Policy Implementation in Military Organizations: The Impact of the Key Characteristics of Military Administration

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Abstract

Western military organizations face an increasingly complex landscape of threats and challenges from immense changes in the international security situation. At the same time, they are experiencing still more political and societal demands. Designing and implementing policies to meet these numerous and multifaceted demands call for effective, efficient, and legitimate public administration. Public administration research in military organizations is scarce. This article explores how critical characteristics of military organizations impact policy design and implementation within these organizations. Based on a systematic review of contemporary literature on specific military characteristics, the study identifies critical characteristics of military organizations related to structure, culture, profession, leadership, and management. Furthermore, strengths and challenges related to policy design and implementation in a military context are analyzed and discussed. The article argues that military organizations must scrutinize and strengthen their policy design and implementation efforts. Lastly, the article points to future research agendas.

Practical Relevance

- The study, which identifies critical institutional characteristics of Western military organizations, has significant practical implications. The research-based knowledge developed in the review studies is a valuable resource for decision-makers, project management teams, analysts, leaders, and practitioners. It aids in developing strategies for effective and legitimate policymaking in defense organizations, thereby providing immediate benefits to the audience.

- The study provides an empirical research-based foundation for formulating hypotheses and refining research questions to investigate further public administration, especially policymaking, in defense organizations.

- The study particularly sheds light on the military institutional characteristics often valued in wartime and risk management contexts, which pose challenges when designing and implementing policies for complex issues. The institutional characteristics challenge organizational learning, multifaceted leadership approaches, and collaborative relationships that can otherwise support developing innovative and adaptive policies crucial in complex, uncertain, and ambiguous contexts.

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Introduction

The design and implementation of public policies is a notoriously complex and challenging endeavor for public organizations. Public administration researchers observe that the design of visionary policies and their subsequent implementation are complicated and demanding – and often fail (Linder & Peters, 1984).

According to a 2019 study, defense policy literature is significantly less developed than the overall policy literature (De Spiegeleire et al., 2019). The study points out that despite defense ministries and organizations focusing more explicitly on policy implementation and actual effects, there is still much to learn from studying policy formulation and implementation in defense organizations for increased defense and security value (De Spiegeleire et al., 2019). Whereas this

study analyzes national governance structures and various mechanisms for securing implementation, other studies explore specific reforms and policy initiatives in Western militaries. Studies have found that diversity/gender policies have proved challenging to implement, leading to significant gaps between planned and actual outcomes (Johnstone & Momani, 2019; McNamara et al., 2021; Smith & McAllister, 1991). Other studies explore different types of implementation initiatives: implementation of personnel reforms (Farrell et al., 2008; Fredén, 2020; Weber & Eliasson Johan, 2007), digitization of systems (Holth & Boe, 2019; Skærbæk & Thorbjørnsen, 2007) and structural change initiatives (Friesl et al., 2011; Holsting, 2017). They all show great complexity and difficulties, inducing budget transgressions, exceeding deadlines, and failing to meet stated objectives. As such, policy design and implementation in military organizations also appear to be a complex and uphill struggle.

Specific characteristics of different public organizations (March & Olsen, 1989; Wilson, 2001) and the identity of the practitioners dealing with implementation (Brehm & Gates, 1999; May & Winter, 2000) are described as influencing policymaking to weaken or strengthen the generic challenges to effective policy design and implementation (Linder & Peters, 1984). The neo-institutionalist theory claims that norms, rules, and values impact the production of outcomes (Peters & Zittoun, 2016). Institutions matter by narrowing the range of policy options and shaping the incentives for choosing between them or defining appropriate action in particular situations (March & Olsen, 1989). As public organizations vary in purpose, governance structure, and culture, their institutional form influences their capacity to design policy solutions and implement them in practice (Hill & Hupe, 2009; Wilson, 2001).

According to academic scholars, military organizations have not received sufficient attention about public administration research despite the substantial spending allocated to military organizations, the crucial role they play in delivering national security, and the political and societal demands for reforms (Charbonneau & Wood, 2018; Mayer & Khademian, 1996; Miewald, 1970; Norheim-Martinsen, 2016; Stever, 1999). The current turbulent geopolitical situation demands that military organizations become even more efficient and legitimate, prompting the NATO countries to increase their national defense budgets and build up military capacities (Weber & Eliasson Johan, 2007), strengthening the call for more empirical research on military administration.

The military organization has conceptually been described through a division of military action into two different logics of action: the logic of external conflict and the logic of internal cooperation (Boëne, 1990; Janowitz, 1961; Ydén, 2008, 2021). According to this thinking, the two logics are represented in all military organizations but simultaneously contradictory and mutually restrictive. The ratio between them differs according to the task and context in question. The logic of external conflict is combat-oriented, aiming at defeating an enemy. In contrast, the logic of cooperation is focused on well-functioning exchange relationships resembling those found in other government agencies (Ydén, 2021). The logic of internal cooperation gradually becomes more important due to increasingly more turbulent and complex socio-political demands (Boëne, 1990).

Acknowledging this rising complexity and the institutional influence on internal cooperation, it becomes necessary to understand military characteristics influencing administrative tasks and processes, especially also policymaking. The article explores the empirical characteristics of the military organization operating in the logic of internal cooperation. This empirical foundation provides a basis for formulating hypotheses and refining research questions that further investigate military organizations and internal cooperation.

The article seeks to identify key organizational characteristics that researchers have identified in and through empirical research and to draw the implications of these characteristics for the ability to design and implement policy. As such, the research question is: *What are the key characteristics of the military administration, and how do they support or hamper effective policy design and implementation?* A systematic literature review focusing on research-based empirical articles from 1990 to 2022 is conducted to identify characteristics of the military administration. The findings are discussed in relation to policy design and implementation theory.

Conducting literature reviews is a vital part of most academic research activities. Different types of literature reviews exist for various purposes (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2020; Snyder, 2019). Acknowledging these variations requires explicating the premises and assumptions underlying this specific review. This literature review aims to identify and discuss military characteristics and then relate them to policymaking, spurring further questions and trajectories for interesting research studies.

The characteristics of the military organization presented in this review constitute a specific representation framed by the inclusion/exclusion criteria of the review. This construct gives rise to a nuanced understanding of military characteristics based on multiple differences and variations underlying the empirical studies. The differences relate to research traditions and streams of literature and differences in national culture, government structures, civil-military relations, military branches, and hierarchical levels in the military organizations studied. Thus, the claim is not that the review is to present an exhaustive description of the military characteristics representing an accumulative knowledge base. Neither does the review allow for comparisons among the different studies and findings. The military characteristics derived from the review hence point to characteristics possibly existing in the military organization, informing reflections and considerations related to research in or practices of defense policymaking.

The following section presents the methodology of the review. The next section presents the characteristics of military administration, followed by a discussion that generates a set of conjectures regarding the impact of the identified characteristics on the design and implementation of policy in military organizations. The conclusion summarizes the main points and sets an agenda for future research.

Method – The Literature Review Process

The organizational characteristics of military administration are identified based on a systematic review of empirical peer-reviewed articles. The study intends to produce a research-based understanding of the military organization when engaged in the logic of internal cooperation. PRISMA guidelines for systematic literature reviews are followed to ensure the quality and transparency of the review (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009). The searches are made in Scopus and EBSCO.

The first step is to identify articles focusing on key characteristics of military organizations. The keywords used to identify the military organization are 'military', 'defense', and 'armed forces', which comprise the following search string: 'military' OR 'defen*e' OR 'armed forces'. The next step is to combine the military organization with keywords related to its key characteristics. The keywords are: a) 'organizational structure', b) 'organizational culture', c) 'profession', d) 'leader*', e) 'public management', and f) 'public governance'. The keywords are interpreted as follows. *Organizational structure* is the formal and relatively stable structure of military organizations. Organizational structure encompasses division of labor, degree of centralization, and mechanisms for coordination (Scott & Davis, 2000). *Organizational culture* is understood as shared values, ideas, and beliefs guiding action and framing responses to tasks and problems facing the organization (March & Olsen, 1989). *Profession* is understood as the unique expertise and knowledge, code of conduct and ethics, specialized education of the personnel, and the specific professional jurisdiction over particular tasks (Freidson, 1999). *Leadership* is understood broadly as the work conducted by leaders to achieve goals together with or through other organizational actors (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982). The term leader is included to encompass studies focusing on the traits and characteristics of particular leader types. *Public management* is understood as allocating managerial authority, the role of competition and incentives, and the forms of regulation, auditing, and performance management linking efficiency and accountability (Hood, 1991). *Public governance* is formulating and applying judicial decisions and administrative practices that constrain, prescribe, and enable the exercise of public authority on behalf of the public interest (Hill & Hupe, 2009). The search looks for the six keywords in titles, keywords, and abstracts of journal articles.

The search is conducted by applying a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria are: 1) studies focusing on military organizations in Western democracies 2) peer-

reviewed journal articles, 3) empirical studies, 4) articles published from 1990–2022, and 5) publications written in English. Peer-reviewed journal articles based on empirical research are selected to ensure that only knowledge based on systematic methods in studies of empirical data is included, avoiding prejudiced or anecdotal representations of the military organization (Kuhl et al., 2018). Only double-blind, peer-reviewed articles are included, excluding book chapters and conference papers. Research based on qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods is included, whereas articles without an explicit methodological description are excluded. Articles from 1990–2022 are included. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the re-evaluation of NATO's purpose in 1989, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 all marked significant shifts in Western defense organizations. That observation is used to narrow the timeframe (Heinecken 2009). Only English articles are included to make the insights decipherable, even though military academic journals in different languages also exist.

To maintain a stringent focus on the administration dimension of the military as the unit of interest, research on political issues influencing the military organization, research conducted in international missions, combat training, crisis management, and psychical, medical, and family issues are also excluded from the search in the identification stage.

In total, 4.727 records were identified, 4.650 articles were rejected, and 77 articles were included in the review. The search was conducted in March and May 2022. The initial searches included both public management (e) and public governance (f). Since the latter did not lead to any articles meeting the eligibility criteria, it was excluded from the search. The result of the search based on the various criteria for inclusion and exclusion is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The figure presents the number of articles accumulated from both EBSCO and Scopus
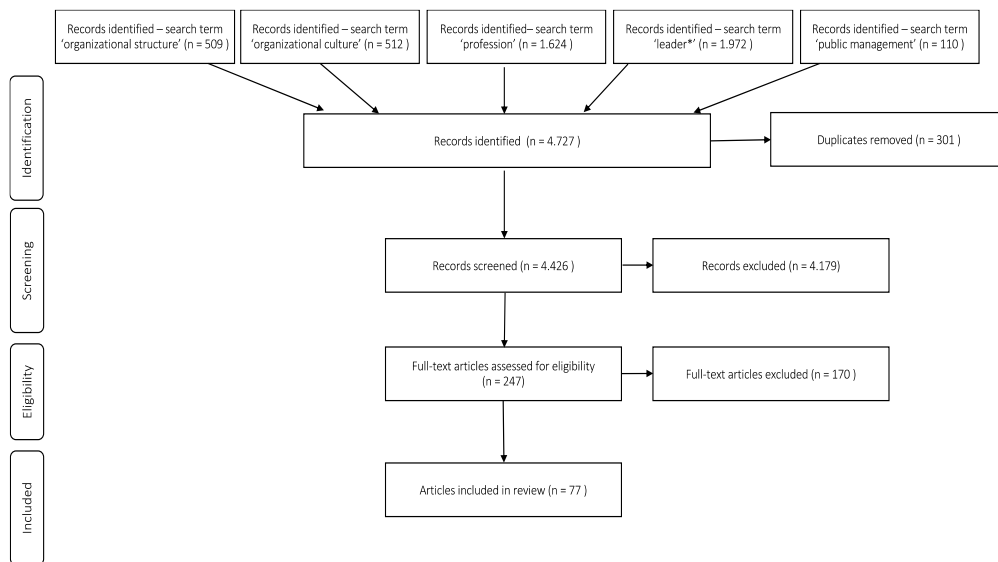
Findings

The organizational structure of the military

Six articles focus on the organizational structure in military organizations. Three articles explore military organizations as hierarchies and how formal structures, rules, and routines create and sustain inequality regimes by giving preferential treatment to military employees and superiors, excluding competencies needed in the rising complexity of the military administration (Eriksen 2008; Heiskanen et al. 2018; Macdonald 2004). Another study explores the effects of organizational restructuring aimed at increasing cost effectiveness, operational flexibility, and the agility of deployable units in four countries. Restructuring challenges the traditional military value system based on selfless service, loyalty, and commitment, leading to discontent within

the ranks, professional disunity, and dissatisfaction with the institution being unsupportive of effective internal cooperation (Heinecken 2009; Heffner and Gade 2003).

Another study explores how formal structures support creative ideas from informal communities of practice to develop solutions to new and changing operational demands that support internal exchange relationships. The effectiveness seems supported by a goal that aligns with traditional values (Schulte et al., 2020).

The organizational culture of the military

This search resulted in 16 hits translated into two themes: masculine *esprit de corps* and social order.

Masculine Esprit de Corps

Three studies highlight the importance of masculinity and belonging in the military, where qualities like determination, fitness, and duty are central. Acceptance in this masculine community is crucial, as adherence to norms reinforces membership (Hale, 2012). Another study found that recognition positively affects job satisfaction, mediating the negative impacts of meaningless tasks and long hours (Stocker et al., 2010). Additionally, stress is seen as a threat to masculinity, with respondents fearing that acknowledging stress could harm their reputation and career (Cawkill, 2004).

Eight articles examine harassment, gender challenges, and inclusion of minorities (Bergman et al., 2002; Holland et al., 2014; Munson et al., 2001). One study described a lack of managerial action to prevent bullying, with no communicated repercussions for reported incidents (Skurdeniene & Prakapiene, 2021). Efforts to implement gender-mainstreaming frameworks faced structural resistance due to conflicting masculine values, resulting in limited change (Johnstone & Momani, 2019). Further studies highlighted how military culture negatively affects job retention and satisfaction for minorities (Dandeker et al., 2010; Estrada & Berggren, 2009). The masculine esprit de corps challenges meritocracy, compliance with workplace laws, equality rights, and central decision-making.

Social Order

Three studies examine how the military rank system and social order shape organizational culture. One study finds that perceptions and worldviews of senior commanders are passed down the chain of command and accepted by lower ranks, ultimately defining what is considered real and true while undermining the ethical ethos (Gushpantz, 2017). Military rank reflects dominance and authority tied to seniority, hierarchical position, and commanding power (Mattila et al., 2017). Another study explores how organizational politics and hierarchical decision-making negatively affect innovative projects, highlighting the role of micropolitics and entrenched values hindering reforms (Friesl et al., 2011). These findings reflect broader challenges in public administration, where top-down control and internal politics can stifle innovation and adaptability.

Two studies explore motivational factors related to pay and performance (Bodziany et al. 2021; O'Donnell and Shields 2002). The studies explore employee responses to individual performance management, revealing a hierarchical, seniority-based culture where performance and motivation are primarily linked to promotion to higher rank and position.

In sum, there is a high premium on conformity to masculine norms and a seniority-based social order that conflicts with the logic of effective and legitimated internal cooperation.

The military profession

The third search yielded 16 articles focusing on how the military profession changes in response to geopolitics, operational environments, and public demands.

Three articles explore the shift in military personnel and officer education from a practical professional focus to a more academic approach. Despite opposition and criticism, a new form of professionalism is slowly emerging (Ben-Shalom, 2014; Libel, 2019). However, military education, training, and socialization continue to reflect traditional military norms rather than

adapting to the new demands of peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and international missions (Boncourt, 2017; Franke & Heinecken, 2001).

Increased civilian control over the military, challenging the military profession and rank system, are studied in four articles (Fragoso et al., 2019; Hedlund, 2013; Holmberg & Alvinius, 2019; Ledberg et al., 2022). Political demands for social equality and the integration of civil laws also influence military organizations (Hedlund, 2013). Managerialism in the public sector has impacted the military, increasing civilian control through audits and evaluations, which limit military professional judgment and challenge the traditional self-governance of military organizations and senior command (Ledberg et al., 2022).

Five studies focus on integrating gender, reservists, and private contractors (Berndtsson, 2019; Danielsson & Carlstedt, 2011; Hirschfeld & Thomas, 2011; Persson, 2010; Smith & McAllister, 1991). Findings reveal visible cultural hierarchies between male and female, military and civilian, and combat versus support roles. Male officers occupy the highest ranks, while civilian women in support roles face the poorest working conditions and limited career prospects. Though highly educated and often holding prestigious civilian positions, reservists are not entirely accepted as 'real officers', and their skills are undervalued and underutilized (Danielsson & Carlstedt, 2011). Despite policies that change traditional military values, they are persistent and highly influential in internal cooperation (Persson, 2010; Smith & McAllister, 1991).

Military leadership and the profession are deeply intertwined. One study highlights the glorification of military leaders, portraying leadership as more about social control than genuine social influence. This reinforces the military hierarchy, associates leadership with the military value system, and creates an idealized view of the profession that blurs the line between control and influence (Hutchison, 2013). Another study on professional socialization reveals how young officers endure excessive workloads in pursuit of career advancement and face exclusion if they refuse to perform unpaid work (Nilsson & Österberg, 2022). Furthermore, the military practice of frequent job rotation negatively impacts job satisfaction and performance, especially among junior officers (Jans & Frazer-Jans, 2004).

In conclusion, while the military profession remains conservative and hierarchical, glorifying commanding figures, it faces increasing external pressure for reform. These external demands challenge the traditional profession, affecting and challenging internal cooperation by creating tensions between maintaining established values and adapting to modern public administration practices. The result is a profession struggling to balance its traditional identity with evolving public accountability and efficiency expectations.

Leaders and leadership in the military

A search for articles on leadership in military organizations resulted in 30 relevant studies, many focusing on leadership behavior, potential, and competency development (Bekesiene et al., 2021; Bekesiene & Hoskova-Mayerova, 2018; Oh & Lewis, 2008; Young & Dulewicz, 2005, 2007, 2009).

Military leaders are often elevated to heroic status, with top leaders distanced from their followers by the chain of command and aides who limit access (Sang & Golan, 2022). Transformational leaders who communicate vision and mission are seen as role models, especially at higher ranks, while transactional leadership, which rewards performance, is less frequently reported (Ivey & Kline, 2010; Stadelmann, 2010). Mission-focused leadership is more common than controlling, performance-based leadership (Hattke et al., 2018). However, resource-demanding, non-hierarchical leadership, such as fostering innovation, requires special support from top management (Šimanauskienė et al., 2021).

Destructive leadership is observed at all levels, reducing job retention, commitment, and job satisfaction (Dobbs & Do, 2019; Larsson et al., 2012; Reed & Bullis, 2009). Toxic leadership is linked to organizational cynicism, where employees lose faith in improvement and evaluate leaders negatively (Dobbs & Do, 2019). Interestingly, higher-ranking personnel report fewer instances of destructive leadership (Larsson et al., 2012).

Military leadership is value-driven, grounded in shared mental models and influence (Brænder & Holsting, 2022; Larsson et al., 2005). Indirect leadership studies emphasize trust-

building and role clarity (Alarcon et al., 2010; Larsson, 2006). Trust, fairness, and integrity are fundamental values that enhance commitment (Deluga, 1995; DeLiello & Houghton, 2008).

At the strategic level, the military fosters exclusive loyalty, with respect for symbols, rank, and traditions viewed as essential for success (Alvinius et al., 2017). Leadership struggles arise when employee norms and competencies do not align with project demands, as leaders expect uniform commitment regardless of individual differences (Holth & Boe, 2019).

Six articles address the inclusion of minorities, highlighting challenges for part-time reservists and gender minorities. Reservists report of marginalization and exclusion (Connelly, 2021; Scoppio & Luyt, 2016). Gender minorities face difficulties reaching leadership roles due to masculine norms and lack of networks (Alvinius et al., 2018; Dunn, 2007, 2015; McNamara et al., 2021). Successful minority integration requires better alignment between leadership culture and societal demands (Kotzian, 2009; Dunn, 2015).

In sum, while military leadership is often viewed as heroic and transformative, it can also be experienced as destructive and toxic. The traditional, hierarchical leadership model faces significant challenges in adapting to modern public administration demands encompassing more inclusive and flexible leadership approaches. These challenges influence internal cooperation as leaders are perceived as role models guiding appropriate action and behavior; simultaneously, they are subject to traditional masculine values and appropriate behavior for advancement and maintaining the culture.

Public management in the military

This search resulted in nine studies of public management in the military.

Societal, political, and operational pressures increasingly shape public management in military organizations. Analyses of current and future military needs emphasize the importance of integrating military branches to address resource shortages and improve efficiency (Moreno & Gonçalves, 2021). One study finds that suspending conscription has led military organizations to adopt more market-oriented public communication, primarily focused on recruitment. This communication emphasizes international missions and combat, referred to as "the unique offering," which has caused internal resistance, as personnel feel these campaigns misrepresent their work. This market-oriented approach challenges traditional professional norms within military organizations (Deverell et al., 2015).

New governance ideas and management techniques further complicate military identities (Catasus & Gronlund, 2005; Costa et al., 2020; McConville, 2006; Skærbæk & Thorbjørnsen, 2007; Valério et al., 2020). Two studies examine how the shift from a focus on war and defense to peacekeeping and unconventional warfare makes it difficult to define the military's core mission (Almqvist et al., 2011; Catasus & Gronlund, 2005). Introducing New Public Management-inspired documentation and accounting systems disrupt traditional military structures, transforming officers' roles into a highly challenging and complex hybrid of warrior and manager (Skærbæk & Thorbjørnsen, 2007). Additionally, a study on environmental management shows that the military shifted from resisting stakeholder participation to adopting proactive attitudes that provide necessary knowledge on environmental issues (Wu et al., 2014).

While public management changes are taking place, they often create challenges related to military identity and culture, leading to confusion and conflicting values, complicating internal cooperation.

The modern military characteristics influencing the logic of internal cooperation

Table 1 presents the modern military characteristics described through the reviewed empirical research conducted within the logic of internal cooperation.

Table 1: Characteristics of the military organization impacting the logic of internal cooperation

Military structure	Bureaucratic and hierarchical structure with clear division of labor and extensive formalism. Rank has functional relevance and reflects structural authority, specialty, and tasks.
Military culture	A culture of communal belonging, recognition, and acceptance. Superiority influences worldviews of subordinates and aligns perceptions and understandings. Rule adherence, loyalty, and compliance with norms and practices generate appreciation. A hegemonic culture with values, practices, and norms resembling the masculine warrior.
Military profession	A seniority- and rank-focused profession. A meritocracy with strong socialization, continuous military training, education, and assessments for advancement. Sharp distinctions between superiors and subordinates.
Military leadership	Military leadership is value-driven and based on strong mental models about authority, loyalty, and masculine norms. Leaders are highly honored, self-sacrificing in return for high positions, and they face high expectations.
Military management	Classical public administration focusing on compliance with principles of legality and professional rules. Centralized budget allocation and control. NPM and NPG are increasingly introduced to and challenging bureaucracy, professional rules, and military raison d'être.

The following sections discuss the characteristics of the modern military organization in relation to the logic of internal cooperation. The discussion focuses explicitly on policy design and implementation as a crucial part of internal cooperation. The discussion section is opened with a short description of the theoretical framework based on public policy literature. This framework subsequently relates military characteristics to specific elements of the logic of internal cooperation.

Policy Design and Implementation

Policy design and implementation are critical phases in the policy process, shaping the translation of ideas into actionable outcomes (Hill & Hupe, 2009). Policy design theory claims that insufficient knowledge leads to the misspecification of problems and that a lack of unified political and administrative support creates contradictory policies that are difficult to implement for even the most committed and competent civil servants (Linder & Peters, 1984). Top-down implementation theory explains implementation failure due to unclear and poorly communicated policy goals, overly long implementation chains, and complexity of joint action (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1980). Bottom-up implementation theory focuses on the competing demands placed on street-level bureaucrats caught in a crossfire between local agendas, professional norms, and limited resources (Lipsky, 2010).

This section briefly outlines policy design and implementation theory as a backdrop for discussing the characteristics of the military organization related to policymaking – constituting a critical task within the logic of cooperation. The policy design perspective is applied for a nuanced understanding of the role of a systemic approach focusing on inclusion, collaboration, and adaptation in public policy (Ansell et al., 2017; Peters, 2020). The traditional account of the obstacles to policy implementation departs from Weaver (2010), who briefly summarizes the classic arguments from the implementation literature. Following this outline described below, the discussion of the influence of military characteristics on policy design and implementation is conducted.

Policy design

According to Peters (2021) and Linder and Peters (1984), adopting a policy design perspective enhances the prospects for effective and legitimate policy outcomes by engaging systemic and collaborative approaches to policymaking, avoiding the challenges of insufficient knowledge integration and linear problem-solving approaches. This approach acknowledges complex and turbulent problems and contexts embracing participation and adaptation to take policy actors beyond traditional closed, routinized, and entrenched modes of policymaking presented by most policy implementation literature (Linder & Peters, 1987). Participation of relevant actors provides essential insights into problem framing, practical solutions, and the changing conditions on the ground. For participation to contribute to better policy outcomes, the organization must facilitate the involvement of actors with relevant knowledge and experience, with the policy problem being critical in the design phase, where the course of action is decided (Peters, 2018; Torfing, 2016). Collaboration, spurring mutual and ongoing learning, joint ownership over policy solutions, and adaptation, essential in turbulent contexts, challenge the division of different actors presented by traditional policy implementation literature (Linder & Peters, 1991).

Policy implementation

Policy implementation literature has traditionally been divided into top-down (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1980) and bottom-up (Lipsky, 2010) approaches. Acknowledging the critical insights emerging from these approaches but avoiding the sharp division between them, synthetic approaches have been developed (Matland, 1995; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Winter, 1989). Matland (1995) suggests analyzing the degrees of conflict and ambiguity in goals and means related to a specific policy process as the starting point to find the appropriate approach for further implementation analysis.

Weaver, on the other hand, suggests a pragmatic framework by which policy performance can be improved by conducting a systematic analysis focusing on predictable challenges and proactive responses in the implementation processes (Weaver, 2010). The framework draws on top-down and bottom-up implementation theory and broadly understands policy implementation as controlled by hierarchy, laws, and rules but problematized by the different conditions and complexity of public organizations, environments, and power distribution. The framework can be condensed into five critical points of concern for policymakers: a) Goals, priorities, and tasks should be clearly defined to avoid mission drift and emerging conflicts, and analysis should therefore identify and eliminate ambiguities; b) If a new policy departs from the established policy path, learning curves become steeper and the risk of failure increases, analysis should therefore produce strong incentives and control mechanisms to secure the production of planned outcomes; c) Alignment and coordination between different organizational entities involved is important to prevent opposition and fragmentation. Therefore, Implementation analysis should find ways to simplify the governance structure to minimize coordination needs; d) Resource constraints challenge producing desired policy outcomes. Analysis should, therefore, mobilize and allocate adequate resources; e) The analysis should create clear guidelines to align program operators with the program goals through instruction, communication, and performance management to support efficiency.

The two approaches guide the discussion below, which examines the most common policy design and implementation challenges with modern military characteristics.

Discussion – The Impact of Modern Military Characteristics on the Logic of Internal Cooperation Focusing on Policy Design and Implementation

The impact of military structural characteristics on policy design and implementation

The military structure seems unsupportive of the policy design approach discussed by Linder and Peters (1991). Hierarchy and centralized control, being dominant in the military (Friesl et al. 2011), hinder collaboration up and down the chain of command. A sharp division of labor into branches/functions and extensive formalism reduce horizontal knowledge sharing, coordination, and collaboration opportunities, constraining the solutions' flexibility and adaptation (Moreno & Gonçalves, 2021). Even though the military organization is changing in the realm of societal and political pressure (Franke & Heinecken, 2001; Holmberg & Alvinius, 2019; Lundberg & Rova, 2022; Moreno & Gonçalves, 2021), strong and consistent hierarchical and functional structures challenge collaboration and adaptation to changing conditions. Furthermore, power struggles and turf battles challenge the horizontal coordination between military branches (Moreno & Gonçalves, 2021).

According to implementation scholars, long implementation chains stress the need for control, monitoring, and performance measurement down the chain of command to secure implementation (Pressman & Wildawsky, 1980; Weaver, 2010). The military hierarchy, centralized control, and authority visible in rank insignias (Bergström et al. 2014; Heinecken 2009) support effective policy implementation, as it supports clarity in direction and priorities and helps minimize ambiguity when policy aligns with professional values. However, cultural norms and professional discretion challenge implementation down the chain of command when solutions challenge military norms and values (Friesl et al., 2011; Hale, 2012). When complex challenges arise and orders are not understood concerning implementing solutions, it seems there is little dialogue to facilitate sensemaking, ensuring transformation (Holth & Boe, 2019).

In sum, military structures seem supportive of policy implementation when in line with the military missions and values. Conversely, the military is highly institutionalized in hierarchical and siloed structures, limiting the possibilities for engaging in policy design as collaborative, participatory, and adaptive processes.

The impact of military cultural characteristics on policy design and implementation

Strong loyalty to military values, dedication, and determination combined with an intense sense of belonging to the close-knit professional community, critical dependence on appraisal from seniors for career advancement, fear of becoming an outsider, and a strict adherence to codes of discipline (Gushpantz, 2017; Hale, 2012; O'Donnell & Shields, 2002) all seem to curtail the opportunities for collaboration between relevant and affected actors. Constructively managing differences of judgment and opinion through dialogue is almost impossible in a strong pecking order reflecting leaders' command authority and social status. The exclusion of particular voices and the lack of constructive dialogue hurt the opportunities for mutual learning, joint ownership, and flexible and responsive problem-solving.

In the military hierarchy, the attitudes of subordinates are shaped by individuals in high-power positions (Gushpantz, 2017; Hutchison, 2013), which minimizes the possibility of integrating professional differences in reflective dialogues. Hierarchical cultures tend to be self-reinforcing (Magee and Galinsky 2008), giving collaborative approaches to difficult conditions in the military culture. Front-line workers support their superiors' commands in cases where the results contradict the organizational goals and the well-being of the subordinates (Gushpantz, 2017). The risk of being perceived as unworthy prevents leaders from sharing experiences and insights regarding stress, as doing so is perceived to be contradictory to the masculine culture (Cawkill, 2004). Introducing perspectives inconsistent with the professional rules and norms seems unlikely, as it simultaneously leads to risks of exclusion, minimizes opportunities for advancement, and negatively influences reputation (Cawkill 2004; Friesl et al. 2011), thus sustaining insulated, routinized, and unconscious modes of working. The chances for engaging

in creative design processes are slim, as they are at odds with the military culture. Overall, the military culture, which encompasses hierarchical thinking, rank superiority, and a strong need for communal belonging, stands out as opposed to the policy design fundamentals.

The military culture is characterized by determination and loyalty to the commander (Gushpantz, 2017; Hutchison, 2013), and it supports implementing policies from superiors based on compliance with orders. However, policy goals can be challenging to achieve if they conflict with the organizational mission or culture (Weaver, 2010). Several studies find that discrepancies between policy goals and the military mission and culture lead to superficial changes (Almqvist et al., 2011; Catasus & Gronlund, 2005; Costa et al., 2020; Hur, 2018; Skærbæk & Thorbjørnsen, 2007). A separate military agency was permeated by cultural norms that profoundly hampered achieving the policy objectives (Friesl et al., 2011). Even though the organizational entity was separated from the original organization to avoid influence, as Weaver (2010) recommended, the cultural understandings of hierarchy and seniority overruled task and conceptual arguments. The cultural understanding hampered the chances for the break-away agency to achieve its policy goals (Friesl et al., 2011). Another study shows how adopting new structures and processes related to a gender policy resulted in only superficial changes that failed to question institutional and cultural values (Johnstone and Momani 2019). Strong cultural values support policy implementation in the military, securing the alignment of frontline worker behavior with the policy objectives if they are initially aligned with the mission and values (March & Olsen, 1983; Suntrup & Perrow, 1974).

The impact of military professional characteristics on policy design and implementation

The military profession is highly specialized through ongoing and comprehensive training and education, and professional values guide and sanction behavior and decision-making (Gushpantz, 2017; Moreno & Gonçalves, 2021). Rank is tied to competencies and skills in the military profession: the higher the rank, the more competent and skilled members are perceived to be (Mattila et al., 2017). This perception means that the opinions of high-ranking officers and seniors tend to overrule the task-oriented arguments and voices of lower-level employees regarding decision-making, knowledge sharing, and innovation (Friesl et al. 2011; Šimanauskienė et al. 2021, Jaffe 1984). Bringing different knowledge bases together in policy design processes for collaboration is challenging in the military administration, as superiors are powerful agenda setters; and even in processes explicitly focusing on the involvement of specific expertise, superiors overrule lower-level voices and non-military perspectives, which hinders the constructive use of multi-actor collaboration (Mattila et al., 2017).

The professional understanding of the leader reinforces the military hierarchy, heroizing military leaders, and installing a romantic perspective of the military profession (Hutchison, 2013). The military chain of command is introduced at the very beginning of military socialization and continually maintained. Written educational materials representing the military organization and institution are pervasive and indoctrinate specific values and worldviews (Hutchison, 2013). This controlling form of socialization to the acceptance of hierarchy minimizes the opportunities for participation and collaboration, as constructive deliberation calls for openness to and responsiveness of multiple voices (Linder & Peters, 1991). Not only is the integration of lower-level military voices difficult, but integrating understandings, competencies, and ideas from "outsiders" (reservists, civilians, women, and support personnel) is even more difficult as the military professions exclude actors who are "proper" members of the profession (Danielsson and Carlstadt 2011; Persson 2010; Smith and McAllister 1991). The resistance to insights and perspectives provided by highly educated and competent civilians and reservists, lacking and much needed in military organizations (Connelly, 2021), underscores the difficulties in collaboration and participation. Despite external and task-related pressure for the military profession to integrate other personnel groups, the professional mechanisms inherently exclude or minimize other voices (Friesl et al., 2011; Gushpantz, 2017; Mattila et al., 2017). In summary, the military profession is highly exclusive and oriented toward the privileged insights of military leaders and seniors; therefore, it opposes the collaborative and integrative approach to policy design.

Policies responding to political, societal, and operative pressures for change are challenging to implement in the military organization (Boncourt 2017; Friesl et al. 2011; Hedlund 2013; Libel 2019; Persson 2010) because they collide with the military professional identities, values, and practices, as well as the overall organizational mission (Almqvist et al., 2011; Deverell et al., 2015). When policy objectives and goals differ from the organizational mission, strong professional groups are likely to interpret and translate the policy in line with their norms and values. Preventing goal displacement requires external top-down control down the chain of command to scrutinize results and to sanction deviations (Weaver, 2010). The military members have a psychological contract with the organization (Hur, 2018; O'Donnell & Shields, 2002) where compliance with the rulings of superiors is exchanged for promotion and appraisal, which may support the implementation of the policy as the military leaders interpret it. Military leaders expect loyalty from their subordinates (Hutchison 2013), and this may reduce the superiors' motivation to set up costly control. The pecking order, the backbone of the military profession, supports top-down implementation aligned with professional rules. Still, there is no guarantee that the military interprets the policy as intended.

The growing external pressures lead to professional and institutional discord, lack of trust in management, and weaker professional commitment, which reduces the compatibility between the needs of the organization and those of the individual (Heffner & Gade, 2003). Waning organizational trust and commitment can lead lower-level staff to implement policies that favor local goals at the expense of the overall policy goals and may also diminish the effect of professional control mechanisms (Franke and Heinecken 2001; Heinecken 2009). At the same time, external pressures enhance the demand for resource efficiency (Holmberg & Alvinius, 2019). Resource constraints, lack of organizational capacity in several domains, and increased efficiency demands prevail in the military organization (Catasus & Gronlund, 2005; Moreno & Gonçalves, 2021; Valério et al., 2020), which may strain policy implementation (Weaver, 2010).

The impact of military leadership characteristics on policy design and implementation

Military leaders are strongly socialized into a solid hierarchy (Hutchison, 2013; Reed & Bullis, 2009). Leaders are responsible for maintaining organizational image and meeting expectations of superhuman and superior behavior (Alvinius et al., 2017; Dunn, 2015). Strategic leaders recognize that complying with values and rules is crucial for their success and future promotion, but they lack feedback and appreciation from their superiors (Alvinius et al., 2017). These perceptions and experiences of military leadership reinforce top-down compliance and prevent initiatives and engagement in collaborative processes. Collaboration, experimenting, and adaptive efforts contradict the heroic and masculine leader directing the staff based on precise commands and clear orders. This hampers the chances for military leaders to develop competencies and mental models that support ongoing learning, adaptation, and collaboration by engaging in the multifaceted practice of leadership responsive to changing tasks, goals, and contexts (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009).

Furthermore, toxic leadership, such as harassment and patronizing behavior (Dobbs & Do, 2019; Larsson et al., 2012; Reed & Bullis, 2009), influences the possibilities for reflective dialogues and mutual learning. Subordinates exposed to toxic leadership do not experience organizational protection, undermining their trust in leadership (Dobbs & Do, 2019). Trust is essential for personnel to engage in constructive and open dialogue, and the lack thereof reduces the chances of collaboration and constructive exchange relationships (Bentzen, 2023). Transformational leadership in the military focuses on followers' values and motivation but remains embedded in the influence of hierarchical culture, toxic leadership, and the lack of organizational trust. Engaging in learning for innovative solutions based on interaction with relevant actors goes beyond transformational leadership and calls for adaptive and pragmatic leadership (Torfing, 2016). Military leadership, primarily focusing on rules, hierarchy, organizational appearance, and the fulfillment of superhuman expectations, seems to oppose this.

Military leaders are appreciated and valued by the military community when stating clear goals, telling subordinates what is expected of them, and finding ways to achieve them (Young

and Dulewicz 2005, 2009). Relating their competencies to policy design and implementation reveals difficulties since resource capacity constraints and local conditions undermine the goals and plans of military leaders. Moreover, leaders, accustomed to commanding and telling subordinates what is expected, tend to be less responsive to subordinates' knowledge and conditions on the ground, overlooking important contextual insights emerging during the implementation.

Military leadership, primarily based on hierarchical top-down approaches, is unsupportive of complex problem-solving and adaptation to changing contexts and conditions, which require a more multifaceted approach. However, military leadership may support the implementation of policies aligning with the military culture, as loyalty to superiors focuses attention and determination.

The impact of military management characteristics on policy design and implementation

The military is governed by a classical public management model, hindering more collaborative and adaptive approaches to policymaking. Resource competition and resource scarcity among the military branches and support agencies create a focus on local goals, tasks, and means (Costa et al., 2020; Moreno & Gonçalves, 2021) rather than the overall policy goals hampering crosscutting collaboration. Top-down governance with a strong focus on compliance and budget discipline reduces the room for adaptability and responsiveness, as information sharing, openness, and collaborative problem-solving are frowned upon (Moreno & Gonçalves, 2021). The particularistic mentality in the military branches exacerbated by rivalry prevents a holistic approach to policymaking (Moreno & Gonçalves, 2021). The integration of the external participation of relevant societal actors in environmental management is hampered by the tendency to rely on the internal discretion of military agencies and top leaders (Wu et al., 2014). However, external political pressure for efficiency and demands for a broader range of military capabilities occasionally lead to management reform and more collaborative governance, but the organizational inertia is considerable (Costa et al., 2020; Moreno & Gonçalves, 2021; Wu et al., 2014).

Overall, the key characteristics of the military organization find little leverage for engaging in policy design based on participation, collaboration, and learning-based adaptation. The military hierarchy, its masculine culture, and the strong professional identities exclude non-military personnel and opinions that do not comply with military rules and values, thus leaving little room for problem exploration and collaborative innovation. The strong importance of leadership, seniority, and advancements combined with ongoing socialization and a sense of communal belonging minimize the opportunity to explore diverse understandings, insights, and knowledge bases. The lack of holistic objectives further reduces the possibilities for engaging in creative policy design.

The military is generally governed by bureaucracy (Moreno & Gonçalves, 2021; Wu et al., 2014) and professional rules (Deverell et al., 2015). New and deviant policy objectives are challenging to implement and require external pressure and hard-won learning. Ambitious political, societal, and operational demands conflict with entrenched structures, cultures, and professional norms, resulting in delayed, superficial policy implementation - or even a lack thereof (Almqvist et al., 2011; Moreno & Gonçalves, 2021; Skærbæk & Thorbjørnsen, 2007). The implementation of policies aimed at profound changes is an up-hill struggle in most public organizations (Egeberg, 2013). Still, it seems even more difficult in military organizations, where centralized control, autonomy of special branches, professional norms, top-down leadership, and organizational insulation are all particularly strong and contribute to maintaining the status quo. Implementing accounting, recruitment, and appraisal systems bears evidence of the protective shell provided by the military profession, bureaucratic rules, and the masculine *esprit de corps* (Costa et al., 2020). Implementing an accounting system challenged the military professional values and warrior identity and spurred conflicts. On this account, top management and subordinates were reluctant and unsupportive of the project, leading to long, troublesome implementation processes (Skærbæk & Thorbjørnsen, 2007). The implementation of a new

recruitment policy created problems of internal cooperation, as external communication collided with military identities (Deverell et al., 2015).

In sum, the key administrative characteristics of military organizations that the systematic literature review revealed overall challenge participation, collaboration, and adaptation required to develop implementable policy designs. Moreover, at the surface level, centralized control in military organizations, where top leaders expect to be obeyed, may seem to support policy implementation; deeper down, however, implementation seems frustrated by long implementation chains and strong professional norms and identities.

Conclusion and Future Research

This article investigates the key question of how military characteristics manifest in the administrative sphere and their impact on internal cooperation. The study highlights key traits of military administration derived from empirical research. While the findings do not present a comprehensive knowledge base, they provide a preliminary overview of the literature on military administrative characteristics. The review identifies the following traits: a) a bureaucratic structure marked by formalism, a clear division of labor, and hierarchical coordination; b) a culture centered around values such as determination, loyalty, obedience, and a strong sense of belonging, with a power structure that is rooted in the command hierarchy and a masculine ethos; c) a professional identity shaped by intensive socialization through ongoing operational training and assessments for advancement, where rank, superiority, and a "warrior mentality" define professional standing; d) leadership that is value-driven, with leaders often idealized and expected to embody superhuman qualities; and e) a bureaucratic management approach that remains only marginally influenced by New Public Management (NPM) principles and even less so by New Public Governance (NPG), although external pressures for both are increasing.

The conclusion is that the characteristics of military organizations, often valued in wartime and risk management contexts, pose challenges when applied to public administration, particularly in designing and implementing policies for complex issues. A culture that glorifies superiors emphasizes rank, and demands obedience impedes internal cooperation, legitimacy, and the development of collaborative relationships. This culture also marginalizes non-military actors, whose organizational competencies are critical for innovative policy design and reform efforts. Furthermore, the emphasis on hierarchical structures and seniority undermines mutual learning, vertical responsiveness, and critical dialogue, all essential for generating novel solutions by effective and legitimate processes. Finally, the pervasive social control within the leader-centric and obedience-driven culture stifles organizational learning, inhibits the development and practice of more multifaceted leadership approaches, and negatively impacts job satisfaction and the work environment for both leaders and employees.

The findings and insights obtained by this study are significant because they illuminate military characteristics described through empirical studies, forming a base for further research on policy design and implementation in the military.

Now, merely understanding the individual impact of each trait within military organizations is insufficient. Empirical case studies focusing on military organizations operating in administrative contexts are essential to grasp the combined effects and interplay of these traits. Moreover, more empirical studies are needed given the primarily conceptual nature of the two logics of actions and the limited empirical research on military administration. This would refine, nuance, and further develop the concepts of the two logics of action and expand the empirical knowledge on military administration. The findings of this review highlight how wartime logic, in many cases, negatively affects the effectiveness and legitimacy of internal cooperation.

Studying policy design and implementation in military organizations using Qualitative Comparative Analysis of a medium-sized sample of similar case studies will further enable us to identify pathways to both success and failure. The findings can help improve the implementation of policy reforms and inform practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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