SOLDIERS ON INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

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SOLDIERS ON INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS: THERE AND BACK AGAIN

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List of Abbreviations

BPP	Børge Prien-prøven is the Danish Armed Forces intelligence test
DIB	Danish International Brigade was a peacekeeping force established in 1994. It was officially disbanded on 15 February 2005
FPT	Danish Ministry of Defence Personnel Agency (*Forsvarets Personeltjeneste*)
HBU	Basic military education (Hærens Basisuddannelse)
HOK	Army Operational Command (*Haerens Operative Kommando*, HOK)
HRU	Military reaction forces education (*Hærens Reaktionsstyrkeuddannelse*)
IFOR	NATO Implementation Force (December 1995, December 1996) in Bosnia Herzegovina
IMP	Institute for Military Psychology (*Institut for Militærpsykologi*), since 1 January 2011: The Military Psychological Department (*Militærpsykologisk Afdeling*, MPA)
INTOPS	International Operation
IRAQ	Coalition in Iraq (2003−2007). The coalition forces was a military command during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, led by the United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, Spain and Poland
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force (2002−2014) in Afghanistan. Denmark has had deployed soldiers under the NATO-command since January 2002
KFOR	NATO Kosovo Force, in Kosovo, since June 1999
MPA	The Military Psychological Department (*Militærpsykologisk Afdeling*, MPA), before 2011: Institute for Military Psychology (*Institut for Militærpsykologi*, IMP)
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
SFI	The Danish National Centre for Social Research. Since 1July 2007, SFI and KORA (the Danish Institute for Local and Regional Government Research) were merged into VIVE − The Danish Centre for Social Science Research. In the book, we refer to SFI for the source of data and some previous analyses
SFOR	Stabilisation Force, in Bosnia Herzegovina (December 1996 to 2004)

SRS	Army Standing Reaction Force (*Haerens Staaende ReaktionsStyrke,* SRS)
UNCRO	United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (March 1995 to January 1996)
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, since 1978, and enhanced in 2006
UNIKOM	United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission, in Iraq and Kuwait (April 1991 to October 2003)
UN	United Nations
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Forces, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia (February 1992 to March 1995)
VIVE	The Danish Centre for Social Science Research

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Stéphanie Vincent Lyk-Jensen is Senior Researcher at VIVE – The Danish Center for Social Science Research. She holds a PhD in Economics. Her work focuses on quantitative methods to measure the impact of policies and interventions. Her research areas include behavioural economics, economics of health, labour economics and applied econometrics. She has studied the motivations to sign up for a military deployment, the effect of military deployment on mental health and the impact of military service on men's income and crime. Her work is published in journals such as *Defence and Peace Economics*, *Economics and Human Biology* and *Labour Economics*.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the first half of the twentieth century, the two world wars sent millions of soldiers into battle. Since the Cold War, military action has increasingly involved deployment of professional soldiers to regional conflicts in either peacekeeping (PK) missions or peace-enforcing (PE) missions – that is, soldiers fighting in a 'distant' war. Millions of men and women have been deployed to such missions and have returned with experiences that may greatly affect their lives and the lives of their families, in both the short and the long run.

The experiences of the Danish Armed Forces, who participate in more and more international deployments, provide an excellent case study for the transformation of the military – from mass armies built on conscription during the Cold War to much smaller professional units that can be deployed to international missions. Gilroy and Williams (2006) provide a general introduction to and description of the shift towards all-volunteer forces (AVFs) in Europe. In Denmark, the military situation changed from being a 'front-line' situation during the Cold War to a situation characterised by the ambition to participate in international missions with allied forces (Heurlin, 2006). The timing of this change coincides precisely with the period of the data used for the analyses in this book (1992–2009). Denmark also constitutes an exception to the international trend towards AVFs, as it has kept conscription (Heurlin, 2006). While only a small share of a cohort has to serve in the military, this group of conscripts is a pool of potential recruitment to the group of voluntary professional soldiers.

In another comprehensive survey of the transformation to AVF with deployment capabilities, Tresch and Leuprecht (2010) provide a broad European coverage and emphasise how the strategy shift creates a great demand for soldiers qualified for international deployments. Sørensen (2010) illustrates some of the Danish aspects of this shift, with a special focus on policies that are relative for veterans. King (2011) describes and analyses this transformation using case studies of the UK, Germany and France and illustrates the multinational military cooperation with the planning and implementation of the mission in Afghanistan. Petersson (2011) uses the Scandinavian countries to exemplify this change in a setting with a partial denationalisation of the national defence forces. He contrasts the strong Danish engagement in sharp missions in southern Afghanistan with the engagement of another NATO member, Norway, in the northern part of the country, where there are fewer combat situations. Despite these differences in strategy, Petersson (2011) also emphasises the common need

in the Scandinavian countries to ensure that the population at large see this transformation as justified.

In a collective volume, Caforio (2013) focuses on the new form of warfare, that is, irregular groups in non-state wars, where the parties in conflict deploy regular troops within large coalitions. Caforio (2013) encompasses all the nine national contributions analysing interview-based surveys in the participating countries.

Kold and Sørensen (2013a) report the results from interviews of 542 Danish respondents with questions about separation from the family, psychological problems and stress during deployment and adaptation to a normal life after returning home. Kold and Sørensen (2013b) describe the mission types and destinations involved in deployments of Danish Armed Forces, with a focus on the public opinion regarding these deployments.

Thus, the literature provides hypotheses and analyses of challenges and experiences of this form of deployment of soldiers to 'distant' wars and our analyses build on this relevant literature. To our knowledge, this book is the first to investigate the impact of deployment on the soldiers' lives when they return home to family, work and civilian life in general. As an illustrative study, this book uses the full population of Danish soldiers deployed to international PK and PE missions between 1992 and 2009 – a total of 26,000 men and women. These soldiers were deployed in PK missions in the former Yugoslavia or PE missions in Iraq and Afghanistan – or a combination of these.

While PK missions are predominant in the beginning of the period, PE missions are predominant towards the end. Both types of mission presented challenges for the deployed soldiers. The missions in the former Yugoslavia were likely to cause frustration, with the risk of later psychological reactions, for example when soldiers had to witness brutal and humiliating treatment of civilians without being able to interfere. In contrast, the missions to Iraq and Afghanistan contained the clear possibility of involvement in combat situations, with the risk of being wounded or killed.

The total sum of experiences of the 26,000 deployed soldiers and the problems that may result from these deployments lie far beyond the scope of a book such as this. Our ambition here is to focus on the central topics and issues involved in being deployed in an international mission and returning home.

The analyses answer the following questions:

- Who are the men and women who choose to be deployed?
- Why do they choose to be deployed?
- Which challenges do soldiers face *before*, *during* and *after* returning home from a mission?
- What are the consequences of deployment on soldiers' individual lives?

To answer the central questions about the deployed soldiers, we draw relevant data from administrative registers, data following all the deployed soldiers over 18 years and covering both their pre-deployment lives and their experiences

after returning home. A number of data sets are specifically developed to present a unique possibility of analysing the impact of deployment on important issues, such as the financial situation of the soldiers before and after a mission, their post-deployment career in the labour market, criminal activity, smoking and drinking, and overall health. Moreover, the analyses provide a portrait of the men and the women who choose to be deployed and explain their motives as well as the challenges they face before and during deployment and after returning home. The analyses also compare these soldiers with relevant control groups, also constructed from administrative registers.

To explore in greater depth the soldiers' motivations, feelings and emotional reactions, we supplemented the registered data with a broad survey of approximately 3,200 present and former soldiers, a before-and-after deployment survey of 600 soldiers and qualitative in-depth interviews of 44 individuals (veterans, parents, relatives and support group professionals).

The unique contribution is that the data to which we have access provide us with an opportunity to compare a number of life conditions among the deployed soldiers before and after deployment. As a rule, investigations of this kind are usually limited to accessing data after the soldiers return home. This book is the first to provide a longitudinal perspective covering the participants in these missions before, during and after deployment, on a large range of life outcomes. In addition, the comprehensive data material consists of the results of in-depth qualitative interviews, comprehensive telephone interviews and questionnaire surveys carried out among a large representative group of veterans.

Our analyses of these rich data sets have also dismissed some myths or disproved hypotheses. For example, we found that veterans have a *lower* crime rate and a *better* financial situation than the control group. Moreover, the various sources of data – interviews, surveys and administrative records – complement one another. To the objective information from the administrative records, we add more subjective information from interviews and questionnaires. For example, we used questionnaires to study the motivation of soldiers to sign up voluntarily for the military training qualifying them for deployment in a mission. We designed the study as a before-and-after questionnaire, as soldiers' original motivation for choosing deployment may have changed after the deployment. While the scope of change in motivations differs, the veterans generally have a positive experience of their deployment.

As soldiers sent on an international mission do not represent a random sample of the population, investigations of this kind face a methodological challenge. Clearly, a process of self-selection is involved, as the soldiers' volunteering for deployment is followed by the selection process that the military undertakes to select soldiers for missions. Although the deployed soldiers belong to a physically and mentally relatively strong group, being deployed does not come without costs: the risk of being wounded during deployment and coming home with physical injuries or psychological problems. For example, when we observe the first three years after returning home, we find a sharp rise in psychiatric diagnoses and the purchase of mental health medication – a tendency we do not find in the control group.

The 26,000 soldiers were studied over an 18-year period, during which they were deployed on very different missions. Given this wealth of data, our study contributes important new knowledge about and insights into how PK or PE deployment on international military missions affects soldiers and their lives, as no other study had access the data necessary to analyse so many aspects of a deployment.

This book is structured as follows. Chapter 2 gives a brief summary of the entire investigation. Chapter 3 presents an overview of the sources of data and methods used in this book. Chapter 4 provides a statistical portrait of the soldiers before their deployment. Chapter 5 presents the results of in-depth qualitative interviews with a group comprising the deployed soldiers, their relatives and representatives from the military and other institutions. Chapter 6 presents the results of a large representative interview investigation of veterans. The chapter focuses on the path into – and for some out of – the military, social relationships and self-assessed health, as well as the experiences during a mission. Chapter 7 investigates whether the deployment itself has an independent effect on soldiers' motivation to volunteer for a mission, on the financial situation of the soldiers and on soldiers' criminal behaviour. Chapter 8 analyses the central elements in the soldiers' health profile before and after deployment, with a focus on psychiatric diagnoses, purchase of medication for psychological problems, work-related injuries and mortality among the deployed soldiers after they return home. Chapter 9 concludes with some perspectives arising from the study.

Chapter 2

Summary of Contents

The chapters in this book contain descriptions and analyses of a great many factors connected with deployment on international missions. The objective of this summary is to provide a brief overview of the content of book (Chapters 3–8), in which we draw on different data sets to comprehensively describe all soldiers sent on international military missions for the Danish army over a period of 18 years. These data sets are uniquely suited for analysing and explaining soldiers' lives and experiences from a before-and-after perspective.

The fundamental question here is whether deployment on a peacekeeping (PK) or a peace-enforcing (PE) mission has an independent effect on a series of important beliefs, decisions and behaviours in the soldiers' individual lives. The basic methodological challenge in answering this question is that, by their very nature, the deployed cannot be observed as if they had not been deployed (the 'counterfactual situation'). Moreover, as soldiers themselves have volunteered for deployment, they constitute a select group. In each of these six particular chapters, we deal with this self-selection issue in various ways – descriptively, analytically and with a control group comprising comparable non-deployed persons.

Chapter 3 summarises the data sets and methods that chapters 4–8 apply in different ways for different purposes. The data are derived from administrative registers, qualitative interviews, a large telephone survey and a smaller questionnaire survey. Military records are the source of data about the deployed soldiers between 1992 and 2009. Personal data for 1980–2010 also come from the Statistics Denmark registers for all those deployed. Information from these sources therefore covers a number of years before the actual deployment. Other sources include data from the Danish Health Authority (*Sundhedsstyrelsen*) records both before and after deployment and from the National Board of Industrial Injuries (*Arbejdsskadestyrelsen* (ASK)). We use personal identity numbers (*centrale personregister* (CPR)) for combining information from the various data sources. These data are, of course, anonymised for research purposes.

From the administrative registers, we build a general population that we use primarily to analyse the socio-demographic characteristics of the deployed and their financial, health and criminal status. We focus on the before-and-after aspects of deployment. The social statistical records provide socio-demographic profiles, as well as criminal records, health status and the current job market status of those who have left the military.

As the registers do not contain subjective information for all those deployed, we carried out *qualitative interviews* with 44 individuals to both elicit and elucidate their motivations and experiences before and after deployment. These individuals included deployed soldiers, their relatives, people from the military and support group professionals. Qualitative interviews yield insights and information that cannot be obtained from the administrative records alone (e.g. relationships with family during and after a deployment).

One further source of data is a telephone interview survey of a random sample of 4,000 deployed soldiers, a survey with an unusually high response rate of 80 per cent. It included questions on socio-economic background, experiences during missions, type of employment contract (for those still in the military), the employment situation for veterans and smoking and drinking habits.

In addition, we obtained data from another questionnaire survey of those deployed on two specific missions, one PK and one PE. Central to the survey were the soldiers' motivations before and after deployment, broken down into 12 categories.

The methods vary throughout the chapters. Results from both the qualitative interviews and other interviews, as well as from the questionnaires, are presented in the form of *descriptive analyses.* Other chapters use econometric analyses, with logistic regressions explaining the probability of specific outcomes, and difference-in-differences methods applied to the before-and-after analyses with a control group. The control group, which constitutes an important methodological instrument, consists of men (in a relevant age interval) who are deemed eligible for military service but who have never been deployed. Registered data are used for both groups.

Chapter 4 presents a statistical portrait of the deployed. On average, although the soldiers were deployed on two missions, the variation is great, as half have been deployed only once. We cover changes that have occurred in both mission types, from PK to predominantly PE, and mission destination. In terms of numbers of deployments, the former Yugoslavia is the dominant destination area, with the greatest weight in the first years of the period we study, whereas Iraq and Afghanistan dominate in the later years. Moreover, from around 2000, the number of deployed soldiers starts increasing.

The statistical portrait starts with the socio-demographic background factors. The dominant age group is 21–24 years old. The proportion of women among the deployed increases throughout the period from two per cent to 10 per cent, and while the proportion of immigrant and their descendants is low, it also increases from one per cent to two per cent. The proportion of those with a further education (i.e. higher secondary or tertiary) increases, whereas the proportion of those with a vocational training decreases. Results of intelligence tests show that the deployed are at least at the same level as those not deployed.

A look at income and socio-economic status before deployment reveals that the soldiers have a higher relative income than other similar groups in the year before deployment. At that time, they also had better labour force attachment than other similar groups.

As for convictions for property crimes, a sharp drop occurs in the three years before deployment, starting at the same level as the general population. While the same drop occurs for violent crimes in pre-deployment period, this drop starts at a lower level than that for the general population.

Data for the repatriated soldiers are available only for 2005–2009, during which time most repatriations were from Afghanistan, chiefly because of illness and social problems. The main causes of injuries and death were roadside bombs, combat or explosions.

Chapter 5 focuses on the qualitative interviews with previous deployed soldiers and their relatives, as well as with representatives from the military and other institutions. The interview structure emphasises soldiers' experiences and needs *before*, *during* and *after* returning home from a mission. The central elements *before* deployment are the transition to another life situation, the change in close relationships and soldiers' motivations for choosing to take part in a deployment. *During* deployment, the focus is on comradeship and personal development. The significant elements *after* returning home are personal change, reintegration into the previous life situation and meetings with the military and other institutions, as well as whether veterans feel that they are valued by society.

The qualitative interviews show that the significant motivational factors before the deployment are self-realisation, new experiences, ideology, comradeship, need for money and military professionalism. During a mission, the most important issues are the problematic nature of powerlessness, occurring within a limited mandate. The quality of leadership, 'the military family' and communication with the soldiers' own families also appear important. Media coverage is generally perceived as one-sided and negative, with a strong negative effect on the deployed. After returning home, soldiers appear changed: they miss the comradeship they experienced during deployment, and they mention the absence of social recognition from the media. Psychological after-reactions also appear in the first months after they return home. Soldiers generally refer to their personal growth as a positive consequence of deployment.

Although the military and other organisations offer post-deployment help, two problems emerge: one is that contact may be lost with soldiers whose psychological after-effects appear much later and the other is that help is given only to those soldiers who request it. More broadly, the large number of people deployed on missions constitutes a group of new citizens with special needs.

Chapter 6 presents the results of a telephone survey of 4,000 randomly selected deployed soldiers. The focus is on socio-demographic background factors, the path into and out of the military, later work experience and mission experience, especially on which conditions were either enriching or stressful for the veterans. The survey also focuses on social relationships, self-assessed health and contact with the military's support organisations, with an emphasis on the veterans' smoking habits and use of drugs.

The chapter starts with a short overview of the respondents' demographic profiles, including the number of adults in the family of origin and current family and housing situations. Then, it follows a brief review of the path into – and,

for some, out of – the military, including the type of military contract, educational level before enlisting and the number of deployments at the time of the survey. Finally, the chapter examines the employment situation of those who have left the military: about five per cent are retired or took early retirement and five per cent are unemployed, regardless of when they left the military.

As for mission experiences, 75 per cent of respondents were deployed once, to the former Yugoslavia, whereas the many-time deployed were more often (or also) sent to Afghanistan. Only a very small share of respondents turned into 'mission bums', that is, those who choose deployment a great many times. The study also reveals that deployment is an important family tradition for one of every three deployed soldiers.

About seven per cent of respondents were repatriated, mostly for health or social problems. Overall about three per cent were wounded in combat, and another nine per cent had non-combat-related injuries. Respondents also self-assessed whether they had psychological or physical problems after deployment. In all, 17 per cent felt that they had psychological problems, and four per cent considered these problems serious. Another seven per cent reported physical problems, with two per cent considering them serious.

For self-assessed social relationships, the experience of being lonely is more widespread among veterans than in the general population. The self-assessment of illness is on a par with that of the general population – a surprising finding given the self-selection and screening that take place before a deployment.

Although veterans have lower weekly alcohol consumption than the general population, they engage in more binge-drinking. Smoking is more widespread among the younger veterans than in the general population. Although fewer veterans have used cannabis, a greater proportion of veterans younger than 45 years have had experiences with other illegal substances.

Chapter 7 focuses on the important issue of whether research can show that deployment in itself has an independent effect in three areas: motivations for deployment, financial situation and probability of committing crimes. The analyses of motivation are based on a questionnaire survey carried out with 447 respondents who had been deployed on either a PE mission to Afghanistan or a PK mission to Lebanon in the spring of 2011, thus representing both a PK and a PE deployment. The questionnaire investigates soldiers' motivations with a 12-item typology of possible specific motivations, divided into four categories: self-oriented gain, dignity, other-oriented gain and fidelity.

The analysis shows that motivation changes during deployment. The more idealistic motivations became less important after the soldiers return home. The first-time deployed are generally more positive than the more experienced (many-time deployed), who put greater emphasis on financial motivation. Women who are deployed place a high value on making a difference for the people needing help in the mission areas and on the idea of performing a challenging job. Moreover, privates rate comradeship the highest, whereas officers choose having a challenging job. We analyse both whether the soldiers' financial situation before deployment may have influenced their decision to go on a mission and whether the soldiers' financial situation (especially their net debt) after