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

Vark, A. van

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THE NETHERLANDS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As shown in chapter 4, liberal democracy in Northwestern Europe, however stable it might be compared to other parts of the world, is under pressure. Both the academic literature and the relevant quantitative databases indicate that at least part of this pressure can be explained by three parallel but intertwining security and stability related challenges that can together be identified as three forms of ‘undermining’. These forms of undermining have in recent years led to the hybridization of the armed forces and the police, a process which is still taking place today. If this process continues, this can be expected to lead to a growing immersion of the military and civil domain. This immersion may enable governments to increase the stability of liberal democracy. At the same time, the risk of state undermining puts a limit to the degree of immersion that is conducive to a liberal democracy. Furthermore, as I have discussed in chapter 2, in civil-military relations theory the inherent norm in a liberal democracy is a model of separation of civil and military domains, with civilian control over the military.

These dynamics and their implications for civil-military relations will be studied empirically in the next three chapters. This chapter will focus on developments in the Netherlands. At first sight, a process of hybridization seems to be taking place in the Netherlands as well. In recent years, Army search teams have been used in counter-drugs operations and armed forces materiel has been used to, for instance, block and protect government locations against protesters. During the pandemic, the armed forces mainly supported civil authorities in health care by offering logistical support to hospitals and transferring patients to other hospitals. They also helped to build test facilities and supported the vaccination campaign. In the domain of law enforcement, military personnel have been used to restore public order and enforce lockdown measures on the Dutch Caribbean Island of Curaçao, and Marechaussee personnel have been involved in protecting vaccine depots as well as checking people at the border for negative testing or proof of vaccination. And recently, the armed forces were tasked to team up with the police to protect a court building in an organized crime trial (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022a; Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2022).

The first part of this chapter contains a description of the Dutch armed forces, its tasks and legal framework, the relations between military and society, the current state of civil-military relations and civil-military cooperation in the Netherlands (section 5.2). Section 5.3 focuses on specific security challenges and threats in the Dutch context, in addition to the general analysis provided in chapter 4. In section 5.4, recent changes in the domestic role of the Dutch armed forces and explanations for these changes are explored. The second part of this chapter focuses on the future: what policy options

can be defined for a future domestic role of the armed forces (5.5) and what would implementation of these options mean for civil-military relations in the Netherlands (5.6)? Finally, section 5.7 analyzes the results of this chapter using civil-military relations theory. Together with the analysis sections of chapter 6 on Sweden and chapter 7 on Finland, it will provide the foundation for chapter 8 of this dissertation, the overall analysis of this research. The three individual analysis sections will focus on the undermining of liberal democracy and hybridization in the specific cases, policy options, and the impact on civil-military relations. Chapter 8 will provide a comparison between the three case studies and will answer the research question of this dissertation on how the armed forces can contribute to the stability of liberal democracy.

5.2 THE DUTCH ARMED FORCES

This section focuses on the Dutch armed forces, its tasks, the legal framework for their domestic use as well as civil-military relations and cooperation. In addition, this section contains a description of the position of the Dutch armed forces in society. This will set the baseline for future developments regarding the domestic role of the armed forces and civil-military relations.

The Dutch armed forces consist of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marechaussee. Including the supporting units (the Central Staff, the Joint Support Command, and the Command Materiel and IT) the Ministry of Defense has around 68.500 employees, including both military and civilian personnel. The budget in 2022 was around 12.5 billion euros (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022b). However, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine the government has announced a budget increase of around 5 billion euros per year. Consequently, in 2024 the Netherlands has met the NATO norm for the Defense budget (2% of GDP).

Tasks

The Dutch armed forces have three core tasks (Ministerie van Defensie, 2020):

1. Defense of national and allied territory, including the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom.
2. Promotion and protection of the international legal order and stability.
3. Support to the civil authorities (in all circumstances) in public order management, law enforcement, disaster- and crisis management, both nationally and internationally.

Within the organization, these tasks are commonly referred to as the first, second and third core task. Support to the civil authorities is based on several laws, and elaborate procedures must be followed to request this support. In addition, some specific domestic tasks have been allocated to the armed forces, for example explosives detection,

monitoring airspace and Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear defense (CBRN). All capabilities of the armed forces that are available for national operations are listed in the 'Catalogue National Operations' (Ministerie van Defensie, 2018).

The Marechaussee is a gendarmerie-type force (police organization with military status), which is part of the Ministry of Defense but performs most of its tasks under the authority of other ministries, mainly the Ministry of Justice and Security. The main tasks of the Marechaussee are border control, security and surveillance, and international and military police tasks.

The Marechaussee was created in 1814 and until the Second World War the organization was responsible for policing the countryside and main roads. In the first decades of the 20th century, the organization was also frequently used for public order management tasks in support of the local authorities. After the First World War however, the government decided to create another military police force (the 'Korps Politietroepen') for this task (Smeets & Hovens, 2022). After the Second World War the government decided to reform the police system and make it largely civilian. However, the police system was never completely demilitarized. The Marechaussee remained the police force for the armed forces and was additionally tasked with border control and support to the police. In the '60s, '70s and '80s, the Marechaussee frequently supported the police in public order management, in times of large demonstrations and rioting.

Some questioned the role of the Marechaussee and feared this would lead to a militarization of policing in the Netherlands. However, in 1988 the government decided to formally anchor the position of the Marechaussee in the Police Act. In 1994, the organization received additional tasks: policing the airports, the fight against cross border organized crime and mobile checks in the internal border areas (after implementation of the Schengen accords) (P. C. J. Neuteboom, 2017).

The position of the Marechaussee has not always been uncontroversial (Weger, 2006). Throughout the years, some have questioned the need for a military police organization in addition to the regular police. As part of a government-wide budget cut in 2010, the government evaluated the option to merge the Marechaussee with the national police, that was created at the time. However, it has decided to keep the Marechaussee as a separate organization. Arguments that were used to keep the Marechaussee emphasized the advantages of the gendarmerie model: the combination of military and police characteristics that facilitate a fast and flexible deployment, both nationally and internationally, in a higher spectrum of force and in aggravated circumstances (Rijksfinanciën, 2010).

Legal framework

The role of the Dutch armed forces is based on article 97 of the Constitution, which reads as follows:

Article 97

1. There shall be armed forces for the defense and protection of the interests of the Kingdom, and to maintain and promote the international legal order.
2. The Government shall have supreme authority over the armed forces (The Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 2018)

The three core tasks of the Dutch armed forces are based on this article.

Domestic support to civil authorities for police tasks is based on the Police Act 2012 (Politiewet 2012, 2012). Four articles in this law are of particular relevance.

Article 4 sums up the police tasks of the Marechaussee in a limitative way. This concerns the structural police tasks of the Marechaussee. Depending on the task concerned, authority lies with the Public Prosecution Service (for criminal law enforcement), the local mayor (for public order management) or the Minister of Justice and Security (for security and surveillance). Article 57 outlines support by the Marechaussee to the police. Based on this article, the Minister of Justice and Security decides about such support, after consultation with the Minister of Defense.

Support to the civil authorities by other parts of the armed forces is dealt with in article 58 and 59 of the Police Law 2012. Article 58 states that 'in special circumstances' the armed forces can support the civil authorities. The Minister of Justice and Security makes this decision, in agreement with the Minister of Defense.

Article 59 forms the basis for the Special Intervention Service, a combined unit of police and military personnel. This special forces-unit consists of intervention and arrest teams and is used in cases of terrorism or the arrest of high-risk individuals, for which regular police personnel is inadequately trained and equipped.

Domestic support to civil authorities for non-police tasks is based on the 'Law for the Safety Regions' (article 51) and on a ministerial decree, the 'Ministerial decree for military support in the public interest' (Regeling Militaire Steunverlening in Het Openbaar Belang, 2014; Wet Veiligheidsregio's, 2010). This form of military support usually concerns disasters and crises for which the Safety Regions do not have sufficient manpower, means or expertise. Examples are the evacuation of citizens in case of flooding or firefighting in

a nature reserve (P. C. J. Neuteboom, 2017). The Law on the Safety Regions was recently evaluated, and the report concludes there are no specific points for improvement in the legal provisions concerning the armed forces (Evaluatiecommissie Wet veiligheidsregio's, 2020).

Military and society

Two important developments that have impacted the position of the armed forces in Dutch society since the end of the Cold War are the suspension of conscription and the downsizing of the armed forces. Conscription was suspended May 1st, 1997, which means that after that date, Dutch young men were no longer drafted for military service and the Dutch armed forces transformed into an all-volunteer force (Hoffenaar, 2017). Conscription has not been abolished altogether and since 1 January 2020 involves women as well.

As for downsizing, the Dutch armed forces were reduced from 103.000 troops in 1989 to 53.000 in 2005 (R. Moelker, Huiskamp, et al., 2015). This downsizing stemmed from the belief that a traditional war was unlikely, and the traditional task of the defense of the national and allied territory therefore deemed less important. The second and third core tasks, as described above, prevailed. One of the consequences of downsizing is the relative physical absence of the armed forces from large parts of the country, especially the western part, where most large cities are located. Larger barracks are usually found in the outskirts of the country.

Have the suspension of conscription and the downsizing of the armed forces led to a growing gap between the armed forces and society? Research shows that support for the Dutch armed forces has remained at a constant high level since 2017, around 7.1. The Dutch view the armed forces as an essential institution (7.6). At the same time, the level of pride in the armed forces as well as the appreciation of 'moral potential'. The level of appreciation for the three core tasks has also decreased; however, the third core task (7.5) is receiving greater support than the first (6.6) and second (6.8) (Konings & Van Der Grient, 2022). During the COVID-19 pandemic, when the armed forces provided extensive support to the civilian authorities, public support peaked at 7.7 (Siebelhoff & Fastenau, 2022). According to Van der Meulen, this means there is no significant civil-military gap in the Netherlands (Van der Meulen, 2017).

However, as Van der Meulen states, the acknowledgment of necessity is no guarantee for support of a specific mission. It does not lead to a higher budget, nor to more personnel. How people feel about the armed forces, does not say much about their knowledge of the armed forces and interest either (Van der Meulen, 2015). One of the questions in the

World Values Survey concerns the 'willingness to fight for your country'. The most recent survey shows that 46,7% of the Dutch are willing to do so, while 40,9% are not and 11,8% do not know. Compared with, for example, the Nordic countries (Denmark 74,6, Finland 74,8, Norway 87,6, and Sweden 80,5) this figure is remarkably low (Haerpfer et al., 2020).

Muller claims that there seems to be no resistance in Dutch society against a domestic role for the armed forces. He is of the opinion that a more intensive domestic role is desirable and even necessary from a legitimacy and visibility perspective (Muller, 2017; Muller, Bosch, et al., 2017).

Civil-military relations

Looking at the ideal types defined in chapter 2, the Netherlands, at first sight, matches the preferred model for a democratic regime, in which civil and military domains are separated and there is civilian supremacy over the military.

As described in the previous section, based on the Dutch Constitution the government has supreme authority over the armed forces. This means the domestic role of the armed forces takes place under civilian control. As Muller, Van Eekelen and Rosenthal describe, this does not mean that the military cannot influence government policies. They distinguish seven options (Muller, Eekelen, et al., 2017). The most important option is the amount of formal and informal meetings and contacts between the armed forces and the ministers and civil servants of the Ministry of Defense. A second option is the presence of ex-military personnel in political office, such as Minister or Member of Parliament. Thirdly, military personnel are allowed to be a member of a political party. Fourthly, armed forces personnel can unite in labor unions. Fifthly, ex-military personnel are involved in lobby activities concerning military procurement. Sixthly, ex-military personnel commonly speak out in the media. Seventhly, both current and ex-military personnel can influence policies through their involvement in higher education and scientific research.

Notwithstanding these options to influence policies, the Dutch armed forces are generally considered to be very loyal to the government and the Minister of Defense in particular. Some even suggest the armed forces should speak out more in public debate (Muller, Eekelen, et al., 2017; Van Vark, 2021).

Civilian control does not mean that the armed forces have no autonomous decision space whatsoever. While strategic decision-making takes place at the political level, operational matters are generally decided by the armed forces themselves. The crucial question then of course is how to distinguish between strategic and operational matters.

In the current culture at the Ministry of Defense, the tendency is to let most decision-making take place at the political level (Muller, Eekelen, et al., 2017).

Are civil and military spheres completely separated? No, this is certainly not the case in the Netherlands. As has been shown in the previous section, both the Marechaussee and the armed forces can fulfil police tasks, either in a structural way, or in support to the civil authorities. The mere existence of the Marechaussee, a gendarmerie-type force, can be seen as a form of hybridization, as described in chapter 3. In civil-military terms, this can be seen as a form of immersion. In describing the Dutch situation, some authors therefore talk about an incomplete or imperfect demilitarization of the police system (P. C. J. Neuteboom, 2017).

Civil-military cooperation

Civil-military cooperation in the case of crises and disasters usually takes place between the Safety Regions and the armed forces. There are 25 Safety Regions in the Netherlands in which municipalities, the fire department, Regional Medical Assistance Organizations and the police cooperate in cases of crises and disasters. The armed forces have 3 Regional Military Commanders (RMC) and 25 Regional Military Operational Advisors (RMOA's), one for each Safety Region. The RMOA is responsible for advising the civil authorities in their Safety Region and the RMC coordinates the military capabilities that can be used to support the civil authorities (Muller, 2017).

5.3 SECURITY CHALLENGES AND THREATS

In chapter 4, three security and stability related threats that undermine liberal democracy have been defined, namely (1) the blurring of internal and external security and the rise of new security threats, (2) declining social cohesion and the rise of social unrest and parallel societies and (3) undermining of liberal democracy by the state.

How do these challenges and threats play out specifically in the Netherlands? In 2022, the first 'Government-wide Risk Analysis' was published, produced by a network of analysts working for the government (Analistennetwerk Nationale Veiligheid, 2022). It identifies threats with a potential disruptive impact on the aforementioned national security interests: territorial, physical, economic, and ecological security, social and political stability and international legal order and stability. The analysis is based on an all-hazard approach, including both security and safety threats and both internal and external threats. A total of 60 scenarios have been identified, clustered into 9 themes. These have all been analyzed for probability, impact, and the combination of the two.

Looking at these themes, climate- and natural disasters stand out. Examples are scenarios of extreme weather such as heat/droughts, floods, hurricanes in the Caribbean parts of the Netherlands, and wildfires. Climate change is an important driver of these scenarios. A second high risk category concerns pandemics (for example, the flu, and COVID-19). As for economic threats, the Dutch dependence on other countries, not all of them considered friendly, stands out. These risks can become manifest in situations where there are shortages or tensions between actors. Influence operations by foreign actors and cyber threats are also considered high risk threats for the Netherlands. Other risks worth mentioning are possible instability of the EU and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, polarization in Dutch society, and a disturbance of vital infrastructure (such as an electricity black-out). This risk analysis has formed the basis for the first government-wide security strategy, which was published in 2023 (Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid, 2023).

Another relevant recent report, produced by the Dutch intelligence services (both civil and military) and the National Coordinator for Terrorism and Security) focuses on the threat posed by foreign state actors (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst et al., 2022). It concludes that the threat posed by foreign state actors is growing and threatening national security interests. The report has four main conclusions. First, the territorial security of the EU, NATO and the Netherlands is increasingly under pressure, in particular because of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine. Secondly, foreign state actors are continuously interfering with Dutch society. Examples are espionage and influence operations aiming to destabilize Dutch society. Some countries use 'long-arm tactics' to influence their diaspora population in the Netherlands. Thirdly, the Netherlands are increasingly confronted with threats against economic security. Vital processes remain vulnerable to sabotage attempts, strategic dependencies can be abused (for example, the European dependence on Russian gas), and foreign regimes attempt to steal advanced technology (China being the main culprit). Finally, the international legal order is increasingly under pressure from non-Western actors trying to destabilize the international system.

Social discontent is growing in the Netherlands. A recent report has focused on this trend, trying to identify the specific groups that are increasingly likely to 'drop out' of or 'disengage from' society (*afhaken*) (de Voogd & Cuperus, 2021). The report shows a strong correlation between disengagement and level of education and income, with citizens with a higher income and/or level of education being less likely to disengage. The report also shows differences between central and peripheral areas, but also between 'rich' and 'poor' neighborhoods in cities, growing and shrinking areas. Health is identified as an important factor as well, with people in bad health being more likely to disengage. The

report argues that people have not disengaged, but have been made to disengage, by societal changes, meritocratic norms and the disappearance of occupations and traditions. The result has been a growth of populist or outsider political parties, some of them holding extreme-right ideas.

As mentioned in chapter 4, the growth of undermining organized crime is a big problem in the Netherlands as well (Lam et al., 2018; Tops & Tromp, 2017; Tromp, 2015).

As for undermining by the state, chapter 4 has mentioned research by Van der Woude on counter-terrorism legislation and border control (Van der Woude, 2012; Van der Woude et al., 2016). Dutch migration policies, and particularly the treatment of asylum seekers, have received criticism by both NGO's and the Dutch Advisory Council on Migration (Adviesraad Migratie, 2022). The IDEA data presented in chapter 4 show a decline in almost all indicators, in particular civil liberties, and impartial administration. The decline in impartial administration could indicate that part of the population does not feel adequately represented or treated fairly, which could provide evidence for both horizontal and state undermining. The World Bank data show a sharp decline in political stability in the Netherlands, and Fund for Peace shows an increase in security threats to the state, a growing fragmentation of state institutions, and growing divisions and schisms between different groups in society.

Recent research by IDEA focuses on the impact of COVID-19 measures on democracy and human rights. As in other countries, measures were taken in the Netherlands that impacted civil liberties. Examples are restrictions on gatherings (such as keeping distance and showing a vaccination certificate, recovery certificate or negative test result), freedom of movement (including temporary curfews and lockdowns and the obligation to wear masks), and education. All in all, IDEA concludes that no pandemic violations of the Democratic Standards Index have taken place and classifies the Netherlands as low risk on the Pandemic Backsliding Index (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2022).

These reports show signs for the three security challenges identified in chapter 4. How do the respondents for this case-study evaluate the challenges?

Most respondents recognize that the blurring of internal and external security leads to new security threats. Hybrid threats in general, cyber threats, organized crime, foreign influence operations and terrorism are mentioned.

Interestingly, one respondent questions the use of the word 'hybrid' in describing new threats, stating that *'personally I find 'hybrid' the most polluting word that the Defense department uses now. It implies that a clear distinction between threats has become impossible and therefore you can be made responsible for anything.'* (Respondent 20, civilian, executive organization)

In the Netherlands armed forces, cyber is considered the fifth domain, after Sea, Land, Air and Space. One respondent (respondent 33, military), however, considers this a wrong interpretation of reality, in which there is a physical sphere, and a virtual sphere, forming two parallel structures. Instead of considering cyber as the fifth domain and dedicating personnel to develop that domain, it would be logical to integrate cyber fully in the four existing domains.

Organized crime is considered a large and growing problem by many respondents. They point at the undermining potential of organized crime groups that are slowly spreading into neighborhoods where the government has pulled back to a certain extent. *'Government cutbacks from the last 20 years on social services, youth work, elderly care, public spaces have led to neighborhoods going downhill. Organized crime sees an opportunity to take over government tasks in these areas. ... As a government you will eventually lose grip over such a neighborhood.'* (Respondent 1, civilian, academic) And *'If people have the feeling that they are on their own, you should not be surprised when they start organizing themselves and creating their own law and order.'* (Respondent 47, civilian, academic) Respondents use the metaphor of a creeping process or a smoldering peat fire, slowly gaining in force. The ability of organized crime to undermine the constitutional state is demonstrated by acts such as the shooting of a lawyer, which deters other attorneys from taking up a suspect's case in an organized crime trial.

The link between organized crime and developments in society is clear: declining social cohesion and the rise of parallel societies provide opportunities for organized crime. Respondents from both local and national government authorities point out that specific groups that are dissatisfied with government policies increasingly find each other and unite in larger groups. In the Netherlands, this concerns, for example, critics of the COVID-19 government policies, farmers who fear losing their livelihood, spiritually inclined groups from well-to-do areas (with organizations such as *Moederhart* (Motherheart)) and extreme-right groups and sympathizers. Respondents worry about polarization: *'People end up sooner in places that are very extreme, left and right. In a liberal democracy you need a critical mass in the center, that is aiming for amelioration but not revolution. I see that opinions are becoming more extreme, and people are not just judging, but also condemning these days.'* (Respondent 2, military) Social media can be considered an ac-

celerator for these developments and as people increasingly end up in echo chambers on the internet it is more difficult to find dissenting opinions.

In general, some respondents emphasize that social cohesion is a precondition for stability: *'In the end, you can only keep stability in a country when there is something communal that everyone endorses. ... If personal interests are enlarged and put on central stage, you break that communal element. And that leads to destabilization. You see that in conflict areas as well.'* (Respondent 21, civilian, executive organization)

As this short overview shows, Dutch respondents recognize the first and second challenge to liberal democracy. The third challenge, the undermining of liberal democracy by the state, is mentioned a lot less, although some respondents do point at government policies and recent affairs (such as the childcare allowance affair and the earthquakes in the northern province of Groningen following decades of extracting gas) leading to declining trust in government. A few respondents mention that since the War on Terror western governments tend to emphasize and perhaps even exaggerate threats to liberal democracy, paving the way for an increase in their powers.

5.4 RECENT CHANGES IN THE DOMESTIC ROLE: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

The Netherlands seems to have followed the trend of a growing domestic role of the armed forces. As for the third core task (the domestic role), until 2005 the armed forces were commonly referred to as a 'safety net', a 'last resort' that could be called upon in case all civilian options had been exhausted. In 2005, the government announced in a letter to Parliament that the armed forces would be transformed from 'safety net' to 'structural security partner', which implied a larger domestic role (Ministers van Defensie en van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2005). The letter states that the domestic role of the armed forces is transformed from a quantitative to a qualitative contribution. As stated in the letter, the knowledge, skills and means acquired abroad can be valuable in the Netherlands in the fight against terrorism and disasters.

A second letter to Parliament in 2006 further specified these measures (Ministers van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties en van Defensie, 2006). The biggest change announced was the guaranteed availability of specialist capabilities (4600 military personnel) under civilian control, that was deemed necessary to deal with new threats arising from the blurring of internal and external security. With these capabilities, the armed forces would be able to support civilian authorities in, for example, public order

management, security, and surveillance (with personnel or materiel, including drones), border control, protection of harbors, explosives detection and disaster management. Furthermore, three Regional Military Commanders would coordinate cooperation with civilian authorities, assisted by 25 military advisors that would be posted in the 25 Safety Regions.

To what extent has this transformation taken place in practice? For the respondents, the transformation from 'safety net' to 'structural partner' entails a move from a reactive to a proactive stance, from a quantitative to a qualitative contribution and from incident driven to strategy driven. They paint a mixed picture of this transformation. Some claim that the armed forces are better integrated in the Safety Regions, that civilian authorities are more open to cooperation with the armed forces, and that they see growth in the support of law enforcement. In the words of one respondent: *'Yes, I believe so. ... Since a year, a year and a half there has been some sort of breakthrough, that civilian authorities admit that they can't handle crises above regional level themselves and that they need the armed forces as a partner.'* (Respondent 14, military, national government)

There is some research to support these statements. A report written in 2017 concludes that support to the civilian authorities has grown since 2009. This growth can mainly be seen in criminal investigations (and much less in public order management), for example the use of advanced search teams (Army), divers (Navy), military trackers (Marines) or intelligence capabilities for observations and analysis (Bervoets, 2017; Bervoets & Eijgenraam, 2018).

Others think that in practice not much has changed: the armed forces are still used as a last resort, incident driven, and acceptance by the civilian authorities is limited. *'It's not stable, but it moves marginally within a bandwidth. The whole performance in the COVID crisis, with all due respect, only concerns a few people that already did that job. When you talk about the use of the armed forces for law enforcement, I don't see much change.'* (Respondent 2, military). Neuteboom and Hovens have concluded that the hybridization of the armed forces and the police has thus far been quite limited, although this may change because of the blurring of internal and external security and the growing threat of violent organized crime (P. Neuteboom, 2015; P. Neuteboom & Hovens, 2018).

The most recent letter to Parliament concerning civil-military relations seems to confirm this point of view (Ministers van Justitie en Veiligheid en van Defensie, 2020). Reading this letter leaves the impression that not much has in fact changed since 2006, at least not on the strategic level. The same words as in 2005 and 2006 are used, and the description of the changes since then is not convincing. The letter states that the domestic

role of the armed forces has grown since 2006 and points out its unique capabilities and sustainability. It confirms that the armed forces are a 'structural security partner' and that partners experience a growing willingness to accept this. Some initiatives are announced to explore a possible contribution of the armed forces in security and surveillance and the fight against organized crime. Bos arrives at the same conclusion, stating that the letter does nothing more than confirm the 2006 agreement (Bos, 2020). Two recent letters to Parliament confirm some development in the areas of security and surveillance and the fight against organized crime, but these can be considered marginal steps (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2020, 2022).

How can this be explained? When respondents were asked what factors influence the domestic role of the armed forces in the Netherlands, three main factors stand out, namely perception and framing, mixed attitudes on both sides and the growing distance between the armed forces and society.

Factor 1: Perception and framing

A very strong metaphor used to describe the domestic role of the armed forces in the Netherlands is that of 'green on the streets', which in the Dutch context has a negative connotation. *'Green on the streets always leads to debate in our country, more than in other countries. I think the Dutch don't want the state to impose things. ... And the armed forces are an instrument of power, an instrument of the state.'* (Respondent 27, military) In this frame, the armed forces are seen as an instrument of violence, aggressive and masculine. *'...because a domestic role seems farther away when people believe that masculinity is always true. Because then they associate the soldier with violence and then there will always be a certain hesitation to use the armed forces for tasks in which we could perfectly support.'* (Respondent 32, military)

Using the armed forces in a domestic context, especially in a visible role such as public order management, could lead to escalation instead of de-escalation and would convey the image to the public that civilian authorities have lost control. One respondent states: *'You must be careful with the image you convey. The use of the armed forces may give the impression that the police have lost control.'* (Respondent 20, civilian, executive organization)

Some think this metaphor of 'green on the streets' is slowly losing ground in the Netherlands due to the changing security threats, but they constitute an exception in the group of respondents interviewed. One of them states, *'There is some sensitivity with local authorities that say they don't want to see green soldiers in their streets. ... I do notice that with the rising threat level the borders are becoming increasingly blurred; there is more political-*

administrative willingness to accept that on some occasions there is no other alternative than to show your strength by using the military.' (Respondent 22, civilian, executive organization)

Another metaphor commonly used to describe the domestic role of the armed forces is that of the 'toolbox'. In the words of Bos, this makes the armed forces a supplier and the civilian authorities the customer. This image does not correspond with that of a structural security partner (Bos, 2020). The existence of a catalogue for civil-military cooperation strengthens that image of a toolbox. In the words of one respondent, *'A catalogue projects the image that you can order from it. That has never worked well in the past and it's not necessary now. The military liaisons know exactly what the organization has to offer and then you don't need such a catalogue.'* (Respondent 23, civilian, executive organization)

A complicating issue with using a catalogue is that the average civilian does not know what military capabilities can be used for. In the words of a local mayor, *'But I don't know what you can or cannot do with a tank. The fact that they said we want to help with the analysis of the problem and with that we can perhaps also contribute to a solution, that was a real revelation for me. And I think the armed forces can play an important role in that way.'* (Respondent 5, civilian, local government)

Another respondent points out that the armed forces choose to be in a safe position if they stick to the catalogue: *'It is a safe position, when you say we do our best to deliver if they ask us something, you can never be judged for it. Yes, I picked up the phone and did my best to arrange something, but all capabilities were abroad. That's a very safe position.'* (Respondent 14, military, national government)

The metaphors of 'green on the streets' and the 'toolbox' complicate the transformation of the armed forces to a structural security partner. According to one respondent, the addition of the word 'structural' is already an indication that the armed forces are seen as something special in the security domain: *'How should we understand this word 'structural'? ... It implies that the armed forces are a special structural partner, but of course that is not true. In my world of the Safety Regions, all partners are structural partners. ... There is something strange in that word 'structural'. The question is whether you need that word. I don't think you do.'* (Respondent 49, civilian, academic)

And if the armed forces have the ambition to be a 'structural partner', that has consequences: *'The armed forces say they want to be a structural partner in national security. That means you don't wait, like in the beginning of civil-military cooperation, from a perspective of 'your wish is my command'. That is a reactive position. If you have the ambition to be a*

structural partner in security, you choose a proactive position.' (Respondent 22, civilian, executive organization)

Factor 2: Mixed attitudes

Both the armed forces and the civilian authorities have mixed attitudes concerning the domestic role of the armed forces. As mentioned before, the Dutch armed forces have three core tasks. The third core task is the domestic role and in the words of many respondents, this third task gets third priority, something that should not distract the armed forces from their 'real' task, the first core task (defense of national and allied territory). *'It's not as if we have so much capacity. What if we use part of the Army for those tasks and we get a mission abroad? We won't have any personnel left. In addition, I believe that part of those tasks is educational, but in the end the core task of a soldier is to kill people and destroy things. If you work for example 5 years in law enforcement in the Netherlands, that makes you less capable for your real job.'* (Respondent 29, military). Another respondent confirms: *'Within the armed forces it's not viewed as a full task. We train for core task 1...we say all core tasks are just as important, but of course we secretly say it's first, second and third priority.'* (Respondent 35, military) Bos confirms this informal prioritization in a recent article as well (Bos, 2020). This attitude may lead to shirking by the armed forces in offering support to civilian authorities and a recent analysis points at some examples during the COVID-19 pandemic (Zijdeveld & Van Vark, 2025).

This prioritization is not without consequences in civil-military cooperation, as one respondent explains, *'At the armed forces, core task 3 people were usually non-commissioned officers or specialists. Real career officers shouldn't go to core task 3, then you were a loser. ... But if you want to work with the civilian domain, they are not stupid you know, you must send people of a certain quality. You can professionalize, so that you become a full partner in discussions.'* (Respondent 36, military)

Some however blame the civilian side for problems in civil-military cooperation: *'My analysis is that the civilian domain is still not organized well. If you can't work with your next-door neighbor, you don't go and ask your neighbor from three blocks down.'* (Respondent 39, military)

On the civilian side, they find it hard to build relations with armed forces personnel, who switch jobs much faster than their civilian counterparts and do not integrate well. *'And what I notice in my network is that the armed forces are very much inward-looking. In other ministries the culture is a bit more open. They know each other well. The armed forces are really a bastion, it's very hard to get in.'* (Respondent 43, military, working in the civilian domain) In addition, they fear budgetary competition from the armed forces and loss of authority

in the eyes of the public. *'Competition, fear, every euro that goes to the armed forces, doesn't go to the police or fire department.'* (Respondent 14, civilian, national government)

Some say the armed forces could be more proactive in offering capabilities: *'I think the armed forces can offer capabilities much faster than is the case now. That even today the training program gets prioritized instead of the needs of society. That they are very reluctant in offering capabilities because performing tasks in society is seen as a threat for the upkeep of skills and readiness.'* (Respondent 21, civilian, executive organization)

Others speak about the 'military mindset', claiming that military personnel are too dominant, find it difficult to accept civilian control and have difficulty in de-escalating in contacts with the population. *'Military personnel are trained to step forward and act, not to step backward and start a conversation.'* (Respondent 15, civilian, national government)

Military respondents with experience in cooperation with the civilian domain recognize this as well: *'Sometimes it's as if the armed forces feel treated unfairly when they operate under civilian authority. Even in the COVID-19 crisis I know that has happened. They tend to say, proclaim a state of emergency. ...The armed forces are reluctant in offering help unless they stay in control.'* (Respondent 24, military). And another respondent, *'The culture is completely different. At the Safety Regions they coordinate and consult. We call that command and control. If you bring that mindset to the table, you really are the odd one out.'* (Respondent 31, military)

Yet others, from both the civilian and the military domain, state that this is just an example of resistance, as military personnel would also prefer to take a step back, and the police can shoot when it is necessary. *'..., the police work context dependent as well. We shoot too when we must. But our starting point is that we act in peace time in a liberal democracy, knowing that we must play by the rules. And I think in a time of war there are less rules.'* (Respondent 19, civilian, executive organization) And a respondent on the military side: *'We train our people to deal with that situationally and violence is our last resort. ... I think that contrast isn't there. I think most of us don't want to throw the first punch.'* (Respondent 32, military)

Some respondents are of the opinion that the armed forces should be used only as last resort: *'I prefer the analogy of the soccer team. The armed forces are all the way in the back, even behind the goal. The defensive line is that of the police, special investigators, etc. Mid-field are organizations such as schools and businesses that have different goals than security but are still relevant. Those organizations should feel the backup of the police, etc. And at the*

forefront are the civilians. ... So, I do understand that the armed forces maintain relations towards the forefront, but you don't go and play soccer there.' (Respondent 46, academic)

Factor 3: Distance between the armed forces and society

A third factor influencing the domestic role of the armed forces is the distance between the armed forces and society. As mentioned before, on the separation versus immersion dilemma, the Netherlands have for a long-time preferred separation between the armed forces and society. For some respondents, this has caused a disconnect between the armed forces and society, which has deepened after conscription was suspended in 1997: *'...the natural entanglement of the armed forces with society has been lost since the suspension of conscription. The armed forces have mainly shown themselves on the international stage, while pulling back in their own barracks and training grounds back home.'* (Respondent 15, military, national government)

Some believe this has led to a disconnect between the armed forces and society, which is seen as problematic, as it may lead to an erosion of support for the armed forces. *'It's very important that you make sure the armed forces are integrated in society and remain part of society. I think we must stay alert and must keep explaining who we are, what we do and why we do it.'* (Respondent 26, military) And another respondent: *'Something changed in the position of the armed forces. After the Second World War we still had barracks in the cities, but with the reorganizations they have largely been sold. That has caused a disconnect between society and the armed forces. We have pulled back at the Hoge Veluwe, behind the trees. You must create and cherish proximity; it helps in creating support and understanding. You need blending with the civil sector.'* (Respondent 36, military)

Other respondents think the opposite is true. One respondent is of the opinion that the suspension of conscription has not caused a disconnect between the military and society, but on the other hand has normalized the armed forces as part of society: *'Well, I think perhaps the military has become more of a part of normal society. I don't know if that is related to the suspension of conscription. Conscription was defining the image of the armed forces.'* (Respondent 24, military)

This section has shown that although a changing (and larger) domestic role of the armed forces in the Netherlands is announced in government documents, and is visible in practice as well, change is slow. Reasons for this can be found in persisting metaphors and frames, mixed attitudes on both sides and the growing distance between the armed forces and society.

One exception is the Marechaussee. As mentioned before, the Marechaussee is a gendarmerie-type organization, a police organization with military status that is part of the Ministry of Defense but performs most of its tasks for civilian authorities such as the Ministry of Justice and Security. In terms of civil-military relations, the very existence of the Marechaussee is a form of immersion. As in other countries with a gendarmerie-type force, the blurring of internal and external security has led to a growth of the Marechaussee, even in times where the other parts of the armed forces have suffered large cutbacks.

Table 5.1: Marechaussee personnel

	2010	2015	2021
Military	5.490	5.649	6.606
Civilian	565	494	954
Total	6.055	6.143	7.560

As can be seen in table 5.1, the organization has grown particularly fast between 2015 and 2021 (Kamerstukken II 2010/11; 32500 X; nr. 4, 2010; Kamerstukken II 2015/16; 34300 X; nr. 17, 2016; Kamerstukken II 2021/22; 35925 X; nr. 4, 2021). This growth mainly concerns the area of high-risk security and surveillance due to the rising terrorist threat in this period. The Marechaussee supports the police, based on article 57 Police Law 2012. As this support was given a semi-permanent character, the Marechaussee set up a new unit for high-risk security mainly focusing on object security. With the rising threat of organized crime, including the murder of both a lawyer and a journalist (Peter R. de Vries), the Marechaussee additionally developed extra capabilities for personal security. Up to recently, these tasks were still carried out in support of the police. However, with a recent change in the Police Law, high-risk security has become a legal task for the Marechaussee. This means the Marechaussee can be tasked directly with high-risk security activities (Marechaussee, 2022). Recently, the Marechaussee has also received extra personnel for the fight against organized crime.

Most respondents are positive about using the Marechaussee for high-risk security and surveillance. In the words of one respondent from the local level, *'I'm positive about the current division of work, because in well-argued and exceptional cases you can use the Marechaussee and leave the heavy weaponry with military personnel. I do find that in-between form better, because if you say that it must be police, then I'm afraid there will soon be a request to give the police automatic weapons and if you start doing that, it's a slippery slope. Before you know it, you will have American-type police and then you have two armed organizations in your city.'* (Respondent 10, civilian, local government) Another respondent confirms, *'Yes, the beautiful thing is that we have military personnel dressed in blue. They are robust and have more charisma than the police, but it doesn't feel like it's*

the military. I find that a perfect in-between type of organization, that is very effective and needed.' (Respondent 27, military)

Gendarmerie-type forces have the advantage of providing an extra step on the escalation ladder while still being under civilian control: *'That's the strength of gendarmeries, you must be able to operate with force, but under civilian control. If you don't have it, you must choose between too weak civilian police performance that is overrun quickly or the armed forces. But if you don't embed it well, you are in big trouble. They will demand an operational autonomy that you can't keep under control well.'* (Respondent 47, academic)

However, growth of the Marechaussee is generally not seen as growth of the armed forces: *'If you look at the toolbox of instruments the government has at its disposal, it won't classify our performance as using the armed forces.'* (Respondent 2, military)

As was evident in the literature discussed in chapter 2 as well, not everyone is convinced of the usefulness of the Marechaussee. Some believe that institutional interests led to a growing role: *'Look, the role of the Marechaussee. Those tasks must be done by someone; that they are done by the Marechaussee is because of opportunistic arguments used at the time. Everyone is happy now, but if you would design it again, border control could have gone to Customs just as well.'* (Respondent 28, military) And another military respondent: *'The Marechaussee played that game well, they are the only part of the armed forces that has grown. If you are situated in a border area, you can always profit either on the left bank or on the right bank.'* (Respondent 36, military)

In the words of another respondent, responsiveness of the Marechaussee may have played a role in awarding the organization with extra tasks: *'For me, it has only partly to do with the threat and how it is appreciated. For example, with the high-risk security units, that is seen as a threat for which you need something that can both bark and bite. But to be honest, I think it has mainly to do with the responsiveness of the Marechaussee, both in governance and organization, that we can create a solution in a fast way. So, I don't think there is a fundamental debate underneath. They find it an okay solution, but the persuasive power to choose that solution is based on how fast we can effectuate it.'* (Respondent 12, military)

Having investigated how the domestic role of the armed forces in the Netherlands has changed in both theory and practice in the past 20 years, the next section will explore possibilities for a future role.

5.5 POLICY OPTIONS FOR A CHANGING DOMESTIC ROLE

This section will explore policy options for a changing domestic role of the armed forces as well as define criteria for this role. Respondents acknowledge the changing threat environment and mention many possibilities for the armed forces to contribute to dealing with these threats. During the interviews, some of these policy options were brought up by the respondents themselves. In other cases, the respondents were asked for their thoughts on certain policy options. For each policy option, both descriptive elements (what domain and what task does the policy option entail) and normative elements (why, or why not the armed forces should have a role, and under what conditions) have been discussed. The interviews resulted in 8 specific policy options for the domestic role of the armed forces in the future that will be summarized below. In the appendix to this chapter, the policy options are summarized in table 5.2.

Conscription

Regarding conscription, some respondents see a possible role for the armed forces in the event that social conscription would be implemented in the Netherlands. Young people could be allowed to choose between, for example, the armed forces, police, care homes, etc. A different option would be to organize special programs for young people that could benefit from the structure and discipline offered by the armed forces and/or learn a profession and gain work experience there. *'I believe the armed forces have an enormous asset to give people pride, a future, ..., a sense of community and discipline.'* (Respondent 6, civilian, local government) In fact, on a small basis these programs already exist. The 'School for the Nation' argument is mentioned by some respondents, who claim the armed forces can help integrate young people in society and foster social cohesion.

Others are of the opinion that this purpose is too far-fetched from the core business of the armed forces. In any case, the 'School for the Nation' argument would only work in case of large numbers. *'The armed forces as big equalizer, I don't believe in that. It's a feudal rank-based organization where order, authority, and hierarchy play an important role. That's the armed forces for me.'* (Respondent 10, civilian, local government)

Public order management

In the area of public order management, the most far-reaching option would be the use of military personnel on the streets, for example in case of large-scale public unrest and when the police are overburdened. A large majority of respondents does not see this as a preferred option. It might lead to escalation and would be intimidating for the population. Others emphasize that the monopoly on violence in peace time should rest with the police.

A less invasive option would be the use of military materiel, for example heavy materiel to block an area or the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) for surveillance of an area. *'What we can do is support crowd management with observation, with UAV's. Also, the use of counter drone capabilities like on King's Day.'* (Respondent 30, military) A good example of the use of military materiel were the farmer's protests in the Netherlands in 2021: *'An interesting case is the closure of the city center of Den Haag at the farmer's protests. At the beginning, a private company had been hired to do that with trucks... So, they were there from 5 AM and at 5.30 the owner had already received 6 not so friendly phone calls stating what the protesters intended to do with his trucks. So, he left at 9 AM and then they asked us to come. ... Next time we were there blocking the area with green trucks.'* (Respondent 35, military)

An even less invasive option would be to give the armed forces an advisory role in logistics, such as the most logical route to organize a certain protest in a city. *'I do believe that in demonstrations you shouldn't immediately arrive with tanks. You could think of another role, a critical review of the logistical preparations of the police, for example, or the design of the city, if that is the most optimal, or choice of location.'* (Respondent 5, civilian, local government)

The respondents name quite a few preconditions for this policy option. In the opinion of most, no violence should be used against the population. The military should only be used for public order management in exceptional cases (last resort) and under civilian command, and military personnel should preferably be wearing a police uniform and working in teams of military and police.

Fight against organized crime

With respect to the fight against organized crime, respondents emphasize the use of specific expertise, such as search teams or arrest teams: *'In the south, you can see that in the search for drugs labs, the armed forces in Afghanistan gained a lot of expertise in search. It was aimed at explosives there, but you can use that expertise to search for drugs labs and that's what they are used for.'* (Respondent 8, civilian, local government)

As the fight against organized crime is a national task, local authorities—who ordinarily would be hesitant to have military personnel on their streets—are more receptive to the use of the armed forces. Other relevant aspects are the fact that organized crime tends to use a high level of violence, and the expertise of the armed forces is complementary to that of the police. The military could profit as well since the use of search capabilities in support of the police is real life training for them. A minority of respondents was more skeptical, stating that criminal investigations are a police task. In their opinion, if the

armed forces have specific expertise that is needed, then the police should develop this expertise themselves.

As for preconditions, respondents stated that the use of the armed forces should always be in support of the police and that no integration of police and military capabilities should take place.

Cyber domain

The cyber domain is seen as a promising and relatively uncontroversial area for the domestic role of the armed forces. Many respondents suggest combining capabilities of the military and civilian organizations. They state that the cyber domain is borderless, so the fight against cyber threats should be borderless as well. In addition, it's quite difficult to distinguish between cybercrime and cyberwar. In the words of one respondent, *'Why would the armed forces protect the harbor of Rotterdam in case of a physical attack and not in case of a cyber-attack?'* (Respondent 3, civilian, executive organization). Finally, personnel for this line of work are scarce and hard to find.

Respondents do point out that there may be legal obstacles, for example in sharing information that must be dealt with.

Crisis management

Crisis management seems to be the least controversial domain when talking about a domestic role for the armed forces. It is in fact a domain in which the armed forces have traditionally been active already. Some respondents suggest giving the armed forces a larger role in planning, although others say the civilian domain has developed these capabilities as well. Some suggest looking at structural tasks for the armed forces in this domain instead of the armed forces only being called in to fill certain gaps.

As a precondition, respondents suggest that the support should be long-term when needed as the armed forces tend to leave too soon. In the words of one respondent from the civilian domain, *'The armed forces can supply a lot of people on short notice. The question then always is for how long. You see that with the COVID test locations now. They say in four weeks you must take over from us. Well, where am I supposed to find the people for that? You build an XL test location with 300 soldiers and in four weeks you leave again!'* (Respondent 23, civilian, executive organization)

Security and surveillance

In security and surveillance, we can distinguish between object security and personal security. This policy option has both a quantitative and a qualitative aspect. On the

quantitative side, unfortunately the number of people that must be protected is rising and the police has difficulty coping. On the qualitative side, the level of violence is rising and some plead for a layered use of police, Marechaussee and the rest of the armed forces, depending on the level of violence. Respondents from the civilian side are quite positive about this as it could prevent a militarization of the police. In the words of one respondent, *'I don't think the police should be able to cover the whole spectrum of violence. The police should focus on crimefighting and law enforcement. Security and surveillance and arrests in a higher spectrum of force can be done by others. Of course, these are police tasks, but they are very specific police tasks. We have a different group of people in the Netherlands for that, so we should use them.'* (Respondent 21, civilian, executive organization)

Some respondents are more critical, stating that the monopoly on violence in peace time should rest with the police and that security and surveillance is a police task: *'In peacetime, the monopoly on violence should rest with the police. That is a matter of principle. ... But I don't object against investigating how the armed forces can support the police and cooperate. ... I believe we can intensify our cooperation; we are no enemies of each other.'* (Respondent 19, civilian, executive organization)

As for preconditions, some respondents prefer the use of armed forces personnel for object security rather than for personal security. In case of using them for personal security, some prefer that the armed forces wear a police uniform.

As we have seen in chapter 4, there are recent developments in this domain. In 2022, the Dutch armed forces and the police teamed up to guard an Amsterdam court building in a high-profile crime trial (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022a).

Intelligence

In the area of intelligence, the first topic that comes up with respondents is air surveillance capabilities that can be used for surveillance and search. An example is the Joint Strike Fighter, or UAVs such as the Reaper. Many respondents suggest that pooling such expensive and scarce resources and using them for multiple purposes is efficient. In the words of a military respondent working for a civilian organization, *'You should look for a win-win situation. Take for example UAVs - we will buy those Reapers. They are meant to observe the enemy in Afghanistan, well, as Director of the Coast Guard I can use those as well!'* (Respondent 38, military)

Respondents working in the domain of intelligence also talk about the difference between military and police intelligence procedures and mindset. The police tend to look inside-out (from a crime scene), while the military tends to look outside in. This can be

complementary. However, there are legal obstacles that prevent combining intelligence capabilities that would have to be overcome first.

In general, this domain seems to be less controversial than for example public order management, as it is a less visible role. On the other hand, when during the COVID-19 pandemic the Army created an experimental intelligence unit to monitor developments in the population, this led to a significant incident and the unit was shut down.

Expert support

A final domain mentioned by respondents concerns expert support in all kinds of areas, for example explosive detection, CBRN, divers and logistics. Arguments used mainly concern efficiency and these tasks are not controversial.

As one respondent from the police says, 'Yes, I think you should use each other's expertise. It would be nonsense for me to train diver teams if I can also just make a call to the armed forces. It's nonsense that we would have to train all these specialists ourselves. I have long discussions with my labor unions about explosives and then I say, just go talk to the armed forces. Why would I train them myself? That's another 10 cops, that really doesn't make sense.' (Respondent 19, civilian, executive organization)

Conclusion

As is clear from the above, respondents see many possibilities for a future domestic role of the armed forces, particularly in national tasks (under national authority), in large-scale operations, in a higher spectrum of force and for tasks in the grey zone between war and peace (cyber operations stand out in this respect). Proponents of a larger domestic role list arguments of capacity (police can be overburdened, certain capacities are scarce, for example in cyber), efficiency (pooling of resources), unique expertise of the armed forces (for example search, logistics, air surveillance). They also emphasize that in using the armed forces for tasks in a higher spectrum of force, the militarization of the police can be prevented. Layering (with the police as first layer, Marechaussee as second and armed forces as third) can help in this respect.

On the more critical side, respondents emphasize that the monopoly on violence in peace time should rest with the police, the armed forces should preferably not be used for police tasks and certainly not against their own population. When used in a domestic context, the armed forces should always be under civilian command, should team up with civilian personnel and should not wear military uniforms.

Almost all respondents are reluctant to use armed forces personnel in public order management in a visible way, especially when there is a risk of force against the population. This does not mean the armed forces cannot be used in public order management at all. The use of materiel (air surveillance, heavy materiel to block areas) is a lot less controversial, as well as the use of personnel in an advisory role (such as logistics).

The strengths of both the police and the armed forces could be combined in a complementary way, based on a comprehensive approach. However, the respondents feel that combining the two groups into a single security organization is a step too far.

After this exploration of policy options for the future domestic role of the armed forces, the next section will explore the impact on civil-military relations.

5.6 IMPACT ON CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

As shown in this chapter, in terms of civil-military relations, the Netherlands prefer the model of separation, in which the military and civil domain are separated and there is civilian control over the military. At the same time, signs of immersion are visible. These signs and the trends will be described in this section, focusing on four domains: society, public administration and strategy, law, and performance.

Immersion in society

As has been shown, respondents talk about a growing disconnect between the armed forces and society in the Netherlands, which has exacerbated after the suspension of conscription. The armed forces have vanished from view and, consequently, also from the minds of many people. According to one respondent, the armed forces have become a concealed reality, while they should be a self-evident certainty: *'In this world we live in, with growing uncertainty for people, the armed forces and gendarmeries are an implicit certainty. A form of stability and continuity and certainty which you don't speak about because it's always there. Until it's gone. Then a crisis is just around the corner. In a democratic society, the armed forces can be a self-evident certainty.'* (Respondent 47, academic)

There are many ways to increase the visibility of the armed forces in society, some small (for example, wearing a uniform while travelling to work, which was forbidden in the Netherlands for a few years after the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels, or opening barracks to the public), some bigger (for example, social conscription, where the armed forces could be one of the organizations where young people can serve). In the words of one respondent, *'The suspension of conscription, which I find to be one of the bigger decisions*

that have led to a growing disconnect between the armed forces and society, is a decision you cannot easily undo, but that deserves reflection to see if reinstatement would make the social contract between the armed forces and society stronger...a form of social conscription, like they have in Germany. It will result in a more natural link with the organizations that matter in society and it would also show that defending values is something all of us have a responsibility in, not just the armed forces.’ (Respondent 15, civilian, national government)

Immersion in public administration and government strategy

This form of immersion refers to respondents stating that the armed forces are too absent in public administration, are seen as an inward-looking bastion, switch jobs too fast, and are seen as too reactive. Ways to deal with this would be to exchange personnel with civilian organizations in the security domain, to professionalize in building relationships with civilian partners and to be more proactive in offering a contribution to civilian authorities.

Some respondents propose that the armed forces increase their ‘professional visibility’, meaning that they participate in public debate. This could lead to a better understanding and appreciation of the armed forces with civilian authorities and the population and consequently also increase public support. *‘In my opinion, you must be more present as the armed forces. We don’t talk about our profession and the way we look at the world. We believe that everyone must understand there is a threat and what constitutes that threat. One role of the armed forces is just to be there, not on the streets I mean, but to speak out, and this means more than marketing. ... In my opinion, our place at the table is too small to be able to contribute. (Respondent 2, military)*

As for government strategy, the Netherlands up until very recently has not had a comprehensive security strategy, including both national and international security, as was recommended by a government think tank in 2017 (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid, 2017). The last government, however, established a National Security Council, which has produced such a comprehensive security strategy, based on the Government-wide Risk Analysis discussed in section 5.3 (Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid, 2023).

Immersion in performance

This form of immersion has to do with tasks performed by the armed forces in support of civil authorities. As shown in this chapter, although developments are slow, there are examples of the armed forces supporting the civil authorities. As shown in section 5.5, there are many options for a larger domestic role of the armed forces, also in tasks that have traditionally been seen as police tasks, such as criminal investigations. With their specialist capabilities, the armed forces could support the civil authorities in various

domains, especially in national tasks, large-scale operations, in the higher spectrum of violence and in the grey zone between police and military tasks. The armed forces and the police could train together, exchange personnel and cooperate in teams.

In fact, the only area where a domestic role is considered controversial is public order management, especially in the visible role of personnel on the streets. In addition to the substantive arguments against such a role, having 'green in the streets' has some influence as well.

A model that could describe the future domestic role of the armed forces is that of a comprehensive approach, as it is known from stabilization operations in post-conflict areas: *'The opponent doesn't know borders between countries, but also not between organizations. They do what they find important, and our answer shouldn't be stove piped. We must use a comprehensive approach.'* (Respondent 26, military) Others speak about a whole of government approach or about ecosystems. In the words of one respondent, *'Security is not purely military. By looking at security challenges in a modern way you come to new solutions. ... Aren't there any new forms of organizing other than the stovepipes of government ministries and how do you get people ready to embrace new constructs if the security challenges require it? You shouldn't be afraid not to be autonomous anymore.'* (Respondent 16, military, national government)

Immersion in law

In the current situation, the use of the armed forces in a domestic context is based on art. 97 of the Constitution, as explained in section 5.3. Some respondents have stated this is a rather vague description and have suggested amendments: *'...I think it would be good to review art. 97 of the Constitution, because the domestic use of the armed forces is based on a rather vague sentence in that article, the defense and protection of the interests of the Kingdom. We use a quite broad interpretation of that sentence, and it seems wise to have a State Committee check if the armed forces haven't been given too many powers in relation to that article. ... Why doesn't that article for example include that domestic use of the armed forces always takes place under civilian control?'* (Respondent 44, academic)

5.7 ANALYSIS

All three security challenges that have been linked to the undermining of liberal democracy (see chapter 4) can be found in the country-specific literature. The respondents mainly focus on the first and second security challenge, not so much on the third challenge (undermining of liberal democracy by the state). This could be caused by the fact

that almost all respondents work within the security domain and it could be challenging to recognize your own shortcomings. Furthermore, being part of the state apparatus, respondents may not see the specific measures taken by the state as undermining liberal democracy. However, when asked about policy options, respondents did seem to be able to reflect upon and acknowledge the risk of state undermining.

Regarding the degree of hybridization, in the Dutch case there are examples of constabularization and militarization. The armed forces have been increasingly involved in domestic operations in support of the police, for example in the search for drug laboratories or in arrest teams (the Special Interventions Service). However, the main example of hybridization in the Netherlands is the existence and relatively fast growth (even when the rest of the armed forces were shrinking) of the Marechaussee, which has followed from the increased blurring of internal and external security. As shown in this chapter, respondents see the Marechaussee as an effective in-between option between the police and the rest of the armed forces.

Looking at policy options for the future, respondents see possibilities for a domestic role of the armed forces in national tasks (under national authority, such as security and surveillance), large-scale operations, a higher spectrum of force (also with the purpose of preventing police militarization) and the grey zone between war and peace. They use arguments of capacity, efficiency or the unique expertise of the armed forces. There is a clear link between these options and arguments and the rise of new security threats (for example, the increasing organized crime threat leading to an increased use of the armed forces for search activities and security and surveillance).

At the same time, the respondents are aware of the risk of state undermining, pointing at the need not to use the armed forces against the population and making sure they always operate under civilian command and collaborate with civilian personnel. As for the second security challenge, declining social cohesion, Dutch respondents are reluctant to use the armed forces in public order management, especially in a visible way. There is some support for the 'School for the Nation' argument for conscription, but not on a large scale.

Regarding the separation versus immersion dichotomy, this chapter makes it evident that the Netherlands is not entirely in a separation paradigm. This is most clear when looking at the task dimension. As shown above, the Dutch armed forces (and even more so the Marechaussee) have been increasingly involved in domestic tasks. The legal possibilities to have the armed forces support civilian authorities – following a request by civilian authorities – are quite extensive as well. And even in public administration and

government strategy, the position of the armed forces has been slowly growing. For the first time, the Netherlands have a security strategy covering both internal and external security, and a National Security Council has been created.

This chapter has furthermore shown how cultural factors seem to have played a role in the Dutch focus on separation. Pacifist sentiments, reluctance to see 'green on the streets', and fear of the military mindset have been important factors. However, since the end of the Cold War, this has slowly changed.

On the side of the government, the diminishing external threat has led to budget cuts in the armed forces and the decision to suspend conscription, as explained in section 5.2 (what Levy would classify as an effort to rebalance the republican exchange) (Levy, 2012). With the rise of new security threats following from the blurring of internal and external security, the government has subsequently expanded the domestic tasks of the armed forces and has increasingly relied on the Marechaussee to support the police in dealing with these threats, as illustrated in section 5.4. For the armed forces, the new tasks were welcomed in a time when external threats were diminishing, conscription was suspended, and budget cuts were looming. On the other hand, as has been confirmed by the respondents, the armed forces have been reluctant to take on more domestic tasks, as this could impact their preparedness for the first core task (defense of allied territory). As for the Dutch population, although there is a disconnect between the military and the population, especially since the suspension of conscription, there are no indications in the literature that a growing domestic role is not supported, except for public order management. And in recent years, there has been more support for a domestic role of the armed forces than for the other two tasks (Konings & Van Der Grient, 2022; Muller, 2017; Muller, Bosch, et al., 2017; Van der Meulen, 2015, 2017). During the COVID-19 pandemic, when the armed forces provided extensive support to the civilian authorities, public support peaked at 7.7 (Siebelhoff & Fastenau, 2022). Therefore, looking at the Dutch data, I conclude that there is evidence for alignment between the political elite, military and population on the development towards immersion.

If there is alignment (or concordance as Schiff would call it) (Schiff, 1995) on the move from a separation paradigm towards an immersion paradigm, this should have consequences regarding civilian control as well. A move from objective control towards subjective control is to be expected. Looking at the Dutch data, the position of the armed forces in public administration and government strategy has slowly become stronger, culminating in the creation of a National Security Council and the first security strategy covering both internal and external threats in recent years. According to Bruneau, Matei and Sakoda, a National Security Council is an appropriate institute for civil-military

relations in liberal democracies, as it can both improve civilian control and the effective implementation of roles and missions (Bruneau et al., 2009). The Dutch data show evidence for what Travis calls 'pragmatic civilian control' or what Schiff calls 'targeted partnership', meaning that relationships between civil and military actors are adaptive, and that the military interacts with politicians in policymaking (Schiff, 2012; Travis, 2017). However, the Dutch situation does not reflect Bland's theory of shared responsibility in which responsibility for control is shared between civilian leaders and military officers, at least not yet (Bland, 2001).

APPENDIX: TABLE 5.2: POLICY OPTIONS FOR A CHANGING DOMESTIC ROLE OF THE ARMED FORCES

Domain	What	Why	Why not	Preconditions
Civic education	• Social conscription • Special programs for difficult youth	• 'School of the Nation' • Disciplinary role	• Far-fetched from core business	• 'School of the Nation' only in case of large numbers
Public order management	• Use of military personnel on the streets • Use of military materiel, for example heavy materiel to block an area or UAV's for surveillance of an area • Advisory role in logistics	• Armed forces can provide extra capacity when police are overburdened	• Might lead to escalation • Intimidating for the population • Monopoly on violence in peace time should rest with the police	• No use of violence against the population • Only in exceptional cases (last resort) and under civilian command • Only in an invisible role (materiel / wearing police uniform) / in teams of military/police / unarmed
Organized crime	• Use of specific expertise (e.g. search teams) • Arrest teams	• National task, which makes the use of the armed forces more acceptable for local authorities • International aspects (grey zone) • High level of violence • Expertise armed forces is complementary to police • Benefit for the armed forces: real life training	• Criminal investigations are a police task. If the armed forces have specific expertise that is needed, then the police should develop this themselves	• Only in support to the police • No integration of police and military capabilities. Keep it separated
Cyber domain	• Combine armed forces and civilian capabilities (pooling of resources and capabilities)	• Cyber domain is borderless so the fight against cyber threats should be borderless too • Difficult to distinguish between cybercrime and cyberwar • Cyber personnel are scarce	• Legal obstacles, for example in sharing information	• Legal aspects must be dealt with

Domain	What	Why	Why not	Preconditions
Crisis management	• Structural tasks instead of incidental gap filling • Planning capabilities • Large scale evacuation scenarios must be investigated	• Uncontroversial, appreciated role		• Support should be long-term when needed, armed forces tend to leave too soon
Security and surveillance	• Object security • Personal security	• Quantitative: numbers of people that must be protected are rising • Qualitative: layered use of police / Marechaussee / armed forces depending on level of violence • Supported by local authorities • Militarization of the police can be prevented	• Monopoly on violence in peace time should rest with the police • Security and surveillance are a police task	• Preference for object security over personal security • In case of personal security, some prefer that armed forces wear a police uniform
Intelligence	• Air surveillance capabilities for surveillance and search (JSF, UAV's) • Military personnel	• Efficiency, pooling of resources (e.g. UAV's) • Military intel procedures are complementary to police (outside-in instead of inside-out from a crime scene)	• Legal obstacles • Less controversial than for example public order management, as it is not visible	• Legal aspects must be dealt with
Expert support	• Explosive detection, CBRN, divers, logistics	• Efficiency, pooling of resources		