examples of this is the following quote:

There is a reason it is called the Defense. It literally means that we have to protect Danish citizens and defend the values that are important for Denmark. For some it might sound pompous when we talk about the values, but they are the foundation for our lives as Danes. It is about freedom and democracy, human rights and peace in the world around us. [...] All because these missions help to defend our common values – and because it matters, if we did nothing (Forsvarets Uddannelser n.d., 7) [author translation].

This description is part of forming the institutional narratives on peace and security in military work and it is further supported through the Danish Armed Forces' hashtag #nogetatkæmpefor or- #somethingtofightfor (Forsvaret – Om Os n.d.). This new hashtag stresses the significant role of the Danish Armed Forces in maintaining and upholding Danish values, and that this protection goes beyond borders and is something that the military (and the Danish state) is willing to sacrifice bodies to protect also internationally.

The shift in foreign policy, which Daugbjerg and Refslund Sørensen (2017) discuss, reveals changes in how the Danish Armed Forces narrate their military work and identity. During the same period of the introduction of a warrior narrative (Daugbjerg and Refslund Sørensen 2017; see also similar narratives in Rones 2015 for the

Norwegian military), international missions articulated by the Danish Armed Forces as peacekeeping, or at least peacebuilding, have become an important part of the Danish military's (and the Air Force) assignment repertoire as members of NATO and the UN. Hence, simultaneously as the warrior narrative exists, I argue, that an institutional narrative of Denmark as a contributor to building and keeping peace domestically and internationally is present in policies, recruitment material, and mission statements/ objectives. "*I.e. it is about freedom and democracy, human rights and peace in the world around us*" (Forsvarets Uddannelser n.d., 7). The warrior nation narrative, which Daugbjerg and Refslund Sørensen (2017) address, is therefore nuanced and includes variations in the framing of international missions and the values, which influence military work and subsequently military identity for the Danish Armed Forces and the individual soldiers.

These differences in narratives can be seen as examples of how narrative negotiations are part of the institutional story of who the Danish military is and their role in international missions including aspects of contributing to peace and security from afar. Following Shenhav's (2015) notion of social narratives, these diverting presentations of the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force as warriors and peacekeepers/peacebuilders are part of the complexities of creating and negotiating social narrative of "who we are" and "what we do". In this sense, these diverting narratives reveal the multiplicity of negotiating and maintaining certain social narratives for the Danish Armed Forces, in which both the institution as well as its soldiers can relate to the narratives presented. In this regard, Duncanson's (2009) narrative of *Forces for good* may be seen in the written material by the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Forces and as an attempt to create and present an institutional (as well as social) narrative in which the self-identity of the Danish military is based on the idea of being a force for good domestically and internationally. Thereby internally and externally demonstrating a commitment to fight for the "right values" (i.e. #somethingtofightfor).

The motto "*because some things are worth fighting for*" is found throughout the Danish Armed Forces' public material in reports, home pages, recruitment material, and social media accounts via the hashtag #nogetatkæmpefor (#somethingtofightfor). Moreover, some of the soldiers I interviewed referenced this motto in our conversations, indicating that this particular phrase was relatable in terms of what they were doing as soldiers and, in this sense, a top-level approach to soldiering had reached at least some of the soldiers at the bottom level of the organization. The motto relates to narratives on peace, security, and conflict and narrates a story of fighting for the greater good, doing valuable work, and being important, domestically and internationally. In short, on the Danish Armed Forces' homepage under *Assignments* the following description is found:

The Danish Defense should contribute to promoting peace and security.  
The Danish Defense is a significant security policy tool, which should

assist the government and Parliament. And the Danish Defense helps to guard the values that Danish society is built on. This happens on a number of frontiers both nationally and internationally (Forsvaret n.d) [author translation].

The quote articulates an institutional narrative of being part of making a difference by defending Danish citizens and Danish values and connects to the military narrative of being *Forces for good* with a human rights agenda at the core. This further adds to the Danish Armed Forces' self-image of doing valuable work and justifying taking military actions because the endgame is to secure peace. This approach by the Danish military to narrate their military work as aiding to secure peace is part of a process of legitimizing and justifying the use of violence by framing this as taking part in keeping and building peace. Hence, one may argue that in this process, the Danish Armed Forces is strategically narrating a particular story about their military contribution, which includes a narrative of being tough when needed, but always with the common goal for securing Danish values; values which they identify as being human rights oriented.

The above point connects to understandings of being a peacekeeping and peacebuilding nation and thereby the type of assignments that Danish soldiers in general, and in particular for this project the Royal Danish Air Force, take part in. Hence, the quote "*It is about freedom and democracy, human rights and peace in the world around us*" (Forsvarets Uddannelser p. 7) builds a narrative of military work that makes a difference in creating and maintaining peace and security for people inside and outside Danish borders. In this sense, the institutional narrative that is presented in written material is in contrast to the narrative of being a warrior nation, which Daugbjerg and Refslund Sørensen (2017) present.

The narrative of being a force for good is also found in the 2014 NAP, in which the Ministry states the following:

We believe Denmark can provide a significant contribution to international peace and security, especially because of our long experience with combining military, humanitarian and civilian engagements. Denmark has adopted a whole-of-government approach to engagements in fragile and conflict-affected areas. The Danish focus on the women, peace and security agenda spans across the Danish Government and includes the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Justice (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Justice 2014, 4).

In this 2014 NAP, the Ministries manifest Denmark as an active player in global politics and conflict resolution and as a nation with focus on peace through a humanitarian approach. By applying this definition of the Danish contribution at a macro-level, the ministries communicate a strategic narrative about Denmark, which

aims at reinforcing a reputation as a friendly and progressive nation manifested via (humanitarian) military contribution internationally thereby building a narrative of a military that works through humanitarian means. This narrative is thus part of creating a military identity for the Danish Armed Forces as a military institution that is responsible and committed to peace and security, rather than war and conflict. This is present in the sentence: *"We believe Denmark can provide a significant contribution to international peace and security, especially because of our long experience with combining military, humanitarian and civilian engagements"* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Justice 2014, 4).

This narrative of military identities (being committed to diversity in military work), aligns with the international narratives on gender equality presented by the UN in UNSCR 1325, which *"calls for measures to expand the role and contribution of women in field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights experts and humanitarian personnel"* (United Nations Security Council, 2000). At the same time, the 2011 diversity plan goes a step further than the UN resolution in arguing not simply for more gender diversity, but to see a more diverse pool of employees with different capabilities and perspectives. This is part of building a narrative of a military institution that is committed to gender equality and diversity from the domestic context and mixing these with international narratives on gender, peace, and security. At the same time, the understanding of gender as a social category is still binary in the Danish military's documents and therein the narratives of military identities.

#### **4.2.4. THE SUCCESSFUL, PROFESSIONAL DANISH SOLDIER**

Narratives on military work and military identity are presented at various levels of the institution and the receivers of the intended narrative play a part in which institutional narratives the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force present. In the Defense's recruitment material, which is directed at potential new members of the military it is possible to identify a multiplicity of (gendered) military narratives. Combined with the previous account of international as well as the national documents (diversity plans and NAPs) and conventions, this fosters a further discussion on institutional narratives, including narrative negotiations and potential struggles over which hegemonic narrative best describes the military identity and military work and is part of forming the social narratives.

The gendered nature of the armed forces is complex and includes challenges associated with masculinities in military culture, changing assignments, requirements for military personnel, and, in relation to this latter point, the integration of women and other gendered bodies. As established in the previous sections, a global focus on gender in military institutions by the UN and NATO has been part of influencing the three Danish NAPs and as well as the 2011 Diversity Plan's on gender (women) in domestic and international settings. As such, narratives of who the Danish Armed



Forces is as a group, including understandings of gendered bodies and diversity, is detectable in the recruitment material from the institution and the official presentations on the Danish Armed Forces' homepage. The following section addresses this recruitment material from and short statements from the Royal Danish Air Force, ATW, and ACW, respectively to give insight on how the top-levels of the Air Force describes itself.

Being the largest public employer in Denmark, the Danish military needs to work on recruiting personnel to their institution to maintain the level of service required by the state. A process, which in recent years requires other instruments than simply a narrative of fighting for king and country (Strand 2019). Given that the conscription period is only four months, detecting qualified candidates for a professional military career is important for the organization, and other channels of recruitment besides the conscription are applied. For example, the Royal Danish Air Force hosts an annual Air Show, which is a way to promote their service and at the same time give the public an insight into the world behind the fence. Besides air shows, the armed forces have created a variety of recruitment material to attract new personnel.

The recruitment material is interesting from a narrative perspective in that this material conveys a narrative about who the institution is including which values and qualifications the organization places emphasis on. This material needs to tell a convincing story of military work and identity in order to appeal to new recruits. Simultaneously, these documents are part of official institutional narratives of the Danish Armed Forces. This includes a focus on which competences and skills are important for a job in the armed forces in peace and security assignments. Further, it tells stories about the gendered understanding of men and women's roles in the armed forces.

The first example is from the brochure on choosing a professional career in the Danish Armed Forces<sup>14</sup> - *The Professional Soldier: A Career as a Professional*. This particular recruitment material describes what an education in the Danish Armed Forces entails.

### **The Professional Soldier: A Career as a Professional.**

An education in the Defense is a different kind of education. Here, you will not only learn what is written in books. You also learn concretely what it means to solve tasks far away from a desk, far away on the ocean, high in the skies, or deep inside the Danish forests. The everyday constantly changes between theory and practice, between **training and tough exercises** and when the task is solved, the result will be greater knowledge,

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<sup>14</sup> Since this project focuses on professional soldiers only, the recruitment material chosen for this chapter does not include material on the Basic Training education (the conscription period).

more competence, and **improved physique** (Professionel Soldat n.d., 3)  
[author translation] [emphasis added by author].

As the quote above illustrates, focus is on the practical aspects of being a soldier and that changing contextual settings is part of the skills, which you learn to adapt to as a professional in the armed forces. Moreover, there is a focus on the physical abilities of a soldier in which tough exercises and improved physique are emphasized. This presentation of military work is in line with classical understandings of military work in which the physical element of soldier work is regarded as a basic premise for doing soldiering the "right way". This link between the physical abilities and soldiering is connected to understandings of the correct bodies and understandings of military masculinities in which the male body has been used as the prototype for how soldiering is carried out in practice (see for instance MacKenzie 2015; Rones 2015; Carreiras 2006). In this sense, this quote demonstrates a continued emphasis on traditional understanding of military work. Although there is no mention of *which* bodies can learn these skills, soldier bodies and military masculinities have traditionally been performed by the male body (MacKenzie 2015; Carreiras 2006; Rones 2015). Hence, in this particular part of the recruitment material, the narrative on military bodies links closer to classic military narratives on tough male soldier bodies than the need for diversity in the bodies performing soldiering in the Danish Armed Forces.

In the following example from the same brochure, emphasis is still on endurance, however, it is also possible to find narratives that support the institutional diversity narrative of the Danish Armed Forces:

### **A Soldier is Only Something You Become by Force of Will**

Even though the basic educations are short, they demand your full attention both **physically and mentally**. A constable's knowledge must become second nature also in stressful situations, in 40-degree heat or in the middle of the night. It is almost self-evident that this requires more than common perseverance. Contrary, none of this means that you need to look like a triathlete and be a born sharpshooter. You need to be who you are. In the Defense, we solve the assignments together, and even though all contribute to the group, nobody gets through safely solely based on their own talents and solo performances. In the Defense, everybody is welcome, both **women and men and people with different cultural and religious backgrounds**. As long as you have the will and desire to perform together with others, we guarantee a good education and a challenging job with many new friends and powerful experiences (Professionel Soldat n.d., 11) [author translation] [emphasis added by author].

The sentence, "*In the Defense, everybody is welcome, both women and men and people with different cultural and religious backgrounds*" emphasizes the previous

institutional narratives of being a modern force with attention to the benefits of diversity in military assignments. In this sense, the quote supports the operational effectiveness narrative found in the NAPs and the 2011 Diversity Plan. As Jennings (2011) and Basham (2009) argue, this approach is classic for modern militaries in their attempt to incorporate recommendations from global actors, such as the UN and NATO i.e. the notion of the specific need and effectiveness of women in peacekeeping missions. However, this approach to understanding diversity and gender can, at times, fall short in practice, as this approach does not necessarily change underlying gendered hierarchies within the organization, and instead, simply reproduces gendered hierarchies especially among men and women but also strengthens a heteronormative understanding of military bodies. In this sense, one may argue that the institutional narrative of the Danish Armed Forces maintains a segregated understanding of military identity and military work in which heteronormativity and traditional gender roles are maintained.

As Woodward (2003) stresses, the negotiations of military identities and subsequently military masculinities are reliant on contextual settings. Following this logic, the narration of the Danish Armed Forces' roles in international missions is part of the institutional narrative as well as the social narrative of who the Danish Armed Forces and RDAR are and what they do. The following example from the recruitment material places focus on the changing contextual settings that soldiers are expected to adjust to and subsequent changing military assignments.

### **On International Missions**

[...]As a professional soldier, you will gain insight into the Defense's international assignments, and you will learn what it means to work in foreign terrains with other customs and different prioritizations. You will learn how soldiers work together across language and cultural traits, and you will be trained to overcome unfamiliar conditions such as high temperatures and deserts. Everyone who travels with the Defense returns home with a changed view of the world. It does something to a soldier to work and fight for a greater cause far from home and the ones you care about [...] ((Professionel Soldat n.d.,17).

The two quotes bring forward two military narratives; one that is connected to classic understandings of military work, identity, and brotherhood (the Band of Brothers MacKenzie 2015) and another that relates understandings in which diversity, i.e. in regard to gender, makes for more successful missions. One may argue that the Danish Armed Forces is creating two institutional narratives by attempting to speak to two slightly diverging understandings of soldiering and military identity in which one emphasizes the strength of the (homogenous) soldier body and the other argues for the operational effectiveness in which difference is valued. This might be a strategy to reach a larger pool of potential new recruits by placing emphasis on two different elements of military service in the Danish Armed Forces.

As hinted at above, it is important to remember that these particular documents on recruitment are intended for this exact purpose to have more people join the force and by speaking to and creating institutional narratives that are nuanced and complex, it might be possible to reach more individuals. Hence, as opposed to the NAPs, these documents are written in Danish only and are not part of evaluations to the UN or NATO per se. This, however, makes the documents relevant and important elements in the discussion on institutional narratives as counter documents to the NAPs since the recipients of this written material are the new potential soldiers and thereby the individuals whom the organizations wish to carry out the military work and embody the social military identity, which they produce.

The institutional focus on gender (mainly understood as women), is not explicit in the general recruitment material except for the brief mentioning in the examples above. However, the Danish Armed Forces has initiated an open house for women and online material found on the Danish Defense homepage (including small video clips related to diversity and in particular women in uniform). In addition, the Danish Armed Forces has created a brochure, *Women in the Defense* (Kvinder i Forsvaret), which is an example of the explicit focus on recruiting more women to the Danish Armed Forces. In the material directed at prospective female soldiers, the *operational effectiveness* and *essentialist understandings of inherent differences between men and women* and the work they carry out and competences they hold is present. Thus, the two following abstracts from the brochures demonstrate these narratives and ideas in which there is a focus on the unique skills that women (inherently according to the quote) have and which the Danish Armed Forces in need of. A narrative, which is in contrast to the previously mentioned example of the focus on physical strength. Moreover, in the quotes there is an explicit articulation of physical abilities, and how these requirements, in a number of functions, are achievable for women:

### **Women in the Defense**

More and more women join the Danish Armed Forces. But there are still too few. It might be due to the myth that the military is mostly for men with massive muscles. The truth is that we have a long list of educations and jobs, which are just as exciting and challenging for women and which do not require insurmountable physical qualifications, besides basic fitness. That being said, we strongly need more women. We need women so that the armed forces to a higher degree reflects the population we defend. We need women who can view things from new angles and make the armed forces a more diverse workplace. We need women who want to use their competences and communication skills within the broad range of challenges that we offer nationally and internationally (Kvinder i Forsvaret n.d., 2) [author translation].

### **More Women, Please**

Even though the number is increasing, still too few women choose an education in the armed forces. And that is a shame. An education in the armed forces is not just about how fast you can run or how focused you are on the shooting range. It is foremost about how acute your mind is and whether you are ready to unlock your potential to the extreme. In the armed forces, women ensure a diversity and balance, which makes us stronger in all positions. That is why we need more who want to use their competence within all of the Defense's services and jobs – both here in Denmark and missions abroad (Kvinder i Forsvaret n.d., 3) [author translation].

In addition, the UN and NATO's argumentation for women in the armed forces, namely that they ensure diversity, which is important for operational effectiveness is also present in the material: "*In the armed forces, women ensure a diversity and balance, which makes us stronger in all positions*" (Kvinder i Forsvaret n.d., 2) [author translation]. Hence, despite efforts to create more diversity in the Danish Armed Forces through, for instance, recruiting more women, one might argue that essentialist notions of gender, including gender practices and gendered bodies prevail within the organization. This binary approach might hinder more extensive changes in gendered stereotypes, including competences and skills and which bodies perform soldiering best (or worst) (Zalewski 2017).

#### **4.2.5. THE ROYAL DANISH AIR FORCE: A FRONTRUNNER ON GENDER EQUALITY?**

We have the huge advantage that there have always been women present in the Royal Danish Air Force through our female flying corps, which was established almost at the same time as the Royal Danish Air Force. There haven't been women on the ships and not at all in the Army, well perhaps the cook, but women have always been part of solving assignments [in the Royal Danish Air Force] (Officer Iben, in her 40s-50s).

The Royal Danish Air Force's institutional narratives are significant components in understanding and analyzing negotiations over social narratives in the Royal Danish Air Force; meaning that the institutional and the personal narratives of the Royal Danish Air Force are interlinked and in combination create social narratives of what it means to be a member of the Royal Danish Air Force. Furthermore, by addressing the institutional as well as the personal narratives (in Chapters 5 and 6), it is possible to discuss negotiations over narratives on gender, peace, and security and reveal hegemonic and conflicting narrative accounts of military work in the Royal Danish Air Force. The following section, therefore, addresses these different institutional narratives in order to create the contextual setting for the personal narratives presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

Being the youngest Danish military service and holding the highest percentage of women serving in military positions, the Royal Danish Air Force has long presented a narrative of being a front-runner on gender equality. Moreover, of the two wings chosen for this project, ACW has an exceptionally high number around 20%. Moreover, as the analysis in Chapter 5 will address further, the understanding of being a progressive and modern service also in relation to gender is something that the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers respond to and identify with in describing their workplace and connect to their military identity. This means that in the institutional (as well as personal) narratives of the Royal Danish Air Force it is possible to identify gendered stories which reveal who they are as a force collectively and in opposition to the Army and the Navy.

In addition to the recruitment material produced by the Danish Armed Forces as a whole, the Royal Danish Air Force has its own webpage and the individual branches have their own specific pages and social media accounts. For instance, on the official webpage for the Royal Danish Air Force under the subsection, *About the Royal Danish Air Force*, they write:

The Air Force controls all military air traffic in Danish air space and with Danish Air Force soldiers deployed in international missions. The head of the Air Force in the joint Defense Command determines the operational demands and regulations for the defense to make sure that the Air Force can solve its national and international missions quickly, precisely, and effectively (Forsvaret "Om Flyvevåbnet" 2019) [author translation].

The narrative of the Royal Danish Air Force as operating *quickly, precisely, and effectively* conveys a narrative of military work where not necessarily physical strength but precision and quick thinking are valued skills, and that these skills are important regardless of the contextual settings. This understanding of skills with an emphasis on highly specialized and technological military work is also found in the general recruitment material from the Danish Armed Forces:

The Air Force is one of Denmark's most highly technological workplaces, and at the airbases in Karup, Skydstrup, and Aalborg, you will, on a daily basis, experience how advanced material helps with solving all types of tasks from environmental surveillance, rescue at sea, ensuring sovereignty, to assignments that take place far from Danish borders (Professionel soldat n.d., 13) [author translation].

The Royal Danish Air Force's description of their work portfolio brings forward interesting gendered elements on military work and identity in which traditional understandings of gendered military bodies have the potential to be challenged. This includes negotiations over hegemonic forms of masculinities and the creation of the ideal soldier (or the hegemonic form), as this type of ideal soldier in the Royal Danish Air Force does not necessarily rely on physical strength but may be connected to other

competences such as expert knowledge. Hence, an articulation of military work, which is not based on classical physical military skills, is detectable in the Royal Danish Air Force institutional narrative. Nonetheless, the Royal Danish Air Force does not go to the next step of actively mentioning gender (female bodies) or diversity in their written material as is the case with the NAPs and the 2011 Diversity Plan. Hence, although ACW and ATW are units with high numbers of women serving in military positions, there is no mention of the gender division in the units as an articulation of how this makes them unique and frontrunners, and that military work in the Royal Danish Air Force may appeal to other gendered bodies than male.

In ACW's own written leaflet on who they are, the unit builds on the narrative of military work presented by the Royal Danish Air Force and at the same time narrates a military identity where they are ready to take responsibility in times of crisis, domestically and abroad:

Air Control Wing is the unit, which carries out surveillance and secures Danish Air Space. We are a team with large technical and operational expertise with people who are willing to take responsibility when it really counts. 24 hours a day – year-round – we keep an eye out. [...] All that Air Control Wing does at home, the unit can do anywhere in the world. Therefore, we are an internationally demanded capacity, which only a few nations are able to deliver. [...] We are actually the Air Force's most deployed unit (The Danish Defense, 2018 - Air Control Wing, 6-7).  
[author translation].

ATW, on the other hand, is in charge of transportation of goods, people, and other heavy cargo that need to be transported either from different places within Danish territory and to an increasing extent in international missions, such as the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali. Hence, despite an institutional narrative of being front-runners on gender equality concerning especially women, which is something that the soldiers and management personnel I interviewed stress, there is an apparent lack of stressing this element in the written descriptions of the Royal Danish Air Force and the different branches online and in leaflets. The point of being a front-runner was presented at initial meetings with top-level officers to gain access and permission to carry out the study, as well as later correspondence via emails, phones, and interviews. The case was often made that the minor focus on physical strength in the assignments that the Royal Danish Air Force carries out, had resulted in the Royal Danish Air Force having the highest percentage of women serving in military jobs i.e. administrative work and desk-work.

[...] to fight and be a soldier, that is primarily something that appeals to men. That is just how it is. Then we can have a long discussion about culture and how gender roles stick with culture [...]. I think one big step is that women now have gained the right to serve [...] In this sense, we are part of changing some of the culture (Officer Iben, in her 40s-50s).

This understanding of military work and gendered competences, which the management personnel presented and exemplified in the quote above links to essentialist notions of male and female competences and skills. Examples of such essentialist ideas are the notion that men are inherently (based on biology) tougher, more rational, courageous, and aggressive, whereas women based on their biology are more compassionate, soft, emotional, weaker, and passive. These are normative understandings, which have shaped military practices and narratives for centuries and which especially feminist IR scholars over the past 40 years have critiqued and challenged by stressing the need to expand the examination of military work and identity and, in this regard, unpack the gendered power relations and dynamics at play. This includes challenging the notion that i.e. women are vulnerable and men are protectors in times of crisis (Tickner and Sjöberg 2011; Carreiras 2006; Duncanson and Woodward 2016; Enloe 2000).

One of the officers who both discussed her own personal experiences as a Royal Danish Air Force soldier, and expressed statements on behalf of the task force for diversity in the Royal Danish Air Force, was Officer Iben. In her interview, the strategic narrative of the Royal Danish Air Force as a progressive force with a focus on diversity and the inclusion of women was something that she made sure to stress and articulate as significant particularities for the Royal Danish Air Force:

Part of my job is to work with diversity. I think it is important because it provides a better chance at solving an assignment, I believe this to be true. I buy into the idea that we are better at solving assignments, we have more perspectives on things, because everything does not necessarily have to be solved with a gun. [...] As I say, it is not the weapon that we draw first, there are things where there is no need for this alpha male [attitude] and somebody starting a fight. [...] I believe it is important that both genders are represented because they are connected in some way, anyways. It might be that women are not here [in the armed forces], but the men are, and the men are part of families with wives who are subject to security politics and a foreign policy that impacts their lives. So, I think it is important (Officer Iben, in her 40s-50s).

Iben's account includes an approach to gender and military work, which is similar to the operational effective argument, which is also detectable in the written material from the Danish Armed Forces. This is evident in her emphasis on the inherent differences in the type of military work that appeals to men and women, respectively. In this sense, Iben is enhancing the work assignments in the Royal Danish Air Force, as she believed these appeal more to women and that this is part of the reason why the Royal Danish Air Force has more women serving than the other services in the Danish Armed Forces. One could argue that Iben is actively engaging in national as well as international narratives on gender and military work in her approach to women in the armed forces with an emphasis on the importance of female soldiers for specific work assignments (Jennings 2011; Earl 2015; United Nations Security Council 2000).



Moreover, it seems that this engagement with different national as well as international narratives on gender and military work is fairly unproblematic for Iben and resonates with her own experiences from the Royal Danish Air Force and her take on military work. Iben further concludes this by arguing that:

I think it has been easier [for women to enter the Royal Danish Air Force]. ACW is one of the places with the most women. Why is that? It is because this type of job appeals to women somehow. It is not the combat soldier or the combat vehicle soldier, few women are interested in this, but here it fits with the way women are. It is more the “*woman way*” [...] in the Navy there are a lot of sailing days, in the Army there are a lot of training days, so what sets us apart is that in the Royal Danish Air Force you can go to work, be part of a guard shift, and know at what time you have to be at work and when you can leave. This fits well with having children; to know when you can pick up the children from daycare. It can provide a more stable life and more stability in terms of your service; a work-life that suits your private life (Officer Iben, in her 40s-50s).

As argued above, the quotes by Iben tie into a particular narrative of military work in general and the bodies that carry out military work. As I argue, Iben makes use of classic understandings of gendered bodies and capabilities in terms of military work by stressing that men and women are inherently different, which she sees manifested in the military services and work assignments, which attract men and women respectively. Iben acknowledges that these differences may be traced to certain social and cultural elements, but nevertheless maintains that these differences are a reality in the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force, and something, which they at a management level need to address and take into account in their recruitment tactics. Hence, in this description of both the Royal Danish Air Force and the soldiers who work in this service, Iben is creating a particular strategic narrative of the Royal Danish Air Force as being progressive, attractive for women, and with a focus on gender equality and diversity. By presenting this as the institutional narrative of the Royal Danish Air Force, Iben is speaking into the written material produced by the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces, as presented above, and maintaining a uniqueness of the Royal Danish Air Force.

Hence, the institutional narrative of the Royal Danish Air Force, which both the documents and Iben present, is based on an understanding that they favor gender equality and diversity and that there is room for this in the Royal Danish Air Force. One may argue that this idea is based on a gendered segregation approach to military work in which less violent and aggressive assignments are widely used in the Royal Danish Air Force to attract more women. This idea again is based on a traditional division of labor between men and women and could in itself be part of reproducing gendered stereotypes in military work, in which men and women continue to be assigned certain particular characteristics and preferences based on their biological gender. This follows the points made by feminist IR scholars that often military work

continues to reproduce gendered stereotypes and, in this, gendered hierarchies especially between men and women remain. Moreover, it maintains the classic divide between women and peace on the one side and men and war on the other (Tickner and Sjoberg 2011; Carreiras 2006; MacKenzie 2012; MacKenzie 2015).

This approach is based entirely on a binary understanding of gender and gendered bodies, which again may limit diversity in the Danish Armed Forces and in this case the Royal Danish Air Force. Nonetheless, the narrative that is produced in the written material and supported in interviews and conversations with management levels affirms international and national narratives on gender, such as, the operational effectiveness argument of the uniqueness of gender based on inherent gendered abilities of women as peaceful and men as protectors. These understandings of gendered bodies in military work and the capabilities understandings of doing soldiering and identifying with being a Danish Royal Danish Air Force soldier are, however, to a certain degree challenged, or at least nuanced, at the individual level, as the following Chapters 5 and 6 will reveal. Thus, as I have stressed, work on gender equality faces challenges reaching implementation levels in Danish organizations (such as the Danish Armed Forces) and becoming part of actual practices on the ground (Ventegodt Liisberg 2017).

#### **4.3. CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

As this chapter demonstrates, the Danish Armed Forces' institutional narratives mirror global and national narratives on gender, peace, security in the written presentations of who they are as a force and what they do in their military engagements. This relates to the notion of women as especially important in military peacekeeping and peacebuilding work due to inherent competences and skills, which are based on their gender (and most often understood as sex bodies). In accordance with this, the operational effectiveness ideal as emphasized by NATO and has also become part of the narrative of the Danish Armed Forces in their approach and responses to being attentive to the gendered dimensions of conflict, and as such, this understanding of military work and gender is part of the national context of the Danish Armed Forces and become an integral part of how the force responds to their domestic and international commitments.

In general, global narratives on gender, peace, and security from the UN and NATO share conceptual overlaps with the Danish Armed Forces' presentations of who they are and without large contestations. Moreover, the Danish self-understanding of being frontrunners in terms of gender equality on military work, which they link to their commitment to i.e. UNSCR 1325, is supported by national notions of gender equality in Danish society of being exceptional in achieving equality.

This understanding is, however, as I also stress in this chapter and address further in the following chapters, an example of how certain normative perceptions at the top-

level or even among individuals may be part of a self-image, but that practices may challenge this self-image. This is, for example, the case in regard to men and women's responsibility towards military service (duty versus voluntary service), discrimination towards female soldiers, as well as hierarchies in gendered bodies in military work i.e. maintaining that men are physically superior to women. Within the individual units of ACW and ATW, narratives that place emphasis on gender are less dominant at the organizational level, and military work in terms of skills are highlighted more than the benefits of diversity and gender equality. In regard to peace and security, the narratives are linked closer to ideas of security and protection of nations and people and not necessarily women and children, as the global narratives presented by the UN and to a large degree NATO.

Military identity formation is context dependent (Higate 2003; Woodward 2003) and, as mentioned, understandings of masculinities in Denmark and the Danish Armed Forces might take different forms and be valued differently, be less hierarchical, and less dependent on the form of militarized masculinity, which is found in i.e. the U.S. military (see Enloe 2000; Sjoberg and Via 2010; MacKenzie 2015). A different type of military identity might, therefore, be performed and valued in the Danish Armed Forces than the U.S. militarized masculinity at the institutional level as well as the individual. This, however, does not mean that militarized masculinities do not exist in the Danish Armed Forces, or that masculinities are valued less than femininities in the Danish Armed Forces. Moreover, it does not propose that gender is less significant in the Danish Armed Forces (or Danish society), but it might suggest that gender and ideas of masculinities and femininities take different forms and are performed and understood differently, including for women serving in the Danish Armed Forces.

In the following chapter, the voices of the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers will be addressed in focus where I analyze the personal soldier narratives and explore further the negotiations and creations of military identities in relation to contextual settings, as well as, national and global narratives on gender, peace, and security.



## CHAPTER 5. NEGOTIATING GENDERED MILITARY IDENTITIES

In the previous chapter, I introduced the institutional narratives of the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force in relation to global and national narratives on gender, peace, and security. I argue that in a number of ways, the Royal Danish Air Force presents itself as a frontrunner through a focus on gender equality policies, gender equality task forces, and their articulation of gender in relation to skills and competences needed in the Air Force, which are less reliant on physical strengths and more in the form of communicative abilities and expert knowledge, as well as working hours and shorter deployments that fit better with having a family as well. The narrative is enunciated in written material, where the high percentage of women serving (relative to the other two services) is emphasized. The articulation of this from management levels as well as in conversations with Royal Danish Air Force management personnel and put forward as a success regarding diversity ambitions (see Chapter 4) emphasizes this narrative. The narrative focus on gender is further mirrored in the ways in which the Royal Danish Air Force describes their assignments domestically and internationally; a description, which includes an articulation of which bodies are qualified to carry out military assignments with an emphasis on specialist knowledge rather than physical endurance.

However, as the previous chapter demonstrates, a presumed awareness of gender equality, domestically and globally, is only part of the institutional narrative of the Royal Danish Air Force. Gendered understandings and realities are often hidden in more silent ways through everyday practices in which understandings of masculinities and femininities, including military masculinities, become evident. In this sense, the Royal Danish Air Force may be subject to a lack of concrete actions towards creating a gender equal and diverse Air Force, despite articulated focus by the institution. This is a common pitfall for organizations that work towards gender equality efforts in which an ambition to be sensitive to gender equality may in practice lack concrete (and comprehensive) initiatives that can change normative understandings on gender and gendered practices (see, for instance, Faber, Gemzøe, and Nielsen's rapport from 2017 on gender equality policies in the Danish University setting). Hence, the institutional narrative of being progressive on gender equality may be more nuanced and complicated in practice, as I will discuss further in this chapter.

The different social categories, which are part of the narratives of who we are, create social hierarchies within the groups we belong to and not belong to, and among different groups. In the case of the Royal Danish Air Force, categories such as race (whiteness), ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, religion etc. each play out in different ways in the negotiations over military identities and military work and intersect with gender. One element of this is the fact that the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal

Danish Air Force, primarily are white. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the whiteness in the composition of military personnel is a focus area of the Danish Armed Forces along with the inclusion of more women in an effort to create more diversity within the Danish military. Nonetheless, despite attention on this from management levels, the Danish Armed Forces faces challenges in attracting individuals from ethnic minority groups to serve in military (and civilian) positions in the Danish Armed Forces. Hence, "*For ethnic minorities we do not see the same positive development in the number of applicants, as we do with women*" (The Ministry of Defence 2011, 16) (see discussion in Chapter 4 and the report by Schaub et al. 2012 on diversity in the Danish Armed Forces). This means that most soldiers in the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force belong to the majority ethnic group in Danish society. As a result, the soldier body of the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force is quite homogenous, and the most visible minority category in the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force is female bodies (The Ministry of Defence 2011; Schaub et al. 2012).

The face of the Danish soldier body being mainly white (and heterosexual) can be part of reinforcing a narrative of a Band of Brothers among the soldiers and in this uphold a particular social military identity by which a particular - read male and white body – is the standard and desired physical appearance of the soldier (MacKenzie 2015; Belkin 2012). At the same time, this speaks into the discussion on the organizational goal of attracting more female soldiers to the force because they can add other skills such as compassion, dialogical abilities etc. based on an operational effectiveness mindset. At the same time, as my initial meeting with the Officer prior to beginning my interviews stressed, gender (and other categories) are irrelevant as long as you are able to perform the duties of the soldier. This seeming discrepancy between wanting to attract other gendered bodies and ethnicities to make the Danish military more diverse and concurrently insist that the military sees all soldiers as one uniform group calls attention to the complexities of working with gendered bodies, gendered dynamics, and qualifications in an organization that historically (and continues to be) male dominated, and where a goal in educating soldiers is to make them prioritize the group before individual needs (Woodward and Jenkins 2011).

Thus, where the institutional narratives seen through documents and interviews with senior management staff narrate a particular story of military identities and military work within the Royal Danish Air Force, an equally important perspective is the soldiers' narratives on military identities, that is, who they are as individual soldiers and how they view the shared military identity of the Royal Danish Air Force. I argue that if we are to understand fully the mechanisms of professional soldier identities and military work, we need to examine and bridge macro, mezzo, and micro levels through personal narratives. In this chapter, I, therefore, turn my attention to the personal narratives and focus on data from my 24 interviews to examine how military identities are negotiated among the soldiers and in relation to the institutional narratives as well

as societal narratives. I approach this through the particular research question for this chapter:

*How do Royal Danish Air Force soldiers negotiate gendered identities, bodies, and military work in the everyday crossroads of military and civilian life?*

Critical military scholars Woodward and Higate (2003) argue that the contextual setting of where one examines military identities is paramount to understanding the role of masculinities and what this means for the soldiers' narratives on their individual work and their membership of a military force. In addition, Woodward argues that "*gender identities are themselves shaped by the geographies in which they operate*" (Woodward 2003, 46). The locatedness or geographies can be translated into differences among the services, which includes both locations; Army bases or Air bases but also work assignments domestically and internationally. Thus, in this chapter, focus is mainly on identity constructions and negotiations as part of the everyday life at the air bases in Denmark, including how this setting is part of negotiations over military identities and understandings of military work. To support this, the interview material reveals that the contextual setting influences the format and position of gender, peace, and security in the soldier narratives and thus aligns with the interconnectedness between locations and identities, which Woodward (2003) points to. This means that the soldier narratives foreground reflections on gender compared to peace and security in relation to the construction of military identities in the domestic setting and everyday life as soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force on/off base. Consequently, this chapter places more focus on the gendered aspects of negotiations over military identities and reflects on some of the paradoxes and ambiguities of gender equality and military work in a Danish setting.

## **5.1. EVERYDAY LIFE: THE EMBODIMENT OF THE ROYAL DANISH AIR FORCE SOLDIER**

As discussed in Chapter 3, identities are key in how individuals think about themselves and the groups they belong to/ do not belong to (Biton and Salomon 2006; Jenkins 2004). In this process, identities become essential in the stories we narrate about who we are, what we do, and where we belong. This is also true for the soldiers I interviewed for this study. In their capacity as professional soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force, they belong to a select group of individuals in Danish society, who represent the defenders of the nation (Enloe 2004; Tickner and Sjoberg 2011). Through their military work, they are part of a military machinery that the Danish state relies on for national protection and contributions to security across borders and in conflict settings. A military identity is thus an essential part of the identities of the interviewees in this study.

At the same time, identities are fluid entities, which change over time, take different forms, and are situated in local contexts. An identity is a process, which includes a being and a process of becoming and is relational (Woodward and Jenkins 2011). This means that identities are never in a final stage or fixed, but rather in constant movement and negotiation with the surroundings (Walker 2010). Hence, the soldiers' military identities are part of a range of identities, which they negotiate at different stages of their lives and in different contexts and situations. This includes being inside or outside "the fence" at the local airbases in Denmark, being abroad on peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, in encounters with civilians, or in the everyday lives of changing from being at work to picking up kids at the local daycare, and seeing friends on a friday night (Jenkins 2004; Woodward 2003; Walker 2010).

Because individuals hold more than one identity (Jenkins 2004), the soldiers need to negotiate the identity of being soldiers in relation to being citizens, neighbors, mothers, fathers, siblings, sons, daughters, etc. These negotiations entail intersectional categories, such as class, 'race', nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, etc. (Christensen and Jensen 2012; McCall 2005). On a daily basis, the soldiers engage in a process of negotiating these different categories, which may take different positions at different times, and in different spaces and places. That is, 'race' (in particular whiteness in this study) and ethnicity may be more pronounced identity markers in settings, where the soldiers are part of another cultural context than the Danish i.e. on deployments (this point is particularly discussed in Chapter 6). The soldiers thereby engage in a dialectic process in which different identities are part of shaping who they are as individuals and citizens, and in addition, who they are and how they act as soldiers. All these aspects are part of the particularities of being a member of the group that is the Royal Danish Air Force, and part of shaping the narratives that the soldiers use to describe their identity as soldiers.

Throughout the interviews with the soldiers, it became clear that there is an idea of a military identity and to some degree a shared military identity of the Royal Danish Air Force. However, there is also a realization that a particular military identity, and especially a shared one, is difficult to describe, grasp, and isolate at least for the majority. Thus, there is an everydayness related to negotiations over military identities, which connect with the soldiers' work routines and their assignments. Hence, the ideas relating to military identities and military work in a Danish setting, and in particular, on the military bases, may be so inherent that those who belong to it find it difficult to see and describe. This element further connects to places and spaces where military identities are formed and negotiated, for instance, on/off the base or among colleagues from the Royal Danish Air Force or other services of the Danish Armed Forces. This point is supported by Woodward (2003) who argues that particularities and the geographies of where soldiers work influences their negotiations over military identities and become important components in understanding and examining the complexities and varieties in military identities and military masculinities (Woodward 2003). Hence, the everyday for the soldiers



includes an awareness of working as professional soldiers at Danish military airbases and, at the same time, being Danish citizens leading civilian lives in Denmark away from work and the military. This further means that the Danish context, including societal narratives on norms, practices, and structures, influence the soldier narratives and their constructions and negotiations of military identities. This realization is important in the analysis of gendered narratives on military identity and military work, as aforementioned intersectional categories such as race, ethnicity, nationality, age, religion, and sexuality, influence these negotiations (Crenshaw 1989; Christensen and Jensen 2012). In addition, because the soldiers have more than one identity, which are negotiated in different times and places i.e. being a mother, father, daughter, son, sister, brother, parent, spouse, friend, citizen etc. as well as being a professional soldier, the intersectional take on the construction and negotiations over military identities enables the caption of how certain contextual structural (in)equalities intersects with gender in the negotiations over the soldiers' military identities. In the following, I discuss the negotiations over military identity formations and provide examples of how these categories are part of this process.

Critical military scholars, such as Woodward (2003) and Belkin (2012), argue that the distinction between military and civilian can be difficult to make and that the lines are often blurred, especially for military personnel. A byproduct of this is what Enloe describes as a militarization of the everyday (Enloe 1983; 2000). The militarization, which Enloe discusses in her work (1983; 2000), elucidates the extent to which the military transcends civilian life in an effort to create legitimacy and a connection to the everyday of the civilian population, for example, through camouflage patterns and the color khaki in everyday fashion, or militaristic vocabulary (see also Cohn 1987). Enloe describes this as a *“step-by-step process by which something becomes controlled by, dependent on, or derives its value from the military as an institution or militaristic criteria”* (Enloe 2000, 291). Moreover, the militarization and the difficulty to separate military and civilian transcends over space, place, and time, for instance, through family members with military connections. This can be parents or grandparents who have served in the military during World War II or siblings who have been deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq and whose experiences and stories become part of family tales of who they are and their connection to the military and the nation.

This association through embodied experiences of family members was also true for a number of the soldiers I interviewed. For most of them, parents or grandparents either had served as professional soldiers or had been conscripts. This meant that the military as an institution in society was not foreign to them, but something they had heard stories about or even been directly exposed to through visits to Army and Air bases with relatives. This creates a link between civilian and military life in a way that normalizes a military career and the actions the military takes part in (Enloe 2000). This process is part of the argument that the contextual setting is significant for the creation and negotiations of military identities, but also that these are fluid and intersect, which makes the military identity and the private identity difficult to

separate. Signifying the relationship between private and military, the soldiers' everyday life at the airbases in Denmark and their civil lives are part of shaping military identities. Nonetheless, even though a separation between civilian and military life is difficult to uphold mentally and physically, and as Enloe (2000) argues, a complete separation of the private and the soldier/military is unlikely to happen, this point was something that the soldiers attempted to do through particularly one ritual; namely when to take on and off the uniform.

For the soldiers, being employed in the Royal Danish Air Force was their primary occupation and something they identified with. Nonetheless, most of the soldiers changed into uniform only after they arrived at the airbases and back again to civilian clothes before leaving or drove directly home and changed before running any private errands. For many, this was a way of separating work life (military life) and private life (civilian life) and thereby upholding a private identity separate from a military identity. An example of this was Alice, a non-commissioned officer in her 50s-60s who argued:

Yes, but I am a private person, funny enough. I am a private person. Put on the uniform I am [uses her military name], and if I take the uniform off, I am Alice (Alice, non-commissioned officer, in her 50s-60s).

Alice's shift between military and civilian life was clear in her mind and something that she made sure to do every day. Alice's approach to wearing a uniform conforms well to the way Woodward (2003) describes the function of the uniform; that it is a way to identify with being a soldier and something that the soldiers use to visually separate civilian life from military life once the uniform comes off. Alice is a cool, fit woman who had served in the military for a long time and had been on several deployments. Walking into the room where we had our interview, we passed a number of young recruits, and it was clear from how they greeted Alice that she commanded respect from her fellow soldiers, and at the same time, there was a familiarity in their dialogue. Alice's reflections on her use of the uniform and her shift from a military to a private identity intrigued and surprised me, as she seemed to fully embody the military culture in how she walked, talked, and her interactions with the other soldiers. Nonetheless, for Alice, the uniform was a way to "perform" the soldier role and be referred to by her soldier name and making a clear shift to when she was off duty and private Alice. This duality of being on and off duty indicates that the military identity is something that Alice links to a job and not necessarily something that she considers part of her private life (or identity). This approach to wearing a uniform was common for many of the soldiers I interviewed. The accounts by Private Gry and Non-Commissioned Officer Kim below demonstrate some of the same points as Alice.

Gry, a private in her 30s-40s changed from uniform to civilian clothing as soon as she was home or running errands in her private life. When asked about whether she would wear the uniform outside the barracks, Gry replies:

No, you take it off when you get home. I don't feel comfortable wearing the uniform to my children's school, for example, or going grocery shopping in one of the larger cities in the area. I might do it here [in the small town] where we live and come from, but not in other places. I don't like when people look at me. I know that it is not in a negative way, actually on the contrary. I don't care for it. I don't like it. It is a kind of attention that I don't need. And I feel a bit exposed as well. I mean, I am completely different from everybody else, and then I am not part of the club right, the way I am out here [on the base] (Gry, Private, in her 30-40).

I drive home in it. It is not because I am not proud to wear it, but if I am going somewhere, then I change. It feels more natural in my own clothes (Kim, Non-Commissioned Officer, in his 30s-40s).

As exemplified by Alice, Gry, and Kim the uniform is part of creating a shared identity and a way to identify with others who belong to the same group. The uniform is thus a way for them to embody the military identity in a very physical and visual way. The uniform functions as a significant demarcation of the professional life as a soldier and instates a particular identity for Alice, Kim, and Gry; namely the physical symbol of their military identity. This is perhaps not surprising and true for other occupations who wear a uniform i.e. police, firefighters, doctors, nurses, etc. Uniforms just like other symbols, such as a flag or an anthem, are intended to unify a group/collective and create particular associations with belonging to this particular group of people (Biton and Salomon 2006). In this sense, the military uniform is no exception. However, the military uniform is particularly interesting when examining narratives on military identity and discussions on militarization of society in general (Enloe 2000). The primary purpose of the military uniform is to enable the soldiers to carry out their work to the best of their abilities, which includes fighting in wars, and to build, keep, and secure peace for civilians. The military uniform, therefore, has a practical purpose as well as including a seriousness, which invokes connotations to extreme situations of conflict and war. By wearing the uniform, the soldiers come to represent this particular aspect of military life and military identity. Moreover, the same way as police uniforms signify an identity of legitimacy for a particular group of citizens who have authority to carry out arrests, etc. on behalf of the state, so does the military uniform provide soldiers with easily recognizable legitimacy to carry out their assignments domestically and internationally, which includes legitimate use of violence. Consequently, the uniform is a significant element in the identity constructions for the soldiers as it marks a clear distinction between military and non-military. At the same time, the uniform separates civilians from military personnel both inside the military and outside.

The narratives from the soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force and their relationship and reflections on uniforms and its connection to military identities, exemplified by Gry, Kim, and Alice, are in line with existing research on the topic (see Woodward 2003; Duncanson 2015; Roness 2015b; Persson 2013) and, in this sense, neither

surprising nor controversial. It does, however, indicate that doing soldiering, creating, and negotiating military identities include elements that cross national borders with one aspect being the need to visually create a collective unit by wearing a uniform. In this sense, a social narrative of doing soldiering is created by means of individual narratives of soldiering as well as the institutional focus on the uniform as an important part of military work. This further specifies that global narratives on military work and military identity can be identified in different military contexts. This further implies that this particular job holds certain identity markers, which are universal and experienced by most soldiers; the Danish included. At the same time, the efforts to separate the two identities by wearing or not wearing the uniform may be a unique Danish or Scandinavian element to soldiering. Whereas being a military family in the U.S. is something that is often flagged openly in society and supported in society through special treatments i.e. to board planes first, medical aid, and veteran discounts in certain shops, it seems that in the case of the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers, there is a clear need to separate the two and make a distinction between the private and the military person. This might tell something about the militarization of Danish society and the role the military plays in a Danish context, where it might be more considered a professional identity rather than a personal identity marker.

Despite the attempts to separate the military and civilian identities, which the interviewees express a desire to, Enloe (2000, 2016) argues that the militarization that soldiers take part in during their training transcends into their everyday life outside of the bases and is something that is identifiable to civilians. Hence, whereas the uniform may represent physical and visual aspects of a military identity and something that can easily be removed to separate military life and civilian life (private life), other demarcations such as behavior i.e. how you talk, walk, or solve problems are less easily removed and transcend the private identity as a citizen, mother, partner, etc. This further indicates that the characteristics, which are associated with military work and identity in this process of changing between different contexts, may spill over and become part of civilian lives. This process is something that a number of the soldiers referred to, as exemplified in the following quote by Alice:

I suppose that there are some who would argue that it is the way we talk. I think there would be some who would say, "You are definitely in the military." I mean, I really think so. I have heard this (Alice, Non-Commissioned Officer, in her 50s-60s).

As the quote demonstrates, Alice is aware of this process of militarization in which a military life and perhaps the military identity is not only enforced by wearing a uniform but transcends into her private life through other means. Hence, the choice to take off the uniform outside of work might function as a visual separation of military identity and life, but militarization takes place through other more salient ways, for example, verbal and body language (Enloe 2000). Nonetheless, despite acknowledging that this process takes part, the interviewees still make a point to mention this as a clearly active action that they engage with every day in an effort to

visually minimize their military identity in their surrounding societies. This process should however not be seen as a wish to disown their military carrier. All the interviewees were proud to wear the uniform and be part of military work domestically and internationally. However, what I argue is that at least in the Danish context, the need to hold separate identities i.e. one of work and one that was private was a significant way in which the soldiers related to their work in the Royal Danish Air Force. Again, this may suggest that for the soldiers employed in the Royal Danish Air Force, the military identity was to a large extent classified as a professional identity. Moreover, this approach to soldier work and subsequently soldier identities speaks into a discussion on professionalization of military work, where this is an active professional choice and not a way to serve Queen and country (Higate 2003). As one of the interviewees argue, in his opinion and from his around 25 years in the service, this process is part of a shift from being a soldier by *heart* to being a soldier by *mind* (Jan, Officer in his 40-50s)

### **5.1.1. THE MILITARY UNIFORM: A BATTLEFIELD FOR GENDER EQUALITY?**

Military bodies and physical strength are interchangeably linked in military work and scholars and professionals within militaries have stressed this connection (see Carreiras 2006; Dyvik and Greenwood 2016; Cohn 2000; Rones 2015). The association has been part of the discussion of women in military work and whether they have the “correct” bodies to carry out military work or whether their presence in military settings disrupts not only the Band of Brothers, but also the functionality and strength of militaries (Woodward 2003; Cohn 2000; Sjoberg and Via 2010; Carreiras 2006; Rones 2015). As stressed in the theory section, this particular element of military work and military bodies is still debated among feminist IR scholars, where especially two conflicting arguments are used, that is the right and civic duty argument versus the anti-militaristic approaches (see discussion in Chapter 2). This element of the “correct” military bodies or “standard” military bodies reveal gendered understandings of military work and is part of explaining the gendered hierarchies in military work also within the Royal Danish Air Force.

The military uniform is an interesting visual component in studying the challenges and negotiations that take place within military organizations of gendered bodies. Hence, I argue that as a garment, the uniform exposes gendered practices within the military and presents prevailing gender narratives in the Royal Danish Air Force despite an articulated focus on gender equality (see discussion on institutional narratives Chapter 4). Woodward (2003) advances the argument that the connection between military bodies and the uniform is something that plays a significant role in the gendered creations of military identities. Hence, the body plays a substantial role in how gendered military identities are formed and performed within the military organization (Woodward 2003). This means that bodies become places where military masculinities in their various forms are constructed, shaped, and negotiated and that

this process is reliant on space and location i.e. a Danish airbase in Jutland. Next, I demonstrate how listening to the voices at the micro-level of the organization through personal narratives, reveal these exact connections between bodies and military identities and how the articulation of gender awareness at the institutional level in practice are problematized through lived experiences. Moreover, how the military uniform reveals particular understandings of military/soldier bodies.

The idea that the uniform is able to make a group of individuals *uniform* is commonly used in military settings and was also expressed in my initial meeting with the armed forces (cf. the comment from the Officer I had the first meeting with, as described in the introduction). The logic following this is that gender is camouflaged because men and women (and other gendered bodies) wear the same garment. However, despite the uniformity in the appearance of the garment, gendered differences are apparent in the everyday practices of wearing and working in the uniform. As Sløk-Andersen argues,

The uniform was believed to conceal gender differences; it was expected to make us all non-gendered soldiers. [...] Competences, however, were seen as differing from one conscript to the next. They were apparently not camouflaged by the uniform – quite the opposite, I would argue, as they affected one's ability to be recognized as a good soldier. To illustrate the way in which this is entangled with the uniform, I next present an example centered on the highly ordinary act of peeing. [...] While the uniform was meant to camouflage gender categories, it simultaneously made gender present in these situations (Sløk-Andersen 2018, 183-184).

In her study from 2018 on Danish conscripts, Sløk-Andersen challenges the understanding that the uniform means uniformity (Sløk-Andersen 2018). Sløk-Andersen, demonstrated with the quote above, describes how the material discourses of the uniform and its functions expose gendered differences and make it clear that the standard soldier body is male. Illustrated through the simple, ordinary (yet clearly) challenging task for women to pee in uniform as quickly as their male colleagues. This situates an obvious disadvantage for women soldiers and affects their perception as *good* soldiers since being able to do things as quickly as possible is a requirement and something that soldiers are measured on (Sløk-Andersen 2018).

Sløk-Andersen's work relies on fieldwork observations and interviews with conscripts, whereas the material in this project is based on interviews with professional soldiers. Hence, there may be differences in how competences are evaluated i.e. solving a certain task as quickly as possible. Nonetheless, the gendered implications of the uniforms are present among professional soldiers as well, but also something that only female soldiers stressed in the interviews. For the female Royal Danish Air Force soldiers, the gendered components of the uniform also relate to its shape. An example is present in non-commissioned officer Julie's narrative. Julie found that the military in some regard was behind in adapting to the changing soldier

bodies doing military work today and one of these aspects relates to the uniform and military gear, such as boots:

An example is the uniforms we wear. They are definitely not made for women. They fit really really poorly. They are not made for somebody with shapes or anything. And I also think they have a hard time with, for example, providing me with a pair of boots that actually fit. Because I have small feet. It might also be me who has very tiny feet, but it also has something to do with this being a more male-dominated world, because they don't think it's necessary to have small boots in stock (Julie, Non-Commissioned Officer, in her 20s-30s).

Julie's story demonstrates continued gendered practices within the Royal Danish Air Force despite a decade long focus on gender mainstreaming inspired by i.e. UN and NATO policies. Hence, even though women have been working in the Royal Danish Air Force almost from the beginning<sup>15</sup>, the uniform still does not fit the female body, making it less comfortable for women soldiers to wear the uniform and carry out their work assignments (or simply to pee), in addition to having footwear that fit all bodies. This connects to the male-dominated world of the military, which feminist IR scholars argue prevails in modern militaries; namely that the norm is the male body and the *not seeing gender* (as proclaimed by the military itself) means that the standard is male and not an expression of seeing all genders equally (MacKenzie 2015; Kronsell and Svedberg 2012; Enloe 1983; 2016).

Julie's story is interesting when analyzed in relation to the Royal Danish Air Force institutional narrative of gender awareness. It seems that despite presumed institutional intentions and a narrative, which signify diversity among personnel, a number of the practices within the Royal Danish Air Force continue to be formed by traditional military understandings in which male bodies are "soldier bodies" and female bodies become the abnormality. In this sense, the Royal Danish Air Force is neither abnormal as a military unit or progressive, but in line with a number of other Western militaries in which military identities and masculinities are linked to particular gendered bodies; that is male bodies (Enloe 2016; Rones and Steder 2018). This element is part of the complexities and paradoxes of the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force particularly in terms of gender and gendered practices and the creation of social narratives in which it seems that the institutional narrative and personal narratives may result in conflicting understandings of the Royal Danish Air Force's focus on gender and gender awareness.

As I discussed above, the uniform can expose gendered practices in which the male body is cemented as the ideal military body i.e. through the shape of the uniform

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<sup>15</sup> women first entered the Royal Danish Air Force in 1953 as part of the Female Flying Corps (Sløk-Andersen 2014)

(Sløk-Andersen 2018). However, at times, the military uniform *can* manage to even out and camouflage gender. This idea of the uniform as a common identity marker and something that “deletes” gender is articulated in Officer Laust’s account:

I mean it evens out gender. We all look the same. However, it is fantastic to see the difference in your colleagues for the fall ball, when they are wearing long dresses. I mean that is nice. To see that there is a woman underneath. [...] The best thing you can do is not to focus on gender (sex). Luckily, most women do not look sexy in uniform. That helps a bit. I mean we are only human. With two arms and two legs (Laust, Officer, in his 50s-60s).

Laust argues that the uniform makes the bodies more neutral and that the soldiers become one by wearing them. This argument follows the notion that a common identity for the soldiers is created by the use of visual effects such as the uniform. This argument is also presented by Alice, *“It plays a role [the uniform]. And it plays a role that we have been through the same training, in order for us to become soldiers”* (Non-Commissioned Officer, Alice). In this sense, following Woodward’s (2003) argument, the military uniform has a strong connection to the military identity and becomes a significant element in doing soldiering on a daily basis. At the same time, Laust makes the point that it is wonderful to see his female colleagues in long evening gowns at the fall party because this reveals the woman underneath the uniform, a garment, which in his account is unsexy. Thus, even though the uniform to some degree visually may camouflage the gender of particular bodies, Laust’s comment demonstrates fully how gender and gendered bodies are part of the everyday lives of military personal, uniform or not.

Laust’s narrative presented above is interesting in relation to the ideas of bodies and military assignments and touches upon a curious and significant element of military work, military identities, and military bodies; namely sexuality. As Belkin (2012) and others have stressed (Rones 2015), heteronormativity is an important element in the construction of military masculinities; albeit divergences from heteronormativity in practice is no exception in military work and relations among soldiers (Belkin 2010; 2012; Belkin and Carver 2012; Rones 2015).

Female bodies in military work do not necessarily challenge the heteronormativity of the military body, but they may challenge the relationships between soldiers in terms of attraction and the influence this may have on military work and the uniformity of the soldiers. Hence, the argument by certain critiques of women in militaries has been that women disrupt the Band of Brothers with their female bodies and prohibit men from carrying out their basic soldier work (Creveld 2000). Even though this argument may be one-sided in regard to everyday practices, and Creveld (2000) especially takes a fixed approach to women’s inclusion in military work, the question of heteronormativity, as well as sexuality in military work, is a significant element of the



everyday life in a military setting, where the inclusion of female bodies in military work has added an extra element to sexual attraction.

In Laust's narrative, these elements of sexual attraction and potential tensions are present and his account that the female body is unsexy in a uniform seems to be in line with the argument that sexuality and sexual attraction is an issue, but one that may be solved by wearing a uniform. Laust's underlying argument is that if gendered bodies are visually disguised then the issues surrounding gender discrimination vanish or diminish. Discrimination in the Danish Armed Forces, Royal Danish Air Force, and other military forces diminishes this argument; however, the function of the uniform to camouflage gender in military work is a common understanding, which is used in guidelines for female soldiers on international missions (further discussion in Chapter 6). The need to hide the female body in order to become part of the group/collective military identity resonates with feminist scholars' arguments that female soldiers need to adapt to the culture and masculinize themselves in order to fit in and gain acceptance and recognition. Nonetheless, as feminist IR scholars such as Sjoberg and Via (2010) argue, this process is often a failed mission to begin with as women often continue to represent the "other" or at least struggle to maintain their position (Sjoberg and Via 2010). As Halberstam (1998) argues, female masculinity is a difficult thing to master for women, female soldiers included, and they will often be unsuccessful in their attempt (Halberstam 1998).

The *othering*, which Sjoberg and Via (2010) among others address, further stresses the tensions in military organizations in relation to intersectional categories of gender and sexuality. Tensions and connections between gender and sexuality are significant power elements in organizations, especially in workplaces where one gender (in this case women) is a minority or in a male-dominated world. The power hierarchies that these gendered practices install among soldiers are thus essential for understanding relations among soldiers and their negotiations of military identities. As militarized masculinities and hegemonic forms of masculinities are significant elements of military identities, the element of sexuality (and heteronormativity) is even more pressing (Belkin and Carver 2012; Duncanson 2015; Duncanson and Woodward 2016). In this sense, the *othering* that women may be subjected to in military work can also transcend to male gendered bodies in particular, who do not live up to the heteronormativity, which hegemonic militarized masculinity ideals rely on (Sjoberg and Via 2010).

As such, in my conversations with the soldiers in which we discussed discrimination and gender in military work, there was an idea that being homosexual, especially gay, was an even bigger disadvantage than being a woman. An idea existed that being gay or lesbian disrupted the Band of Brothers even further, but also that this was such a taboo that people refrained from commenting on this to soldiers who were gay, because it was uncomfortable, and something you just did not discuss. As Officer Camilla argues, it was okay to tease female colleagues, but not gay colleagues:

It is a bit funny because we had one [colleague] who has homosexual, and that was a bit more, you didn't talk about that. A girl, her you can tease, right! But the others were a bit like, "Hmm, it is better if we don't talk about it" [...]homosexuality is not really something that you talk about, right. I think in general men have a hard time talking about this. Now men in the military are, well like very man-man, masculine men, and I think some people have a difficult time relating to it [homosexuality]. Most people live with a woman, and you know how to talk to them (Camilla, Officer, in her 20s-30s).

The following narratives by Kristen and Bjarne reveal similar tendencies. However, as with the discussions on gender and gendered discrimination, the soldiers were quick to dismiss their own part in these practices, but, nevertheless, conveyed that these discriminatory practices did take place:

There is a difference between men and women, right. If I meet a lesbian, I talk to her, whereas men still have that, "He better not come to close to me" [in encounters with gay men] (Kirsten, Non-Commissioned Officer, in her 40s-50s).

As long as he takes care of his job, and he is a nice guy. And it is not like he is walking around and clapping the other men on the butt...I mean that is the idea that many might have in their head "He better not touch me!" (Bjarne, Private, in his 20s-30s).

It can be comments like, "Well, I am definitely not taking a shower with him, because you never know" (Stine, Officer, in her 20s-30s).

These examples demonstrate how gender shapes the everyday lives of the soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force, and that despite institutional efforts to challenge gendered discriminations through top-down policies, certain understandings of military work, military bodies, and military identities continue to be part of soldier work and identity in the Royal Danish Air Force. As Enloe argues, "*Gay and transgender men have been among those who have most directly challenged common notions of what constitutes standards of masculinity*" (Enloe 2016, 4). The focus on homosexuality as opposite to heteronormativity, which military masculinities often rely on, links to discussions among feminist IR scholars and critical military scholars about military lingo that centers on penetration and homophobic gestures and language (Cohn 1987; Belkin 2012). This point is made by Belkin in his extensive work on the U.S. military with a particular focus on the constructions and negotiations of militarized masculinities among (mainly) male U.S. soldiers. Sløk-Andersen (2018) also found this type of lingo among Danish conscripts; signifying that certain gendered understandings of military work and being a *real* soldier that is, white, straight, and male is still a core expectation in military identity despite /-or maybe even because of, changing bodies doing military work.

Despite an institutional narrative in the Royal Danish Air Force as being a modern military with a focus on gender equality and a desire to attract other bodies (i.e. female bodies), traditional normative understandings of military work and military bodies (including militarized masculinities that impose traditional gendered practices and norms) may be identified in Royal Danish Air Force soldier narratives. This is despite initial comments from my conversations with the soldiers in which they argued that as a collective they did not have any issues relating to homosexuality or gender, but that these were issues that (if they existed in the Danish Armed Forces) were prevailing in the other two services, especially the Army. This element of disassociation from certain (politically incorrect) normative understandings of gender and sexuality, but at the same time revealing through their narratives certain gendered practices, leads to the different ways in which soldiers construct and negotiate their military identities. In this sense, conducting interviews through a narrative approach enables a room to discover these issues, which might be silenced otherwise. At the same time, in the conversations with me, the soldiers are constructing their narrative accounts and in this sense deciding which narratives they wish to be associated with and which they disregard.

### 5.1.2. WOMEN DISRUPT THE MILITARY CULTURE

As I discuss above, female soldiers with their bodies automatically come to present the ‘other’ (Carreiras 2006; 2008; Carreiras and Kümmel 2008). The female physique embodies *otherness* in the military in a visual way, which is difficult for female soldiers (as well as male) to disregard (see also Thidemann Faber 2008 on female Danish police officers for similar tendencies). At the same time, the female body in military work links to sexuality and poses a challenge to the presumed uniformity of the male Band of Brothers consisting of male, white, and straight men who fight together as a collective (MacKenzie 2015 and the myth of the all-male Band of Brothers). The female body through the narrative of the protector and protected, as discussed previously, embody that particular function of the protected in a classic military narrative and, by engaging in military work, interrupts this understanding. These narrative negotiations are present in the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers’ stories also among female soldiers who stress the need for women to change to fit the organization in order to be accepted and not the other way around.

A number of the female soldiers reflected on the male-dominated military world and their own presence in this institution. It was clear that they were aware of the discourses surrounding women in the armed forces and that a number of them had experienced discrimination or knew about fellow female soldiers who had been subjected to discrimination. At the same time, they all stated that they enjoyed their work and were happy to be part of a male-dominated environment and that this fit their personalities, and they probably would be uncomfortable working in an environment, which was more feminine. The female soldiers’ responses and reflections on this is a classic response to military culture in which dominating

masculinities are the norm, and male gendered bodies are considered the prototype (Rones and Steder 2018; Kronsell and Svedberg 2001; Sjöberg 2015). Something, which the female soldiers do not intend to challenge through conflict or attention to their own bodies or presence in the military.

Moreover, as Thidemann Faber (2008) argues based on similar studies in the Danish police, women who work in male-dominated environments like the Danish Armed Forces or the police to a large degree tend to dismiss degrading or discriminating comments by male colleagues as merely teasing and perhaps even with a "loving" element as a way to be part of the group. Some of the women I interviewed even expressed that they felt sorry for male colleagues in the aftermath of gender discrimination cases because it was difficult for men to know how to act without risking a disciplinary case of sexual harassment. The struggles for female soldiers to adapt and adopt the military masculine culture is part of the discussion on gender discrimination and sexual harassment. Even though female soldiers may express a desire to combat discrimination, they are, at the same time, faced with a feeling of being trapped in a conflict of loyalty towards their male colleagues and exposing their own difference (breaking with the Band of Brothers with reference to MacKenzie's (2015) argument of the myth of the all-male military bond). By standing up against discrimination and articulating that there are issues, the female soldiers are positioning themselves in a vulnerable spot where they risk alienation and losing collectiveness with their male colleagues; an element of soldier work and identity that is crucial on a daily basis and especially on deployments where extreme situations call for a strong collectiveness. Officer Camilla demonstrates these struggles and exemplifies how the issues can be extra sensitive for a minority:

You ask a difficult question. Exactly gender discrimination and sexual harassment, I have a very hard time with. Because in one way, of course, I think there are boundaries, but they are also difficult. Of course there should not be rape, there should not be somebody who feels uncomfortable at work, but again I have also just seen some cases where I just think "It is simply a shame to ruin a man's career," because there is often alcohol involved, and stuff like that. [...] It is very difficult, and it also just makes it difficult for men (Camilla, Officer, in her 20s-30s).

What is also evident in Camilla's account and which is also emphasized in Maiken and Paula's stories below is that an adaptation of the narrative that certain women are more sensitive and thereby also to a certain degree blaming women for being too easily self-victimizing is part of the story of the Royal Danish Air Force and gender issues:

We have talked a lot about when something is offensive. That the tolerance threshold probably varies a lot from woman to woman when we just take the example of gender-abusive behavior. After all, there are some who would be ticked off by a glance, and there are some who almost offer

themselves up. I think that just varies a lot. I think we've talked a lot about it being in the Army. Or the Navy. I do not know if we have considered how it would be in the Air Force as such. Okay, so maybe we haven't talked so much about it in reality (Maiken, Officer, in her 20s-30s).

Not the report, but we have been working on it for many, many years. And we have had our share of cases also in the Air Force. Offensive behavior, it is so bendable in my objective. Sometimes it doesn't take much for people to feel offended, and that is about a particular mindset (Paula, Officer, in her 50s-60s).

This behavior or approach to discrimination and degrading or even sexual comments, which the female soldiers convey is the type of coping mechanism, which Thidemann Faber also describes for female police officers in Denmark. Women who work in an environment where they are the minority, and at the same time, a world where the collective is paramount limits their abilities to act. Thus, being the outsider and abnormal may be even more difficult and challenging than to accept occasional teasing or sexually degrading comments. As Thidemann Faber argues:

The explanation of this phenomenon is probably that the female police ultimately benefit from focusing on the good intention behind the comments from their male colleagues. As long as the men in the field are exempted from the role of potential oppressors and thereby released from the potential consequences, which the comments may have, the female police officers are relieved from the role as victims of the comments (Thidemann Faber 2008, 248) [author translation].

Similar explanations may be given to the female soldiers' responses to discrimination in the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force; namely that by ignoring these comments they actively decide not to be placed in a position as victims and risk being alienated even further by their male colleagues. These accounts stand in contrast to the institutional narrative by the Royal Danish Air Force of being a progressive service with room and need for all gendered bodies (expressed in the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force as only two genders). However, the stories may be examples of the challenges an organization like the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force face in changing understandings and narratives particularly on gender since relations between gendered bodies (male and female) are situated in deeply rooted (military) practices, which are challenging to alter despite the best intentions. Moreover, militaries especially have relied on the production of militarized masculinities and an othering of the female body in constructions of soldier identities, which may make the changes even more challenging and prolong the changes in the social (as well as institutional and personal narrative) even further - if these can be fully implemented at all? Moreover, this tactic by the female Royal Danish Air Force soldiers may be an expression of a particular Danish approach to discrimination and responses to these in which the room for these types of conversations may be limited

because of the general understanding that gender equality is already achieved (Borchorst 2009; Bloksgaard 2012; Dahlerup 2019). An articulation of experiences of discrimination, therefore, places the victim in a vulnerable position, where speaking up and voicing discriminatory practices (and even acts of gender-based violence) may be deemed as overreactions and contributing to breaking the Band of Brothers. At the same time, some of the female soldiers actively fought against the idea that sexual harassment was part of the Royal Danish Air Force. One example of this is Alice:

In the beginning when I entered the Army, I thought "Wow, is this how you talk here? If so, I am only staying nine months, I don't want to put up with this." But then you begin to think and listen to how they talk and then you adopt that way of talking and it helped a bit. "Oh, this is how you are supposed to talk." You have to be like them, if you think they are brutish then retaliate in the same way. I learned this very quickly. It is all about collaboration, collaboration, collaboration. I have never experienced gender equality [issues] or sexual harassment at any time. Ever! (Alice, Non-Commissioned Officer, in her 50s-60s).

I can give you a small example, just a small example. According to our uniform regulations, you can have one button open on your shirt. Anyways, that is how you wear your shirt, got it? Then this female [uses the condescending Danish word *hunkønsvæsen*] is sitting there with two buttons open. And then the guys across [from her] they are sitting like this [demonstrating a stare]. Now, who is signaling what to whom...All I am saying is, try to put your own house in order first. I really cannot stand this [behavior] (Alice, Non-Commissioned Officer, in her 50s-60s).

Alice's accounts regarding sexual harassment and gender discrimination are frank and display a desire to protect and maintain particular ways of doing soldiering and interactions among soldiers in the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force. Alice's description of her own journey is used as an example of how female soldiers should *just learn the lingo and practices* of the organization and then everything will fall into place instead of disrupting the order of things with discussions on gender discrimination and harassment. The narrative that women in military work carry some of the blame for cases of sexual harassment and gender discrimination or at least have the potential to cause incidents due to their bodies and particularly gendered ways of working within the organization is also found in the accounts from Officers Paula and Mads. Hence, there is a certain degree of "*women disrupt the military culture*" in the argumentation and that it is not the organization that needs to adapt, but the female soldiers who need to adapt and understand the setting, which they have chosen to work in; a context that is dominated by male bodies and displays of masculinities:

Yes, and then I would say that women are also very different. Obviously, there is a difference if you, as a woman, consider the culture. Meaning that you are aware that this is a male-dominated workplace, and perhaps it is

not here you walk through the changing room with bare breasts. It is about also remembering the men, who can be extremely offended, so both genders must behave properly (Paula, Officer, in her 50s-60s).

Occasionally, I have met, and now that we are back during my training, I have met women who have not necessarily behaved very wisely to help strengthen their own position (Mads, Officer, in his 20s-30s).

Officer Jan and Jens also challenge the female soldier victim narrative in the stories of sexual harassment and gender discrimination by arguing that some (male) colleagues were fired in the process, but that these issues may at times be exaggerated and that some women are too sensitive and that a focus on these issues led to undesirable changes and challenges in the interactions between soldiers, which again, challenges the military culture and collectiveness. Hence, as Jan argues:

It is the same now, we are not allowed to have women hanging [nude calendars] in the office. It is a big problem in the mechanic hangars, where the calendars are sent to them from companies and such. I mean then all this talk about gender equality becomes...I mean if the women want to have Chippendales hanging, then by all means. I won't get offended. It is a bit like we are creating a problem that is not really there (Jan, Officer, in his 40s-50s).

We had sort of like a women's movement in the Defense, but it took a wrong turn towards handling (gender) equality in a direction that didn't help women. So, it ended up with them actually displaying women as the weak gender (Jens, Officer, in his 30s-40s).

Officer Jan and Jens's stories unfold how the dynamics between soldiers are challenged due to other gendered bodies, in this case, unwanted changes in practices at the local level i.e. the removal of nude (women) calendars in the mechanic hangars. Jan uses this as an example of how the discussion on gender equality in his opinion has gone too far and that the process of creating equality in the Danish Armed Forces is also a result of women being too sensitive and not understanding the jokes and culture. Again, the argument put forward by Bloksgaard (2012) previously that gender discrimination and sexual harassment can be brushed aside as merely jokes is part of the Danish context of examining gender norms. In this sense, using jokes can be seen as a coping mechanism to the changes happening at the local level due to pressure from the institution and global actors to becoming more diverse.

Officer Stine's narrative is particularly interesting in regard to the idea that "*female bodies disrupt the male bond and way of soldiering.*" As she describes in her story below, in order to fit in, she adopted male behavior and attempted to "become" a man by using masculine and sexist vocabulary and talking derogatorily about women and the female body. However, her attempts were in vain in the sense that despite her

efforts to mimic male behavior, she was confronted by her male colleagues who encouraged her to act more like a woman. Nonetheless, by then changing her ways and standing up against sexualized comments, she received backlash. What is interesting in Stine's account, however, is that she blames herself for not succeeding in fitting in instead of questioning the male-dominated and sexualized behavior that she found:

When I was a conscript and at the sergeant's training as well, I found myself coming up with exaggerated sexual jokes, i.e. the rifle looked like this or that, inappropriate. I took it upon myself to be inappropriate. But why? Because usually I am not like this. I felt I needed to, like if I did it, I was part of [the group]. So I tried to be a man [...]. I think it was me trying to fit in, and I thought that if I put away that part of myself that was feminine and womanly then I would probably fit in better. When I started at the Officer's school, I began to put my foot down if people made inappropriate comments, which they often did because I had started it myself. I had to say stop, "Don't talk about how I look or in that way." The boundaries suddenly became very hard because I had been looser and gone along in the beginning. I never felt offended because I was the one who started it, but the need to act this way, to think that I needed to do this to fit in, that is a bit sick (Stine, Officer, in her 20s-30s).

Stine's account situates the discussion presented previously about the two stands within feminist IR and women's roles in the military (Duncanson and Woodward 2016) perfectly in the context of the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force. Hence, in Stine's narrative the arguments presented by the anti-militarist IR feminists (Whitworth 2004; Enloe 2004) that women will always be subject to gendered discrimination and take an inferior role to their male colleagues because of gendered norms, which see the male as the standard soldier, is clear in her account. At the same time, Stine's narrative is also an example of a female soldier who is doing well in terms of her career and is progressing in terms of rank in the same way as her male peers. Stine's experiences reveal the complexities of the gendered hierarchies within the Danish Armed Forces and how these influence the everyday lives of the soldiers. At the same time, she is an example Duncanson and Woodward (2016) point out the scholarly discussion on the role of women in the defense where an increasing number of women join state military and a number of them are doing well within the organization despite the aforementioned discrimination towards them.

## **5.2. UNFOLDING MILITARY MASCULINITIES**

Whereas the uniform is a visual way to display a bodily connection to a military identity, there are other means, which the soldiers use to identify with a military identity and a particular military identity for the Royal Danish Air Force separate from the other services. This connection was often obtained by referring to themselves as



*specialists*. In this section, I, therefore, turn my attention to the soldier narratives of being a specialist by examining how this demarcation is part of negotiations over (gendered) military identities and how this is expressed through a classic identity construction of *us and them*.

As argued by i.e. Woodward & Duncanson (2017), Higate (2003), and Rones (2015), masculinities are significant to the ways in which military identities are constructed and negotiated, making an analysis of how masculinities become part of narrative negotiations by the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers particularly important. In this section, I turn my attention to the constructions and negotiations over masculinities among the soldiers. This includes an examination of which forms of masculinity are negotiated in the Royal Danish Air Force among the soldiers and which take a hegemonic position if they are constant or changing depending on context and intersections of other categories such as race/ethnicity, sexuality, and rank.

Power relations and hierarchies are essential components in constructions of gender relations including which masculinities take a hegemonic position, and which are subordinated (Enloe 2000; Belkin and Carver 2012; Higate 2003a; Woodward and Duncanson 2017; Zalewski 2017; Stoltz 2019). Moreover, Stoltz (2019) argues that *“if we want to identify how gendered power relations operate at both individual and collective levels, then we can use the notion of hegemonic masculinity to provide us with a framework for understanding how gender inequalities are produced and reproduced over time”* (Stoltz 2019, 3). As such, the military is an ideal setting for examining these tensions, as the armed forces by default relies on a hierarchical system enforced by rank, which in a visual way situates the soldiers in a power hierarchy among each other. Hierarchies within military contexts can be constructed and negotiated in a number of different ways. This means that a hierarchy can exist in terms of gendered bodies, between military ranks, education, age, and length of service, but also sexuality, religion, and ethnicity/race can play a part in the power relations, which the soldiers engage in.

In addition, as I have argued throughout this thesis, contextual settings i.e. space, place, and time in which these negotiations and constructions of (military) masculinities take place are important for the analysis of how military identities are formed. Moreover, as emphasized by Christensen and Jensen (2014) (see also Stoltz 2019; Stoltz 2020), the need to include an intersectional element to an analysis of (hegemonic) masculinities is necessary to fully comprehend the gendered power relations and particularities of the local context. Christensen and Jensen (2014) bring attention to the point of including an intersectional perspective in analyzing masculinities by arguing that:

One way to think about this is that class, race/ethnicity and sexuality can support the dominant position and male privilege of some men because it strengthens the legitimacy of their masculinity. Likewise, masculinity can

intersect with other categories in specific configurations that challenge or even subvert male privilege. It can thus be argued that class, race/ethnicity, and security can weaken or subvert the legitimacy of some men to the extent that they are either unable to gain any form of patriarchal dividend, or can only lay claim to a symbolic form of patriarchal dividend in the reduced form of being able to at least claim (hyper) masculinity and heterosexual conquest – in a social situation where very little else can be claimed (Christensen and Jensen 2014, 69–70).

As the quote by Christensen and Jensen (2014) demonstrates, intersecting categories, such as class, race/ethnicity, and sexuality may enforce certain dominant/or subordinate positions of some men and at the same time strengthen or weaken the legitimacy of their masculinity. In the case of the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers, this means that power hierarchies among the soldiers are constructed in combination with other categories than gender.

In a military setting, rank may be viewed as an artificially constructed social category, which in a concrete way situates the soldiers in power hierarchies. However, according to the interviewees in my study, the soldiers convey that in the Royal Danish Air Force, less attention is given to rank and instead focus is on the skills needed to perform a given assignment. This calls for intriguing negotiations over which categories become part of creating power hierarchies among the soldiers and how these unfold and are negotiated among the soldiers. Following Christensen and Jensen (2012), this is an example of how rank intersects with other categories such as gender and competences, and demonstrates that in a given context a category which might be powerful in other situations (such as a military rank) can take a more subordinate position than in other parts of the military institution i.e. the Army because other categories in this particular setting take a more dominate position (competences such as being technically skilled). This element demonstrates how intersections of social categories become concrete tools for negotiating power hierarchies in a military setting and follow the arguments by McCall (2005) that intersecting categories reveal direct ways in which identities are negotiated at the individual level and in relation to other groups, etc. This element calls for the significance of the Royal Danish Air Force as a case to examine military masculinities, as the traditional key tool to construct and maintain a hierarchy among soldiers, namely rank, is given less attention. Analytically, this means that it becomes important to locate alternative ways to construct military hierarchies as well as how this plays into the soldiers' military identities. Thus, this demonstrates how intersectionality relates directly to what types of masculinities are hegemonic within a given military service demonstrated by which social categories are emphasized or disregarded in combination with gender and masculinities.

That the Air Force exhibits a particular type of military masculinity(ies) aligns with Higate's (2003) studies of the RAF, which may indicate that there are resemblances between these services across national borders. This could also relate to the type of

military work, which the Air Force soldiers take part in, domestically and internationally, which takes on different forms i.e. less physical than traditional (Army) military work. This element connects to the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers' negotiations over masculinities, which include an emphasis on (gendered) hierarchies in the separation between us (the Air Force) and them (i.e. Army) (Higate 2003a).

The Royal Danish Air Force soldiers' reflections on their work and subsequent military identity(ies), also connect to Higate's (2003) studies in the British Armed Forces and reasons for joining the military today (Higate 2003). Higate states that recruits actively resist particular masculine ideals (of honor and sacrifice), challenging the universal "raw material" of basic and continued training into more idiosyncratic ideals (Higate 2003, 34). The narratives of why the soldiers are in the Royal Danish Air Force and their reflections on their work assignments, therefore, take a different form than, for instance, what a recent Danish PhD study by Thomas Randrup Pedersen *Soldierly Becomings: A Grunt Ethnography of Denmark's New 'Warrior Generation'* found among young grunts in the Danish Army. Here, the desire for adventure was a key to choosing a military career within the Army (Pedersen 2017). In the Royal Danish Air Force, however, the average age is around 40, a number of the military personnel have a mechanical education prior to joining the force, and the duration of the missions are significantly shorter than the missions the Army takes part in and the assignments are different from Army work as well.

As argued, the creation of an 'us' and 'them' is a common practice when creating identities (Biton and Salomon 2006). In the case of the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers, there is an extra dimension to the dissociation to the Army, which is linked to peace and security issues. As the following example from Non-Commissioned Officer Mike demonstrates, the need to stress that you are a *specialist* and the disassociation to the Army may be connected to the more violent and serious aspects of military work:

We are constantly told that we are primarily soldiers, right. But I have never thought of myself as a soldier. Well I mean, I wear a uniform and I know the skills needed to be a soldier, but I am not one of those running around and thinking "*Hell, now I'm going to kill somebody*" (Mike, Non-Commissioned Officer, in his 40s).

Mike's reflection of not thinking of himself as somebody who is "*running around and thinking 'Hell, now I going to kill somebody'*" holds a number of elements to military identity negotiations. Mike is actively distancing himself from the type of soldier work that entails taking lives and expressing physical dominance. At the same time, he is clearly stating that he is able to do this type of work but actively chooses not to. Similar to the example of Jens, I argue that Mike's reflections are an expression of narrative negotiations over military masculinities within the Royal Danish Air Force in which traditional soldier actions are linked to Army work, which soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force actively try to distance themselves from. There is thus, in

Mike and the other soldiers' narratives, a disassociation to hyper-masculinity. This disassociation can be linked to *the Danish case* (Dahlerup 2018) where a self-image of gender equality and gender sensitivity is a common reference - despite this not necessarily being a reality in practice (For a discussion on gender equality and the particularities of the Nordic countries see i.e. Siim and Stoltz 2015; Rolandsen Agustín and Siim 2015; Hernes 1987, Dahlerup 2018).

Besides being part of a national narrative in which certain understandings of gender and gender equality influence masculinities and femininities in identity constructions and work i.e. being a soldier, Mike's narrative is also part of a broader narrative on soldiering, which includes global narratives on gender, peace, and security. A global narrative, where peacekeeping and peacebuilding elements of soldiering have gained dominance since 2000 with UNSCR 1325. In this sense, Mike is speaking into an agenda by the UN and NATO in which military actions are articulated as being with the intention of creating peace and stability in insecure settings. This is also part of the Danish Armed Forces' institutional narrative of the type of work they carry out abroad i.e. "*Danish Defense should contribute to promoting peace and security*" (Forsvaret n.d). Hence, the warrior narrative is pushed in the background in the institutional as well as the personal narratives. It might, therefore, from the personal as well as the institutional narratives be a question of defining *good versus evil* in war and peace situations.

In addition, Mike's narrative demonstrates the relevance of time, space, and place in the construction of military identities. Mike's account may be an expression of a way to make sense of private (civilian) and professional (military) identities. By basing a military identity more on being a specialist rather than a soldier narrative, Mike may be able to better embody both identities in a national context. This element may be less articulated once you are on deployments and part of a contextual setting that entails conflict. The element of the seriousness of being part of the military is also detectable in my interview with Non-Commissioned Officer, Julie, in which she reflects on the seriousness of soldier life as something that is present in her life and that she found to be important for her military identity:

[...] Some of my colleagues will say, "But we are not soldiers, we are specialists," where I would always argue that we are soldiers because we participate in war actions and you don't do that simply as a specialist, then you are a soldier. We might not walk around with guns here at the barracks, but I still refer to myself as a soldier (Julie, Non-Commissioned Officer, in her 20s).

In Julie's account, there is a reflection on a basic understanding of soldiering, namely the basic premise of being part of the Danish Armed Forces that you occasionally go to war and ultimately are required to defend your country and fight enemies, violently. These identity negotiations are part of the negotiations of masculinities and legitimacy within the Royal Danish Air Force and in the Danish Armed Forces, internally and

externally and reveal the conflicting narrative negotiations, which the soldiers find themselves in as professional soldiers.

### 5.2.1. WE DO SOLDIERING DIFFERENTLY

One of the key ways the soldiers articulate a differentiation between them and other services, in particular, the Army was to refer to themselves as *specialists* (cf. Mike and Julie's narratives above). The soldiers' focus on being *specialists* is mirrored by Royal Danish Air Force management through official descriptions of the Royal Danish Air Force: "*The Air Force is one of Denmark's most highly technological workplaces [...] you will on a daily basis experience how advanced material helps with solving all types of tasks – from environmental surveillance, rescue at sea and sovereignty to assignments, which are solved far from Danish borders*" (Professionel Soldat n.d. p. 13). Hence, one may argue that the individual narrative and the institutional narratives of the Royal Danish Air Force find similar needs to specify the particularities of their service and the contrast to the two other services in the Danish Armed Forces. This focus on being specialist and emphasizing the technology element of the work that Royal Danish Air Force personnel carries out speaks into a narrative of increased attention to technology warfare on a global scene and in this sense legitimizing the Royal Danish Air Force and its significance and relevance in solving military work in a modern military institution.

Given the attention to being specialists, I examine this demarcation as a piece of the puzzle in constructing military identities for the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers and exemplify how this process entails gendered narratives and practices and is part of constructions and negotiations of masculinities. The following narrative accounts exemplify the tendency to focus on being special (specialist):

You are more a specialist for a specific work assignment, whereas in the Army...you can quite quickly educate an Army-man, it does not take as long compared to educating a flight mechanic, a cargo man or a pilot with parachute abilities. I would say it is more challenging to educate a pilot than an Army-man (Bjarne, Private, in his 20s).

You are a specialist and it is your experience which counts, not whether you are a private or a non-commissioned Officer, it is like...it is your experience that counts (Paul, Private, in his 50s).

There is not this old-school discipline. People are specialists in the Royal Danish Air Force (Kamma, Private, in her 50s).

The points made by Bjarne, Paul, and Kamma resonate with the notions of hierarchies among services, which Duncanson (2009; 2013) and Persson (2013) point to in their work with British and Swedish soldiers, respectively. This means that there is a need for the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers to differentiate themselves from the other

services in particular the Army and in this process justify their work as *special* and more *technically advanced* than Army work. In this process, they are defining a collective "we" that is different from the Army and one that unites them as Royal Danish Air Force soldiers. Analyzed through gendered lenses this process can be seen as a way of establishing legitimacy for their work in a space (a military setting), where traditional hegemonic understandings of masculinity have been associated with physical strength (Tickner 1992; Tickner and Sjoberg 2011). Hence, by arguing that their work is highly specialized, the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers are compensating for a lack of physical strength by arguing that their work is more sophisticated than "basic" Army work. At the same time, the soldiers diminish the importance of rank and hierarchies, once again disrupting traditional understandings of military hierarchies and their connection to traditional military masculinities and hegemonic power within the armed forces.

The accounts can, therefore, be viewed as an attempt to define a different form of military masculinity; namely, one that is not conditional to physical strength, but based on skills and advanced training, which require the ability to think and be independent. In this sense, being a specialist is understood to encompass masculine connotations situating Royal Danish Air Force personnel at a higher level of military hierarchy; creating a narrative that they are special, unique, and educated in addition to being in good shape compared to civilians. One could argue that the soldiers are attempting to narrate their military identity in a way that can provide them with a dominant position within the Danish Armed Forces despite their lack of physical endurance, muscular appearance, aggressiveness, and maleness compared to the Army soldiers. By creating a narrative in which the soldiers are not considered less in terms of their abilities to perform their work within the Royal Danish Air Force, but instead put focus on being special, unique, able to think outside the box, and independent, the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers bring other forms of masculinities into the equation of establishing a dominant position in the fight for the hegemonic ideal (see Messerschmidt 2012). In this discussion, Beasley's (2008) argument of distinguishing "*hegemonic from merely dominant men, from actual men or from their specific personality traits*" (Beasley 2008, 91) resonates with the nuances in the constructions and negotiations of masculinities among the soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force and their position to other soldiers i.e. the Army or civilians.

At the same time, the skills presented by, for example, flight mechanics in the Royal Danish Air Force hold masculine connotations in the sense that the soldiers emphasize their ability to work on heavy machinery and that they enjoy an atmosphere where workshop jokes, which may have condescending gendered content about women, are welcome. There is also a profound sense of pride in their abilities and an articulation that their skills are more sophisticated and require more education. This narrative is found in Bjarne's story where he discusses his own military identity and how he views himself within the military setting. As a private, Bjarne is ranked lowest in the military hierarchy. He is training and aspiring to rise within the military system, but his current

position is traditionally one with low responsibility and limited leave way in terms of decision-making powers. However, Bjarne's account is an example of the linear structure of the Royal Danish Air Force where rank is less important. A system where skills and competences surpass military ranks (in a number of cases). Hence, despite being located at the bottom level of the organization based on rank, Bjarne still believes that he is part of the mechanical team in the Royal Danish Air Force that holds specific skills, which are more complex than Army work.

Returning to how intersections of social categories influence the constructions and negotiations over military masculinities, the way that Bjarne is negotiating his military identity through a masculinity that relies on skills instead of muscular power or rank demonstrates how following Duncanson's work on hegemonic masculinities (2009, 2013) that masculinities (hegemonic forms as well) rely on contextual settings as well as intersecting categories, and moreover that they are constantly being negotiated. Hence, when Bjarne and the other especially male soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force stress other competences as significant for how to be a successful Air Force soldier, they are actively constructing and collectively engaging in a process of forming a particular type of masculinity. A type of masculinity that has the potential to take a hegemonic form within the Air Force at least. These negotiations of masculinity present a similarity to Higate's (2003) understandings of the differences in military masculinities within the armed forces and how these are negotiated on different levels based on different connotations. That is to say that even though Bjarne is aware that the Army represents more classic masculine characteristics such as physical strength, endurance, etc., he considers himself high in the military hierarchy at his local base given his skills as a member of the Royal Danish Air Force. Narrative negotiations over different forms of masculinity, which Messerschmidt and Connell (2005; 2011) call attention to in their work on hegemonic masculinities and their abilities to change given a specific context and their significance for the organization is, thus, detectable in the soldiers' descriptions of their military work and the ways in which this relates to how they perceive their military identity e.g. being a specialist and then a soldier or stressing the soldier part. The type of hegemonic masculinity that the Air Force soldiers stress in the context of the Air Force may be challenged when seen in relation to other forms of masculinity within the military as a whole. I discuss this point further below.

As argued above, a way to achieve a separate identity and at the same time claim a certain place in the military hierarchy is to use particular words (Cohn 1987) to describe a soldier in the Royal Danish Air Force and as a particular military service one example being the use of the word *specialist* instead of *infantry soldiers*. As Table 8 summarizes, there were a number of words, which the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers used to refer to Air Force soldiers and Army soldiers respectively, and which are used to signify traits, which the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers use in their narratives to create an 'us' and 'them'. As the list of words in Table 8 indicates, the soldiers had a particular understanding of which traits characterized the two different

services. I argue that these categorizations/words, entail gendered components and reveal processes of constructions and negotiations over military masculinities in the Royal Danish Air Force, which set them apart as a military unit. In line with Higate's (2003) argument, the form of military masculinities, which may be found among Royal Danish Air Force soldiers relate to gentler and softer skillsets/traits i.e. being softer versus tough or low-risk versus high-risk.

In addition, there might be characteristics that are even more enunciated at ACW and ATW, which relate to the type of military assignments they carry out i.e. surveillance and air transport in contrast to the fighter jets.

Royal Danish Air Force (US)	ARMY (THEM)
Modern	Traditional
Young service	Long history
Gender equal	Macho
Softer	Tough
Low-risk	High-risk
Specialists	Infantry soldier
Flexible	Rigid

Table 8. Summary of the words used by Royal Danish Air Force soldiers to describe themselves and soldiers in the Army.

The clear articulation of an 'us' and 'them' is further exemplified in the two following quotes by Officer Mads and Non-Commissioned Officer Alice:

We see ourselves as **flexible** and **skilled**, but we probably also put ourselves in one group and compare ourselves to the other services and in that way create an identity where we say, "Well, the others are like this, so we are something different." We would argue that the Army is very rigid and set and not that good at thinking outside the box, where we have a more flexible approach. We have a motto that reads, "*Flexibility is the key to air power*" (Mads, Officer, in his 20s-30s).

Yes, well there is a difference between the Army and the Air Force. That is certain. Now, I have experienced both services, and this one [the Army] is the tough one. In here [the Royal Danish Air Force] we are softer. Also, in the way we talk and how we act and stuff like that. Certainly. I think we are softer (Alice, Non-Commissioned Officer, in her 50s-60s).

As the table and the interview transcripts demonstrate, a process of differentiation between the services is detectable in the soldier narratives. I argue in line with Cohn (1987) that words by actors hold significant meaning for the gendered narratives of an organization. This means that the words used by the soldiers give meaning to the military narratives in the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force, and



are part of identity formation and negotiations. Hence, in Mads and Alice's process of differentiation, gendered elements are detectable in their choice of words, for example, by using soft and flexible versus tough, rigid, and set. Thus, when Alice says that "we" (the Royal Danish Air Force) are the *softer* service, she is actively gendering the different services and enforcing a gendered hierarchy among them in which power struggles and hierarchies between soldiers and services become evident.

Being softer is not a connotation often valued within a military hierarchy. By using this word to describe the Royal Danish Air Force as a collective, Alice could be argued to place the Royal Danish Air Force low in the internal military hierarchy when it comes to military force. This may be the intention of Alice; to acknowledge that the Army carries out a type of military work that requires soldiers to be tough and strong, whereas the Royal Danish Air Force does something different less in terms of traditional military contributions, but even so, provides an important military impact. In other words, in Alice's narrative the social identity of the Royal Danish Air Force is not based on fulfillment of a classic military narrative of being tough and strong (or a warrior identity as presented in Haaland and Rones' studies of the Norwegian armed forces on particularly the Army (Haaland 2010; Rones 2015b)). On the contrary, Alice describes values that have feminine connotations as representing Royal Danish Air Force soldiers. One might even argue that this description and characteristics of the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers, which Alice among others describe, relate well to articulations of peacekeeping and peacebuilding as these can be seen in UNSCR 1325 and NATO documents, where these types of values are presented as important in new forms of military work. However, in the case of the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers, they are not placing these characteristics on female bodies only, which NATO and the UN's documents may be argued to do. On the contrary, these characteristics are used on all military members of the Royal Danish Air Force.

This description of the characteristics of Royal Danish Air Force soldiers in comparison to i.e. the Army is curious in a theoretical discussion over the application of masculinities to analyze and examine military identities. It seems that for the soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force, being soft(er) is not a disadvantage, but an identity-marker, which is valued. In this regard, locating different forms of military masculinities might lack certain nuances in how the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers negotiate their military identities. Alice's description suggests that femininities are part of the gendered identity constructions. Hence, negotiations over military masculinities need to be viewed in combination with certain femininities to understand the complexities of military identity constructions including the variations among services and how gendered hierarchies are negotiated in the narratives of the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers. This nuance and ambiguity of masculinities and femininities and their role in the creation of military identities aligns with studies found among Norwegian soldiers where, [...] *the military is shaped by a masculine appearance combined with feminine behavior* (Rones 2015, 1). This might suggest that military identities and the link to gendered bodies and intersectional categories

such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, nationality etc. can be understood more deeply and in more nuances through a queer perspective wherein masculinities, femininities, and gendered bodies take a more fluid understanding. At the same time, it calls attention to some of the implications that the concept of hegemonic masculinity and militarized masculinities may present (Henry 2017). Henry argues that is important to be aware of how the application of the concept of hegemonic masculinity given its popularity within critical military studies and feminist IR and security studies at times reproduce conceptual understandings of what is hegemonic in a military setting rather than explicitly explaining the processes and categories that soldiers use in their negotiations over military identities and military work. Hence, again it is significant to highlight that contextual settings or locatedness, as Woodward (2003) argues, is key in analyzing which, how, and when, particular masculinities take a hegemonic, dominate, or dominated position in military identity negotiations. Hence, masculinities and negotiations over these are part of the ways in which the Danish soldiers relate to their military identities and their military work and in this sense is the concept of different types of masculinities a useful tool. From an empirical perspective, the use of masculinities as a concept relates to how the soldiers themselves through particular vocabulary discuss and negotiate their military identities. When situating this vocabulary as found in the empirical data within the literature of masculinities and militarized masculinities in military work and identity formations, it is possible to stress how vocabulary used to define masculinity(ies) is part of a dialectic process between scholarship, military organizations, and the individual soldiers.

Even though there are national differences between the Norwegian and Danish armed forces, as well as between services, Rones' (2015) observations about feminine behavior in the (Norwegian) armed forces resonates with a number of the narratives produced by the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers. This is for example supported in my study by Officer Jens, who argues that:

Yes, and I think in reality...masculinity is probably iced out in the Royal Danish Air Force. I mean, there is a majority of people, who try to talk it down, it seems sort of more...well except for Squadron 660, who are a group of fighting hounds, who only guard and protect. And then, there has to be masculinity (Jens, Officer, in his 30s-40s).

Jens' description aligns with the argument that negotiations of a military identity relies on masculinities and femininities (Rones 2015). Moreover, it brings interesting dimensions to the constructions of military masculinities, including hegemonic forms, dominant and dominating (Connell 2016; Messerschmidt 2012; Christensen and Jensen 2014; Myrntinen, Khattab, and Naujoks 2017; Beasley 2008). Jens' argument that masculinity is bullied out in the Royal Danish Air Force is an intriguing narrative of the collective military identity of the Royal Danish Air Force. Jens' account connects with the institutional narrative of the Royal Danish Air Force as a progressive force with a focus on the recruitment of women, and which places

emphasis on special assignments, which make them unique within the Danish Armed Forces as a whole and a frontrunner in terms of gender equality. At the same time, this element brings interesting elements to how masculinities are negotiated and constructed in the Royal Danish Air Force, and which forms of (military) masculinities may be hegemonic or dominant. As Beasley argues:

It is important to be able to disentangle hegemonic from merely dominant types/dominant actual men and their associated personality traits [...] As Connell himself notes, many men who hold significant social power do not embody hegemonic masculinity (Beasley 2008, 90).

Hence, in the narrative accounts by Jens as well as the other examples above, negotiations over military masculinities are part of a power game within and among the services on how to balance the hierarchical system in the military. Hence, what Jens is describing in his narrative where extreme or hyper-masculinity is disregarded could be deemed a dominant form of military masculinity in the particular military wing that Jens is part of. However, whether this is also a hegemonic form of military masculinity in the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces as a whole is more questionable. Thus, at the same time as Jens dismisses hyper-masculinity in the Royal Danish Air Force, he stresses that there are certain tasks, like the Squadron 660, where soldiers need to be tough and display masculinity, as these assignments concern protection. This example demonstrates the complexities of military masculinities and the connection to military work and military identities. In the first part of the quote, Jens is dismissing the need for masculinity in the type of work that the Royal Danish Air Force carries out. However, in the latter part, Jens returns to support classic military masculinity characteristics such as toughness, courage, and physical power and links these to represent the epitome of the ultimate soldier (Tickner 1992); a soldier who can protect the nation and civilians and relies on displaying masculinity for legitimacy.

One way to understand this dichotomy, I argue, is to examine Jens' account as an expression of the existence of a form of hegemonic masculinity within the Royal Danish Air Force (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Duncanson 2015). A hegemonic masculinity, which is only practiced and constructed among a select group of Royal Danish Air Force soldiers, who possess abilities that only few soldiers have in common, and that this practice of masculinity is necessary for tough and high-risk soldier work; that is to "to guard and protect". This is in contrast to Alice's account of the Royal Danish Air Force being the "softer" service. It further reveals complexities in identity formations (including military identities) and how contextual settings and assignments are part of creating different military identities. This includes how gendered hierarchies are part of these negotiations within the Royal Danish Air Force, where some soldiers are identified as being tougher and embodying more masculine values, such as, the Squadron 660 team compared to soldiers who work with supplies or logistics.

These struggles and negotiations over gendered military masculinities are part of Jens' narrative struggle over his own understandings of military masculinities and subsequently military identity for himself and the Royal Danish Air Force as a collective. He adheres to the institutional narrative of the Royal Danish Air Force in the sense that a lack of masculinity (which he translates to mean that there is room for softer skills that can be carried out by female bodies), makes the Royal Danish Air Force a progressive service with a focus on gender equality. At the same time, he believes that there are certain aspects of the Royal Danish Air Force that rely on traditional normative understandings of military work and military identity, which require male bodies (Tickner 1992; Sjoberg 2015).

The second part of Jens' narrative connects to a transnational narrative of a warrior culture present in a number of especially Western militaries. A narrative, which, as exemplified in the theory section, is one of the narratives that describe military identities and military masculinities. This is the case in Rones' studies in the Norwegian military and detectable in the Swedish military as well (Rones 2015; MacKenzie 2015; Kronsell and Svedberg 2012). Jens is, thus, adopting traditionally masculine military narratives of being tough and brave (embodied by Squadron 660 soldiers) as well as describing gendered military narratives that are in line with the more feminine understandings and reflecting the institutional narrative of the Royal Danish Air Force as being progressive and gender-sensitive (i.e. masculinity is bullied out). The duality and complexity in Jens's narrative exemplify how soldiers constantly negotiate military identities and base these on skills, assignments, relations with other services and their own personal experiences. In these negotiations, the soldiers make use of different gendered narratives of military identities and military work, which include both masculinities and femininities, and which may be connected to national gendered narratives, as well as global narratives regarding gender and military work. This furthers my argument that the gender narratives, including dominant forms of masculinities, present in the Royal Danish Air Force, rely on other traits than traditional (hegemonic) military masculinities. Masculinities are thus not only situational, but also processes. In addition, the personal narratives (and institutional) narrative of who the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force rely on societal narratives in a Danish context in which gender equality is a common frame of reference (Borchorst 2009; Dahlerup 2018). Hence, the negotiation of being both aggressive (a warrior culture) and embracing softer qualities (peacebuilding culture), summarizes the complexities of Danish exceptionalism in regard to military work and thereby also military identity, in which societal narratives on gender equality influence military identities as well.

Woodward (2003) and Higate's (2003)'s arguments that masculinities are reliant on time and space to unfold and develop, and that, depending on contextual settings, masculinities take different forms and hold different meanings stresses the point to address intersectional categories, which the Royal Danish Air Force rely on in their constructions of military identities. This includes both personal and institutional

narratives on what it means to be a soldier in the Royal Danish Air Force. In this sense, ethnicity and nationality become important components for how the soldiers negotiate their military identities and which normative understandings of masculinities prevail and become dominant. Christensen and Jensen (2014) argue that:

[...] In a sense, men and masculinities that are constructed as non-equality oriented are relegated to the position of hegemonic masculinity's other. Especially when they are also working class and Muslim (Christensen and Jensen 2014, 70).

The point Christensen and Jensen make here may explain why the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers find it unproblematic to be seen as less aggressive, muscular, and physically inferior to the Army, because they instead stress that the dominant form of masculinity found among Royal Danish Air Force soldiers entails room for being equality oriented. Again, stressing that the Royal Danish Air Force, despite lack of classic military masculinity traits, position themselves high in the internal military hierarchy as almost elitist without this being a hegemonic form of masculinity.

These negotiations of military masculinities and the different services, where different social categories and skills such as being technically competent, out-of-the-box-thinking are used to negotiate particular understandings of these within the Air Force are also evident in Officer Jens' narrative as presented previously. Hence, the narratives reveal concrete ways in which particular vocabulary and social categories are part of complex identity negotiations on the individual level and in combination with social narratives of who and what the soldiers believe the Royal Danish Air Force is and what they do. Another example of the creation of a particular Royal Danish Air Force collective "we" is from the same interview with Jens, where he describes a situation in which a division from the Royal Danish Air Force was deployed at the same base as the Army. Jens' account describes a setting where negotiations over being a "real" soldier are explicit, and how in this process power relations and struggles over masculinity among the different military groups take place. Jens argues that:

In my opinion, the more macho it is, the better it is in the Army. The more it is a matter of we have to survive this situation the better, and they [the Army] also have a habit of creating these situations themselves. We had to integrate with the Army-people and there was a tent, one of those rotation tents, where you only sleep on a camp-bed. Our Commanding Officer of the radar unit said, "Why the F... are there no mattresses?" But according to the Army, there were not supposed to be any mattresses. Our Commanding Officer just called back home to our supplier and ordered 20 mattresses, and they were there within three weeks. This is an example of how the Army gets this misunderstood idea about the Air Force, where they talk about the Air Force as spoiled kids, but basically, they are just jealous because the Air Force is able to think outside of the box and make

the best of the situation. I don't think I experience this type of masculinity in the Air Force. I think that here you are measured on how well you perform your specific assignments, and then your rank is less relevant (Jens, Officer, in his 40s).

Jens presents this as an example of how the Army has a need to create hyper-masculine settings, especially on deployments. The idea is that if "*we sleep in a bivouac and shit in a bag then the deployment has been a success. But no, I mean the best scenario is to sleep inside, have toilet facilities, and all that stuff.*" Jens connects differences in practices and the three services with how traditions, along with contextual settings, create and maintain notions of masculinities. Hence, Jens' argument that hyper-masculinity is even more articulated in extreme contextual settings i.e. deployments to conflict areas, emphasizes the need to create an 'us' and 'them' in which the Royal Danish Air Force oppose this type of behavior and, one may argue, deem the masculinity which the Army constructs juvenile compared to the behavior, including displays of masculinities, in the Royal Danish Air Force. Hence, it seems that even though masculinities may be more expressed in conflict areas, there is still a need for the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers to differentiate themselves and create an articulated 'us' and social narrative of who the Royal Danish Air Force is and how they handle extreme situations in a more mature manner. Again, with a reference to being able to think outside the box, being adaptive and quick.

Jens' experiences place emphasis on the negotiations over masculinity within the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces in general and how this process is negotiated collectively among the services through social narratives and that the contextual setting of deployment stresses the need to perform masculinity in a more classic hegemonic form of military masculinity (see Higate 2003 on military masculinities). At the same time, Jens defends the practices of the Royal Danish Air Force by arguing that the Army are the ones who are juvenile and jealous of the Royal Danish Air Force because they are able to take measures and "think outside the box". Once again, the notion of being special and having other competences i.e. being smarter and more specialized is a way to combat the notion that the *best* soldiers, the *real* soldiers, are the ones who are physically superior.

Jens' account is particularly interesting, as he is a former Army Officer. Jens' background in the Army displays a duality in his understandings of how to be the "best" and a "real" soldier. This is reflected at another point in the interview, when Jens comments on the physical demands, and how he regards the lack of determination of some Royal Danish Air Force personnel to enhance these skills as problematic. Jens is a muscular person and direct in his vocabulary. Unlike some of the other interviewees, Jens does see a need for a high degree of physical abilities in the Royal Danish Air Force, despite different work tasks since this is part of being a "real" soldier, according to him. Jens' concerns about the physical demands are based on personal experiences from a number of deployments and having experienced the pain of losing personnel under his command and having to call loved ones to inform them

of the death of a partner, son, daughter, brother, sister, father, or mother. The physical dimension as a requirement for soldiers is grounded in a particular form of masculinity, where physical strength is key in how well you are able to perform your role as a soldier, when deployed on missions (see similar arguments in Thidemann Faber's work on the Danish police 2008). Thus, in these two examples, Jens is dismissing hyper-masculinity as a way to perform "real" soldiering (the case of the camp-situation). Jens is struggling with the complexities of being part of a military organization and being trained in the Army, which according to him placed focus on physical endurance, and then currently working in a different service, where the institutional narrative places emphasis on uniqueness and being a front-runner in terms of gender diversity. Thus, Jens returns to classic military skills, such as physical abilities when classifying how to be a successful soldier in the Danish Armed Forces. This duality is interesting and part of the negotiations (and potential personal and collective) struggles over competences, skillsets in relation to military identities (including performing and negotiating masculinities or femininities), which seem to take place among a number of the soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force.

### **5.2.2. GENDERED QUALIFICATIONS?**

The negotiations over competences and skills and how these relate to gendered soldier bodies and requirement from the military institution, which Jens expresses in the previous section, link to institutional and global narratives on military work in which an increased focus on gender and softer skillsets, such as compassion and care, have become part of a strategy for operational effectiveness and a discussion on soldier bodies male and female (Jennings 2011). The qualifications of compassion and communication are especially linked to female bodies and the UN and NATO often highlight these skills as successful tools in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. This assumption relies on essentialist and inherent understandings of men and women and their abilities to perform soldiering. For the soldiers I interviewed, this particular aspect of inherent understandings of men and women, were part of their reflections, but also a point that some of the female soldiers struggle with in terms of acceptance within the field and their own military identity. The discussion tries into a wider conversation in the Royal Danish Air Force of particular jobs, which are suited for women – simply because of their gender and which demonstrates following Woodward and Jenkins (2011) how identities, military ones included, are relational and depending on context and where the specific assignments in the Air Force call attention to how gendered military identities are shaped by gendered understandings of bodies and competences that may deviate from traditional military skills of being physically strong and muscular.

This type of identity negotiation is exemplified in the narrative by Officer Jan in which gendered understandings of what male and female soldiers are supposed to do intersect with military bodies, assignments, qualifications. Jan argues that the armed forces and, in particular the Royal Danish Air Force, have positions, which are fit for

women; meaning that there are certain positions within military work, where women do not disrupt the band of brothers. Jan is both an Officer of rank and holds a leadership position within the Royal Danish Air Force. Seen through a traditional way of analyzing military hierarchies based on the understanding that certain social categories such as rank, gender, ethnicity, etc. intersect and influence identity formations, Jan's rank as an officer, being male and cis-gender, as well as holding a leadership position places him high within a traditional military hierarchy. As I discussed previously, rank may not in the Air Force be a sole reason for being placed high in the internal hierarchy, however, in Jan's case it can be part of putting weight behind his words within the organization as he is also part of management decisions and since he is also male, white, muscular, living in a heteronormative relationship, and through his leadership job in a position of power, his reflections on skills and competences and how these relate to gendered bodies should be seen in connection to a soldier, who can be argued to possess all the "right" qualifications. In his interview, Jan was, however, keen to discuss the leadership and management aspects of the changes in the bodies that carry out military work today:

If I look at the Unit I am in now. We are actually the unit within the Danish Armed Forces with the most women. It is around 17 percent. I don't find that very masculine. Not at all. I actually think that it is quite equal across the board. All of the positions we have could just as easily be undertaken by a woman. And we want more women, but there are not enough who apply. I also know other units where I, from a personal perspective, would prefer a man to a woman more from psychological considerations, for instance, if I fall and break something, he could grab me and pull me out. Whereas a woman would not be able to do that with a combat soldier who weighs 110 kilograms. And it might be that schism, that spectrum. So, I think it is very much dependent on the work assignment (Jan, Officer, in his 30-40s).

Jan's description is an example of a gender-segregated approach to gender equality by arguing that there are certain jobs, which appeal to women, and other jobs, which are more suited for male bodies. This approach is a classic response to gender diversity in organizations and one that is often used to respond to why certain jobs/organization have a majority of either men or women; namely that inherent differences exist between male and female bodies, which makes them choose different career patterns (Bloksgaard 2004). In this sense, the women in Jan's unit and the Royal Danish Air Force in general do not disrupt traditional masculine narratives of soldiers because the assignments that the Royal Danish Air Force carry out often require less extensive physical strength. Thus, there is a clear connection between gendered hierarchies and military work in which women can serve and are welcome as long as they do not disrupt the traditional order of military work in which male soldiers are still preferred to carry out the "real" soldier work.



Officer Jens points to another example of the links between military bodies, physique, and gender. Jens argues that ACW is a good place for women because this part of the Royal Danish Air Force has assignments and working conditions that are well suited for women and mothers. As Officer Jens argues:

[...] It is a job where you can be a mother to a large extent because you can work and leave so you have time to pick up the children from daycare. I mean, it would be cool if we could point this out. And then of course make sure that the degree of make-up and stuff before you leave for work is in somewhat coherence with the uniform. So, that you still keep the soldier identity (Jens, Officer, in his 40s-50s).

In his story, Jens speaks to traditional (military) narratives of women as bearers of the nation (see Yuval-Davis *Gender and the Nation*, 1997) in which motherhood and caring for children is a natural and important part of women's lives. Something that also affects their worklife and thereby the military assignments most suited for women: deskwork, surveillance, and logistics rather than direct combat. At the same time, Jens' emphasis on female soldiers needing to tone down their use of make-up to make their appearance match the uniform tells a gendered story of how the ideal soldier body is still based on a male figure with a particular appearance. Moreover, it connects to the points made previously that female bodies are welcome within the organization as long as they do not disrupt the Band of Brothers by engaging in "real" soldier work i.e. combat. This links to Melissa Herbert's points from her book *in Camouflage Isn't Only for Combat*, (2000) which demonstrates how notions of soldiering as an exclusively male/manly job place female soldiers in structures where they constantly have to balance a fine line of being manly enough, but never too manly. Although Jens' story does not directly relate to incidents of sexual harassment and gender discrimination, the normative ideas that he puts forward are part of traditional and gendered narratives of military work and identity that persists in the Danish Armed Forces and which may challenge individuals who do not live up to these normative ideals of gendered bodies and assigned behavior.

The links between soldier bodies and competences and basing these on gender are also found among the female soldier. One example is Paula, an Officer in her 40s-50s who has been in the Royal Danish Air Force for around plus 20 years. Paula starts the conversation on gender equality by saying "*It has shifted tremendously from here to here [points to timeline]*," indicating that there is a time aspect in the narrative of military work and gender more precisely women's inclusion in the military apparatus including the Royal Danish Air Force. Paula argues that women's presence in the military has become more positive and valued within the organization from when she first began to work for the military in the 1980s. Simultaneously, she is making use of the same understandings of soldier work and gendered bodies in which certain military work is more fit for women i.e. combat-related tasks.

Besides having been part of the Royal Danish Air Force for a long time, Paula has a family connection to the military going back generations. The job portfolio of a Royal Danish Air Force Officer was key to her choosing a career within the armed forces. However, in Paula's case, gendered narratives within the organization have been a constant companion for her entire career. As such, she did not join the military before it was possible for women to obtain an officer position. Although the Royal Danish Air Force has always included women, it was not until 1974 that women were allowed into the officer academies in all services (and not before 1988 were women allowed to hold a position, in which they took part in direct combat) (Værnsfælles Forsvarskommando 2015). Even after women gained the right to serve, officer positions were still reserved for male soldiers upholding a traditional normative view on gender (in the binary form). In Paula's case, she did not want to serve in the military before she was able to pursue a military career at the officer level, where the exciting assignments were, according to her:

Well I am, how to put it, influenced by my heritage. It actually came as a calling, it might sound strange because I have wanted to do all sorts of things, but then there came a time when they opened up for women to become officers. Before this, women were only, how do you say, able to become privates, and that was not a job I found interesting. But then I read this brochure that you could become an officer in the Air Force, and thought, "*This is it, this is what I want to be*" (Paula, Officer, in her 40-50s).

Besides being an active serving soldier, Paula worked on diversity plans within the organization and presented some of the institutional narratives and understandings of the Royal Danish Air Force in her stories. Paula was interested in promoting the Royal Danish Air Force and recruiting new soldiers, including women to the service and argued that this required the military to improve their presentation of who they are and what type of work they carry out. Paula stresses that contrary to the other two forces, women's entry into the Royal Danish Air Force has been easier and with fewer battles. She is convinced that the type of work that the Royal Danish Air Force carries out appeals more to women because there is less combat and that the working hours are more adapted to having a stable family and private life including having children, picking them up from daycare, and a work-life-balance, which includes working hours that fit these needs.

Paula bases her narrative on the idea that there is a need for a different type of soldier (embodied by the female soldier) which again links to binary norms on gender. Paula is not experiencing narrative struggles over her own personal narrative of military work and military identity and that of the organization, including her own position within the military. In this sense, Paula is using the institutional narrative of the Royal Danish Air Force in her own narrative of military work and military identity. Hence, Paula is basing her narrative on traditional narratives on gendered bodies and capabilities as well by arguing that women find less dangerous positions more

appealing compared to being a platoon leader for a fighter squad, but at the same time, contribute to the greater good by other means. This notion follows an operational effectiveness mindset as discussed by Jennings in which women and men contribute to different aspects of the military apparatus based on their gender (sex) (Jennings 2011).

In her narrative, Paula is speaking into the institutional narratives of diversity in the Danish Armed Forces, which are presented in their diversity plans from 2011, and their work on UNSCR 1325 (NAP 2008-2014), which has a clear focus on recruiting more women into the Danish military (see discussion in Chapter 4 on national, regional, and international policies). Focus on new values and skills, which are articulated in policies and on the top level of the organization are also points that are highlighted by the soldiers. In particular, there is an understanding that the Royal Danish Air Force is different and does soldiering differently. Hence, the political and institutional debates, which Paula addresses on the increase of women in the Danish Armed Forces (but still limited numbers), is something that is present in the soldiers' minds and in their reflections of their own workplace.

The narratives relating to qualification and gendered bodies as pointed to by Jan and Paula also connects to the narrative of having the "right" physique in which understandings of ideal military bodies (read male) and an articulation of normative understandings of biological differences between men and women and the assignments they carry out within the organization become evident. At the same time, not having the "right physique and therefore not having the "right" soldier body, is not something at women experience. Hence, being unfit for soldier work can also be something that male soldiers experience, which means that only is the standard soldier narrative still male, but individuals who fail to live up to physical standards can also be singled out. One practice in this regard is to be given a princess letter, as described in the quote by Palle:

Yes, there are even more physical requirements now. In the past, there were some who did not do their tests very often. That does not really happen anymore, but then they just get what we call it a princess letter (Palle, Private, in his 20s-30s).

A Princess Letter is a term used unofficially to state if somebody is excused from certain physical activities. The feminization by means of the name adds to the othering of the female soldier body and challenges the institutional narrative that the Royal Danish Air Force is a place where gender equality is valued. These accounts are small examples of how language is part of creating normative understandings of gender. They may seem innocent on their own, however, as Cohn argues by accepting certain vocabulary, a particular reality is created within an organization like the military and among the soldiers (Cohn, 1987). From an intersectional approach and the connection to how this is part of the ways in which military masculinities are negotiated, it is clear as following Woodward (2003) and Higate (2003) that the soldier body creates certain

ambiguities in relation to understandings of skills and competences. Hence, as mentioned above, the idea of the unfit soldier body also disrupts the military masculine identities, as these are unable to perform the basic soldier duties. Furthermore, the analysis of these narrative account where particular understandings of military bodies – the right and wrong kin - addresses the discussion by Connell (2016) on military masculinities and how these change depending on context and therefore take on different forms and functions. An example of this is articulated by Jens, who is an Officer in the Royal Danish Air Force:

I know the consequence. I have a motto: "If I am afraid to be in the trench with you, we cannot work together." If I don't trust that the person next to me can fix me, what is it worth then? We just had the discussion where we had somebody who was partly suited for deployment. He is so fat. We measure it in BMI, and his BMI is around 34-35, that means around 120 plus kilograms. It is very easy for me to advise my superior in this case. I could simply say, "Imagine we are on a work trip, just a quick visit to a deployed unit. But then the plane crashes and Ronni gets injured. Now you are in a dilemma. Do you run without Ronni, or do you drag Ronni along, knowing that you cannot lift 120 plus kilograms for more than 10 meters, and then you also die. Is this a dilemma you want to be placed in?" No, he didn't want that scenario. Well, then you have the answer. Ronni cannot be deployed before he loses weight (Jens, Officer, in his 40s).

As the quote from Jens demonstrates, conversations about fitness for deployment and the ideal body for soldiering are articulated within the organization and measured in concrete terms. Failure to live up to these has consequences for the individual soldiers as well as lifting the work assignments within the organization. In the above case, the soldier is deemed unfit for deployment based on his body, even though he might be able to solve his everyday assignments in Denmark, for example, as a flight mechanic or a clerk. This again demonstrates how ideal understandings of and constructions on military bodies are closely linked to ideas of classical military work and thereby physical strength and endurance in dangerous situations. It also stresses that space and place are important aspects in the evaluation of military work and identity and the bodies that perform the duties of the soldiers.

These aspects stress the narrative struggles between and among the soldiers in regard to their own experiences and also in relation to the Danish Armed Forces' and Royal Danish Air Force's narratives on military work and identity. Moreover, this also means that military bodies and the qualifications that soldiers are expected to have are evaluated on gendered expectations, which rely on particular understandings of masculinities and the performance of these in a military setting. The dilemma which Jens presents about Ronni, who is unfit for deployment because he is overweight, also means that although masculinities in the Air Force may be negotiated based on other skills than physical endurance, there is still an understanding that the soldier body needs to be able to meet certain criteria, even though it might not be necessary for the

work assignments at home. This stresses that despite some leave way in how Air Force soldiers relate to their military masculinities, there is still a certain standard, which needs to be protected and, in this particular case of Ronni, it means that his comrades finds him unfit and also not representative for the type qualifications and military masculinity, which they believe that Air Force stands for.

### **5.3. COMMANDERS, COLLEAGUES, AND COMRADES**

A good soldier is trustworthy, adaptable, holds high expertise, and processes a military understanding of the organization and work assignments. A good soldier is collaborative, helpful, and respectful [collective words articulated by the soldiers in the interviews].

The above sentence captures central descriptions present in the soldiers' accounts of important qualifications and competences for soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force; qualifications that unite the collective "we" of the Royal Danish Air Force. The descriptions cut across specific work functions and are applicable to flight mechanics, radar observers, pilots, etc. Key to the comments made by the interviewees is the notion that a good soldier needs to be able to work collectively to ensure that the organization functions to the best of its ability. This notion of collectiveness and sense of trustworthiness, respect, and loyalty are characteristics, which are often associated with military organizations and links to the idea of a Band of Brothers (MacKenzie 2015).

As I have argued, global narratives on gender, peace, and security presented by the UN and NATO (in particular based on UNSCR 1325) are mainly in line with the "right-to-serve" argument and take an operational effectiveness approach to women's inclusion in armed forces. This entails a perspective that men and women inherently hold different qualifications, which are needed for the creation of peace, and that this justifies and signifies the importance of women in military positions. This approach is both binary and mostly uses gender as a synonym for women, and at the same time maintains stereotypical understandings of men and women including the influence of masculinities and femininities in military contexts. This approach is simplistic at best and at worst may risk alienating gendered bodies who do not live up to binary understandings of gender and furthermore uphold gendered hierarchies and misconduct within the armed forces and among civil populations. Nonetheless, I argue that these global narratives on gender are detectable in the national context of the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force and are part of the discussions on military identities and military work especially when it comes to the inclusion of women into the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force.

In the personal narratives, at first there were no articulations of differences in men and women's qualifications in terms of military service in the Royal Danish Air Force at least for the same job functions. Nor did there seem to be a narrative that women were

disrupting the Band of Brothers. On the contrary, the interviewees mainly highlight the benefits of women's increasing numbers in the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force. Nonetheless, as I have discussed and further elucidate in this section, gendered understandings of military work and notions of masculinities and femininities and gendered power relations did become evident in the narrative accounts as the conversations progressed. The duality of the inclusion of women in the force challenges the constructions of personal military identities, but also the shared understanding of the Royal Danish Air Force's military identity and thereby the social narrative of the Royal Danish Air Force in the sense that the all-male bond needs to adapt to other gendered military bodies (See MacKenzie 2015 on the Band of Brothers). Moreover, it is part of the narrative negotiations especially among female soldiers in terms of their own self-image and resistance to becoming tokens for gender equality as well as diversity.

### **5.3.1. MORE WOMEN, PLEASE...**

Over the past 10-15 years, the Danish Armed Forces has worked on increasing the number of women serving in military positions and stressed the importance of this both in recruitment material and within the organization through national action plans. As discussed in Chapter 4, this process aligns with global voices i.e. the UN and NATO on new requirements for modern militaries. An example of the national focus on this from the Danish Armed Forces is detectable in specific recruitment brochures for women:

Even though the number is increasing, still too few women choose an education in the armed forces. And that is a shame. An education in the armed forces is not just about how fast you can run, or how focused you are on the shooting range. It is foremost about how acute your mind is and whether you are ready to unfold your potential to the extreme. In the armed forces, women ensure a diversity and balance, which makes us stronger in all positions. That is why we need more who want to use their competence within all of the Defenses services and jobs – both here in Denmark and missions abroad (Kvinder i Forsvaret, n.d., 3).

As I have argued, the Royal Danish Air Force places focus on being progressive in terms of gender equality measured particularly by having the highest percentage of women serving in military positions in the Danish Armed Forces, and in this way, partake in the focus from the Danish Armed Forces to place emphasis on the role of women in military work. This institutional narrative of being progressive and inclusive of female soldiers is an element, which the soldiers emphasize in their personal narratives and the social narrative they construct about who the Royal Danish Air Force is as a military group.

At the same time, it is evident in the interviews that focus on recruiting more women to the Royal Danish Air Force (and Danish Armed Forces) is a question of

competences and assignments and less seen as an effort to make the service more diverse (although this is an added bonus for some of the soldiers). At the same time, the awareness among the soldiers that this particular topic is a focus area from management levels influence the conversations I had with the soldiers. This meant that in this part of the interviews I was particularly attentive to the ways in which I framed my questions (see Bloksgaard 2012; Højgaard 2010). This was to avoid reproducing gendered stereotypes, and at the same time recognize the soldiers' preexisting knowledge of gender and gender awareness both from their own organization, and as citizens in a country where gender equality is a discussed topic (Rolandsen Agustín and Siim 2015; Siim and Stoltz 2015; Hernes 1987). I was, therefore, conscious that the national context in this regard was a constant influencer in how gender plays a part in the military identity constructions for the soldiers including how they define a personal and shared military identity.

It also became evident that different narrative negotiations were taking place both at the personal and collective level in terms of making sense of the inclusion of women. Although there was consensus among the soldiers that the inclusion of women in the armed forces was generally positive, the strategies used to recruit women were debated and conflicted at times with the institutional approach in how many women were needed and for which positions. Moreover, the discussion on women's inclusion in military work revealed normative understandings of gender, which often rely on stereotypical perceptions of gendered bodies and military work. Among the female soldiers I interviewed, there was also a particular reluctance to function as tokens (Yoder 1991; Kanter 1977) for a particular institutional narrative and at the same time on a personal level wanting more female role models.

Camilla, an Officer in her 30s-40s, is an example of how these narrative negotiations over gender and military identity are a constant part of being a minority in an organization that has traditionally been (and arguably continues to be) dominated by male bodies and ways of displaying masculinities. Camilla presents some of the uncertainties in her narrative when she reflects on her own entry into the Royal Danish Air Force and the institutional focus on increasing the number of women.

I have always been of the opinion that I don't think there should be women for the sake of women. I think it is great that there are women, because I think it creates a really great dynamic, but it shouldn't be like "because now there has to be 20% we will just go recruit some." Because you should recruit the ones who want to be here and who are good at it (Camilla, Officer, in her 30-40s).

Camilla's response resonates with the other Royal Danish Air Force soldiers. She acknowledges the benefits of diversity and the institutional narratives on gender equality and is at the same time adamant that the women who enter need to adapt to the existing military culture. Hence, the ones who need to change or adapt are women and not the institution as a whole or the male colleagues. This argumentation is

common for women in militaries and connects militaries to male bodies and performances of masculinities (Sjoberg and Via 2010; Tickner and Sjoberg 2011; Whitworth 2004). Further, a desire not to disrupt the Band of Brothers as described by MacKenzie (2015), can be seen in this response.

Camilla's specific mentioning of a percentage of women serving can be seen as a direct response to the Danish Armed Forces' use of quotas, as a strategic tool to achieve a higher degree of diversity among the military personnel in the Danish Armed Forces (The Ministry of Defence 2011). A gender mainstreaming strategy, which in a Danish context often is questioned and resisted (Rolandsen Agustín and Siim 2015; Fiig, Rolandsen Agustín and Siim 2022). Camilla's (and a number of the other soldiers') resistance to the idea of quotas could therefore also be a specific Danish resilience to solve gender equality issues. The female soldiers may be influenced by an organization that is male-dominated with certain understandings of gender, and, part of a society in which gender equality is a component in national discourses. It is thus within this particular intersection that they negotiate their own military identity as belonging to a group (the military as a whole and in the Royal Danish Air Force in particular), and at the same time representing a minority and the constant focus that this brings to their soldier bodies. In this negotiation there is a clear dissociation to tokenism and an unwillingness to play this part for the institutional narrative of the Danish Armed Forces (Kanter 1977; Yoder 1991).

Camilla's narrative aligns with the constant theme in the conversations with the female soldiers of rejecting to be measured on gender and the particularities of certain jobs, which the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces believe appeal more to women. On the contrary, the female soldiers stress that they are part of the military on equal terms. Nonetheless, the female soldiers struggle with this particular aspect of being a minority. For a number of the female soldiers this meant that they negotiated their military identity in relation to their male colleagues and the narratives of the organization as well:

I think most women would say that they don't want to be here because of key figures, I want to be here because I am good enough, right. You spend so much energy. Because you will never be like one of the others. First of all, you can never run as fast as a man, right, and you spend so much energy on constantly proving yourself. It is really hard, right. Until you realize that it takes so much time. I have been here for 14 years and it was not until now that I am like "You know what!..." [...] Actually, now that we are talking about it, I get annoyed [...] (Camilla, Officer, in her 30s-40s).

The discussions on changing bodies in military work, in particular female bodies, which Camilla addresses should be seen through a process in which the narratives on gender and military work, including peace and security issues, have changed over time. As the timeline (Figure 7 section 3.3.4.) over policies and initiatives in the wake of UNSCR 1325 demonstrates, focus on gender, and particularly women, have gained



a significant role in the discussion on progression in military work, which influences institutional and personal narratives on military work and identity. At the same time, a narrative struggle is central in Camilla's account, which was common for a number of female soldiers. Namely, a desire to be part of the group and do the work required and feeling exhausted in an effort to try to be like a man.

These narratives about women's roles in the armed forces and the challenges that new bodies pose affects some of the female soldiers in their constructions of military identities and their abilities to point out discrimination. As Officer Stine points out in the quote below, if you choose to speak up and articulate challenges, which only women face in serving, for example, in terms of physical abilities and differences in male and female bodies, responses of being a red stocking, or that serving is their own choice is part of the comments made:

Well I also think it's a bit of a taboo [...] if I say that it is kind of weird that we get tested [physical tests] the same way then you get comments like, "Well red stocking, don't you want to be treated equally, didn't you choose to go enter this world on your own account?" Then you get the one comment again that you chose to enter a male-dominated world. Well, no I didn't choose that. I have applied for this job, just as you did, that it is a male-dominated world, well that is just... it should be another facet of it, right. So, I think it's about not wanting to go into the red stocking mindset again, and there's a bit of this feminism where you are marked quickly, and I don't know why (Stine, Officer, in her 20s-30s).

This again strengthens the argument previously made that a self-image of being gender equal which is present in the narratives among the soldiers as well as the institutional narrative despite practices that may be slightly less equal and that speaking out against discrimination is challenging in a Danish context when the normative understanding is that gender equality is already achieved (Bloksgaard 2012). As Bloksgaard (2012) stresses, speaking out against discriminatory practices can then result in remarks being deemed as merely jokes and not serious; thereby blaming the victim for being too sensitive and easily offended.

### **5.3.2. GENDER DISCRIMINATION – IS IT REALLY AN ISSUE?**

In practice, the focus on recruiting and emphasizing the important role of women in militaries maintained by the Danish Armed Forces as well as the UN and NATO face challenges in a Danish context. This emphasizes the difficulties that feminist anti-military IR scholars such as Sjoberg (2015), Enloe (2000) and Whitworth (2004) have pointed to concerning women's continued "othering" in military organizations. In the interviews, it became clear that the soldiers have different takes on the issue of discrimination, but most of them seem to adhere to the idea presented that the worst cases are in the past (cf. theme number four presented in the methodology) and at least not something that happens in the Royal Danish Air Force. Again, this idea of Danish

exceptionalism seems to influence the soldiers' accounts on the current state of affairs. The social narrative created by the soldiers and related to the institutional narrative is one where discrimination and harassment are a thing of the past and gender equality is part of the modern Danish Armed Forces and in particular the Royal Danish Air Force. Nonetheless, a number of diverging themes and stories emerged in the interview setting and most of the soldiers found the topic difficult to discuss and act on, as exemplified by Camilla and Stine's accounts in the previous section. In this sense, the stories demonstrate narrative negotiations, struggles, and conflicting feelings for many of the soldiers in that they know of incidents of discrimination. Especially a number of the female soldiers describe how they find the topic challenging to discuss.

For the female soldiers in particular this is based on their reluctance to be singled out, as being unable to cope within the military environment, and at the same time, wanting to be loyal towards their male colleagues (see also Thidemann Faber 2008 on similar tendencies among Danish female police Officers). There seems to be a hesitancy to discuss openly these issues and a "fear" among some of the soldiers of being targeted if they speak up or raise concerns. The differentiation to the other services, which was important for the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers to maintain, may explain some of the mechanisms at play here. The disassociation to hyper-masculinity, as a type of masculinity they associate with the Army (the helicopter wing soldiers excluded) is part of the narrative that the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers convey and something that, to a certain degree, they associate with the type of behavior that could cause exploitation and harassment. In this sense, the soldiers refrain from discussing the problem by blaming a type of military masculinity or "a wrong type of military masculinity", which they argue is unlikely to be found in the Royal Danish Air Force.

The notion that these issues are outdated is dismissed by the Union for Female Veterans. Furthermore, a recently published newspaper article from Information (Danish newspaper) based on access to documents from the Defense judge advocate over the past five years, states 31 cases of sexual assault have been tried before the judge advocate and the number of assaults has increased since 2014 with 11 cases alone last year (Ritzau 2019). The findings are in line with the experiences from the Union for Female Veterans. As the spokesperson from the union argues:

Most people have no idea about how much of this is still going on in the Defense. Because it is hidden away. Nobody talks about it. I have spoken with many women in the Defense who sleep with a knife under their pillow during deployments" [Comment is made by spokesperson of the Union for Female Veterans in Denmark, Sara la Cour] (McGhie 2019a) [author translation].

Many women experience that they are not taken seriously. They are met with an attitude that they should just think of it as a joke or a compliment. Or that they shouldn't smile so much or talk with the boys. That kind of

advice is part of maintaining that it is the woman's fault, that they experience discrimination. It is a culture that is alive and kicking. It is no secret that the tone in the Defense is brutish. And it should be. We should not use considerate didactic formulations, when we give or take orders. But there is a big difference between a brutish and a sexist tone [Comment is made by the spokesperson of the Union for Female Veterans in Denmark Sara la Cour] (McGhie 2019b) (author translation).

These accounts of the current state of affairs bring forward discrepancies between the institutional narrative of being inclusive and attentive to these issues and the lived experiences of some soldiers working in the Danish Armed Forces. At the same time, the accounts by the Union for Female Veterans or the cases brought to the judge advocate stand in contrast to narratives from the soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force. At the same time, the interviews for this study demonstrate that the topic and discourses surrounding gendered discrimination and sexual harassment are not unheard of. Moreover, when listening more closely as the interviews progress, stories of harassment are articulated, although a number of the interviewees expressed disbelief and questioned the extent of the problem today, especially within the Royal Danish Air Force. As the following narratives reveal, the skepticism and narrative negotiations relating to the topic is present in the interviews:

I thought, "Holy shit" [in response to the 2003 report], I couldn't believe it, because I have never experienced it. It gave food for thought and you start to think like okay these women, what the hell, have I said something at one point that might be close to the line? Because it was extremely male-dominated, right, and "dicks and tits" were said randomly and bad jokes and so on and women would be present. I don't know if the women who entered at that time, if they were more tough than the women who entered later on (Officer Jan, in his 40s-50s).

Yes. Gender discrimination and sexual harassment (kønsskrænkende adfærd in Danish), there was a lot of talk. I remember when I was down in Karup, there were some who talked about it and said, "No it can't be true that such things go on," but then you saw the report and saw the numbers (Christian, Officer, in his 40s-50s).

In the beginning when the report came out [reference to the 2003 report], we made a report every month at the station. We had to report if there had been any cases of sexual harassment and sexually abusive behavior at any location. Month after month at the unit I was leading at that time, we wrote nothing to report. I think it was crazy. I think it was a crazy way to keep it alive. Because you could almost create more problems by using those terms, by focusing on gender-abusive behavior, it was like you could see it everywhere. [...] It is best just to silence it (Laust, Officer, in his 50s-60s).

Jan, Christian, and Laust are all in positions of power in terms of their rank (Officers) and, combined with their age, they possess seniority through their position in the internal military hierarchy. Moreover, they are all white and heterosexual, and compose all of the characteristics that describe the traditional military body. In addition, the points that Officer Laust makes bring forward complexities of discussing issues relating to gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the armed forces and perhaps in Danish society in general, and is another example of the idea of having achieved gender equality. Hence, the strategy to silence in order to resolve an issue brings forward a number of complex problems, especially since the person articulating this approach is in a position of power in terms of rank (being an officer), gender (being male), and sexuality (being straight and living in a monogamous marriage). To take on this position emphasizes the challenges minorities i.e. women face in combating discriminatory practices in the Royal Danish Air Force and Danish Armed Forces.

The examples from three male Royal Danish Air Force officers speak to a discussion of gendered power relations and how an intersectional approach to studying this is relevant in revealing a number of the complexities, which are embedded in negotiations over military identities (Higate 2003; Woodward 2003). It is clear that the soldiers are aware that gender discrimination and harassment is of current institutional attention, and a topic that has the potential to be personal and sensitive. At the same time, there is a certain degree of denial of the scale of the problem. Another tactic to address the issues of discrimination and harassment is to distance oneself from the incident by means of time. Hence, when the soldiers argue that the incidents happened prior to their own entry into the force they are distancing themselves and removing questions of whether they are perpetrators. Examples of this distancing are clear in the narrative by Officers David, Maiken, and Christian:

Well, I am young, so I haven't really experienced the before and after. I have perhaps 10 years of experience, right, and positive things to say about diversity. The extreme macho, male chauvinistic jargon is only something I have read about (David, Officer, in his 20s-30s).

So, I have only been employed during the period when the worst of it may have been resolved (Maiken, Officer, in her 20s-30s).

When you talk to older colleagues, also female colleagues, they can tell stories of what it was like "then", 30 years ago, that there was a slightly different jargon. Back then, [female soldiers] could get a slap in the behind, which is unthinkable today, right (Christian, Officer, in his 40s-50s).

As discussed, a number of the soldiers were familiar with the 2003 report and had been working for the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force during the period and prior to the report and had experienced the "the old times", which David,

Maiken, and Christian refer to. One of the soldiers who is familiar with “the old times” is Private Kamma. In her narrative, clear examples of sexual harassment and gender discrimination are evident, such as inappropriate physical contact and the idea that this behavior towards women was acceptable because *they* had chosen to enter the military world and therefore ought to accept the consequences of being female in a male-dominated world:

I think that has changed a bit. I think, the people who enter today, and it's actually the young people again, they're much more aware of this and much nicer. They respect you more than the older ones did in their day. It has really changed. [...] before, it was like “Well, she has chosen a male-dominated workplace, she just needs to adjust” (Kamma, Private, in her 50s-60s).

Kamma's example demonstrates how women were subject to discriminatory practices even in the Royal Danish Air Force and that they were alone in handling these incidents without help or focus from management, which is in contrast to the official institutional narrative today. Although the soldiers seem to narrate a common idea that the worst incidents of sexual harassment and gender discrimination are in the past and that it is only minor cases today, especially in the Royal Danish Air Force, small hints and stories especially from some of the female soldiers reveal that the practices in the Danish military still foster cases of discrimination. Hence, even though there may be action plans and task forces that articulate a particular focus on gender equality, which to a certain degree incorporates global ideas on gender equality, the military culture and practices seem to still include a number of challenges in the inclusion of other gendered bodies.

These gendered practices, which include gendered discrimination, revealed in the narratives from the soldier interviews resonates with the experiences from the Female Veteran's Union, who have registered over 200 incidents of gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the Danish Armed Forces committed against especially female soldiers (“Kvindelige Veteraner – Danmarks Veteraner” n.d.). Even though the numbers from the Female Veteran's Union are not specific to the different services, the numbers nevertheless bring forward other perspectives to the presumed gender equal Danish military. Hence, there seem to be certain discrepancies between the normative ideals and articulations of social narratives of the Royal Danish Air Force as a military service and some of the lived experiences of soldiers in the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force.

#### **5.4. CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I approach the material with the aim to understand the negotiations of gendered identities and bodies in the everyday crossroads of military and civilian life as well as the implications on Danish exceptionalism in these negotiations. The main

material is the interviews with Royal Danish Air Force soldiers and the personal narratives are therefore at the forefront in this chapter.

As Chapter 4 reveals, the Royal Danish Air Force views itself as a special force within the Danish Armed Forces "family". The institutional narrative further includes a story of a service, which comprises assignments that appeal more to women than typical Army work i.e. the phrase "we do soldiering differently" meaning "we have assignments for other bodies." Hence, it is within this institutional framework that the soldiers construct and negotiate their military identity and articulate their narrative of what it means to be a soldier in the Royal Danish Air Force and how this spills over into their work assignments. By approaching the question through a qualitative method by means of narrative interviews, I was able to reveal the personal nuances to understanding work assignments in the Royal Danish Air Force and ultimately how the soldiers understood and negotiated their military identity.

The interview material reveals a multiplicity of narratives on military identities and military work including narratives on military masculinities i.e. dominant, hegemonic, and marginalized. In the interviews, it is possible to detect certain narrative struggles between the narrative of the institution of the Royal Danish Air Force (as presented in Chapter 4) and the individual narratives of the soldiers in which both overlap as well as resistance to the institutional narrative is present. These narrative negotiations (and struggles) are seen in responses to the narrative of the Royal Danish Air Force of being an inclusive and progressive service with room for personal development and diversity in the format of inclusion of male and female soldiers. Especially among a number of the female soldiers, there is a reluctance to place emphasis on this part of the institutional narrative, as they at times find themselves to be tokens of gender equality and diversity without actual actions and policies, which can influence some of the difficulties they face in their service.

At the same time, the soldiers seem to concur with the institutional narrative that the Royal Danish Air Force has positions that appeal more to women. Male and female soldiers support this. In this sense, the soldiers are buying into the institutional narrative on operational effectiveness and an idea of inherent differences in the type of military work that attracts men and women respectively. One may even argue that the soldiers to a certain degree include global narratives produced by the UN and NATO (and reinforced by the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force) of the differences between men and women in soldier work, which rely on heteronormative, as well as binary, understandings of gendered military bodies. An approach, which feminist IR scholars (see Jennings 2011 and Cohn 2013) have stressed include a number of problematic practices in which gendered stereotypes are maintained. Furthermore, it limits the room for maneuver and equality in the armed forces and in understanding the gendered complexities of conflict and peacebuilding.

In terms of representations of traditional military connotations associated with military work and military hegemonic masculinities, the narratives tell different stories of the characteristics that define the Royal Danish Air Force as a military institution. These characteristics hold feminine connotations for being soft instead of tough, prioritizing family time, and a sense of inclusiveness. Nonetheless, all the individual narratives highlight these aspects as positive attributes for the Royal Danish Air Force and as valuable to them. Another key finding in the narratives is that the soldiers construct and negotiate their military identity in opposition to the other services, the Army in particular. In this process, they disassociate themselves from a form of military masculinity, which relies on physical strength, aggressiveness, and muscular power, and instead focus on being ready to think outside the box, inclusive, and foremost, being specialists.

These findings fit within the overall stories of what the Royal Danish Air Force, Danish Armed Forces and military institutions in general are aiming to convey with a focus on the more humanitarian, cosmopolitan-minded (and some might argue feminized) aspects of military work such as peacekeeping and peacebuilding (Henry 2017; Rosamond-Bergman and Kronsell 2017). Despite changes in the variety of skills articulated as important for doing military work in a modern military, for instance, due to new types of assignments, there is still a gendered understanding of which bodies do certain skills best (Rones 2015; Woodward & Duncanson 2016). Leading toward the operational effectiveness arguments (Jennings 2011; Basham 2009). This was i.e. articulated in Jens' narrative where he refers to the Squadron 660 as the one that protects and guards and thus needs to uphold masculinity embodied by male soldiers (Jennings 2011; Jennings 2015).

In addition, the normative ideas of military work and military identity and the gendered implication i.e. the inclusion of women as I have presented in this chapter, are not necessarily unique to the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force. Hence, as I also argue, a number of these narratives are recognizable in feminist IR and critical military scholars' work on gender and the armed forces in other contexts as well i.e. the Swedish, Norwegian, American, and British (see Kronsell 2012; Persson 2013; Rones 2015; Enloe 1994, 2000, 2016; Woodward 2003; Duncanson 2009; 2011). However, the soldiers' responses to the topic have elements that can be linked to the contextual setting of Denmark and the Danish approach to discuss and combat gender discrimination and sexual harassment i.e. dismissing sexual comments as jokes (Bloksgaard 2004; Andreassen as quoted in Duncan 2019).

"WE DON'T SEE GENDER, ONLY SOLDIERS!" – NEGOTIATING MILITARY IDENTITIES IN NARRATIVES ON GENDER, PEACE, AND SECURITY





## CHAPTER 6. GOING TO WAR OR BUILDING PEACE?

In this chapter, I turn my attention to soldier work in international conflict areas as part of international deployments. Similar to the previous chapter, focus is on the soldiers' stories analyzed through interview material. By means of the soldiers' reflections on their missions and experiences, I examine further how time, place, and space influence military identity constructions and negotiations. This includes both the soldier's own understandings of who they are and what they do as soldiers, but also how they relate their military work and military identity negotiations to the (national) institutional focus on being cosmopolitan-minded as well as global voices that stress the connection between gender, peace, and security in military work.

Especially security issues and understandings of security in deployments are central in the soldiers' reflections along with the particularities of Royal Danish Air Force missions abroad. These particularities include discussions on peace processes and contributions to peace. I stress that these understandings and considerations are part of overall discussions on military work and military identity in which micro (personal) perspectives link to mezzo and macro (institutional and global) ideas of gender, peace, and security in various contextual settings. As described previously, the international missions, which Denmark takes part in, vary in lengths and contributions depending on the service. For the Royal Danish Air Force, assistance is often provided in the form of material (fighter jets, transport planes, radar and surveillance of air space) rather than large numbers of personnel (infantry soldiers). This means that the type of military assignments that soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force carry out in international missions differ, from instance, Army soldiers. Another component that sets the Royal Danish Air Force aside from the Army is the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers' proximity to conflict zones, which is often more limited and restricted. Simultaneously, the soldiers are part of the same mandated assignments and political reasoning for contributing to a specific military assignment.

As I discuss in this section, the divide between peacekeeping, peacebuilding, or direct national defense missions is ambiguous and dependent on space, place, and time. Hence, the articulation of missions as either being with the intention of keeping, securing, building, or restoring peace connects to the political narratives of Denmark as a cosmopolitan-minded, peace-stabilizing nation rather than necessarily a warrior nation (Daugbjerg and Refslund Sørensen 2017; Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell 2017). This further means that national narratives as well as institutional and personal narratives of military identity and military work abroad are blurred, and at times, opposing. This chapter, therefore, focuses on exploring soldier narratives of experiences on deployment to international peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions (as articulated by the Danish Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defense), including

how the soldiers make sense of their work and their contribution to restoring peace and/or going to war, and what this means for their collective and individual military identities.

For the soldiers, deployments are part of a professional career in the armed forces and an almost unavoidable factor in their lives in the Royal Danish Air Force. Some of the interviewees had been on several deployments, others only one time, and two were about to be deployed to their very first international mission (not counting training deployments as part of their education in the Royal Danish Air Force). I was interested to hear their reflections on the different missions and whether it mattered if the missions were categorized as a peacekeeping/peacebuilding mission and if these were even the terms the soldiers used to describe what they had been part of through their deployments. Moreover, how did the international missions affect negotiations over military identities, including understandings of military masculinities?

Following Woodward (2003)'s argumentation that contextual settings influence military identity constructions and negotiations and further bring forward negotiations over military masculinities, I turn my attention to the international contexts, which are part of the soldiers' lives through their active service in the Royal Danish Air Force. Thus, how the soldier narratives are influenced by experiences from international deployments to conflict areas, and what this means for the use of narratives relating to gender, peace, and security. I aim to analyze this through the following sub-research question:

*How do Royal Danish Air Force soldiers negotiate gendered identities and bodies in international military work, including how the particular assignments of the Royal Danish Air Force influence soldier narratives on security and peace?*

As argued previously, personal narratives are part of larger social narratives of i.e. a group, a community, or a nation (Phoenix 2016; Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou 2013; Shenhav 2015). In this particular case, the personal soldier narratives on gender, peace, and security link to larger national (and international) narratives of the work Danish soldiers carry out in peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions (i.e. a warrior nation or a peace nation or both). These narrative accounts explore the experiences of being a Royal Danish Air Force soldier deployed on international missions, and what this means for the identity negotiations, which the soldiers engage in through their everyday practices of carrying out their work in contextual settings, which, in most cases, are different from the national context of Danish society.

As argued previously, peacekeeping and peacebuilding have become military disciplines since World War II (DeGroot 2001; Jennings n.d.). Peacekeeping and peacebuilding are, thus, used by both international organizations like the UN and military alliances like NATO to refer to military work in conflict areas conducted by especially foreign troops. As discussed in the introduction, the (gender) women,

peace, and security agenda is part of this development, with UNSCR 1325 playing a significant part in the inclusion of women in the peace and conflict discourses. Moreover, military forces often frame and refer to their work as helping to secure and build peace in the conflict areas they operate (Jennings 2011; Cohn 2013) articulating a narrative in which the national militaries and international organizations such as the UN and NATO take part in conflicts to protect the safety of vulnerable populations. This narrative of being peace stabilizing, cosmopolitan-minded, and forces for good can be argued to be in contrast to a warrior narrative and ultimately some of the atrocities, which soldiers, qua the potential danger of conflict, are faced with. This is also the case with the Danish Armed Forces as demonstrated in Chapter 4. This articulation of peacekeeping and peacebuilding leaves interesting dilemmas for analyzing military masculinities in conflict areas and expressions of gender and constructions and negotiations of gendered military identities by soldiers in interactions internally, with other troops, and local populations.

In this process, the soldier narratives provide insightful revelations on what it is like to be deployed to a context, which is different from the Danish and to a conflict, which the soldiers do not have a personal and cultural attachment to. Additionally, the personal narratives from international missions displayed how deployments affect both professional (and personal) lives in a number of ways one example being the soldiers' understandings of the complexities of war and conflict. In addition, the narratives from the missions reveal gendered understandings and practices relating to soldier work including how this plays out in encounters with civilian populations and other troops from allied countries. The narratives provide insightful understandings from a bottom-up perspective to international peacekeeping/peacebuilding military work whether mandated by the UN, effectuated by NATO or a coalition of countries (and at times former colonial powers).

According to critical military studies, proximity to the empirical evidence is an important methodological component in studying the armed forces (Basham and Bulmer 2017) (see further discussion in Chapter 3). By engaging in conversations with soldiers, researchers are able to grasp the complexities and lived experiences of soldiering in conflict areas as well as the everyday at home and at the bases. Although I have conducted fieldwork through interviews at the two airbases in Denmark with active soldiers and, in this sense, embodied similar spaces to my research subject (Dyvik 2016), I am not privy to the spaces where the soldiers were deployed i.e. Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. What I can do, however, is be attentive to the narratives of the soldiers and listen to their stories of the spaces and places where they do their soldiering and, in this way, become aware of their experiences retrospectively although always with the condition that these experiences are not mine, but theirs (Dyvik 2016). Hence, attention to the embodied experiences and my own position as an insider and outsider is even more pressing when examining the soldiers' narratives on military work and constructions of military identities abroad since their experiences of conflict and war reveal extreme (and for some, traumatic experiences),

which I am unfamiliar with in the same concrete way as my informants. In this chapter, as I engage in examining narratives on gender, peace, and security that are part of the soldier narratives on military work and identity abroad and how space, place, and time influences this, I am extra attentive to how these experiences reveal extreme situations for the soldiers.

## **6.1. WE ARE HERE TO HELP**

A number of the soldiers had been on several international missions and their narratives include experiences from missions led by the UN, NATO, and other coalition partners. As argued, space, place, and time are significant factors in the constructions of identities, military identities included, which means that the experiences from deployments are influenced by the contextual setting i.e. the specific conflict area where the soldiers had been stationed i.e. Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, the Balkans, Mali, and other individual UN missions. I acknowledge that the experiences of deployments are unique in the sense that the locations and the type of assignment vary depending on the context of the mission and the mandate. Nevertheless, I stress that certain elements of deployments overlap across the soldiers' narratives and create significant components in their individual narratives as well as social narratives of military identity and military work in the Royal Danish Air Force. In the following, I discuss this element further in relation to soldier narratives on military identity and military work abroad as part of the Royal Danish Air Force.

The peacekeeper or peacebuilder soldier as a military identity is a curious component in the analysis of the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers. I argue that the peacekeeper identity is detectable in the Danish soldier narratives including how the soldiers negotiate this element of being peacekeepers (and a force for good) and the emphasis this has on their military identity negotiations. Whereas peace and security issues were less articulated in a Danish (military) context as analyzed in Chapter 5, peace and security issues influence the conversations and narratives when discussing experiences from deployments. Moreover, in line with Cohn (1987) and Basham and Bulmer (2017), I argue that words and language matter in descriptions of narratives on identity and work. This is also true for the soldiers in this study. The labeling of military assignments as either peacekeeping/building or war holds meaning for the soldiers in their justifications of their military work, which again reflects components in their military identities. As such, a number of the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers discuss the labeling of the type of work they do abroad, and for a number of the soldiers the narratives include elements of helping other nations by keeping, building, and restoring peace. In this sense, and as a reflection on my research question for this chapter, it is clear that narratives on gender, peace, and security, in particular the latter two, are negotiated among the soldiers and influence their stories of deployments.

As such, I argue that a military identity as a peacekeeping or peace-mediating soldier is detectable in the soldiers' narratives of the type of work they do abroad as members

of the military. For example, Gry, a private in her 30s-40s argues that this ideal (of helping others) and standing-up for certain values were part of her considerations for joining the armed forces. In addition, it makes her commitment to this type of career more acceptable in terms of the potential risk of her own life and deprivation and potential loss that her children may face due to her (and her military husband's) deployments:

Overall, we are all here to make a difference. If it is for our own sake or for Denmark, that may vary. But we are all here to do something, which not a lot of other people do, and I think that creates a collectiveness. I mean, we can actually risk being pushed to the very limit where it is not fun anymore, so we take care of each other. [...] Yes, it has been part of my considerations for joining. [...] They [local populations] are people that we hopefully help in some way or another to create peace in their country and help them rebuild it. And that makes a lot, a lot of sense to me. And I mean that is also what makes it more acceptable for our kids that we [her and her husband] have chosen military careers. That we are part of helping people in need (Gry, Private, in her 30s-40s).

Gry displays concern, comfort, and care for people who are less powerful than her; in this case, local populations. These characteristics are often part of the peacekeeping discourses and link to female soldiers i.e. they can do other things than men, i.e. provide care to the local population. As argued, this understanding is part of the operational effectiveness approach (Jennings 2011) to include female bodies in military work. This is present in the Danish NAPs and articulated by NATO when they argue that “[...] *There is a firm recognition that women have a crucial role to play in dealing successfully with the security challenges of the 21st century*”. (NATO 2011). Gry is, thus, speaking into a global, as well as institutional, narratives of women soldiers in conflict areas in which the operational effectiveness argument dominates (see Jennings 2011; 2013; see also Chapters 4).

At the same time, Gry's experiences are examples of personal investments of professional soldiers to help local populations in need. This ideal is part of Gry's narrative and something that she strategically uses to position herself, her group (the Royal Danish Air Force) within a setting of being “a force for good” (see Duncanson 2009; 2013). Moreover, her narrative reveals the personal sacrifices she is making in her pursuit of a military career; namely the deprivation of her children on missions and worst-case scenario the loss of a parent. In this sense, the contextual settings intersect and Gry's identity as a mother and influences her professional career in a concrete way. One may argue that Gry is using her motherhood to strengthen her commitment to the peacekeeping/building element of her career in the sense that the sacrifices she is willing to make for the sake of “making a difference” and “help to create peace” is ultimate.

This connection between sacrifices, nation, and motherhood ties closely to what feminist IR scholars have deemed the gendering of the nation. Feminist IR scholars like Yuval-Davis (1997) have stressed the connection between motherhood and the creation and maintenance of the nation. A gendered connection between men and women in the creation of the nation relies on women giving birth to the nation (their children) and for men to scarify their lives for the nation as a natural part of being members of a people. In Gry's case, she is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for the nation and "the greater good" and in this sense the gendered element of motherhood and soldiering influences her justifications for the work abroad. Moreover, Gry's reflections on helping to secure peace ties to a (Danish) peacekeeping discourse at a macro-level, in which more powerful countries, such as Denmark, help other nations in need of the greater good. This national narrative (as well as institutional) is presented in Chapter 4 and here exemplified with a quote from the 2014 Danish NAPs:

We believe Denmark can provide a significant contribution to international peace and security, especially because of our long experience with combining military, humanitarian and civilian engagements. Denmark has adopted a whole-of-government approach to engagements in fragile and conflict-affected areas (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Justice 2014, 4).

The quote emphasizes how the institutional narrative of being cosmopolitan-minded with a human rights agenda at the core is a central way in which the Danish Armed Forces presents themselves and the work they do on international missions. Moreover, it stresses the connection between the personal and institutional narratives on military work abroad and how a social narrative of being a force for good fits well with the soldiers' own understandings of the significance of the work abroad.

At the same time, it is possible to trace post-colonial elements and subsequent power relations in a number of UN missions and, for example, in the more recent peacekeeping mission in Mali, where Denmark participated in 2013. This particular mission is an example of a UN mission where the Danish involvement is not in the form of combat soldiers/or equipment but focused on transport by means of a Hercules transport plane (Forsvaret n.d.). One of the soldiers who took part in the mission is Officer Maiken, a young soldier in her late 20s early 30s. There are two particularly interesting elements in Maiken's narrative. One is the obvious awareness of the colonial elements of the conflict in Mali. In this situation, a former Western colonial power with help from other Western allies engage in a conflict setting to aid a population, which they historically though colonial rule have caused harm. The military presence in Mali can therefore also be seen as a way to uphold a post-colonial dependency in which the West (and in this case in particular France) continues to be the ones in power. Second, is Maiken's reflections on the (political) decision to use the transport plane instead of foot soldiers. Hence, it is clear that she is aware of the societal and institutional narratives, which influence military work and that she by

taking part in the missions becomes a component in the narratives of what Denmark does as a military force both towards international allies and internally in regards to the support of the Danish population.

I thought about the reasoning behind using a transport plane as the only, at that time, Danish capacity. That I thought about a lot. Do you mean the whole situation and going to war as such? [Interviewer nods] I didn't have too many thoughts about that. France invaded Mali because the Libyan riots were making trouble in Mali. That was the overall background, so I didn't reflect on whether it was right to invade a country other than...that Mali, I mean the narrative was that you (one) were helping Mali, and that we (one) were reinforcements, and that it was France who was leading the mission. That is, the French were the former colonial power; meaning they have been present in the country since the 1960s anyways, but I did not reflect on the colonial legacy either. So, what I did reflect on was that our transport plane is popular to use politically because there is no blood on it. It is really like, everyone can use transportation regardless of whether it is ammunition they transport, so it is always politically popular to use (Maiken, Officer, in her 20s-30s).

Maiken's story is interesting in reflections on social narratives of the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force concerning the organizations' military work, as well as, her own personal understanding of the type of mission she has been part of in Mali. The quote demonstrates how she produces different counter narratives to describe her own participation in the mission and that of the Royal Danish Air Force, in particular the role of her own unit. At the beginning of the narrative, Maiken states that she had reflections on the reasoning for using a transport plane, as the only (Danish) contribution to the mission at that time, but that she did not reflect on the reasoning behind the mandate, going to Mali, and the invasion by the French. Nevertheless, Maiken demonstrates that she has a clear understanding of the official (institutional) narrative of the mission, and that she is aware of the colonial and postcolonial links between Mali and France. Even so, Maiken makes it clear that she did not have any considerations towards this aspect in terms of the involvement, but that the use of the transport plane can be viewed as a political decision to take part in an invasion without too many casualties. As Maiken describes it, "*our transport plane is popular to use politically because there is no blood on it*" (Maiken, Officer in her 20s-30s). As marked in the quote, the use of the pronoun one [man] is a common disclaimer in Danish as a way to distance oneself from a particular narrative or to refer to a normative understanding of a given situation. Maiken says that *one* had a particular narrative about the conflict in Mali and that *one* was reinforcement, which demonstrates a distancing from the creation of the narrative and her own role in the justification of the contribution to the mission.

The understanding of using a transport plane and the connections between conflict, war, and peace are evident in this account. As mentioned previously, the Royal Danish

Air Force and its military personnel are often positioned away from the conflict zones, meaning that their physical proximity to the conflict is reduced. Maiken's account and use of the word might be a simple and unintentional way of describing the type of work the Royal Danish Air Force carries out. Nonetheless, it speaks into a larger discourse on the role of military power and the justification of specific missions, including peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Hence, in this process, the transportation regardless of what it carries (including ammunition), becomes feminized.

Following the arguments above, a micro-perspective seen through narrative interview material i.e. Gry and Maiken's narratives can situate conflict narratives as a matter of individuals and embodied experiences in which certain power dynamics are at play that speak into larger narratives on war and conflict (Wibben 2011). Power dynamics, which bring forward a number of intersectional elements in the negotiations over *doing good* and helping others as well as taking a superior position. In Gry's narrative on her work abroad, her own position, and role as a soldier, the power hierarchy at an individual level between soldiers and local populations is evident as well. Gry is the dominant actor in the gendered hierarchy and is part of feminizing the "other" i.e. the local population (Whitworth 2004; Henry 2017; Zalewski 2017), whom she, to a certain degree, places in the same group as her children. Stressing the subordinate and feminized position of children and "the other". This element demonstrates the multiplicities of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, where power dynamics between soldiers and local populations (as well as between soldiers) are part of the dynamics and social interactions. These interactions create certain normative understandings of gender, peace, and security in which unequal power relations are often an unavoidable factor (Whitworth 2004; Mazurana, Raven-Roberts, and Parpart 2005; Zarkov 2002; Spivak 1988). Moreover, through an intersectional analysis it is possible to detect how social categories such as nationality, ethnicity, race (in particular whiteness) intersect with gender and in these relations often surpass gender as a category or adds to a variety of ways in which they Danish soldiers are able to hold their power.

Narrative struggles and negotiations over peacekeeping work are also exemplified in Private Bjarne and Non-Commissioned Officer Karen's reflections on their military work and military identity as forces for good and being part of creating peace for individuals who are unable to facilitate this on their own:

It was to protect the local population of course, but I think that the local population, they were **just so far behind**. So, yes, of course, it was to support them, but it was also an **easy population to hurt**, if you can say it like that because they were so far behind [...] of course we have **to protect them** (Bjarne, Private, in his 20s-30s).

Even when it is under the auspice of NATO, I would still say that we were there as a small team of mentors, who should try to limit the barriers. And try to **teach them some of our valuable rights**, and then it is also peacekeeping (Karen, Non-Commissioned Officer, in her 40s-50s).



In the quotes by Gry, Karen, and Bjarne, the wish to help others [in this case the local populations] is a central element in their narrative on military work abroad, which resembles the narrative of being *Forces for good* and less a *warrior* narrative. At the same time, they are part of creating and maintaining a power hierarchy between them and the local population in the conflict areas in which they are the ones with knowledge, power, and means, and the local populations are the ones who are described as lacking the “right” ideals and governmental systems to take care of themselves. Hence, in their descriptions, Gry, Karen and Bjarne are ‘othering’ the local population, and in this process, creating an unequal power hierarchy between foreign troops and local populations. A dilemma in peacekeeping/building military work, which feminist IR scholars have pointed to (Whitworth 2004; Mazurana, Raven-Roberts, and Parpart 2005; Zarkov 2002).

Through an analysis of soldier narratives like the ones produced by the soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force, it becomes evident that this process of placing the local population in an inferior position is done through words and descriptions in the soldiers’ narratives such as being far behind, easy population to hurt, teach them some of our rights. Feminist IR and post-colonial scholars stress that these processes are central in understanding the power dynamics in conflict situations. Hence, to address populations who live in conflict zones as vulnerable and in need of protection by foreign nations i.e. the Danish can also be seen through postcolonial eyes. A process where previous colonial power dynamics continue to place countries and therein people in uneven power relations, with especially Western countries continuing to be dominating powers (Dittmer and Apelt 2008; Myrntinen, Khattab, and Naujoks 2017).

This point refers back to the discussion in the Theory Chapter on the uneven power dynamics in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, where Dittmer and Apelt’s (2008) studies of German peacekeepers, for instance, exemplifies that Western peacekeepers may take the position as “thoughtful” and “European”, whereas the local population (and especially the local men) is characterized as “uncivilized” and “backwards”. This again furthers a dichotomy between us and them and an alleged superiority of the white peacekeeper (Dittmer and Apelt 2008).

At the same time, this understanding of local populations displays the gendered mechanisms of war and conflict, where local populations in need of help are feminized. By this, I see the feminization of the population as a process where the Danish soldiers place the local population (both male and female regardless of nationality) in the category of the ones who need protection. A position, which women (and children) in conflict situations traditionally have been placed in (Yuval-Davis 1997; Enloe 2000), and which the empirical material suggests, to some degree, continues to be the case.

The position is also stressed by the UN in their work on peacekeeping and peacebuilding, where they emphasize that women (and children) are the ones vastly

affected by conflict. However, the UN also argues for the need to include more women as soldiers, and in this way give women agency and a different position in conflict and security issues (see discussion in Chapter 4). Hence, the feminization processes in this context links to a way of seeing femininities as less powerful than masculinities, when it comes to protection in conflict settings. This is not to argue that femininities always take a subordinate position to masculinities, since qualifications such as dialogical abilities and compassion, which may be viewed as more feminine (and which are often by organizations such as the military linked to gendered female bodies) are stressed as important to military organizations and the UN i.e. in UNSCR 1325.

This point is supported by Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) reevaluation on hegemonic masculinity, where they argue that the masculinities including hegemonic forms need to take into account the nature of gender hierarchies. This means that gendered bodies and femininities and masculinities intertwine and take hegemonic, dominant, and dominated positions in different contexts. Nonetheless, the process of feminization still relies on the idea that certain skills and characteristics are associated with female bodies, such as, compassion, dialogical abilities, and being softer. In cases of military work abroad, and, in relation to local population, I argue that the soldiers engage in this process of feminization, albeit they in a Danish setting stress qualifications such as communication skills and compassion as important and part of their own soldier identities and the social narrative of the Royal Danish Air Force.

At the same time, the idea of creating peace and helping others ties closely to the institutional narrative of the Danish Armed Forces as being a *Force for good*, and at the same time, protecting certain sacred (Danish) values. This ideal is further exemplified by the collective hashtag #somethingsareworthfightingfor. In this sense, I argue that this may be an example of how the contextual setting as described through the soldier narratives of deployments influences the soldiers' perceptions of, constructions, and negotiations of military work and subsequently military identity. That is, the soldiers are to a certain degree embracing the peacekeeping/peacebuilding soldier narrative enforced by the Royal Danish Air Force and Danish Armed Forces institutional narratives. This may, therefore, be a case where parts of the social narrative are in coherence between the institution and the soldiers in an acceptance of the idea that they work for: "*freedom and democracy, human rights and peace in the world around us*" (Forsvarets Uddannelser, n.d. 7).



The narratives from the interview material demonstrate how military work in the Royal Danish Air Force relies on the soldiers' commitment to fighting for certain values, as I demonstrated in the section before by the accounts from Gry, Bjarne, and Karen. Whereas the institutional narrative of being a peacekeeping/building force is detectable in part of the soldiers' narratives on military work abroad, there are nuances and narrative struggles relating to this institutional story of what the soldiers do on international missions. The complexities of military work abroad and the unequal power relations between soldiers and local populations, which I discussed in the previous section, is reflected in a number of the soldiers' narratives. An awareness of the power dynamics in regard to values by means of military power and a critical position towards the success of this agenda is present. These reflections may therefore be viewed as a questioning of the benefits and success of the type of mission, which the Royal Danish Air Force partake in through their commitments to the UN and NATO and, in this, the narrative of the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force as a peacebuilding force.

An example of this is Private Anna, who had worked for the Royal Danish Air Force for several years and been deployed on numerous occasions. In her reflections on particularly a UN mission, the peacekeeping element of the mission was evident in her narrative, but also her reluctance to embrace this narrative entirely:

I don't think of this as, I am part of a war, really. Because we are there to move aid or help them move, and deal with their own war. Or, I mean, it is war. It is to build peace, but I am also aware that we think it is our kind of peace and our type of democracy, that they ought to have. I believe that sometimes we ought to throw out a feeler and see if this is what they need. Because it takes a long time...I mean it has been a long process for us to have achieved the kind of democracy [that we have], so we can't really expect that because we take away a dictator and then in the course of four years they can achieve this. It is a complete change in their way of life and a norm change that needs to happen first (Anna, Private, in her 50s-60s).

In Anna's quote, narrative negotiations over the peacekeeping military identity are detectable. This is seen in her argument that they [the Royal Danish Air Force] are there to help and that she did not think of the mission as being part of a war, but acknowledges the complexities of the situation by arguing that it is, of course, war, but not a war that she is part of or contributing to. Her reflections on the intricacies of the type of mission that peacekeeping and peacebuilding entail reveal the complexities of defining war, peace, and security especially at the micro-level through lived experiences. The mission might be labeled peacekeeping/building by global and national institutions like the UN, NATO, and the Danish Armed Forces; however, the individual lived experiences exemplify complexities of conflict. This further demonstrates that transition from war to peace is blurred, not linear, and experienced differently depending on perspective i.e. institutions (Danish Armed Forces) versus individuals (soldiers or local populations) (Parpart 2014). Nonetheless, the idea that the soldiers are helping others by their presence is something that the soldiers find important in their stories of military work abroad. In this sense, their military identity, I argue, is tied up to understandings on peace and security in which they are making a difference with their military contributions to create peace and security by being forces of good.

However, when these ideals are not effectuated in reality or at least experienced differently from the bottom (the soldier perspective), the actions in conflict can be difficult to handle for individual soldiers and the peacekeeping soldier identity might be challenged as a signifying part of the soldier's individual military identity. This is exemplified in Officer Jens's narrative:

I had a mantra that I am a soldier for the sake of peace, and then to be deployed and the idealism it disappeared after 1.5 months into the mission. Then you start to look at your paycheck and that you can do for another 1.5 and then that motivational factors disappear as well, and then you are left with none of that and have to try to find the final spirit and spark (Jens, Officer, in his 30s-40s).

Jens' reflections on the processes that happen in conflict settings exemplify the difficulties that the individual soldiers may experience in terms of their military

identity and military work and the internal negotiations that they go through in their justifications for their actions. Hence, the peacekeeping/peacebuilding element of military work is important for the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers but may be challenged when experiences from the ground fail to meet the narratives articulated by the institution.

Another example of this is Officer Mads, whose reflections on his first deployment include perspectives on assignments and working conditions abroad. In Mads' narrative, stories of war, peace, and conflict are dominant. The story contains Mads' own reflections on war and peace narratives of the international missions that Danish soldiers contribute to and his conversations with fellow soldiers about the type of work they are conducting:

I don't know if I have thought about this aspect of peace...I mean in that context whether they use those labels. I don't think that was so relevant because, for us, this was about going down to fight ISIS and support that part of it. And in that sense, it was peacebuilding, one could argue. And using polite words, that was what we did. But I hadn't thought about it in that way. I was very aware that I was going to participate in war, and I was going to be part of [taking] lives (Mads, Officer, in his 20-30s).

In this narrative from Mads' interview, it is possible to detect the personal narrative of soldier work abroad along with a social narrative relating to military work, peace, security, and conflict. Mads' initial dismissal of referring to the mission, he was part of as peacekeeping and peacebuilding, but then quickly changing his wording, demonstrates his awareness of the institutional narrative of the Danish Armed Forces (and Royal Danish Air Force) and how the mission is part of a political discourse of Denmark's commitments to international partners (see Chapter 4). Despite expressing skepticism for the peace aspect of the mission, Mads makes it clear that he found the mission just in the sense that he was going to help defeat a common enemy (ISIS): *"I don't think that was so relevant because, for us, this was about going down to **fight ISIS and support that part of it**. And in that sense, it was peacebuilding, one could argue [...]"* (Mads, officer, 20s). The use of pronouns in Mads' story provides insight into individual and shared (military) identities. In the story, the I (Mads), the We (his small unit, Royal Danish Air Force soldiers in general, but also the Danish Armed Forces) and the They (the pilots, the numbers, and the other "Americans and other coalition partners"), play different roles in the story. For instance, Mads' extensive use of the first person "I" demonstrates a high degree of agency in his account. For example, this is the case, when he states that, *"I was very aware that **I** was going to participate in war, and **I** was going to be part of [taking] lives" or "and **I** also had that [discussion] with **my** team, **we** talked openly about this."*

Mads is using the narrative of fighting the enemy (ISIS) as a justification for his own presence and contribution to the mission. In this process, he creates a specific narrative of a mission, in which he represents the good side, fighting the enemy (ISIS). An

opponent who, in a global western narrative, represents a common enemy; an enemy who it is justifiable to defeat regardless of means and motivation. Linking Mads' story to narrative constructions of peace and security, which feminist scholars like Cohn (2013), Enloe (2000), Duncanson & Woodward (2016); and Duncanson (2009), the idea of a good versus evil or protector versus the protected becomes evident. Hence, Mads' reflection on the motivation for the deployment is reflecting a military mindset in which getting an order and fighting an enemy is a key aspect. In this sense, one might even argue that Mads is performing and displaying a classic hegemonic militarized masculinity in which killing the enemy through dominance is key (Parpart and Partridge 2014; Duncanson 2013; Enloe 2000; Higate 2003b). The narrative of being a *Force for good* (Duncanson 2013) may be linked to a *warrior* narrative, where classic military actions of killing and defeating common enemies through violent means is a given (Haaland 2010). However, it seems that in Mads' narrative constructions these two types of soldier narratives can coexist and do not disrupt his understandings of justifying his actions as a soldier.

As argued in the beginning of this chapter, attention to the particularities of narratives from deployments relates to the notion of proximity. For the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers, proximity is an element that influences narratives on their work abroad and is part of their embodied experiences of deployments. As such, proximity means something very concrete in conflicts, as nearness to danger can determine your fate, and in this regard, space and place become essential components in military identity constructions. I argue that for the Royal Danish Air Force, proximity is part of how the soldiers negotiate their military identity, and it becomes part of the narratives they tell about their military work abroad and their role as soldiers in conflict. This was also an aspect, which sets them aside from other soldiers i.e. infantry soldiers, who are more often in direct combat. At the same time, the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers are part of violent conflicts, despite not physically being close to the actual fighting. In this sense, space and place come to represent concrete compounds for the soldiers in which their narratives on military identities and military work are constructed and negotiated among themselves, with other troops, and civilians alike. This realization is exemplified in another part of Officer Mads' narrative where his concrete calculations of the number of casualties in war, and his role in this:

If I do the math on how many times I have been sitting in three-hour-shifts over the course of those three months, and how many bombs each plane dropped on an estimate under my control, and how many times I indirectly have been part of taking lives...because you get that, those numbers you get every day. "Oh, yesterday I killed so many, and yesterday I killed so many." They [the numbers] were for the entire area of command, but you could approximately calculate, because every time a plane is done with its mission, **they** call an inflight report, where they tell how many bombs they dropped, what equipment they have destroyed, and how many they killed. So, you become very much aware that in those three months, I have

probably been indirectly part of taking over 1,000 lives. So you [one] need to reflect on...I also had that [discussion] with my team, we talked openly about this. Of course, it is not you who press the button and you [one] do not see it in the same way when you are sitting where we are, but that bomb was not dropped, had **we** not been there. And of course, it is true that if not us, then it would have been an **American** [...].I was aware of that, also before I left. I knew that. What I didn't know were the extent and scale. I had no idea about that before I left. But you realize that down there (Mads, Officer, in his 20-30s).

Mads' reflection on his own and colleagues' participation in taking lives is clear in this narrative account of a typical workday on deployment and demonstrates the awareness of the significance and atrocities of the type of work carries out. Mads is aware that during his deployment he is part of war actions, with severe outcomes, and is frank in his responsibility in this aspect of his job as well. The *we* in the sentence “*but that bomb was not dropped, had we not been there*” refer to his role as a member of the Royal Danish Air Force and the Danish Armed Forces in general, and it tells a story of a collective effort to participate in this mission and solving an important assignment for Denmark, and international partners. The *they* is used to refer to the pilots and the number of strikes in the inflight reports, and is also substituted by the noun *Americans*, situating the mission within a larger collaboration.

In his account, Mads' narrative could be argued to display a traditional hegemonic form of military masculinity, which is killing, being in control, taking action, and being part of war scenarios (Higate 2003; Belkin 2012; Duncanson 2009). However, simultaneously Mads' agency and his framing of indirectly being part of taking lives render a distancing from the actual action and a dialogue of responsibility. A distancing that could be analyzed as a more passive expression of masculinity, in which he represents the brain and the pilot (and machine) in this case represents the body doing the killing act. This particular aspect links to discussions among critical military and gender scholars on the military work, military identities (shared and individual), and how military identities are constructed and dependent on space, place, and time (Dyvik 2016; Basham and Bulmer 2017; Woodward 2003; Myrtilinen, Khattab, and Naujoks 2017).

As described earlier, Air Forces as a military service (and in this particular case the Royal Danish Air Force), perform an interesting function in war and peace missions. The action repertoire of the Royal Danish Air Force (the fighter pilots excluded) undertake assignments that are often unconnected to direct combat with casualties/kills as a consequence of the actions. The idea of indirectly being part of killing the enemy (or in some cases civilian casualties) pose probing reflections on responsibility in war and civilian/military responsibility. Anna, Jens, and Mads' personal narrative of war, peace, and security is thus curious when reflected upon in connection with the institutional narrative of the Royal Danish Air Force, Danish

Armed Forces, and Denmark's contribution to international conflicts and institutional as well as national narratives on what a soldier does in conflict situations.

The larger institutional narrative told by the Ministry of Defense and the Danish Armed Forces of securing and building peace (see Chapter 4) coincides with Mads' reflection on justifying his and the Royal Danish Air Force's actions since they were "fighting a common enemy" in order to create peace and security not only for a particular local population, but also securing peace in Denmark. Hence, in Mads' narrative, an adaptation of the institutional Danish Armed Forces narrative of being a *force for good* is detectable. At the same time, Anna, Jens, and Mads demonstrate certain contestations in terms of his own skepticism in labeling the mission as peacebuilding. The duality of the lived experiences of the soldiers is, thus, a component in the personal narratives as demonstrated by Mads in which there is an awareness of the political agenda, but also a realization that the type of work they carry out leads to casualties and may be deemed warfare.

In the following section, I examine further how the particularities of the work by Royal Danish Air Force soldiers abroad were part of creating a particular military identity that according to the soldiers set them apart. In this sense, the traits and demarcations that the soldiers use to differentiate themselves from other services and, in this, creating an 'us' and 'them', is also present in international missions. However, an extra dimension in working abroad is that the 'them' represents not only Army soldiers, but also other troops and civilian populations. In this sense, the negotiations and narratives, which the soldiers rely on in the stories of their military identities and military work, are shaped by not only gendered understandings of peace and security in military work, but also social categories such as nationality, religion, ethnicity, and, to some degree, sexuality.

## 6.2. NEGOTIATING MILITARY IDENTITIES ABROAD

As discussed in Chapter 5, the uniform is a way to create and maintain a particular culture and collectiveness among soldiers and the military as an institution (Woodward 2003) by visually demonstrating who belongs and does not belong. This element further connects to a national identity, visualized by the Danish flag situated on the left arm of the uniform. For soldiers, the uniform is, thus, a way to display nationality, and by wearing the uniform the soldiers belong to a select group of Danish citizens, whose job it is to protect Denmark. Embedded in the uniform is, therefore, a narrative of protecting Danish territory and values (see also discussion in Chapter 4 on the Danish Armed Forces institutional narrative). The clear sign of nationality is entrenched in the garment as a reminder to others as well as the soldiers that they represent the nation in their work at home and abroad and the soldiers thus construct their (gendered) military identities with a Danish nationality. In this sense, the military uniform is an intriguing element in the construction of gendered military identities, and something, which includes a number of intersectional elements such as



nationality, gender, race, ethnicity, and rank; all categories, which include elements of hierarchy and power relations and which bear normative understandings of military service.

Nevertheless, the composition of the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force as mainly white and male, as described previously, becomes a collective that does not represent the national composition of Danish citizens. Hence, where the soldier body is homogenous in terms of gender, ethnicity, and 'race', it may be questioned how well it reflects the Danish nation as a whole. The idea that the soldiers represent Denmark is, thus, more a question of being protectors of a nation rather than representation in the form of displaying a military service that "looks" like the Danish population, in particular in regard to gender. The idea of representation and protecting Denmark and Danish values is particularly interesting on deployments, where the soldiers work with other international troops and local populations. The significance of nationality is clear in a number of the interviews and part of the narrative negotiations, which the soldiers convey in regards to their military work and commitment:

You have to remember that you are always carrying the Danish flag. Regardless of how you behave, people will notice (Alice, Non-Commissioned Officer, in her 50s-60s).

Yes, it [nationality] is something we discuss before we leave, and also while on deployments. You represent Denmark first and foremost. And we are in uniform the entire time. People are constantly told that no matter what you do, you represent Denmark. So, it is important, and we also make a big deal out of the flag, to bring the flag (Christian, Officer, in his 40s-50s)

The narratives from Alice and Christian demonstrate the strong connection between nationality and soldiering. Hence, being representatives of a nation is an important element in the soldiers' narratives and something, which they individually and collectively reflect on. In this sense, the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers and their obligation towards their military service mirror traditional ideals of serving one's nation (Higate 2003; Enloe 2000). In addition, the soldiers engage in a process of negotiating military identities abroad through the same process of presenting an *us* and *them*. This was a common strategy in the narratives, and an element the soldiers placed emphasis on in explaining what they did and didn't do on international missions. Meaning, what sets them apart from other soldiers i.e. "*We do soldiering differently*". Nonetheless, in the soldiers' accounts the "us" in international missions suddenly included being a Danish soldier in general without necessarily focusing too much on service, in contrast to the Danish context where the distancing to the Army was common (see discussing in Chapter 5). Abroad, "them" in most cases referred to other national militaries and local populations. In the context of deployments, where the encounters with other nations and populations is a given, the negotiations over

military identities rely heavily on nationality as a process to describe who they consider to part of their group (the us) and whom they target as the other (them). This means that abroad nationality (being Danish) and ethnicity/race (white) become important categories in the gendered military identity negotiations, which stresses how intersectional categories of i.e. race, ethnicity, and nationality are intertwined in the narrative negotiations over military identities and moreover how they are reliant on a given contextual setting (Christensen and Jensen 2012; 2014).

Although peace and security are more enounced in the narratives concerning deployments, gender also plays a central role in the military identity formations as peacekeepers and peacebuilders in conflict settings. In the creation of an *us and them*, gender takes a key role and again, the national identity of being Danish becomes central in the narrative negotiations. Hence, the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers share a collective understanding that they [as Danes] know better, that they [as Danish soldiers] are representatives of gender equality, and that other nations are further behind on gender equality. This point is especially emphasized concerning the UN system and deployments to UN missions. A national narrative of being more knowledgeable, more professional, and more equal in military work, but also in society in general, is, thus, a collective demarcation for the soldiers and something that they identify as being a product of their nationality as Danes. This perspective connects to a form of Danish exceptionalism, where the presumed focus on gender equality as a core value in society transcends into how the soldiers carry out their military work abroad (in practice, the progressiveness of Danish gender equality is slightly more debatable see discussion by Siim and Stoltz 2015; Rolandsen Agustín and Siim 2015; Dahl 2004; Dahlerup 2018). Moreover, this ideal can be seen as a social narrative of the Royal Danish Air Force (and the Danish Armed Forces), where the soldiers share the institutional narrative of being frontrunners on gender equality and important contributors to this internationally.

Examples of this are found in narrative accounts from Laust, David, and Christian which reveals the soldiers' understandings of gender practices within the UN system as well as their own self-image as ambassadors for gender equality:

I mean you are sent directly home if you do not respect gender [uses the English word gender] and all this equality. We received three days education in Jerusalem on that mission. A large part of it was about gender [uses the English word]. You have to pass two big tests to become an observer. It is about gender [uses the Danish word køn] and equal rights and that stuff. Also, in terms of how you treat the locals. How you treat and have respect for the people you encounter in the country where you have been stationed as an observer, for instance. And if you step out of line, then all hell breaks loose, that is just a given. [...] They keep the flag flying, there are many things, which they do not have under control, but at least this is an area where I think they keep the flag flying really, really

high. There is also a three-week course in Finland, which also places great attention to this topic. It is part of the Nordic...to value equality and [avoid] harassment (Laust, Officer, in his 50s-60s).

*Interviewer: So, you think it matches the training you have from Denmark in the way the Nordics and the UN understand gender?*

I mean the Danes are very well-liked in general in the UN system, we hear that a lot. The Danes have a good reputation there, there are others who are different and have a harder time understanding the procedures (Laust, Officer, in his 50s-60s).

Whereas “*we do soldiering differently*” in a Danish context relates mainly to skills, best practice in regard to gender is emphasized as a plus that sets the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers aside as a great example to other nations and local populations. These expressions are visible in the following narrative accounts in which the soldiers discuss gender equality practices based on their experiences from UN missions. Officer David and Officer Christian especially touch upon the us/them narrative concerning gender norms:

For sure when I was part of the UN mission, there were people from many African countries. I can't divide countries into what they are worth, but there were at least cultural differences, and we had to pass all sorts of courses on gender issues [uses the English word gender] and before we were even allowed to enter the mission, they needed to see a certificate that you had passed the course. It is like, they don't disclaim responsibility, but they have an expectation that you understand these things that you speak politely to people. [The course] was something about equality balance [uses English word], everybody is equal, I mean, it was on a really low level very much like...you can't really misunderstand those headlines. You have to behave, and nobody is worth more than others, and you have to have great respect for others. People from other nations, men and women. At first you thought, “Is this really necessary?”, but I can actually understand that there is this need. I could imagine that there were some issues, when you are in those sorts of countries, where there is not necessarily a culture or control, as we know it. The norms are a bit different (David, Officer, in his 20s-30s).

They [UN] are very attentive to this. When you arrive at the UN, the first couple of days you receive briefings that prostitution is illegal, “Well, of course, it is,” It is okay because we are many different nations there. At home, we have very strict rules about this. But there you received all of these, you received briefings on the power position wearing a uniform gives you in relation to the civilian population. It is all good. They made a great deal out of it. We do that ourselves before we depart. I think we have

a good culture in the Royal Danish Air Force. People know that alcohol and prostitution then you are sent directly home with the first plane. But they were the UN, so they took it seriously to explain these things (Christian, Officer, in his 30s-40s).

In the three accounts from Officers Laust, David, and Christian, gendered narrative constructions are evident. The soldiers articulate these as important in the UN system and something that Danish soldiers are good at upholding and receive acknowledgement for by the UN. The accounts demonstrate the increased focus by the UN system on gender issues in peacekeeping and peacebuilding based on UNSCR 1325 (and the subsequent resolutions) and that this extensive focus influences narratives on gender and soldiering at the micro-level in the sense that the soldiers are aware that in UN-run operations, gender is a key term and focus area. An interesting component in the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers' description of their experiences with the UN and gender relates to the use of language to discuss this topic. As exemplified by Laust, David, and Christian, it is clear that they have heard the phrases used by the institutions in terms of gender, equality, and gender balance, and are aware of the discourses surrounding these from global institutions. It seems, nonetheless, that they, to a certain degree, experience an (unconscious) disconnect between peacekeeping missions, UN gender (peace and security) norms, and the national context of Denmark. That is to say that the soldiers seem only to focus on gender issues in relation to local populations and other nations in conflict settings where they are deployed. They do not to the same degree see these global gender ideals in the context of being Danish soldiers or associated gender (in)equality issues with their own group. The soldier narratives suggest an awareness that gender issues are elements in military work, but that this is mainly something that they need to consider in an international context, and further, that they already know how to behave and the courses by the UN are not intended for them.

The soldiers seeming acceptance of the gender policies from the UN and lack of resistance in this particular case could be seen as another example of how an understanding of being exceptionally well educated in gender equality makes the inclusion of the UN gender programs less problematic than for instance the discussions previously about cases of harassment in the Royal Danish Air Force. At the same time, it may suggest a gender blindness towards practices among Danish soldiers in Denmark (and abroad); practices which may reproduce, limit, or even hurt minority groups in military settings i.e. women or soldiers who do not live up to a particular set of gendered practices and norms (Enloe 2016, 4). Moreover, one may argue that soldier narratives, which stress and dismiss problems with gender discrimination among Danish soldiers, make it difficult to address (salient) problems relating to this for soldiers who have experienced or witnessed discrimination. Simultaneously, it is interesting how the soldiers are aware of the UN's focus on gender through gender courses, practices at UN missions (i.e. dismissal if you commit any form of gender harassment), and at the same time for the most part (there were a few exceptions) are unfamiliar with UNSCR 1325. Empirically and methodologically,

this creates an interesting find and suggests a seeming disconnect between the top and bottom of the organization about work on gender. A disconnect which could explain cases of frustration among some of the soldiers when organizations such as the UN or NATO for particular missions require an assignment to be solved by a female soldier. This struggle over normative understandings of gender equality and operational effectiveness between the UN, NATO, and Danish soldiers is exemplified in Officer Jan's accounts on gender norms in international missions in which he stresses what he finds some of the practices in the UN system to be unequal treatment towards men:

I can see in the job advertisements from the UN at the moment, it says that women have priority. That is puzzling to me. Actually, it annoys the hell out of me because I don't think that is equality. It is the exact opposite. If somebody has the same qualifications as me and it is a woman who applies, then they [the UN] choose the woman. I don't think that is equality. They should pick the person with the best qualifications (Jan, Officer, in his 50s-60s).

Whereas the accounts from Laust, Christian, and David are from male soldiers, similar descriptions are found among female staff. An example of this is Officer Camilla:

When you are on a UN mission, the first thing they say is you "cannot use a prostitute and stuff like that." In my opinion, there is too much focus on [it], but the reason they do it is because they have had these exact problems...so, it is necessary, apparently. And that is probably also because it is a mix of so many cultures, so there are some who are very different from Denmark, right. We are the "sensible" boy in the class, right. And then you need to sit and listen to all this stuff about women, it is also like this in the U.S. and Canada. And then you are taught about these red, yellow, green [codes of misconduct] and you just sit there being close to bursting with laughter, right (Camilla, Officer, in her 30s-40s).

In Camilla's narrative, the same disassociation to the extensive focus on gender in the UN system is found. This is combined with the same self-image of belonging to a nation that in its own accounts is an expert on gender equality and for whom the UN gender courses are novice in their content. There is a clear separation of an "us" and "them" in Camilla's narrative; a separation that includes several categories, as I discuss in the following. First of all, Camilla's narrative comprises the notion of gender in the way that she describes gendered dynamics and potential sexual exploitation between prostitutes and soldiers on UN missions, or gendered bodies when she explicitly refers to women in regards to the content of the UN gender course. However, at the same time, her account shows that gendered narratives intersect with a strong sense of nationality, ethnicity, race (whiteness), and perhaps even a heteronormativity in her reflections on sexual harassment at the end of the quotation when she talks about being the sensible boy in the class who knows how to address these topics in practice. Thus, she connects misconduct with men (boys) as

perpetrators and women as victims and in this sense disregards the idea that men also rape men or that women can be perpetrators of sexual violence as well as the notion that gendered bodies are more than cis-gendered and heterosexual. In her narrative on military work abroad, the negotiation over a military identity links closely to these other categories of gender, nationality, ethnicity, and whiteness, which all intersect in her accounts of working for an international organization like the UN in which certain gendered understandings are present. For instance, Camilla describes the Danish soldiers as being in a superior position and an exceptional position. In addition, she argues that the hyper-masculine ideal of fighting, raping, and misbehaving is juvenile and not something that Danish soldiers engage in and not part of the Danish way of displaying power in military organizations and in the military work they carry out. This aligns with the previous discussions on different types of masculinities within military institutions where the Royal Danish Air Force rely on a type of masculinity that is not based on physical endurance, but being technically advanced, out-of-the-box-thinking, and good at adapting to changing work assignment.

This follows Christensen and Jensen's (2012) points on intersectional categories of, for instance, nationality, ethnicity, and race in identity creations, in which several categories are part of creating hierarchies between individuals and in shaping self-images in Camilla's case her understanding of her military identity. This is also an example of how the contextual setting of deployment influences the construction of military identities (Woodward 2003). In the case of Camilla and the others, the distancing to other nations and in their view lack of knowledge on gender, helps to form the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers' military identities in international contexts with other nations and populations. There are, however, suggestions, in the soldier narratives that gendered practices of discrimination, for instance, sexual harassment and even assault take place and can create problems for (particularly female) Royal Danish Air Force soldiers (this point is discussed later in the chapter). It seems that the soldiers are separating the two contexts being at home and being on deployment and that the gendered norms and gender issues, which might evolve in international missions, are different from their everyday lives back in Denmark. This might also explain why the soldiers in these descriptions mainly use the English terms to discuss gender and the UN. By using the English word, the UN global narratives on gender equality remain concepts that belong to a different space and place, and not the national military identities. Moreover, it may be an example of how gendered narratives are constructions that do not always display actual practices. That is, the soldiers adopt the language of the UN on gender equality in relation to their military work on international missions, but place these in the background concerning their everyday lives at the airbases in Denmark.

As discussed, Danish soldiers have partaken in UN peacekeeping missions dating back to some of the first missions. In this regard, the UN's increased focus on gender as a response to cases of misconduct, for example, on sexual harassment and exploitation by peacekeeping soldiers is also part of the narrative on international

peacekeeping missions (Mazurana, Raven-Roberts, and Parpart 2005; Higate 2007; Lutz, Gutmann, and Brown 2009). Historian Martin Ottovay Jørgensen's work on Danish soldiers' part in UN missions especially from 1956-57 demonstrates through archival material how also Danish soldiers have taken part in the exploitation of local populations. This has been done through i.e. the use of prostitutes, which is supported by the significant increase in numbers of STDs with the presence of Danish and Norwegian soldiers in the Gaza strip in the period of deployment (Jørgensen 2016; 2018) (see Jørgensen's 2016 PhD dissertation on Danish contributions to UN peacekeeping<sup>16</sup>).

Although Jørgensen's material dates back to the 1950s, and none of the soldiers I interviewed took part in these missions, the data supports UN reports and (feminist) work on peacekeeping and peacebuilding on exploitation in UN-led missions, which Danish soldiers at least in the past have taken part in (Lutz, Gutmann, and Brown 2009; Whitworth 2004). From a historical perspective, it is fair to argue that the gender equality awareness, which the Danish Armed Forces and the Danish soldiers emphasize, is challenged in past international soldier work. Hence, the narratives by the soldiers on being frontrunners on gender equality and having the "right" understanding of gender may be more multifaceted seen in a historical perspective, as exemplified above, but also related to practices in the organization today. Related to this debate is also how the UN, through a number of the subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security which have passed since UNSCR 1325 in 2000, actively have engaged in the disproportionate ways in which positions of power between soldiers and local populations have unfolded in conflict settings and how this can lead to sexual violence in conflicts.

UNSCR 2467 from 2019 is an example of how the UN has attempted to address this issue of sexual violence in conflict settings by actively addressing this as a concrete issue in military peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding missions. The resolution takes a survivor perspective and even argues for attention to the fact that not only women (and children) are victims of sexual violence, but also men. The attention to this issue is interesting seen in relation to how the Danish soldiers in their narratives disregard this issue in terms of their own missions and experiences of being deployed to conflict settings by stressing that these acts of misconduct are performed by other countries, who do not know how to behave and understand gendered dynamics and the implications of gendered bodies e.g. 'the UN gender courses are not for us'. Hence, there seems to be an assumption that there are no or hardly any Danish soldiers who could be perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict settings, let alone in a national context of Denmark, as the issue is resolved. However, this understanding of being exceptionally good at handling gendered implications of conflict and military work for instance the problem with sexual violence, harassment, and discrimination

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<sup>16</sup> A masters' thesis by Pernille Østergaard Hansen from 2010 supports Ottovay Jørgensen's findings through interview material, journals, letters, and autobiographies by soldiers (Hansen 2010).

seems too simplistic. The historical context, as well as cases of sexual harassment in the Danish Armed Forces exemplified in the soldier interviews for this study as well as accounts from the Danish Female Veterans' Union as presented in the introduction tell a more nuanced story. Moreover, the assumption that white men cannot rape is empirically incorrect as widely demonstrated by feminist IR and feminist security studies (Lutz, Gutmann, and Brown 2009; Whitworth 2004).

### 6.3. MILITARY MASCULINITIES AND "THE OTHER"

Most critical military and feminist IR scholars associate military identities with military masculinities (although also problematizing these links see for instance Henry 2017; Basham, Belkin, and Gifkins 2015; Zalewski 2017). The question is how these come to life and are to be understood in relation to military work abroad as a Royal Danish Air Force peacekeeping and peacebuilding soldier. One may argue that the separation of *us* and *them*, which the soldiers rely on is a reflection on and display of hierarchies and power dynamics in which masculinities play an important role.

In the previous section, the narratives from David, Christian, Laust, and Camilla all made hints as to how other nations were unable to understand the rules by the UN on gender issues. The articulation of *other nations* as not being able to understand gender codex and discrimination displays a hierarchy in which the soldiers consider themselves advanced, knowledgeable, smarter, and more modern. This point is articulated even further in the narrative by Børge:

When you are deployed as a UN soldier, you receive a briefing about how to and how not to treat women. This is a product of some of the other nations who they can't figure out how to treat women. They [the UN] have worked on this for many years, but they haven't quite succeeded in explaining to some of the other countries how to behave. And it has something to do with their culture and stuff like that. We can see this that some of them look at women in a different light than we do. Especially, when you come from the Far East or South (Børge, Private, in his 50s-60s).

By creating a narrative of themselves as frontrunners on gender equality in military settings (especially among UN allies), the soldiers place themselves high within a global military hierarchy, as a military service that is not only a *Force for good* (see Duncanson 2009), but also able to live up to global ideals on gender equality in peace and security settings. By demonstrating these abilities, the soldiers display a form of power in a military context that relies on a type of military masculinity, which is based on superior knowledge on gender issues; a knowledge, which certain other nations (both military and local populations) do not hold. Again, this means that other nations take the position of subordinate masculinities (Connell 2016). If we take this as a point of negotiation in military identities abroad, gender, whiteness, nationality, and



sexuality (heteronormativity) play a significant role in the constructions and negotiations over masculinities for the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers.

This perspective connects to the discussion in the first part of this chapter where the idea of saving vulnerable populations through military engagements is part of the narrative of helping and being good international peacekeeping soldiers. This narrative is present both on a national/institutional level, and in the personal soldier narratives. As I stressed then, this particular way to address local populations can enforce problematic power relations among soldiers and the local populations (as well as other troops). Hence, when the soldiers refer to the *other* countries as not knowing how to treat women, they create a hierarchy in which they themselves as soldiers, white and Danish, are the ones with the “right” knowledge and behavior, which alienates the others and marginalizes them as individuals (Dittmer and Apelt 2008; Myrntinen, Khattab, and Naujoks 2017; Spivak 1988). This enables a hierarchy in the negotiations over masculinities, where Børge, in the concrete example above, uses other men’s behavior towards women as a means to statute his own masculinity was the “right” one. Again, this can be seen as a process of establishing hierarchies in military work abroad, where soldiers are in unknown territory and, therefore, need to establish a hierarchy in which they are on top. Moreover, it links to a discourse, which a number of feminist and critical military scholars have criticized cornering the use of a presumed gender equality agenda to justify military engagements (McBride and Wibben 2012). This has in particular been emphasized with the war in Afghanistan, where the idea of saving (brown) women has been a politically articulated justification for the type of counterinsurgency that took place, and where Danish soldiers also participated (McBride and Wibben 2012; Bergman Rosanmond and Kronsell 2018).

The Royal Danish Air Force soldiers’ interactions with other troops and local populations are essential components in the creations and negotiations of masculinities and how these intersect with (in)securities at the bases (and outside the bases). As such, military masculinities have been linked to destructive impacts on civilians and combatants, including how these gendered practices challenge and influence gendered hierarchies among the soldiers in conflict settings (Lutz, Gutmann, and Brown 2009; Dittmer and Apelt 2008). This further creates situations that are unsafe especially for soldiers who do not live up to the hegemonic ideal of the soldier (which often relies on a heteronormative ideal of the white, straight, and male soldier) (Parpart and Partridge 2014; Duncanson 2015; Enloe 2000). These practices are also detectable in the narratives by the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers and, as such, the experiences of the Danish soldiers are similar to studies in i.e. the British, Canadian, German, and Swedish militaries (Enloe 2016; Carreiras 2006; Carreiras and Kümmel 2008; Kronsell and Svedberg 2012). The Royal Danish Air Force soldier narratives reveal incidents in which gendered understandings create potentially unsafe situations for especially female bodies. This is particularly the case in the soldiers’ accounts from international missions. As such, Officer Jan describes a situation at the bases, which relates to how soldiers (especially female) are supposed to behave when they

are off duty at the bases to avoid disrupting the gendered norms in the given context (here an American base in Afghanistan) and risk of assaults at the bases:

In Afghanistan, we had the girls [female colleagues] and they were given instructions on how to dress. Because there were Afghans who worked at the base and who could not understand that somebody in a bra, or sunbathing or whatever they [the female soldiers] were doing [were not sending signals]. If he was emptying the trashcan, then he would knock it over, he wouldn't understand. In his world, you are signaling that you are willing to have sex, so there we needed to guide [our female soldiers on what to wear]. It wasn't just the women, the men also needed to be told that we should not shake women's hands (Jan, Officer, in his 40s-50s).

Analyzed through gendered lenses, there are a number of intersectional elements at play in Jan's account of gendered bodies on deployments. Firstly, Jan is emphasizing that military bodies are different depending on the gender of the soldier. Like in the Danish context, the uniform works as a common demarcation for the soldiers and something that may help erase gender in military contexts (Woodward 2003; Herbert 2000). However, according to Jan the problem, occurs when the soldiers are off work at the bases and take off their uniforms. Jan stresses that this is when different understandings of gender and gender practices become evident among soldiers and local populations, which can lead to unsafe situations especially for female soldiers i.e. *"In his world, you are signaling that you are willing to have sex, so there we needed to guide [our female soldiers on what to wear]."* In Jan's narrative, he is actively "othering" the local population (in this case Afghan men) by stressing that they do not follow the same gender norms and that issues of rape, assault, etc. are committed by "brown" men to "white" women (see Spivak 1988; Cockburn 2010; Cohn 2013; Enloe 2000), and that they [the Danish military] need to take precautions to help *their* women understand the practices in the given context.

Jan's account may be viewed as a classic demonstration of heteronormative, white, militarized power over not only women, but also the local populations in which race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, and gender intersect in the power hierarchies that constitute everyday military base life. Moreover, it connects to a Danish national understanding of Danish exceptionalism where the presumption, that Danish men know better in terms of gender equality, is present. Thus, in the process of flagging for gender awareness and being gender-sensitive, they position other local (brown) men in a power hierarchy where they represent thwarted masculinities (Myrntinen, Khattab and Naujoks 2017), and create a form of hegemonic masculinity that entails an awareness of equality as an ideal that all men should strive to obtain. This point is emphasized by Christensen and Jensen (2014) in which they argue that:

[...] (minority) masculinity is constructed as Danish white masculinity's 'other'. [...] to add to the complexity, ethnic minority men are often marginalized and 'othered' because they are (imagined to be) too

masculine or (imagined to) have excess masculinity, that is, they are (seen as) carriers of atavistic, patriarchal, non-equality oriented forms of masculinity. In a sense, men and masculinities that are construed as non-equality oriented are relegated to the position of hegemonic masculinity's other, especially when they are also working class and Muslim (Christensen and Jensen 2014, 70).

Christensen and Jensen's (2014) arguments on Danish white masculinity and an othering in opposition to ethnic minority groups in Danish society can be seen as part of the process of negotiating masculinities on deployments as well and an example of how the national identity is central in the identity negotiations of soldiers abroad (see also Haaland 2010 on homeland defenders). Hence, Jens uses the self-image of being gender-sensitive in the argumentation of why female Danish soldiers need to dress accordingly when they are off duty at the bases on deployments. Jens argues that it is the local "other" men who mistreat women and expose them to danger and not Danish soldiers, and that this is due to a form of masculinity that is less sensitive towards gender equality and where "other men" are unable to control their masculinity and see women as equal, unlike Danish men. This particular narrative is interesting when examining gender, peace, and security, and again speaks into the idea of being front-runners on gender equality, and at the same time dismissing any potential problems of gender discrimination to women (or other gendered bodies) face in a Danish context by Danish soldiers.

At the same time, the soldiers find themselves in situations where they need to address certain potential security risks. By establishing awareness of differences in gender norms and practices concerning appearances, militaries (the Royal Danish Air Force included) are attempting to create safe environments for their soldiers when deployed. A practice that is understandable from an operational effectiveness perspective and can also be seen as an attempt to make sure that the group (the Danish soldiers on the deployment) are all safe. Following this argumentation, Jan's description can be analyzed as a clear indication that his female colleagues are part of the group and their safety is thus a clear goal for the entire unit. However, as demonstrated by a number of scholars, rape, assault, etc. in conflict and war towards female military personnel (and male at times) as well as local populations has been carried out by military forces, including peacekeeping forces, both inside and outside bases. Hence, the insecurities at the military bases are just as easily created by other military males (and in some cases female) as local populations working in subordinate positions at the bases (Parpart and Partridge 2014; Belkin 2012; Belkin and Carver 2012; Sjöberg and Via 2010; Mathers 2013; Mazurana, Raven-Roberts, and Parpart 2005). This challenges the argument made by Jan concerning local populations (brown men) and gender norms and emphasizes the point that gendered power relations are negotiated and constructed among many groups in military work; also within the same collective of a particular unit.

There are, however, also certain elements of narrative struggles over the presumed beneficial Danish approach to gender equality and an acknowledgment that certain gendered elements play a role in military work in a Danish context and in the creation of gendered military identities. This point is articulated by Officer Laust in which he, to a certain degree, questions the presumed equality in the Danish military and in a Danish context by saying, "*Sometimes when I came home [to Denmark], I was like, what the hell are they playing at. Now they do this or that. Had this been in the UN system, they would have gone directly home.*" (Officer Laust, in his 30s-40s). The quote demonstrates Laust's questioning of presumed gender practices in the Danish Armed Forces in terms of how female colleagues are treated and argues that the UN would be less tolerant towards this type of discrimination than what he experiences in a Danish context at times. The point, which Laust makes here, resonates with the feeling I experienced at times during the interview with the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers, in particular during the informal conversations after the interviews ended. In these informal discussions, it was evident that there are certain aspects of military work and military identity in the Royal Danish Air Force that include gendered struggles in particular for the female soldiers similar to studies in other militaries (i.e. Enloe 2016, 2000; Rones 2015; Kronsell 2012; Carreiras 2006). Hence, the presumed unhindered space for women in the Royal Danish Air Force has certain limitations, which are based on gendered perceptions on military identity and military work, which relate to military bodies as primarily being viewed as male bodies, despite an increase in female soldiers and institutional focus on women in arms, as I discussed in Chapter 5. Moreover, Laust acknowledges that the military (the Danish included) might be a difficult world for women to enter due to certain understandings of soldier work and soldier bodies. An acknowledgement that relies on traditional normative understandings of soldier work and male bodies, which i.e. MacKenzie 2015, Sjoberg and Via 2010; and Carreiras 2006 argue continues to be part of military narratives. As such, women in uniform are simultaneously challenging normative understandings in military work, which is also the narrative that the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force enhance in their accounts of military identity for the Danish Armed Forces. Nonetheless, despite intentions to combat discrimination and uphold a narrative that the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force is for everyone who is willing to fight for Denmark and Danish values regardless of the gendered bodies, there continue to be issues relating to gendered practices and norms.

In Chapter 5, I discussed some of these in regard to the context of Denmark, however, also in international missions are the gendered nature of military work evident. The discrimination is noticed not simply by the female soldiers, but also by their male colleagues. An example of this is officer Laust, who argues that he has experienced how female soldiers have trouble balancing soldier work, soldier identity, and their gender identity as well.

I mean we had a female observer, an Army girl on this mission and we drank a lot of beers with her when we were off duty. We had some good

talks, she was really game. And she was skilled too. She got into trouble at one point. She really did. It was something about a meeting. An important meeting with a Mussad out in one of those areas. It was Ellen's turn to have the meeting with a colleague. When he heard this, the local official, he opposed it. He could not discuss with a woman. And then Ellen got pissed. She complained to the Commander, she complained to NYC. She was really pissed. And I said, "Ellen, really, just let it fly, just wear the scarf and then we can laugh about it. But she stood firm. But it was calmed down again, because they are the way they are. And if they stand on this then it won't happen. I mean we can't decide over them. They have practiced this for a 1,000 years (Laust, Officer, in his 50s-60s).

The account by Laust is an example of how contexts invoke certain normative understandings of gender, which can challenge the ways in which for example female soldiers are able to solve work assignments abroad. For the individual soldier, this may result in situations where she/he/they is limited in performing military work the way she/he/they finds professionally most meaningful i.e. having a meeting with a Mussad despite being a woman. This reality of how gendered practices, norms, and cultures change in different contexts and stir perceptions on gender equality including how it affect soldier work, is a reality of working in international missions. This premise also affects Danish soldiers in their abilities to perform their soldier work. As the example of Ellen and Laust shows, these realities may lead to situations where the soldiers need to find alternative ways to solve their assignments because of their gendered bodies. As Laust argues, if Ellen would wear a headscarf for the meeting and in this way show respect to the local population, she would be able to perform her soldier work and simultaneously display an acceptance of cultural differences for the population that she is deployed to help.

As this narrative is produced by Laust, Ellen's objection towards wearing a headscarf is only seen through Laust's perspective, and her reasons may be multifaceted. However, the incidence brings forward the aforementioned complexities of soldier work abroad in settings that culturally and normatively are different from the realities of most Danish soldiers. The narrative, therefore, also displays how soldier identities are negotiated in relation to not only other soldiers and one's own nationality, but also in opposition to others (Walker 2010; Jenkins 2004). In this sense, a gendered soldier identity may become a particularly important part of one's professional identity formation.

Hence, Laust's narrative reveals how military identities and military work are negotiated by the individual soldiers, but also as Woodward and Jenkins (2011) stress with other soldiers, work assignments, duties, and what becomes especially evident in this example in interactions with the local population. Moreover, these situations can create tensions in the collectiveness among the soldiers, as these situations may display an unequal approach to soldier practices in certain situations on deployment because of cultural differences based on gendered soldier bodies.

The incidence, which Laust describes, presents both a particular understanding of gender and nationality in which Laust demonstrates that Danish soldiers are better at working with different gendered bodies. Hence, in Laust's narrative, it is clear that he considers the local man less informed and behind in terms of understanding gender relations and how gendered bodies are supposed to work together as equal in military work. In Laust's perspective, he as a Danish soldier is able to disregard a traditional ideal of male soldier bodies as the ones who undertake soldier work, because of his national background, and, in this way, place himself in a superior position to the local population.

One could also argue that the way Laust describes the local Mussad displays a degree of lack of cultural and religious sensitivity. Elements which are supposed to be part of being good peacekeeping and peacebuilding soldiers, where protection and support of local populations and not diminishing their ways of living is underlined. Thus, while Laust stresses that Ellen should wear the headscarf out of respect for the local Mussad and that they as Danish soldiers cannot decide over them (the local population), he also presents the Mussad as set in his way in terms of gender roles and practices. There are, thus, certain ambiguities in Laust's account in which he, on the hand, argues for cultural sensitivity from his female colleague and, on the other hand, considers the Mussad's understandings of gender outdated.

As this is a second-hand account, Laust only knows the reasoning for the local man's reluctance to talk to the Danish female soldier based on others' accounts. Hence, in the same way that it is not possible to know the exact reasons why Ellen opposes to the treatment and complains to the UN system, it is also not possible to know the exact reasoning behind this confrontation by the Mussad. In this sense, the voices of the local population, as well as, Ellen's are silenced. However, although Ellen as an individual is not able to give her perspective on this particular incidence, I include female soldiers in the study and, in this sense, there is a difference between the lack of voice given to the local population as a whole group and not specifically having Ellen's perspective represented in this narrative account.

Given my attention to the soldiers' narratives of military work and identities, I do not give the local populations a voice in this study. This has been an active choice in that focus is on the soldiers, but it does mean that some of these relational identity constructions are viewed only from the perspective of the soldier in this case Laust.

It further demonstrates the complexities of the UN missions where global norms on gender and operational effectiveness at times experience a disconnect between gender ideas and practices at the local level and contestation for global gender ideas. This creates tension among the soldiers, as the military soldier body very explicitly and vocally can no longer be dismissed as just a "soldier" body, but explicitly is deemed unfit for this type of soldier work due to the gendered nature of that particular soldier. At the same time, a study by Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell from 2018 found that

Swedish and Danish female soldiers deployed to Afghanistan qua their gender had the potential to engage in dialogic peacekeeping, which enabled them to gather intelligence information by other means than their male colleagues because they could engage with the local population in other ways (Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell 2018). Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell argue that the Danish and Swedish peacekeeping activities in Afghanistan included gender dichotomies where the women soldiers were assigned dialogic qualities in contrast to their male colleagues. Moreover,

While, soldiering is primarily about combative skills, our analysis testifies that amongst women soldiers dialogue with local people sometimes loomed larger than combat. Dialogic peacekeeping gave women soldiers a sense of agency and “doing good” beyond borders (Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell 2018, 182).

Hence, Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell argue that female soldiers are aware of the potential benefits their gender identities can play in the conflict. By using their own gendered civilian and military experiences in connecting with especially local women and listening to local voices, they are able to gather important information. This idea aligns with the institutional narrative, I have presented in this thesis, that female soldiers play an important role in peacekeeping and peacebuilding (operational effectiveness). Although this approach has been (and continues to be critiqued) for being gender binary in its basic form, Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell argue that the female soldiers despite the obvious gendered segregated roles experience a form of agency, which give them a sense of making a difference and being good soldiers. This point aligns with Duncanson and Woodward’s (2016) arguments that modern militaries, despite gendered challenges, experience female soldiers who do well within the organizations and are able to advance and carry out important tasks.

Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell’s findings bring forward some of the potential benefits of including women in peacekeeping missions both for the success of the mission seen through the eyes of the military institution, but also the soldiers themselves and local (in this case women), who are given a voice. At the same time, as the quote by Laust suggests, the gendered ideals in conflict settings can also become hindrances for women soldiers, who do not want to take on this particular role as “the women soldier of dialogic peacekeeping”. In this sense, these gendered expectations from the institution as well as the different contextual settings can invoke clear narrative struggles for female soldiers and other gendered bodies who do not conform to stereotypical ideas of men and women in war, conflict, and peace processes. In addition, the type of narratives, which Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell bring forward, of the strong connection between women soldiers and local populations, were not common among the Royal Danish Air Force female soldiers in my material. This can again relate to the type of work that Royal Danish Air Force soldiers carry out, which is mainly done in the refined areas of the international bases and in the air for the pilots. Hence, the experiences of interactions with local populations outside of

the bases were more of a private character i.e. in Mali where some of the soldiers were invited to the wedding of one of their local chauffeur's daughters. These cases can reveal gendered elements in the sense that it was mainly the female soldiers who participated in these events, whereas the male Royal Danish Air Force soldiers preferred to not get involved in private events with the local population and in this sense maintained a separation between the professional soldiers and the local population in need. However, the type of awareness of their gendered bodies and using this strategically in their work abroad was not articulated among the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers.

#### **6.4. IT IS NOT REALLY DANGEROUS...**

As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers' missions include particular elements of proximity to conflict and war. Hence, the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers are protecting from afar, which influences their understandings of security, both their own as well as their reflections on the conflicts they take part in. As stated, the number of deployments varies among the soldiers along with differences in locations of the missions. Hence, the narratives from deployments include, but are not limited to, experiences from Afghanistan, Syria, and Mali. A common narrative among the soldiers entails a shared understanding that the type of missions and tasks carried out by the majority of the Royal Danish Air Force (the pilots were to some degree excluded) entails fewer security threats than the work done by the Army. This is evident in the ways in which a number of the soldiers describe security situations abroad. An example of this is present in the narrative by David, a young Officer in his late 20s-30s.

David's narrative focuses on the experiences of being away on a mission as part of the Royal Danish Air Force, and his reflections on the role he plays in the assignments he carries out, the security aspect of deployment to a conflict zone, and the everyday life of deployment. In David's account, the anticipation of going on his first deployment (Afghanistan) is a memory of excitement and something he had mentally prepared for, including hearing stories of deployment from other colleagues. A significant part of David's account is the notion of being secure on deployment:

It was an exciting experience. It was my first deployment. You [one] had read and heard a lot about this, but as the Air Force, we typically do not operate outside secured compounds, that means we typically operate inside secured airbases, we do what we do best at home in Denmark, and we then perform it someplace else in the world. So, typically we are not in charge of our own protection. They [one] send other people to protect this particular airbase and these areas, so that we can do our work safely and securely inside. But, of course it is not like working at home, there is the possibility of something flying over. Sometimes artillery crosses over, but it was quite peaceful where I was in Afghanistan. There were threats, and



at times, it was close, but there was never like a real threat (David, Officer, in his 20s-30s).

David dismisses the idea that his deployment posed a security threat to himself or people working in the Royal Danish Air Force and, in this, emphasize both his own individual feeling of security but also places this as a shared military identity of a Royal Danish Air Force soldier. An example of this is the way David refers to the security situation with sentences such as: “*as the Air Force we typically do not operate outside secured compounds*”, “*we typically operate inside **secured** airbases*” and “*we are not in charge of **our** own **protection***”, “*we can do our work **safely and securely** inside.*” David’s use of the pronoun **we** is a clear indicator that he includes his own experience in a bigger narrative of working conditions for Royal Danish Air Force personnel on deployments. Following Shenhav (2015), David’s reference to the Royal Danish Air Force and ‘*we*’ can be categorized as a social narrative telling a specific story of a particular group of individuals (Shenhav 2015). Moreover, the account that protection is something that others take care of for them and that they (Royal Danish Air Force) simply carry out the same type of assignment, as they do in Denmark, exemplifies the particularities of the Royal Danish Air Force and sets them aside from, for instance, the Army.

The contradicting aspects of being deployed to a conflict zone, taking part in conflict and to a certain degree dismissing the security aspect is especially clear in David’s concluding remark where he comments, “*Sometimes artillery crosses over, but it was **quite peaceful** where I was in Afghanistan. There were threats, and there were sometimes when it was close, but there was **never like a real threat.***” Using Shenhav’s (2015) definition of social narratives, one can argue that David in this narration of his first deployment constructs a narrative that tells a story of a specific shared identity for the Royal Danish Air Force as a group; namely that their deployment situations are less dangerous than other types of military work or services and encounter fewer threatening situations. The Royal Danish Air Force is safely able to do the work they are assigned despite the different locations.

At the same time, linking *Afghanistan, military work, and peaceful* in the same sentence as *threats and artillery attacks* demonstrates a multifaceted aspect of a war and peace narratives, which describes the complexities and antagonistic working conditions of a soldier in the Royal Danish Air Force including the everyday lives of deployment for soldiers. In the story, David is reflecting on his everyday life in a deployment situation and normalizing the danger of deployment by both stressing that he is doing the same type of work, as he would normally do in Denmark, and that he and his men are not in charge of security and, therefore, not really in danger. In David’s account, this is a peaceful situation for him personally. Nonetheless, this part of David’s account may also be analyzed as a coping mechanism of war and conflict of introducing a form of normality in an abnormal (and extreme) situation (Sasson-Levy, Levy, and Lomsky-Feder 2011; Parpart 2014). This point is also emphasized in

the narrative by Børge, in which he describes the same type of feeling of being safe on missions:

As Air Force soldiers it is relatively quiet, especially as technicians we are mainly at the base. I have been to Afghanistan five times, and I have hardly been outside of the base we stayed at. I have gone flying a couple of times, but we don't really leave the base like the Army soldiers do. So, we are only shot at every so often (Børge, Private, in his 50s-60s).

Hence, despite having been to Afghanistan on five different tours, Børge has hardly ever been outside the base. This aspect of deployments for the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers evokes interesting notions on peace and security and how these are shaped by space, place, and time. Thus, as exemplified by David and Børge's narratives, the use of the words *peace* and *security* are normalized in their accounts of everyday life at international bases and in this way negotiations over space, place, and time become relevant factors in the soldiers' narratives from deployments. The idea of space encompasses the abstract overall setting of a conflict zone, and, at the same time, *space* as a specific confined and visible place in the form of a secured airbase. A confined area, which is affected by the outside area as well through occasional rocket attacks. This process is quite interesting and part of explaining the constructions of military identities and military work where the everyday encounters of military work on international bases become components in the stories told. It also poses questions of defining security, peace, and conflict, including the feminization, which some scholars put forward about peacekeeping and peacebuilding work (Zarkov 2002; Cockburn 2010). Børge and David's descriptions of their military work as safe, and where others are in charge of their security, can be viewed as a process, where the Royal Danish Air Force military work (especially the work that ATW and ACW carry out) at international bases undertakes a process of feminization by being in contrast to "real" dangerous soldier work i.e. combat outside of the military bases.

The everyday life and work of the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers carries on into deployment situations, and for most of the military personnel in the Royal Danish Air Force, the work assignments are the same as when working domestically. This means that unlike the Army, where specific preparations for a mission are done over a course of several months of training, military employees in the Royal Danish Air Force may leave for a mission with few weeks' notice. As such, the concrete tasks and assignments become the key foci for soldiers during their deployments. Understanding your assignment and solving this skillfully was stressed as the key element of being a good soldier in the Royal Danish Air Force. The particular assignment varied among the soldiers depending on their specific function within the force, but were key elements in the narratives on everyday life on deployments. Hence, Børge and David's reflections on the type of work they are doing (same type of assignments as in Denmark) may be analyzed as a way of normalizing an abnormal situation, despite occasional rocket attacks. In addition, the concept and idea of security have an articulated gendered component especially on international missions

for the female soldiers in particular. In the following, I unfold the ambiguities of security.

## **6.5. THE AMBIGUITIES OF SECURITY: EVERYDAY LIFE AT THE BASES**

The discussion on security intertwines with the physical spaces that provide the “home” for the soldiers while on deployments (military bases). Royal Danish Air Force soldiers spend most of their time at the bases, which is considered a safe space where the enemy is unable to infiltrate. Nonetheless, the idea of a safe base and securities or insecurities comes in many forms and is experienced differently depending on actors (Parpart 2014; Parpart 2015; Mazurana, Raven-Roberts, and Parpart 2005). For some of the soldiers, military bases include insecure spaces due to the potential risk of rape, assault, exploitation, etc. This element of safety at military bases links closely to gendered practices in war and conflict and may be tied to, among others, Parpart’s (2014; 2015) discussions on human (in)security and practices in conflict and peacekeeping/building. The concept of human (in)securities refers to the notion that spaces from a macro-perspective (in this case the overall command of the base) might be considered safe (that is safe from enemy forces). However, at the micro-level individual soldiers may experience insecurities i.e. assault and rape from other members of their group (other soldiers) (Parpart 2014). Insecurities in conflict tie to notions of gendered hierarchies in which masculinities and femininities instate certain gendered behaviors in soldiers. In this regard, especially militarized masculinities have been argued to play a significant role in the constructions of gender relations among soldiers including creating and maintaining specific power relations and hierarchies within military institutions, as discussed previously (Parpart 2014; Basham 2015; Belkin and Carver 2012).

The ambiguities of the experiences of (in)security in international missions are evident in accounts from a number of female soldiers. Their narratives emphasize the point that security means different things depending on context as well as level of analysis i.e. the institutional accounts of security in the form of securing a conflict area contra the everyday life at a military base for soldiers working abroad. Hence, being on duty/off duty comes to represent something else for the soldiers when they are on international missions and unable to leave for the day and go home to their respective families. Instead, they are forced to remain on the base and continue to be part of the military environment together with other troops. For a number of the female soldiers this meant a different type of insecurity from working in a Danish context, which they became aware of and acted upon in their encounters with other nations and international bases. As the following narratives demonstrate, the female soldiers are aware of the potential risk that their gender poses in military work. This is evident in the accounts from i.e. Private Nete and Officer Camilla:

Well no, I mean we know this stuff. It can't really come as a surprise to anyone. In general, I think that people behave. On the second shift I was deployed, we were banned from walking outside after sunset. There had been a rape case at the base on an American civilian woman (Nete, Private, in her 30s-40s).

[My gender only plays a role] in connection to driving. I don't drive on my own. That is just a principle I have. I refuse. I mean, I don't want to end up in a situation where I am extra vulnerable. So, on that point I stand firm (Camilla, Officer, in her 30s-40s).

When you enter those dining facilities, many people [the men] would be staring at you. I really don't like that. Look the other way! [Not the Danes] they were fine. [Nete continues to unfold how her gender affects her military work when deployed]. Of course, there are people here [in Denmark] who stare, but down there [on deployments] it is different. Especially because there is something about blond girls. I have colored my hair dark now, because of blond hair and blue eyes; that is something that invites, women in general, most places, but some more than others. If you got just some looks, then tons of men stare. I find that tiring (Nete, Private, in her 30s-40s).

The accounts by Nete and Camilla clearly reveal the potential dangers that female soldiers face on deployments, which are unrelated to the particular conflict/work they are deployed to carry out, but instead is a product of the gendered nature of war and conflict more generally, which transcends the compounds of the presumed secure bases. These experiences speak into the discussions that feminist IR scholars have been advancing for decades, namely the gendered nature of military work in conflict settings peacekeeping/building or war position especially women in vulnerable positions, and that this includes both local women and female soldiers (Whitworth 2004; Cockburn 2013; Enloe 2004). Hence, gender is an unavoidable factor in military identity negotiations, and for the female soldiers this provides certain security risks in their performances as soldiers especially abroad. Nonetheless, the Royal Danish Air Force women do not mention this as a reason for quitting, or not wanting to be part of the armed forces; on the contrary, they merely see this as a basic condition for choosing a career in a male-dominated world, and something, which they personally need to deal with and not the military as such. The way Nete and Camilla narrate these incidents suggests that they see these insecurities as individual problems more than they consider them a systemic challenge that militaries (and organizations such as NATO and the UN) need to deal with.

In addition, female soldiers risk being subject to gossip surrounding their gender and sexuality, which puts them at greater risk of alienation from their groups and missing the opportunity to be part of the Band of Brothers (or collectiveness) (MacKenzie 2015). A collectiveness, which the soldiers stress to be essential in dealing with

especially military work abroad including deprivation from family and friends back home. As an example, Nete argues that:

If you walk with someone of the opposite sex then you can be 100 percent certain that somebody thinks that there is something going on. For sure!! When you are deployed it is almost impossible to avoid [this type of gossip] [and] focus is intensified when it is a woman. Had it been a man, nobody would have noticed right, it makes such a difference (Nete, Private, in her 30s-40s).

As I discussed in Chapter 5, the element of sexuality and female bodies becomes an element in how the female soldiers are able to perform their work (also on deployments), and their connection to the collective soldier body. Paraphrasing Thidemann Faber's work on sexuality in the Danish police, in which I argue there are certain similarities to military work, men's heterosexuality is not problematic related to their work life. However, women, and in this case female soldiers, are blamed if there are certain problems that arise in relation to sexual misconduct in the workplace. This means that women are the "sexually attractive" soldiers who are responsible if the male soldiers misbehave (Valenius 2007). As such, Thidemann Faber (2008) reasons that with female police officers, and I argue similar tendencies are found among female soldiers, face with a dilemma:

If they do not react to a pass at them from the men in the field, they risk being isolated and stigmatized as reserved (or lesbian). If they on the contrary react to a pass, they are considered frivolous and 'of easy virtue'. A woman may be attractive and moderately feminine, but she may not be sexually desirable, as she then – besides signaling unprofessionalism – in case of sexual harassment risks being suspected of have encouraged that it went this far (Thidemann Faber 2008, 250) [author translation].

Although the contextual setting of the points Thidemann Faber (2008) brings forward in her work is based on studies among female police in Denmark, I argue that the findings still resonate with the narratives from especially the female soldiers I interviewed. As the quote by Nete demonstrates, female soldiers can quickly become targets of gossip and singled out as having misbehaved in terms of the code of conduct in military work and risk being excluded from the Band of Brothers by demonstrating (and taking advantage of) their gender and sexuality. Nete is aware that her behavior is viewed in a particular way because she is a woman and that things would have been different had she been a man. Although many of the soldiers to a large degree dismiss issues with gender and gender discrimination, especially in the Royal Danish Air Force, narratives like Nete's are also part of the narratives on military work and military identity. These personal narratives stress the complexities that especially female soldiers face in maneuvering being equally qualified soldiers to the male comrades, not disrupting the collectiveness of the unit, and, at the same time, not becoming too manly (Herbert 2000).

The narratives that the Royal Danish Air Force female soldiers present as exemplified by Nete and Camilla bring in elements of space, place, and time and how these elements intersect with the experiences of unwanted attention due to their gendered bodies and the challenges they face in conducting their work at military bases abroad and the security risk they experience. Hence, in their accounts, there is a story of an 'us' and 'them' in which the perpetrators are identified as other nationalities. This part of the narratives brings in the complexities of being abroad on international missions in contexts (countries or geographical areas), which are culturally different from the national context of Denmark and being part of coalitions where other nationalities, ethnicities, and races are present.

Gender norms and practices not only cause challenges with safety issues for the female soldiers, but also in terms of carrying out their work assignments as constant elements in their interactions with other troops and local populations. The female bodies become visual tokens for the "other" in a military context. In several ways, the experiences of especially the female Royal Danish Air Force soldiers speaks to the heteronormative narrative of soldier bodies and soldier life in which the norm is the male, straight (and white) soldier (Enloe 2016; Carreiras and Kümmel 2008; Sjöberg and Via 2010). Private Nete discusses in her account of deployments this element of the visual difference women make in military settings and how this results in unwanted attention by other troops. Especially in the informal conversations I had with the soldier before and after the interviews, I got the feeling that there were certain aspects of military work and military identity, which were challenging and ambiguous from a gender perspective. These challenges related to physical abilities, but also to normative understandings of military bodies and a male heteronormativity, which female soldiers interrupted. This was the case on deployments in which extreme situations in locations far from home challenged normative understandings of equality, as the security situation was more extreme and the norms more fluid.

As discussed previously, the Danish military is mainly white and male and belonging to the ethnic majority in Denmark. However, when deployed to an international context with several nations working together, the power hierarchies existing among soldiers intensify (also given the extreme situations) and other categories such as race, ethnicity, nationality, and rank come to signify differences. On top of this, the female soldiers need to balance their gender as well as a visual signifier, which makes them a minority not only among their "own" fellow Danish soldier colleagues, but also among other nations. At the same time, these experiences are twofold, I argue. Even though the female soldiers often identify other nations/local populations as potential perpetrators of misconduct, or misunderstanding gender norms, the point about gossip, which Nete brings forward, relates to her own fellow Danish soldiers, who challenge her commitment to Danish codes of conduct in terms of gender norms by insinuating that she has unprofessional relations with other soldiers (Danish and other nationalities alike). In this regard, it is the Danish soldiers who are policing their own fellow (female) soldiers in what they consider good practice in terms of gendered

bodies and relations between soldiers. This is then intensified given the contextual setting and situation, as the soldiers are on the base 24/7 and, therefore, unable to break with the military context while abroad or potential perpetrators.

In relation to cases of gender discrimination and sexual harassment, the male soldiers I interviewed also addressed this in regard to being on deployments and how they, in these cases, did have knowledge of female colleagues, who had experienced harassment. At the same time, there was a clear distancing to their own actions and an articulation that this was either something that had been a problem for others (other services within the Danish Armed Forces) or non-Danish soldiers. The latter point is found in Officer Christian's story where he argues that:

No, I'm totally naive. I think us Danes we live a sheltered life, I think we do. Compared to...Also, on an American base, I have spent a lot of time on American bases, but I have never in my wildest dreams ever imagined that one could not feel safe on an American base. But I mean, well anything can happen (Christian, Officer, in his 40s-50s).

These accounts relate to the points about the '*us*' and '*them*' and to the idea of Danish exceptionalism and a self-image of being experts on gender equality, whereas other militaries are in need of training. Again, this idea is displaying intersectional elements of race, gender, and nationality, where Danish soldiers place themselves high in the international military hierarchy and proper codes of conduct instated by global actors, such as, the UN and NATO:

We had some cases, where two Danish women reported what we call gendered discrimination, which it was called then, now it is just discriminating actions. And it was a case of some American men who couldn't keep their hands to themselves (Jan, Officer, in his 50s-60s).

What I often experience is in the encounters with other nations [soldiers] who we collaborate with their mindset is a bit more basic. There are really some hardcore people who have seen things I never wish to experience. And they don't give a shit. If she is attractive, then they catcall her and give her a slap on the ass. You can talk as much as you want about [diversity and discrimination], but you won't reach them. You just have to tell the girls you need to look as gender-neutral as possible when you are out working with them. That is why you have the uniform, so please don't, when you have a bit of leave, walk around in the most tight-fitting [clothes] (Jan, Officer, in his 50s-60s).

For me as a division manager there in 2003, my people had no contact with women at all. There were two girls who were allowed by my people to come down to our tent area. One was Mette who had the mower and she looked like Bob the builder, so I don't really know what could happen...but

if you have been deployed long enough, then everything is possible (Jens, Officer, in his 40s-50s).

The gendered nature of peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, which Lutz, Gutmann, and Brown 2009 stress, among others, centers on ideas of gendered power dynamics and struggles for power in hierarchies in a given situation. The link between soldier work in peacekeeping and peacebuilding and masculinities and masculinized behavior in the form of sexual exploitation is unfortunately part of the realities of military work abroad (Mazurana, Raven-Roberts, and Parpart 2005; Higate 2007; Lutz, Gutmann, and Brown 2009). The Royal Danish Air Force soldiers are aware of these connections and their narrative accounts of life at international bases reveal this. As Anna's narrative below suggests, these practices are topics, which the soldiers are aware of and discuss internally:

Not rape per se. I remember once in Afghanistan we started to discuss trafficking and people's stance on this. But I haven't really heard that in the Air Force, that Air Force soldiers should be bad. But I can understand how it can happen in pure frustration and powerlessness that the brain just shuts down and they turn into primitive animals. Because it is a way to disregard everything when it gets too much. Not that this is an excuse, but I can see how it can happen. I mean how else anyone could torture people; it must be because the brain just shuts down (Anna, Private, in her 50s-60s).

Anna's reflections on rape/trafficking in conflict speak to a narrative that this type of behavior of expressing dominance and extreme forms of masculinity towards women is not something that is an inherent part of being a soldier, but something that only happens in extreme situations. Hence, Anna is dismissing this behavior as being part of a military identity, but something that will only happen "*when the brain shuts down*." At the same time, she acknowledges that conflict situations may have that effect on soldiers. However, common for Nete, Anna, and Camilla's accounts is the creation of an "other" as the perpetrators of these atrocities where their "own" fellow Danish male comrades are not considered perpetrators, rather, this role falls to other nationalities including foreign allied troops such as i.e. American soldiers.

It is clear from the narratives that the boundaries of deployments influence the soldiers' view on gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the sense that in regard to deployments they express knowledge on cases in a more direct way. This may relate to the formulation of an '*us*' and '*them*' abroad, which is related to other military forces and local populations, and a process in which the soldiers blame others for this type of behavior and thereby distance themselves from the actions. Again, the self-image of being soldiers with an awareness of proper behavior regarding gender and encounters with female soldiers is clear in these narrative accounts and reveals a type of military identity that could be argued to be particularly signifying for the Danish (Royal Danish Air Force) soldiers. This point relates to the points made by



Higate and Henry (2009) in that soldiers from different contingents are different due to different norms, cultures, and practices (and also seen as such by both soldiers and locals), which spill over into their negotiations over military identities (Henry and Higate 2004). These may, thus, become even more articulated in the personal narratives when faced with these differences, which the soldiers experience on deployments both in relation to other troops as well as other civilian populations.

## 6.6. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, focus was on the international settings, which the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers find themselves in when deployed as part of their job as professional soldiers in the Danish Armed Forces. The chapter discusses how the peacekeeping/peacebuilding soldier narrative is part of the soldiers' military identity formations and negotiations. This further meant that space, place, and time came to represent extra dimensions to the discussions on military identities and military work. It was evident in the conversations I had with the soldiers that their narratives to a larger extent included understandings of peace and security in conversations on their work abroad. In this regard, the notion that their contribution mattered and that they were helping the local population (being *Forces for good*) was a common reference among the soldiers. At the same time, the narratives also entailed a sense of struggles, as some of the soldiers were aware of the institutional framing of the missions as peacekeeping and building, but that they were in fact also taking lives and contributing to conflicts.

The idea of being exceptional in terms of gender equality and its link to nationality was also articulated in how the soldiers viewed their military work especially in relation to working for the UN. This was especially the case in the soldiers' encounters with UN training, in which they felt superior in their knowledge on the topic compared to other nations and, in this regard, considered some of their collaborators and the local populations behind in thinking about gender and gender equality. This type of narrative account brought forward interesting dimensions of understandings of gender and the link to ethnicity, nationality, and power dynamics between soldiers, nations, and local populations. Thus, in a sense, the soldiers were *othering* the other nations and populations based on, in their opinion, limited understandings of gender.

In addition, the chapter reveals how space and place influence ideas of security and sets other boundaries for (in)security. Especially for the female soldiers, the international bases came to represent places that could also pose potential dangers, not from enemies, but from other soldiers. It was clear in the narrative accounts that this was particularly a gendered aspect of soldiering, which intensified in conflict settings. In these processes, other intersectional categories came to play a significant part in the power hierarchies and power dynamics between soldiers. As such, nationality, ethnicity, race, and sexuality are categories that influence the soldiers' experiences of military work abroad and are part of how they identify as soldiers and

who they mention as potential perpetrators. There seems to be a loyalty among the female soldiers towards their male colleagues in regard to incidents of sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination, in which other troops or the local (brown) men are deemed less knowledgeable on gender equality and how to treat women. Nonetheless, as one of the female soldiers stress being deployed for an intense period of time in a conflict area also provokes some soldiers to make up stories about female soldier colleagues, for example, that they are sleeping around or being too close to male colleagues from their own nations or other nationalities. Comments that are only made about women. These stories resonate with experiences from other Danish female soldiers who have told their stories to the Danish Female Veteran Union and how Danish narratives on gender and gender discrimination are handled in particular ways in Danish culture, which can make it difficult to speak up against discrimination.



## CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

Military institutions are gendered sites where negotiations and constructions of military identities and discussions on military work, soldier duties, and soldier bodies are rooted in historically (gendered) understandings of what makes a good military force, how to be a good and successful soldier, and continuing as well as changing understandings of required competences, responsibilities, and obligations for the individual soldier and the force as a collective. The historical link between male bodies and military duties enforced by narratives of protectors of the state, for instance, through the use of male conscription has aided to reproduce a continued overrepresentation of male soldier bodies in military work. This is part of the reason why military work and military identities to this day continue to be influenced by particular understandings of gender, in which military identities in particular rely on different forms for military and militarized masculinities.

At the same time, focus from 2000 and onwards in relation to the Women, Peace, and Security agenda through resolutions such as UNSCR 1325 has challenged the historical understanding that soldier work is designed for male bodies, but rather that particular types of military work might be performed equally well and perhaps better through competences and skills such as compassion and dialogue, which other bodies may be able to do. This is especially the case in regards to peacekeeping and peacebuilding work, where global institutions such as the UN and NATO articulate a specific goal of recruiting more women to these types of military missions based on an operational effectiveness argument, where female soldier bodies are ascribed particular qualifications based on their gender i.e. more compassionate and better at initiating dialogue with local populations. These changes are part of the organizational, as well as personal soldier, realities in the Danish Armed Forces and their work internally and in collaboration with allies and partners such as NATO and the UN.

This thesis analyze how the Danish Armed Forces, and the Royal Danish Air Force in particular, position themselves with regard to narratives on doing military work in the 21st century with emphasis on peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and especially how these processes take different forms depending on where in the organization one is looking and asking questions. This includes how this influences negotiations over military identities and military bodies in soldier work. On the basis of this, I set out to examine:

*How do the Royal Danish Air Force and Royal Danish Air Force soldiers negotiate gendered military identities and bodies in military work in narratives on gender, peace and security?*

What this thesis reveals is that narratives of military identity and military work indeed are negotiated differently depending on where in the organization one is looking. The

negotiations are relational both for the institution and the soldiers. Thus, the institution presents its official narratives on gender, peace, and security in relation to global voices from the UN and NATO on what modern military allies are expected to do, as well as a national Danish context. For the soldiers, the identity negotiations are relational and negotiated in reference to the military institution, the interactions between the soldiers, private life, contact with local populations in conflict settings, as well as, collaboration with other military forces.

As I argue throughout this thesis, the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force see themselves as a cosmopolitan-minded international military force with a human rights agenda at the cornerstone of their work. Moreover, they present an institutional narrative of being frontrunners in terms of gender equality in military work and as role models for this in international missions. At the same time, it is also on this particular point that Denmark has received critique for the limited work that has been done internally in the organization on gender issues, which the NAP for the period 2020-2024 acknowledges. Thus, simultaneously as the Danish Armed Forces expresses a desire to attract more women to the force by underlining that they have assignments that are well suited for female bodies, they also point out that gender is irrelevant as long as the soldiers, regardless of gender or other social categories, can perform the duties required. Hence, ambiguities in the narrative of being a frontrunner on gender equality are evident when analyzing both institutional as well as soldier narratives.

These seeming divergences in the ways in which the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force narrate, present, and negotiate military identities and military work in relation to gender and gendered bodies may in essence be an expression of the complexities of working with gender and gender equality issues in an organization that has strong historical ties to a narrative of male bodies as protectors. This can on a normative level, make it difficult to change narratives of which bodies perform soldiering successfully and, in this sense, present narrative struggles over which social narratives represent a modern Danish military that wishes to present itself as cosmopolitan and a frontrunner.

At the same time, new bodies (female and other gendered bodies) present actual practical challenges which the Danish military needs to adapt to in order to reach a successful outcome of everyday work assignments, both at home and abroad. This could, for instance, be in the question of segregated/or joint sleeping quarters, the design of the uniform and other material and garments, which is needed to carry out soldier work, or physical requirements and whether these should be based on gender or other categories such as height or body stature, etc.

Additionally, these practical challenges can become even more enunciated in situations where the security of the individual soldier or the group as a collective is at stake, which can lead to frustrations and conflicts between management wishes to

broaden the types of bodies what perform soldiering and lived experiences of soldiers and performances of soldier bodies. At the thesis reveals, all these elements are part of the reason why gendered military identities are difficult to negotiate individually, institutionally, and collectively and are central to struggles over requirements of changes from global as well as internal organs.

What is interesting is how influence of Danish exceptionalism is evident in analyzing the narratives both in terms of how these negotiators take place in a Danish context (and within the Air Force), but also when it comes to interactions with local populations and other military forces. Especially on deployments, the national identity of being Danish is particularly significant. This is perhaps not surprising and follows the argument that soldiers are first and foremost homeland defenders even when deployed for the UN or NATO. What is particular about examining the Royal Danish Air Force is, however, that the identity negotiations as well as negotiations of masculinities are based on an idea of being *special* and not seeing less physical strength as something that undermine them in the military hierarchy.

However, also in the national context is there are a clear personal, institutional, and social narrative of being special and frontrunners on gender equality on military work. This is articulated by the soldiers as well even though the interviews reveal that all of the soldiers had heard of, if not experienced, discrimination or sexual harassment. This leads to the conclusion that in narrative negotiations over military identities and military work, a particular Danish understanding of gender issues as a case closed impacts the institutional as well as soldiers' perceptions of the Danish military and the Danish soldiers.

Let me explain the points, which I have introduced here, in more details in the following sections.

## **7.1. FROM THE GLOBAL TO THE LOCAL AND THE IN-BETWEEN**

As I have laid out in this thesis, global voices on gender, peace, and security as these can be recognized in UN and NATO documents (especially relating to UNSCR 1325) influence military work for member states, the Danish military included. This is especially true at the policy level of the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force with regard to including vocabulary and initiatives in national action plans, the 2011 Diversity Plan, and recruitment material that reflect the UN and NATO's ways of addressing gender in military work.

In this sense, it is also clear that certain narratives, for instance, those relating to peace and security, can be identified at the local level as well i.e. in written material produced by the Danish military and the Royal Danish Air Force in institutional narratives of what the Danish military does and how it relates to gendered implications

of peace and security. As the thesis demonstrates, different narratives exist of military work and military identities depending on the voices heard. Hence, as my first sub-research question aids a discussion on, the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force as a military institution and service, respectively narrate particular institutional stories of who the force is as a collective.

A general theme is the idea of being a frontrunner on gender equality, which is particularly articulated for the Royal Danish Air Force and stressed in conversations with management, where a number of the work assignments as well as the work-life balance in the Air Force is articulated as fitting particularly well for women especially those with children. This presentation speaks into the idea that men and women also in soldier work have different competences such as compassion, and dialogical skills inherently, which the organization can use to become more effective and respond to the military work requirements nationally and internationally. This idea is formed by an operational effectiveness mindset, which is part of the way in which global voices argue for gender in military work and reasons for adding more female soldiers into national militaries and it aligns with some of the official institutional Danish military arguments of the impact that women soldiers may have in the organization.

The idea of operational effectiveness is, thus, that gendered bodies, mainly understood in the binary form of men and women, have different competences and, therefore do soldiering differently. As a modern military, the Danish Armed Forces wishes to make use of this in peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions where military tasks may differ from traditional warfare i.e. the contact with local populations, monitoring secured areas, and engaging in conversations with other troops, countries, etc. Hence, the understanding (which also the UN and NATO present) is that female soldiers add other competences to peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions in the form of, for example, social, communicative, and emotional skills and that these competences are unique and inherent for female soldiers based on their gender and, therefore, can make military operations more effective.

This approach to military work presents a number of problematic assumptions about gender and competences. Assumptions which provide challenges for individuals who do fit within the confined ideas of particular gendered bodies for specific military work i.e. the female soldier who wants to be in the infantry or the male soldier who wants to do administrative work or lead dialogue with local populations.

Moreover, it assumes that all female soldiers are the same regardless of i.e. ethnicity, nationality, race, age, or class. An argument that feminist IR scholars especially within intersectionality have challenged by emphasizing power dynamics between different social categories. Hence, one may argue that the white female soldier may be in a higher position of power than a female soldier from a minority background. Stressing that different social categories such as gender and ethnicity also within a military setting and despite the supposed unifying elements of the uniform plays a role in

military relations and gendered dynamics among the soldiers. Another example could be a female Army soldier whose body physically is more aligned with the standard male body in terms of strength and height than a petite Air Force soldier in charge of surveillance. In these cases, the potential for taking different positions of power within the military hierarchy exists, which emphasizes that dichotomizing male and female soldier as two uniform groups has its boundaries and risks, and it makes it evident that social categories play a central role and erasing them from military (gendered) power hierarchies is extremely difficult as they are embedded in societal structures, which influences Danish military and Danish society in general.

In addition, the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force's use of operational effectiveness conflicts with the notion of we only see soldiers and not gender. Hence, on the one hand the organization stresses that all military personnel are equal and part of a collective of soldiers doing military work and on the other hand, organizational emphasis is placed on not being the same, which is based on inherent gendered differences between male and female soldiers. This also includes intersections concerning race, sexuality, ethnicity etc. Again, this approach can be argued to reflect global understandings of military bodies and military work upheld by the UN and NATO, particularly related to UNSCR 1325 and subsequently related documents, but nevertheless creates sites for confusing and narrative struggles over which approaches to gender the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force in practice make use of.

Hence, the institutional narratives from both Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force apply some of the same vocabulary and reasoning as found among global actors to stress the importance of gender in peace and security issues especially the attention to including women in military work, but discrepancies also exist in the different narratives and approaches from the institutional perspective i.e. the emphasis on gendered competences such as compassion and communication and at the same time an articulation that gender is an irrelevant category; the latter linking closely to Danish exceptionalism and the idea that gender equality is a close case in Denmark.

Although the Royal Danish Air Force has the highest percentage of women serving in military positions and considers themselves to be inclusive of women, the Danish Armed Forces in general still lacks behind a number of their NATO allies in the percentage of women in military positions, not to mention employees from minority ethnic groups. This is also the case when making comparisons to the other Nordic countries, for example, Sweden and Norway, where the number of women is higher as well and where conscription is mandatory for both men and women.

In addition, the other two Scandinavian countries have long traditions of examining their military institution from a gender perspective and have encouraged this type of research for the past 15 years, for instance, via The Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) in Norway and Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operation (NCGM)

(NATO Gender Advisor 2015). However, in Denmark, this type of research has only emerged over the past five years, and we have no similar formal gender institutions. At the same time, the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force find themselves in a fix in regard to their international collaborators such as NATO and the UN, who are meticulous in their focus on gender in military work and require their members to be as well. This, as I have argued, makes room for attention to global voices at the macro as well as micro-level of the organization in the implementation of gender in peace and security discussions and subsequent military work.

## **7.2. THE PARTICULARITIES OF THE ROYAL DANISH AIR FORCE SOLDIER**

I argue that a narrative exists within the Royal Danish Air Force about being unique and special which relates both to a Nordic ideal of being exceptionally good at creating peace and assuring this as part of the friendly North, but also a Danish exceptionalism in terms of having solved the gender issue domestically, even though as I have laid forward in this thesis practices may tell a different and more nuanced story. Thus, when asking whether the Danish context is special? Or rather, is the Royal Danish Air Force different to for instance the Army? In both cases, I argue that the short answer is, yes!

Although there are overlaps between the institutional and the personal narratives and, in this sense, also shared ideas of social narratives of the Royal Danish Air Force, the thesis establishes that the individual soldiers at times struggle with management/institutional understandings and policies on gender and gender equality and that this impacts their (gendered) understandings of military work and military identities. Enabled by the second sub-research question in which the soldiers' narrative negotiations over military identities and military work in the crossroads between civilian life and military life, the struggles between the institutional and the individual is elucidated. One example of such discrepancies between narratives at different levels of the organization relates to the aforementioned concept of operational effectiveness. This particular element of stressing the need for women in specific assignments, is something that a number of the soldiers (both male and female) struggle with. They agree that the Royal Danish Air Force may have assignments that can attract women. An argument that they base on gender stereotypical assumptions of women being more inclined to take on work that requires less physical strength and where the working hours fit better with being mothers, but at the same time, found it difficult to accept a system in which they are chosen for a specific task (or miss an opportunity) because of their gender and receive special treatment on this account.

As an example, a number of the male soldiers express frustration with the NATO system in which affirmative action is a used tool by setting directives to national allies in terms of the specific gendered bodies they want for particular military tasks. A



number of the female soldiers express the same argument but reversed. Other female soldiers convey that they, at times, experience distrust from colleagues (and even self-doubt) when they receive a promotion or are assigned to an important mission, which can lead to frustration among particularly the female soldiers. This narrative struggle among the soldiers towards the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force's emphasis that female soldiers add an extra dimension to soldier work because of their gender can be viewed as a particular Danish resistance to the debate on soldiering and gendered bodies. The use of affirmative action, for instance quotas, is considered an undesirable tool to achieve gender equality in Denmark. Thus, a general understanding in Danish society is that Denmark will reach equality without these measures, although the reality may be different.

This resistance to a concrete mainstreaming tool, i.e. quotas, may display a national context in which gender quality issues, if not already a closed case, will sort themselves out without the interference of specific gender targeted strategies. Hence, in this regard the soldiers may struggle between Danish social norms on gender equality as they recognize these from their civilian lives, and which they find to be "correct" ways to address gender equality and, on the other hand, normative understandings and tools to achieve more gender balance in the Danish military are based on gender mainstreaming (and i.e. use of quotas) from the UN and NATO. Tools which were adopted into the organization through national action plans and furthermore found in the 2011 Diversity Plan. This creates certain contestations between the different levels of the organization, where lived experiences of soldiering and creations of military identities are challenged by top-level approaches to making the Danish Armed Forces (more or less successfully) gender-balanced.

In terms of the Royal Danish Air Force being special as a military service regarding military identities and military work, the study certainly ascribes to this idea and that this affects the gendered negotiations. This is evident both from the institutional narratives, but in particular it becomes enunciated in the narrative accounts from the soldiers. For instance, rank is mentioned as less important among the soldiers in the Royal Danish Air Force and as a general trait for Danish soldiers on international missions through their encounters with other nations. In this sense, an organizational power structure, which is often predominate in military settings, is less articulated among the soldiers although not completely disregarded, signifying that the soldiers use other categories and means to create hierarchies and negotiate their military identities based on criteria such as specialist knowledge, possessing quick and out-of-the-box thinking skills, and being fitter than the average citizen, but not super muscular.

This clear sense of being special and unique in regard to military work with traits that set soldiers serving in the Air Force aside from the other two military services; the Army and the Navy, is evident in almost all of the interviews with the soldiers and something that becomes part of the personal as well as the social narrative they create

of their service. The traits comprise particular understandings of not only soldier duties and soldier bodies, but also gender. In addition, it entails negotiations of military masculinities, which are based on understandings of traditional military masculinities, which are often in contrast to physical strength and endurance.

This means from a masculinity perspective that the traditional hyper-masculine hegemonic understanding of military masculinities is disputed in the Royal Danish Air Force, and the dominant form of military masculinity is more reliant on the aforementioned competences and qualities. In this sense, the soldiers disrupt ideals of masculinities in the military and instead negotiate their gendered military identities through masculinities (and for the male soldiers also their maleness) that stress being specialists. There is almost an idea that the Army expresses a primitive form of masculinity, which is outdated, undesirable and does not belong in the Air Force. This is an example of how hegemonic forms of masculinities are processes that change over time and take different forms depending on space, place, and time. At the same time, these negotiations may also be an expression of an internal hierarchy within the Danish military as a whole and a fight among the services for being on top of the Danish military hierarchy.

The Royal Danish Air Force soldiers are aware that in comparison to most Army personnel they possess less physical strength and are exposed to less high-risk missions abroad. This idea of low-risk missions is related to the type of work that the Air Force carries out, which is especially the case with the two wings chosen for this thesis (ACW and ATW). The pilots of the fighter jets, as well as Squadron 660, hold different assignments, which may put them at potentially greater risks. However, this is also an example of how the Royal Danish Air Force does not only equal pilots of fighter jets, but is made up of military personnel who hold a number of other tasks and job functions. Thus, in order to challenge a subordinate position based on classic military skills and masculinities, emphasizing uniqueness and expert knowledge can be a way to challenge the hegemonic ideal in the Danish Armed Forces as well as dominant forms of military masculinities and therein also the social narrative of the military identity of Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers.

Nonetheless, a number of the soldiers still make the connection between traditional military work (or physical endurance and strength) and hyper-masculinity as they stress that this type of masculinity is needed to carry out military work, which is more physically demanding and more high-risk, such as the military work for the Squadron 660 or infantry soldiers in the Army. This articulation of the different demarcations for the different services, especially Army versus Air Force, is found among both male and female soldiers. However, the negotiations over masculinities and hierarchies were more articulated in the narratives by the male soldiers with the example of the Army being juvenile or stressing that educating an Air Force man is more difficult. It seems that these negotiations for a number of the male soldiers were something that they were aware of in their constructions of a military identity. In this sense, the

soldiers make use of normative understandings of military work, which are in contrast to the gendered narratives they stress as present and valued in the Royal Danish Air Force but, in doing so, uphold certain gendered stereotypes of military work. These differences are part of continued narrative negotiations, which the soldiers find themselves in as part of their professional lives and which especially become evident in international settings.

The narrative of being a unique and special military unit and relying on different gendered narratives and negotiating other forms of masculinities follows in line with the emphasis on being frontrunners in terms of diversity especially with regard to women's inclusion in the Royal Danish Air Force (an institutional narrative that was stressed in documents as well as in conversations with management Air Force personnel). This narrative may also be an expression of Danish social narratives in which gender equality is thought to be a positive element, albeit as I stress in this thesis, actual gender equality and enforcing this in a Danish context is more complex and challenging. By emphasizing that as a collective the soldiers can master this element in their work, the soldiers, as well as the Air Force as a service, position themselves as progressive and in touch with the outside civilian world as well as with global discourses on gender and the importance of this in military work, which the UN and NATO stress.

### **7.3. DEPLOYMENTS SET OTHER BOUNDARIES**

What becomes evident in the soldier narratives is how deployments set other boundaries for how gender influences negotiations over military identities, the impact on social and work dynamics among the soldiers, with other national troops, and local populations, as well as how understandings of what military work is and how it relates to questions of peace and security are more enunciated. The latter part includes how security may be experienced differently on a personal level depending on gendered bodies and how it can create precarious situations for especially female soldiers in terms of their own security, but also how deployments influence understandings of gendered practices and how the military as an organization responds to a mix of soldier bodies on international missions. Hence, in connection to the third sub-research question it is apparent that contexts set other frontiers and space, place, and time becomes important components in the narratives created and negotiated by the soldiers in relation to their military identities and military work abroad.

Categories, such as, race (whiteness), ethnicity, nationality, sexuality intersect in narratives of a military identity concerning interactions with other international troops and local populations and these categories become essential components in soldier narratives from military work abroad. As I discussed in the thesis, this was, for example, articulated in the soldiers' narratives on the type of military work they are engaged with on international missions. In these narratives, there was a clear articulation that their nationality (being Danish), their ethnicity, and even race

(whiteness) put them in a position of power over the local population. In these situations of power negotiations, categories, such as race, ethnicity, and nationality relations might even surpass gender and Danish female soldiers might, for instance, be in a higher power position than, for instance, local Afghan men due to the female soldier's nationality, race, and ethnicity. This also means that in examining negotiations of gendered military identities in relation to military work, it is important to stress that gendered dynamics take on different forms and positions in a different context and what might be a disadvantaged position in a national context, can in another be a position of power given, for instance, nationality. This stresses that the processes of creating and negotiating military identities are dialectic and relational, which has the potential to change and take on different forms depending on context and that gendered bodies in some regards are less important in cases where other social categories, such as, race (whiteness) and ethnicity surpass in the collective hierarchies.

In relation to this, Danish exceptionalism in terms of gender equality is also part of the narratives of the soldiers. Hence, the soldiers produce narratives in which they make it clear that they are among the leading international troops, when it comes to understanding gender in conflict settings, and that the gender courses provided by the UN in international peacekeeping missions are not relevant, or at least considered too basic for Danish soldiers. These narratives also rely heavily on intersecting categories, which are part of the ways in which the Danish soldiers situate themselves high in the international military hierarchies regarding peacekeeping and peacebuilding including the "proper" gender equal way. Just as the example above, the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers position themselves high within a global military hierarchy in which in relation to other national troops, they argue that they are better soldiers, who are more aware of gender equality as well as democratic rights and values. Again, at least in their internal discussions on power hierarchies, the Danish soldiers, both men and women, argue that given their nationality (which relies upon, according to the soldiers, the "right" values of freedom and democracy), they take a superior position in military hierarchies, and in these encounters even out some of the gendered inequalities that especially the female soldiers experience.

Whereas gender takes center stage in a domestic setting, peace and security become important components in the soldiers' narratives on their work in international peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Duncanson's terminology of Forces for Good (2009; 2013) resonates with the soldiers' own narratives on the work they do abroad as part of military work for the Royal Danish Air Force. At the same time, this narrative of Forces for Good is mixed with negotiations over what peace and security mean and how understandings of especially security take different forms depending on contextual settings, but also that there are articulated gendered differences relating to security and deployments. In this connection, insecurities of conflict are found among the female soldiers. Their narratives from deployments include experiences of being more exposed at international bases due to their gender and feeling more insecure and vulnerable. In this sense, the experiences of Danish soldiers seem similar

to the experiences of female soldiers from other nations doing military work abroad and reveal continued gendered practices relating to discrimination of women and sexual harassment in military work, the Danish included. These conclusions speak into the focus in my second and third sub-research questions on how the soldiers negotiate and narrate their military identities and military work both concerning the crossroads between civilian life and military life, but also in regard to the extreme situations of deployments, where security issues as well as gender difference have the potential to be more enunciated and where the intersection of categories such as whiteness, nationality, and ethnicity become even more important in the constructions and negotiations of military identities.

#### **7.4. “OTHER” BODIES DISRUPT THE BAND OF BROTHERS**

In answer to my main research question, I argue and have demonstrated through narratives that bodies play a key role in the ways in which military identities and military work is negotiated individually and collectively and also that these rely on particular understandings of military and militarized masculinities, which at the same time have the potential to change and be challenged in order to situate Royal Danish Air Force Soldiers in a position of power within the Danish Armed Forces as a whole. Bodies – the right kinds and the wrong kinds – are essential components in military institutions and it is through soldier bodies that particular gendered negotiations (including negotiations over military masculinities) and struggles are fought. Hence, the soldier body is a concrete working tool in military work. The soldiers rely on their body and stamina under combat conditions just as they rely on the bodies of their colleagues for safety and survival.

At the same time, the soldier body needs to do different things depending on work assignments, service, and a given context, which is part of creating certain challenges in defining what a soldier body should look like, what it should be able to endure, and the tasks it needs to solve. Simultaneously, as I have stressed, the Danish military has historically been male-dominated and continues to be so, which results in a fairly homogenous soldier body, which is mainly white, straight, physically strong, and male. Nonetheless, other soldiers’ bodies do exist in the armed forces and these “other” bodies have the potential to disrupt particular military bonds i.e. the Band of Brothers. Hence, the narratives of women who disrupt the military culture with their bodies and having the right physique (e.g. a body composition of being fit and strong (although not hyper-muscular), not having any infirmities and not being overweight) are essential narratives to address in understanding how bodies play a key role in performing soldier duties and creating and negotiating gendered military identities.

The narratives bring forward discrepancies between policy and practice and between strategic narratives and lived experiences. Hence, the reference that things were worse in the past can be seen as attempts to disregard issues and potential challenges that other gendered bodies bring to the shared soldier identity and the performance of

military work in the Royal Danish Air Force. At the same time, it may also be a way to uphold a social narrative of being frontrunners on gender equality within the Danish military as a whole, and that this is an element of their shared Royal Danish Air Force identity, which the soldiers find important to preserve in conversations with an outsider from the civilian world.

Nonetheless, the narratives from the Royal Danish Air Force soldiers reveal that certain gender narratives and subsequent practices in military work transcend space, place, and time and although they may be more articulated in extreme situations, such as conflict situations, the stories of discrimination and sexual harassment are not limited to settings outside of Danish borders. This is supported by the Danish Female Veterans Union, which has been in contact with up to 200 female soldiers who have shared their experiences of sexual harassment in the Danish military. Moreover, these cases are not limited to other services, where hyper-masculinity (and hyper-sexuality) may exist as pointed to by some of the soldiers. Hence, despite the institutional as well as personal narratives that stress gender equality in the Air Force, the interview material reveals that these narratives are multifaceted and that the policies, national action plans, and institutional narratives may in practice present a number of challenges for female (as well as male) soldiers in domestic as well as international settings.

The thesis further illustrates how both men and women are part of creating a continued culture within the military in which the male (white and straight) body and a male-dominated world are preferred and considered the standard. Hence, most of the female soldiers stress their preference for working in a male-dominated environment with a direct vocabulary (and gestures) compared to an all (or dominantly) female workplace despite occasional cases of discrimination. This approach may be viewed as being part of a coping mechanism for a minority (women) within a setting that is both reliant on pronounced (and visual) hierarchies, which stress maleness, masculinities, and, heteronormativity and where the ramifications of speaking out may be an exclusion for the soldier collective.

Hence, as mentioned, women still to a certain degree disrupt the Band of Brothers with their gendered bodies. Moreover, institutional efforts in becoming more diverse faces challenges in relation to everyday practices at the bases in Denmark. This approach to tackle diversity, and gender in particular, by disregarding issues, may be viewed as an example of how Danish exceptionalism can challenge changes in gender practices and normative ideals in organizations, such as the Danish Armed Forces, as the Danish societal narrative is that gender equality is already achieved. Women (or other minorities) who actively choose the military are, thus, expected to adjust and adapt to practices within the force, not because they may be unproblematic, but because challenging these understandings and practices at the local level requires that current military hierarchies and gendered power relations are changed. A process,

which would necessitate shifts in whose perspectives and voices are given attention in creating new understandings of military work and military identity.

As I have stressed in other parts of this conclusion, the thesis demonstrates the importance of intersectionality in examining military identities and military work with a particular gender lens. Hence, it is evident that negotiations of military identities and military masculinities, rely on a number of intersecting categories, which take different forms depending on space, place, and time. These processes are present in national as well as international settings and intersectional categories are also part of different forms of disruption from soldier bodies that do not live up to the white, straight, male soldier body. Hence, an example in which gender might surpass another category in terms of hierarchies among the soldiers and create a situation where the soldier body may be disrupting the Band of Brothers relates to sexuality.

Thus, a number of the soldiers, both male and female, express how they experience homosexuality, especially being gay, as potentially more problematic in interactions with other soldiers. Thus, homosexual soldiers disrupt the heteronormative culture within the military and challenge understandings of masculinities particularly in regard to male expression of masculinity and subsequently soldier identity. The discomfort with how to handle homosexuality among colleagues was present in interviews with both male and female soldiers. One might argue that female, heterosexual (and to some degree even homosexual) soldiers are able to take on a higher position in the internal social hierarchy because they do not disrupt the heteronormative ideal of the soldier in the same way. In this sense, homosexuality is silenced and becomes a topic, which the soldiers find difficult to address.

Yet another example of disrupting bodies relates to what I have already mentioned as not having the right physique. This could be as the examples above about the lack of heterosexuality or being female, but it might also relate to not being physically able to undertake forms of military work by means of physical endurance, for instance, if the body is obese, too old, or disabled. This may also fall upon male (white) soldier bodies that are unable to meet the physical tests and in this sense unable to have a soldier body that fulfills the goal of being a military tool in its own right. These disruptions can be even more articulated in extreme situations such as deployments, where the soldier body as a tool ultimately can make the difference between life and death.

In this sense, the military as a modern organization is a special workplace, which requires attention to gender both because it can be fatal for the individuals who do not feel they belong in the group where collectiveness is paramount especially on deployments, but also because solving gender issues require changes on the normative levels through changes in institutional, personal, and social narratives as well as attention to the extensive list of practicalities, which needs to be incorporated into a gender mainstreaming approach.

## 7.5. STILL A LONG WAY TO GO

Positionality and the insider/outsider element of this type of work is an ever-present component in conducting empirically based research. It is difficult to know how, in what ways, and to what extent my background, nationality, gender, and non-military training has affected the study. However, what I do know is that throughout this process of engaging with military personnel, becoming familiar with military lingo, and military spaces and places and following Cohn's 1987 argument of the challenges of working closely with the military, my understanding of the complexities of the organization has grown tremendously. This has aided the analysis in terms of nuances and complexities of examining the soldiers' everyday lives and situating these voices within larger narratives of gender, peace, and security issues in military work domestically and abroad.

As I have stressed, the topic of gender, peace, and security in armed forces is a long-standing topic within feminist IR, security, and critical military studies (see for instance Enloe 200, 2016; Higate 2003; Woodward 2003; Woodward and Jenkins 2011; Wibben 2011; Basham and Bulmer 2017; Duncanson 2009, 2013; Mackenzie 2015) and one that continues to intrigue and bring forward novel perspectives as new forms of violent conflicts emerge and, in this process, the military responses (both global and local) towards these develop. Unfolding gendered narratives in military work and critically examining these in different contexts has been paramount to building the field of feminist IR, feminist security studies as well as critical military scholarship and for the latter to critically reexamine concepts and approaches used to study the military and militarization i.e. in relation to constructions, negotiations, and/or resistance over (hegemonic) military masculinities. This has been a motivating factor for engaging in this work on the Danish Armed Forces and Royal Danish Air Force and bringing forward the particularities of a military that might be small in scale, but nonetheless plays an active role in international military assignments in various conflict settings.

Nonetheless, as I have pointed to, the amount of scholarly work on the Danish military with gender lenses is limited and far behind the other Scandinavian countries in examining and discussing the gendered implications of military work. This includes a critical examination of which narratives (global and local) that shape the Danish Armed Forces and the soldiers. Although new research is beginning to bring attention to the complexities of this organization and the bodies who carry out the work domestically and internationally, there is still room for more research and examinations of what it means to be a Danish soldier in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, let alone the gendered implications of these processes. I encourage that, with the current political attention to cases of misconduct i.e. of sexual harassment in the Danish military as well as the more intersectional approach, which the Danish Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defense lay out in the 2020-2024 UNSCR 1325 NAP, that attention is brought to the complex roles that soldiers play in military work in Denmark as well



as abroad. The goal to “*walk the talk*” as described in the 2020-2024 NAP can be a step in the right direction in addressing the complex gendered dynamics in the Danish military if it is followed up by concrete changes in practice. Thus, in this process of working with issues on gender, peace, and security internally and externally in the organization, I argue that it is paramount that the soldiers, who on a daily basis live with and under regulations, policies, and action plans from national, regional, and international players, be given a voice.

Listening and actively engaging in conversations, albeit challenging, will enable a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities (and dare I say consequences) of military involvement in international missions. Additionally, it can bring forward nuances to unpack military bodies, military hierarchies, and gendered military practices, which will help make the Danish Armed Forces and the Royal Danish Air Force more inclusive and equipped for the type of missions they are expected to carry out with a changing collective military body.





"WE DON'T SEE GENDER, ONLY SOLDIERS!" – NEGOTIATING MILITARY IDENTITIES IN NARRATIVES ON GENDER,  
PEACE, AND SECURITY

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# Appendix A. Interview Protocol (DK)

Jeg vil kort fortælle om projektet og mig selv. Jeg er Ph.d. studerende på Aalborg Universitet, hvor jeg er indskrevet som Ph.d. studerende på et 3 årigt projekt. Jeg har skrevet lidt til jer om formålet med projektet, og det er særligt fortællinger om soldaterliv her i Flyvevåbenet, som jeg er interesseret i! Interviewet kommer til at tage omkring 1-1,5 time.

Jeg vil gerne have lov til at optage vores samtale. Jeg synes, at det giver en bedre samtale, da jeg så kan koncentrere mig om at lytte og ikke skrive så meget ned. Interviewet vil blive slettet efterfølgende. Er det okay? Interviewene er anonyme. Du vil derfor kun blive nævnt i materialet ift. dit køn og niveau i forsvaret (befalingsmandsniveau, konstabelgruppe, officer gruppe). Derudover vil der være en aldersgruppering.

Jeg kunne godt tænke mig, at vi starter med at lave en lille øvelse inden vi går i gang. Det er en tidslinje, som kan give mig et indblik i din tid her i forsvaret og være en referenceramme for, når vi taler om forskellige emner.

## Overordnede Temaer

- **Demografi og Baggrund**
- **Privat og Familie liv**
- **Arbejdsliv og Karriere**
- **Militær Identitet, Kvalifikationer og Performance.**
- **Hjemme og Ude (Fredsbevarende og Fredsopbyggende missioner)**
- **Diversitets og Ligestillingsplaner**
- **Køn i Arbejdet**

# Spørgsmål

## Demografi og Baggrund

1. Kan du fortælle mig lidt om dit civile liv.
  - Hvor gammel er du?
  - Har du en partner – køn?
  - Har du børn? Hvis ja, hvor mange? og hvor gamle er de?
  - Hvor længe har du været ansat i Forsvaret?
  - Hvor længe har du været en del af Air Transport Wing/ Air Control Wing?

## Arbejdsliv og Karriere: Motivation for at arbejde for det Danske Flyvevåben.

1. Kan du fortælle om nogle af de overvejelser du havde for at søge ind i Forsvaret?
2. Kan du fortælle om hvad din relation til Forsvaret var inden du søgte ind?
  - Er der nogen i din familie, som er eller har været aktive i Forsvaret?
  - Hvordan har det påvirket din beslutning om at søge ind i Forsvaret?
  - Er din partner ansat i Forsvaret. Hvis ja, i hvilken funktion?

## Militær Identitet, Kultur, Kvalifikationer, Egenskaber og Kompetencer.

1. Kan du fortælle lidt om hvilke typiske arbejdsopgaver du har på en dag her i Aalborg?
2. Hvad er de vigtigste faglige kvalifikationer for en soldat ansat i ATW?
3. Hvad er de vigtigste personlige egenskaber for en soldat ansat i ATW?
  - a. Hvad med når I er på missioner?



4. Kan du give mig et eksempel på, hvordan og hvornår denne/disse kvalifikation(er) kommer til udtryk/er vigtig(e)?
5. Hvordan spiller fællesskabet en rolle ift. kvalifikationer og arbejdslivet generelt?
6. Hvordan spiller afsavn og ensomhed en rolle fx når du er på mission?

### **Samarbejdsrelationer, Køn og Maskulinitet**

1. Er der en fælles militær identitet – hvordan vil du beskrive den? – er den maskulin?
2. Forsvaret har traditionelt og historisk været en mandsdomineret arbejdsplads, men nu er der sket nogle ændringer. Hvad er dine oplevelser med det i dag og hvad tænker du om det?
3. Er det en organisation, der har svært ved at omstille sig til begge køn? Hvad har det betydet for dit arbejde? Er der fx noget ift. fordeling af arbejdsopgaver? (måske forskellige arbejdsopgaver ude eller hjemme som er påvirket af køn)
4. Hvordan synes du det fungerer at være både mænd og kvinder på en arbejdsplads som forsvaret? Hvordan er det, når I er ude?
5. Kan du fortælle om en situation, hvor forskelle i køn gjorde en positiv forskel for dit arbejde?
6. Kan du fortælle om en situation, hvor det havde negative konsekvenser?
  - a. Er der forskel på den måde køn har betydning, når I arbejder i DK og når I er på mission? Hvis ja, hvordan spiller det en rolle?
  - b. Hvis nej, hvorfor tror du, at køn ikke har nogen betydning i dit arbejde? (Fredsbevarende og Fredsopbyggende opgaver)
7. Er der forskel på at være blandet personalesammensætning af mænd og kvinder, når I arbejder i Danmark og når I er afsted på internationale missioner?
  - a. Hvis ja, kan du fortælle om de forskelle? Hvorfor tror du, at der er forskel?

- b. Hvis nej, hvorfor tror du ikke, at det har nogen betydning?
- 8. Er der særlige forventer som kvinde i faget versus at være mand i faget?

### **Mandsdomineret Arbejdsplads.**

1. Vi har talt om det med maskuline idealer - er det en særlig forståelse af maskulinitet, der er i flyvevåbnet? Er den anderledes end i hæren eller søværnet?
2. Er det noget, som du synes, der har ændret sig i organisationen over tid, hvis du også tænker på din egen arbejdstid her i flyvevåbnet?
3. Har du oplevet, at flyvevåbnet er bedre til at håndtere en blandet personalesammensætning end andre steder i forsvaret (i har omkring 9% kvinder ansat –hæren 5,6)
  - a. Hvorfor tror du, man er bedre til det i flyvevåbnet?
  - b. Er man også det, når man er ude på missioner – oplevelser med det/erfaringer?
4. Forsvaret taler meget om mangfoldighed – hvad mener du om det? Er det vigtigt?
  - a. Fx etnicitet er det noget du tænker på, når du er på missioner ude. Hvordan oplever du, at etnicitet har betydning i den sammenhæng (lokal befolkning, soldater fra andre nationer)
  - b. Der er også mangfoldighed ift. køn og seksualitet. Er det noget, som er relevant i det danske forsvar? Taler I åbent omkring det?
5. For år tilbage (i 2003) var der en undersøgelse om kønskrænkende adfærd i forsvaret generelt. Kender du den?
  - a. Er det stadigvæk en diskussion, som er vigtig at tage i dag? Overordnet seksuel chikane, men også voldtægt?
  - b. Nu er I ofte udsendt, er den relevant når I er ude på missioner?
6. Det er jo udover at være en mandsdomineret arbejdsplads også en hierarkisk arbejdsplads, hvilken rolle spiller det? Hvordan oplever du det i din hverdag?

## Hjemme og Ude

### **UDE: Vi har været inde på, at der er forskel på ude og hjemme —brug tidslinjen**

1. Kan du fortælle mig om dine oplevelser med at være med på en international fredsbevarende og fredsopbyggende missioner. (Hvor mange internationale missioner har du været på?)
  2. Hvordan forbereder du dig til en sådan mission – både fagligt og personligt?
  3. Hvordan håndterer du det at være udsendt med dit private civile liv i Danmark?
  4. Hvad giver det dig af professionelle og personlige kompetencer at være udsendt på fredsbevarende og fredsopbyggende opgaver?
- Har de oplevelser ændret sig over tid? Fx fra første gang du blev udsendt og til nu?
  - Har du nogen overvejelser om, hvilken type opgave I er på?
  - Hvordan er samarbejdet, når I er afsted?
  - Hvordan arbejder I sammen med lokalbefolkningen?
  - Kan du beskrive en situation, hvor din egen nationalitet spiller en rolle, når du er ude?
  - Kan du fortælle om en af de missioner du har været på, hvor du er blevet bevist omkring kønsforskelle?

### **HJEMME:**

1. Kan du fortælle om, nogle af de positive erfaringer/oplevelser, som en udsending giver ift. dit arbejde hjemme i Danmark?
2. Hvordan oplever du det at komme hjem fra en mission? Er der en tilvænningsperiode?
3. Kan du fortælle om nogle af de aspekter, som kan være svære ved at vænne hjem igen?

- Kombinere at være soldat med at have et familieliv? Er det nemt at lave en arbejdsdeling? Er det svært ikke at tage arbejdet med hjem?
- Hvordan påvirker dette arbejde ens personlige civile liv?
- Når dine børn bliver voksne, vil du så opfordre dem til at søge ind i Forsvaret? Hvis ja, hvorfor? Hvis nej, hvorfor?

**Vender tilbage til tidslinjen – skal vi tilføje noget til denne her?**

Jeg har stillet en masse spørgsmål – jeg har sat rammen, er der noget du synes vi mangler – havde du en fortælling om soldaterliv – temaer vi ikke har været inde på? Er der noget, som vi ikke har snakket om, som du synes er relevant?

Mange tak for en rigtig interessant samtale. Har du spørgsmål her inden vi slutter?

# **Appendix B. Interview Protocol (ENG)**

I want to briefly introduce the project and tell you a bit about who I am. I am a PhD student from Aalborg University, where I am conducting a 3-year project. I have written you previously about the format and purpose of the project, which is mainly about soldier narratives in the Royal Danish Air Force. The interview will have a duration of about 1-1.5 hours.

I would like to tape our interview. I think it makes for a better conversation, as I can then concentrate on listening instead of writing. Is this okay? The interviews will be deleted afterwards. The interviews are anonymous. This means that you will only be mentioned in the material based on your gender and rank in the Defense (Private, Non-Commissioned Officer and Officer). Besides this, there will be an age grouping.

Before we begin, I would like to start with a small exercise. It is a timeline, which can give me some insight into your time here in the Defense and work as a frame of reference for when we discuss different topics.

## **Overall Themes**

- **Demographics and Background**
- **Private and Family life**
- **Work Life and Career**
- **Military Identity, Qualifications and Performance.**
- **Home and Abroad (Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Missions)**
- **Diversity and Quality Plans**
- **Gender at the Workplace**

## **Questions**

### **Demographics and Background**

2. Can you tell me a bit about your civilian life?

- How old are you?
- Do you have a partner – gender?
- Do you have children? If yes, how many? And how old are they?
- How long have you been deployed in the Defense?
- How long have you been part of Air Transport Wing/ Air Control Wing?

### **Work life and Career: Motivation for Joining the Royal Danish Air Force.**

3. Can you tell me about some of your considerations for joining the Defense?
4. Can you tell me what your relationship was with the Defense before you applied?
  - Is anybody in your family members of the Defense or have been part of the organization?
  - How has that affected you decision to join?
  - Is your partner employed in the Defense? If yes, in which capacity?

### **Military Identity, Culture, Qualification, Abilities, and Competences.**

7. Can you tell me about your typical work assignments here at the base in Aalborg (or Karup)?
8. What are the most important qualifications for a soldier employed at ATW or ACW?
9. What are the most important personal qualifications for a soldier employed at ATW or ACW?
  - a. What about on international missions?
10. Can you provide an example of how and when these qualifications are important/become evident?

11. How does the collective play a role in terms of qualifications and work-life in general?
12. What role does deprivation and loneliness play, when you are on i.e. missions?

### **Work Relations, Gender, and Masculinity**

9. Is there a shared military identity? And how would you describe it? Is it masculine?
10. The Defense has traditionally and historically been a male dominated workplace, but some changes have happened. What are your experiences in relation to this today, and what are your thoughts on this?
11. Is it an organization that has challenges adjusting to both genders? How does it affect your work? Is there something in relation to division of labor (perhaps different work assignments abroad and at home, which is influenced by gender?
12. What is it like to be both men and women at a workplace like the Defense? What is it like when you are abroad?
13. Can you describe a situation where being both genders made a positive difference for your work?
14. Can you describe a situation, where it had negative impacts?
  - a. Does gender play different roles when you are working at home versus on missions? If yes, in what ways?
  - b. If no, why do you think that gender doesn't influence your work? (peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions)
15. Is there a difference in being a mixed group of soldiers of men and women when you work in Denmark versus when you are deployed to international missions?
  - c. If yes, can you tell a bit about these differences? Why do you think these differences exist?
  - d. If no, why do you think it doesn't have an impact?

16. Special expectations towards men and women in the armed forces, respectively?

### **Male Dominated Workplace**

7. We have talked about masculine ideals – is there a special understanding of masculinity in the Royal Danish Air Force? Is it different from the Army and the Navy?
8. Is this something, which you think has changed in the organization over time, if you reflect on your own time here in the Royal Danish Air Force?
9. Do you experience that the Royal Danish Air Force is better at handling a mixed personnel group than other places in the Danish Armed Forces (you have around 9 percent women – the Army has 5,6)
  - a. Why do you think the Royal Danish Air Force is better at this?
  - b. It is the same on deployments?
10. The Danish Armed Forces talks a lot about diversity – what do you think about this? It is important?
  - a. I.e. ethnicity is that something you consider when you are on missions? How does ethnicity play a role in this connection (the local populations and soldiers from other nations)
  - b. Diversity also relates to gender and sexuality. Is this relevant in the Danish Armed Forces? Is this something you talk openly about?
11. Some years ago (2003), a large report was made on gender based discrimination in the Danish Armed Forces in general. Do you know this report?
  - a. Is it still a discussion that is important to have today? Sexual harassment in general, but also rape?
  - b. You are often deployed, is it relevant on missions?
12. Besides being a male dominated workplace it is also a hierarchical workplace. What role does this play? How do you experience this in your everyday life?



## **Home and Abroad**

**ABROAD:** *We have talked about this difference of home and abroad –use of timeline.*

5. Can you tell me about your experiences from being deployed to international peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions (how many deployments have you been on?)
  6. How do you prepare for a mission, both workwise and personally?
  7. How do you balance/handle being deployed with your private civilian life in Denmark?
  8. What does it give in terms of professional and personal competences to be deployed to peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions?
- Have these experiences changed over time? From your first deployment until now?
  - Do you have any considerations in terms of the type of missions you are on?
  - How does your collaboration work when on deployments?
  - How do you work with the local population?
  - Can you describe a situation where your own nationality plays a role on deployments?
  - Can you describe a mission where you became aware of gender differences?

## **HOME:**

4. Can you tell me about the positive experiences from deployments, which have impacted your work here in Denmark?
5. How do you experience the transition from deployment to coming home? Is there an adjustment period?

6. Can you tell me about some of the things that might be challenging when returning home?
  - How is it to combine soldier and family life? It is easy enough in terms of work that needs to be done at home? Is it difficult not to bring your work home with you?
  - How does this work affect your personal civilian life?
  - When your children grown-up will you then encourage them to apply to the armed forces? If yes, why and if no, why not?

**Return to the timeline – should we add anything to it?**

I have asked a lot of questions – I have set the framework for our conversation, if there anything you think we are missing – do you have a particular narrative of soldier stories, or themes we haven't touched upon? Is there anything we haven't talked about, which you find relevant to add?

Thank you very much for a really interesting conversation. Do you have any questions before we end the interview?



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