



Universiteit
Leiden

The Netherlands

Separation and immersion: the changing role of the armed forces in Northwestern liberal democracies

Vark, A. van

Citation

Vark, A. van. (2025, October 17). *Separation and immersion: the changing role of the armed forces in Northwestern liberal democracies*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4270680>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4270680>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Separation and Immersion

The changing role of the armed forces in
Northwestern liberal democracies

Annelies van Vark

© copyright Annelies van Vark, 2025

Printing: Optima

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the author or the copyright-owning journals for previous published chapters.

SEPARATION AND IMMERSION
The changing role of the armed forces in
Northwestern liberal democracies

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van rector magnificus prof.dr.ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het college voor promoties
te verdedigen op vrijdag 17 oktober 2025
klokke 10 uur

door

Annelies van Vark
geboren te IJsselstein
in 1978

Promotor: prof. dr. M.A.H. van der Woude
Co-promotor: prof. dr. E.R. Muller
Promotiecommissie: prof. dr. ir. S.J.H. Rietjens
prof. dr. F.P.B. Osinga
prof. dr. L. Peperkamp (Nederlandse Defensie Academie)
dr. J. Kalkman (Nederlandse Defensie Academie)

To my daughters, Eva and Noa

Acknowledgments

Now that my dissertation is nearing completion, I look back on an intense and demanding period in my life. Combining a PhD with an (almost) full-time job, a family, and (too) many extracurricular activities was no easy feat. Yet, it has been a fascinating and deeply rewarding journey, in which I have learned a great deal.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors, Maartje van der Woude and Erwin Muller. I have very much appreciated your unwavering support and guidance throughout this process. Our conversations were always rich in content and frequently included laughter, a combination that suited me perfectly. Pursuing a PhD can be challenging, but your input consistently made it feel lighter and more manageable.

At the outset of this journey, I was working as a senior advisor in foresight analysis at the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (RNLM). I still vividly remember discussing my interest in doing a PhD with my manager at the time, Deputy Commander Major-General André Peperkoorn. He immediately offered his full support, including the opportunity to use part of my working hours for research. I am immensely grateful for that; without it, I doubt this dissertation would have been finished by now.

Over the years, several managers have continued to support me, including Brigadier-General Jos Pieters and Colonel Tonny van den Belt, for which I am very thankful. I would also like to extend special thanks to Lieutenant-General Hans Leijtens for the inspiring conversations we have had over the years.

Many colleagues have supported me along the way. Hans de Vries and Huib Zijdeveld, starting our PhD journeys around the same time created a bond that I truly appreciate. Gillis Oostdijk, Tim van Lit, and my colleagues at Transitieteam CDS, thank you for your support throughout. Captain (N) Pasi Rantakari, thanks for the insightful discussions we had on the Finnish model and your help in finding relevant Finnish documents. A particular word of thanks goes to Peter Neuteboom, who not only engaged in thoughtful discussions in the early days of my PhD but also took the time to review chapters later in the process.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without my friends and family. I am deeply grateful to my parents, Cees van Vark and Thea van Vark-de Jong, who have supported and encouraged me from the very beginning, including stepping in many times to look after the girls. Thank you also to my aunt Joke de Jong for her help with the girls, and to my uncle Christiaan van Tol for the beautiful cover illustration.

To my husband Jason Treurniet, thank you for being with me through the ups and downs of this PhD journey. You were always the first to celebrate the good news, and you patiently bore the brunt of my frustrations when things didn't go as planned. Your loving support has helped me throughout this process.

Finally, to our daughters, Eva and Noa: I know it hasn't always been easy to have a mother buried in a pile of papers upstairs. I'm looking forward to having more time to spend with you. I love you both very much, and I can't wait to see the choices you'll make in your own lives as you grow up.

Table of contents

Acknowledgments

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1	Introduction	12
1.2	Research question	16
1.3	Theoretical background	17
1.4	Dissertation structure	20

Chapter 2: Theoretical perspective: liberal democracy, civil-military relations, and the hybridization of the armed forces and the police

2.1	Introduction	24
2.2	Liberal democracy	24
2.3	Civil-Military Relations	28
2.4	Conscription and the all-volunteer force	44
2.5	Current state of civil-military relations: hybridization of the armed forces and the police	48
2.6	Hybridization and the stability of liberal democracy: conceptual model	57
2.7	Conclusion	58

Chapter 3: Research methodology

3.1	Introduction	64
3.2	Research design	64
3.3	Data collection	68
3.4	Operationalization	71
3.5	Data analysis and validation	75
3.6	Personal reflection	77

Chapter 4: Liberal democracy under pressure

4.1	Introduction	82
4.2	Document analysis: security and stability related challenges undermining liberal democracy	82
4.3	Liberal democracy under pressure: the data	94
4.4	Results	100
4.5	Conclusion	102

Chapter 5: The Netherlands

5.1	Introduction	108
5.2	The Dutch armed forces	109
5.3	Security challenges and threats	114
5.4	Recent changes in the domestic role: empirical analysis	118
5.5	Policy options for a changing domestic role	127
5.6	Impact on civil-military relations	132
5.7	Analysis	134

Chapter 6: Sweden

6.1	Introduction	142
6.2	The Swedish armed forces	142
6.3	Security challenges and threats	149
6.4	Recent changes in the domestic role: empirical analysis	153
6.5	Policy options for a changing domestic role	160
6.6	Impact on civil-military relations	168
6.7	Analysis	171

Chapter 7: Finland

7.1	Introduction	178
7.2	The Finnish Defence Forces	178
7.3	Security challenges and threats	187
7.4	Recent changes in the domestic role: empirical analysis	190
7.5	Policy options for a changing domestic role	196
7.6	Impact on civil-military relations	204
7.7	Analysis	208

Chapter 8: A comparative analysis of the Netherlands, Sweden, and Finland: from separation to immersion?

8.1	Introduction	216
8.2	Similarities and differences	216
8.3	Explanations for similarities and differences	225
8.4	Policy options for the future domestic role of the armed forces	229
8.5	Impact of a changing domestic role on civil-military relations	233
8.6	Impact of a changing domestic role on the stability of liberal democracy	238

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1	Research results and theoretical contributions	246
9.2	Limitations	255
9.3	Recommendations for future research	256
9.4	Practical implications	260

Epilogue: impact of the war in Ukraine

Annex

Annex 1: Information sheet and consent form	272
Annex 2: Interview questions	274
Annex 3: Codebook (atlas.ti)	275

References	276
-------------------	-----

Summary	295
----------------	-----

Samenvatting	300
---------------------	-----

Curriculum Vitae	305
-------------------------	-----