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

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9

CONCLUSION

9.1 RESEARCH RESULTS AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The main research question for this dissertation was: how can the armed forces in Northwestern Europe strengthen liberal democracy and what are the consequences for civil-military relations in theory and practice? In this section I will answer this question and the underlying sub-questions and in doing so identify the theoretical contributions this research has made.

1. To what extent is liberal democracy in Northwestern Europe under pressure and what are the security and stability related challenges undermining liberal democracy in Northwestern Europe?

Democracy studies is a broad research field. As explained in chapter 2, this dissertation does not cover the whole scientific debate on the topic of liberal democracy. Instead, it has addressed the link between the stability of liberal democracy and the role of the armed forces in case of democratic backsliding. Earlier research addressing the connection between liberal democracy and the armed forces has focused on the role of the armed forces in new democracies, mainly with the aim of limiting its role and preventing future coups (Bruneau & Matei, 2008).

This research illustrates that liberal democracy in Northwestern Europe is indeed under pressure, even though this is still a very stable part of the world. It identified three security and stability-related challenges that are undermining liberal democracy. First, the blurring of internal and external security and the rise of new security threats (vertical undermining). Secondly, declining social cohesion, social unrest, and the creation of parallel societies (horizontal undermining), and lastly the undermining of liberal democracy by the state. (Elements of) these challenges can be found in all three case studies of this research.

These results have provided new insights into the link between democracy and security in times of democratic backsliding. The research shows that these challenges do not only undermine the stability of liberal democracy in the researched cases but have also impacted the role of the armed forces (see sub-question 2 below).

2. What is the current position of the armed forces in Northwestern Europe on the CMR dilemma, to what extent has this position changed in recent years and how can these changes be explained?

The security and stability related challenges mentioned above could lead to or ask for a different role of the armed forces in a domestic context and in fact recent years have seen a hybridization of the armed forces and the police taking place in western liberal democracies, although the extent of this hybridization differs. A hybridization of the armed forces and the police implies that a strict separation model is not an option. However, civil-military relations theory is still heavily influenced by two classical works written in the 1950s and 1960s respectively (Huntington and Janowitz). In this field of study, the preferred model for a liberal democracy is a Huntingtonian model of separation between the civil and military domains. This research explored whether this model is applied in practice, by studying recent developments in the domestic role of the armed forces in the Netherlands, Sweden, and Finland, comparing them, and looking for explanations for the differences found.

The research furthermore shows the most constabularization is taking place in the Netherlands, with the armed forces increasingly supporting the police in several tasks, while Sweden is the most reluctant to use the armed forces for these purposes. Not surprisingly, Swedish respondents point at a certain militarization of the police, as a more robust response has been employed to deal with the growing organized crime problem and gang violence. Both the Netherlands and Finland have experience with a hybrid force. In terms of civil-military relations, none of the countries researched is in the Huntingtonian paradigm and, in fact, Finland seems to fit the Janowitzian model in all dimensions investigated (public administration and strategy, society, law) except for the task dimension, in which the civil and military domain remain largely separated. Sweden and the Netherlands are moving in that direction as well.

These findings indicate that the separation versus immersion dilemma in civil-military relations theory does not seem to be a dilemma in practice, as separation and immersion elements mix in all three cases and the trend is clearly in the direction of immersion. The research has shown how separation and immersion may exist at the same time in a liberal democracy. Its results thus provide evidence for Schiff's concordance theory and especially her argument that one should take cultural and historical factors into account when looking at the relation between the military and the civil domain and that the military, the political elite and the population should aim for a cooperative relationship that may involve separation but does not require it.

As the research shows, the trend towards immersion is related to the three security and stability related challenges that liberal democracies have been encountering, which have led to hybridization. The research confirms the three *common traits* identified by Schnabel and Krupanski (Schnabel & Krupanski, 2018) in the (changing) domestic role of

the armed forces: the armed forces are never the primary internal security provider, the role of the armed forces in disasters is undisputed and finally, the threat of terrorism has impacted the role of the armed forces in recent years.

Besides explaining the move from separation to immersion, the research also aimed to explain the variation in hybridization and immersion between the three countries, building on the work that has been done by authors like Schnabel and Krupanski (2018). From the data four main relevant factors can be identified, namely the differences in historical context between the three case studies, the governance model and legal framework, the changing threat environment, and the existence or absence of alignment between the political elite, military and population on change or continuity.

The first two factors can be found in the work of Schnabel and Krupanski (2018) as well. The research adds two relevant factors to their analysis, namely the changing threat environment and, using Schiff's concordance theory, alignment between the political elite, military and population (Schiff, 1995). While Schiff focuses on coup prevention, arguing that alignment between the military, the political elite and the population prevents coups, this research indicates that her theory can be used to explain (changes or continuity in) the domestic role of the armed forces as well.

3. What policy options can be developed for the future role of the armed forces in a domestic context in Northwestern Europe and how will this change the domestic role of the armed forces?

In recent years, the use of the armed forces for police tasks in the Netherlands has grown, and this trend is set to continue, with perhaps the only controversial task remaining the use of force against civilians, particularly in public order management. Based on the data, no such development can be expected for Sweden and Finland anytime soon, with possibly the exception of the fight against organized crime and gang violence in Sweden. All three countries struggle with the cyber domain and intelligence, recognizing that better cooperation between military and civil authorities is essential, but also complicated within existing legal frameworks. The armed forces in Finland have traditionally played a large role in civic education and conscription and Sweden is moving in that direction as well. In the Netherlands, developments are very slow in this respect. Finally, looking at hybrid forces, some discussion has taken place in Sweden and Finland, but no concrete decisions have been taken.

The data furthermore seem to indicate that the trend towards hybridization will most likely continue in the coming years. While the use of the armed forces for police tasks

remains controversial in Sweden and Finland, the expectation is that hybridization in the cyber domain and in intelligence will grow in all three countries. The use of the armed forces in these areas is less visible and thus less controversial on a political level. With a growing awareness of threats in the grey zone between war and peace, and cyber-attacks taking place daily and on a large scale in all three countries (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst et al., 2022; Analistennetwerk Nationale Veiligheid, 2022; Ministry of the Interior, 2023; Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, 2021; Säkerhetspolisen, 2023), the expectation is for the trend for closer cooperation between military and civilian organizations, and even the private sector, to persist. To recall the argument of one of the respondents, in section 5.5, *'Why would the armed forces protect the harbor of Rotterdam in case of a physical attack, and not in case of a cyber-attack?'* And in intelligence, civilian and armed forces capabilities clearly complement each other, but the legal framework to collect and share information is lacking. While a growing body of academic literature addresses the issue of grey zone threats, this research indicates the need for further research into the implications for security organizations to establish options and boundaries and it adds to the academic debate on the blurring of military and police roles.

In the answer to sub-question 5, I will elaborate on the impact of various policy options on the stability of liberal democracy.

4. What would the consequences be of a changing domestic role for civil-military relations in Northwestern Europe?

Civil-military relations literature focuses primarily on civilian control over the armed forces. A relevant question is whether this strong focus on civilian control in established liberal democracies is necessary and whether it may negatively impact the effectiveness of these democracies in dealing with new challenges. This research suggests that this is indeed the case. It shows how separation and immersion may exist at the same time in a liberal democracy and what that means for civil-military relations, including the workings of civilian control (or: civilian direction) of the military.

Building on the work of Bruneau (Bruneau, 2018) on military effectiveness, this research has explored how and with what tasks the military can be effective, while still being under civilian control. As 'new' security challenges, following from the blurring of internal and external security, put pressure on the stability of liberal democracy in all three cases, a strict separation between primarily the armed forces and the police makes it more difficult to act on these challenges. In addition, legal and cultural constraints following from the principle of civilian control may limit effective performance by western liberal

democratic governments. Consequently, the research has explored policy options for a different role of the armed forces in the future. Making the boundaries between the police and the military more permeable could possibly facilitate a more effective performance. Depending on the specific context of a country, the exact form or shape of this permeability could differ, varying in a case-by-case basis, via joint units, to hybrid organizations such as the Finnish Border Guard or the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee.

As for civilian control, this research follows the line of thinking of authors like Brooks, Travis and Bland (Bland, 1999; Brooks, 2019; Travis, 2017). Brooks has criticized the heavy emphasis on the exceptional nature of the armed forces, related to the risk of a coup (Brooks, 2019). She proposes normalizing the role of the military in politics by considering the military a bureaucratic actor like other government actors. The Dutch and Finnish case study are prime examples of two opposite sides of one coin in this respect. While the Dutch armed forces have been largely invisible in government strategy and public administration, the Finnish Defence Forces have been a strong bureaucratic actor, influencing government policies, the country's elite (through the National Defense Courses), and the men through conscription. From a perspective of civilian control, the risk of the armed forces becoming a too dominating bureaucratic actor than is fitting in a liberal democracy seems to be bigger than the risk of the armed forces committing a coup. All three cases have moved towards what Travis (Travis, 2017) calls 'pragmatic civilian control' (the Netherlands and Sweden) or perhaps even what Bland (Bland, 1999) calls 'shared responsibility' (Finland). Based on this dissertation's findings, pragmatic civilian control could be a useful mode to employ in the area of grey zone threats.

Combining the two perspectives, the main contribution to the theoretical field of civil-military relations of this research lies in providing reflections on how to increase the effectiveness of the armed forces in a domestic context (which is called for due to the challenges for liberal democracy), while remaining under civilian control (or direction). It indicates that the classical literature on separation and immersion and the focus on civilian control of the military is too limited for established liberal democracies, particularly in an era where they are confronted with democratic backsliding and a changing threat environment (particularly the rise of grey-zone threats) at the same time.

This calls for new models, for which the Finnish model for comprehensive security seems to be a good example, provided the balance in this model does not tilt towards one of the actors (of which there are indications in Finland). It also calls for new forms of cooperation between security organizations, such as joint units or hybrid forces. Finally, in the task dimension, this calls for a differentiation, with a role for the armed forces in

the cyber domain or the fight against organized crime being more appropriate than a role in public order management.

This would mean the end of a strict separation between civil and military domains and a move towards immersion. In this respect, the research has shown that, when it comes to immersion, the focus on tasks can obscure the other dimensions that can be distinguished. This dissertation has explored three other dimensions, namely the law, society and public administration and strategy. Looking at these dimensions as well, it becomes clear that in Finland, where there is quite a strong separation between the military and civil domain in tasks, the armed forces are immersed in society, public administration, and the law. It is important to consider Brooks' argument to view the armed forces as a regular bureaucratic actor to become alert to possible undue influence of the military. This undue influence may become visible in other dimensions than just the task dimension. While most respondents consider Finland to be in the Huntingtonian paradigm, this research shows that the country is closer to Janowitz' model, and Sweden and the Netherlands are moving in the same direction. In fact, the research has shown that immersion in one dimension can lead to more immersion in another dimension.

5. To what extent could a changing domestic role of the armed forces and a new balance in civil-military relations either contribute to the stability of liberal democracy in Northwestern Europe, or alternatively, detract from its stability? What are the opportunities and caveats for a new balance?

This dissertation departed from the hypothesis that the undermining of liberal democracy by three security and stability related challenges has contributed to a hybridization of the armed forces and the police and subsequently to an immersion of civil and military domains. A further hypothesis was that an increasing hybridization and immersion of the military and civil domain could have both positive and negative effects on the stability of liberal democracy.

This research has indeed identified both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, the armed forces can have a stabilizing effect simply by being there, which signifies the necessity for countering the disconnect between the armed forces and society that has formed in the Netherlands and to a less extent Sweden. This confirms Brooks' argument to view the armed forces as a regular bureaucratic actor, instead of an exceptional organization that may commit a coup. The armed forces are primarily an asset, not a threat, in a stable liberal democracy. Secondly, a form of conscription can foster social cohesion, which could counter the horizontal undermining of liberal democracy. As shown in chapter 2, the academic literature points at a positive effect of conscription

on social cohesion. The Finnish respondents share this perspective for the Finnish situation. As the research shows that declining social cohesion is an important challenge for liberal democracy, the potential role the armed forces could play is relevant to consider. Thirdly, new security challenges with a hybrid character ask for a different role for the armed forces and hybrid forces such as gendarmeries can be helpful in dealing with these challenges as well. This is an important contribution this dissertation makes to the academic literature on gendarmeries, which is relatively limited (for exceptions, see: (Bigo, 2006; Gobinet, 2008; Lutterbeck, 2004; P. Neuteboom, 2010; Van Vark & Beuving, 2022)).

On the negative side, there needs to be alertness to processes of militarization and a distinction between 'necessary' and 'surplus' militarization is necessary. This will become even more important in the coming years, as many European liberal democracies are investing heavily in their militaries and implementing a whole-of-society approach as an answer to the growing Russian threat. The militarization debate in established liberal democracies tends to focus on tasks (militarization of the police, or the performance of police tasks by the military). However, this research has shown that there are other ways in which the military may increase its influence on society and politics. Secondly, there should be awareness of the risk of path dependence and attention to civilian authorities not becoming too dependent on support by the armed forces. Most literature on path dependence focuses on Latin American countries (see chapter 2 for this literature). This research provides more insight in how path dependence processes may take place in European liberal democracies. It is important, thirdly, to take possible institutional interests of the armed forces (for either an increasing, decreasing or changing role) into account. Finally, the balance between order and legitimacy should be kept in mind when considering new or changing domestic roles for the armed forces.

Looking at specific policy options and their impact on the stability of liberal democracy, the policy options defined in section 8.4 can be categorized on the three challenges for liberal democracy (vertical undermining, horizontal undermining and state undermining). As crisis management is not linked to a particular form of undermining, it does not fall in a specific category

Regarding vertical undermining, five policy options can have an effect, namely the fight against organized crime, security and surveillance, intelligence, civic education and cyber threats. For horizontal undermining, three policy options can play a role in countering this security challenge, namely public order management, civic education and intelligence. Finally, with four policy options the risk of state undermining is there,

namely for public order management, civic education, intelligence and the fight against organized crime.

At first sight, there seems to be a thin line between a role for the armed forces in countering horizontal undermining and a role in state undermining. Three policy options fall in both categories. Looking at the policy options involved, it is clear why. Public order management is the most controversial policy option seen in the three case studies. When sticking to, for example, logistical advice in the background, this could be an acceptable role in case of demonstrations. When moving to the use of military materiel, this would already be a lot more controversial, and the use of personnel has been called unacceptable by a large majority of respondents in all three case studies, as not fitting a liberal democracy.

Civic education includes conscription, and the *National Defence Courses* organized in Sweden and Finland. As has been shown in the previous part of this section, conscription could play a role in fostering social cohesion. *National Defence Courses* could help in promoting understanding of relevant security challenges and how to deal with them and increase resilience against their adverse effects (related to vertical undermining), could stimulate social cohesion between participants (horizontal undermining), but could also lead to securitization and fostering institutional interests of the security actors involved (state undermining).

The intelligence policy option is related to all three forms of undermining as well. With respect to vertical undermining, both better sharing of information between the armed forces and civil security organizations and the use of armed forces specific intelligence capabilities could be useful in countering certain security threats, including developments in social unrest (horizontal undermining). However, the use of armed forces intelligence capabilities to monitor the domestic population is politically sensitive and heavily regulated and could be a form of state undermining. A recent report about the Dutch Army Land Information Manoeuvre Centre, during the COVID-19 pandemic, concludes that the unit was stuck between the legal framework and new security threats (and in the specific case went out of line) and that an adjustment of the legal framework is needed to facilitate information-led operations (Onderzoekscommissie Land Information Manoeuvre Centre, 2022).

The policy options 'organized crime', 'security and surveillance' and 'cyber threats' could be useful in countering new security threats. Particularly for organized crime and cyber threats, it may be difficult to differentiate between private or state actors' responsibility (and in some cases it may be combined). As shown in the Dutch case study, armed forces'

search capabilities, developed in Afghanistan, have been very useful in supporting the police in the search for drug laboratories. A joint special interventions unit of police and armed forces personnel in the Netherlands has been successful as well. On the other hand, as seen in the fight against terrorism, it is important to be alert to processes of securitization and state undermining. The use of war language can play a role here as well.

Based on this analysis of positive and negative effects it is clear that (current) security threats evolve; they are not constant. Some are internal, some are external, most are transborder. This means that the answer must be flexible as well: if the opponent operates without constraints, liberal democratic governments cannot afford to keep operating in stovepipes. As the research shows, this also means a strict separation or immersion standpoint should be off the table. Sometimes circumstances may demand the police to step up, other circumstances ask for a larger role of the armed forces. Hybrid or in-between forces such as the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee have advantages as well, as they facilitate a layered approach to security threats. Therefore, the research shows, it is not separation *or* immersion, but separation *and* immersion that is needed.

However, the third challenge to liberal democracy shows that the amount of immersion in a liberal democracy cannot be unlimited. In the task dimension, this means a clear definition is needed of where the armed forces can or cannot support and if they can, under what conditions (see also section 9.4). In the dimension of public administration and strategy, it means normalizing the role of the military in politics, public administration, and public debate, while at the same time preventing that its position becomes too strong, as it could lead to 'shirking' and de facto less civilian control (see also section 9.4). Institutional interests can play a role here. In the societal dimension, the positive effects of conscription on cohesion and the connection between the military and society should be considered, while at the same time surplus militarization of society must be prevented (see also section 9.4). Finally, considering the legal framework, it is important to identify both possibilities for armed forces support and constraints in the law, to provide clarity on mandates and to regularly evaluate the applicable laws (see also section 9.4).

After this general analysis of the results and theoretical contributions of this research, the rest of this chapter will focus on the limitations of the research (section 9.2), suggestions for future research (section 9.3) and practical implications (section 9.4).

9.2 LIMITATIONS

It should be noted that this research project has some limitations as well. They concern the possibility of generalizing findings to other cases, the impact of recent developments, practical limitations for a Dutch researcher studying other countries and finally, the theoretical perspective that was used.

Generalizability

Based on the three case studies, it is difficult to say to what extent the findings of this research can be generalized to other western liberal democracies, in Europe or even outside of Europe. This dissertation shows that even between these three cases, there are many differences, related to (amongst other reasons) historical context, cultural factors, security threats, etc. However, there are similarities as well. Chapter 4 has shown that liberal democracy is under pressure in the western world, not only in these three cases. The security challenges faced by western liberal democracies are similar as well.

Focusing on Europe, some liberal democracies, especially those coming from an Anglo-Saxon tradition, have a long history of a small domestic role for the armed forces, while other countries, for example France and Italy, are less reluctant to use the armed forces in a domestic context. Then there are some European countries (Spain, Portugal, Greece) where military rule is not something of the distant past, but lasted until the 1970s. And then there is Eastern Europe, where the process of democratization started after the end of the Cold War. Presumably, the findings of this research would be most applicable in neighboring countries in Northwestern Europe and less so when moving towards the south or the east of the continent. But even nearby, specific historical or cultural circumstances can heavily influence the role of the armed forces. An example could be Germany, where the history of World War II still has a lot of influence in policymaking today and the domestic role of the armed forces is relatively small.

Practical limitations

Further, as reflected on in chapter 3 as part of my positionality statement, as a Dutch researcher working for the Dutch Ministry of Defense, inevitably I have certain biases that most likely have had an impact on my research as well. Additionally, because of my background I have gathered the main bulk of data in the Netherlands, which may have influenced the outcomes of my research. Thirdly, although I have aimed for a diverse group of respondents, the number of interviews (92) and the fact that I have mainly interviewed respondents working at the strategic level, most likely has consequences for the outcome of the research. Interviewing frontline workers, for example, could have

resulted in different outcomes. Finally, language problems have limited the possibility to gather data in both Sweden and Finland

Theoretical perspective

The research is based on civil-military relations theory and more specifically the dichotomy between separation and immersion, a logical choice when studying the role of the military in society and politics. Civil-military relations theory stems from a background of political science and (military) sociology. However, the role of the military can be studied from other theoretical perspectives as well, such as philosophy, public administration, security studies, or law. These perspectives have been referred to throughout this dissertation, but the main emphasis and lens has been civil-military relations theory.

Additionally, because of the military being a security actor, the research has focused from the start on security challenges and the possible role of the military in countering these challenges. When talking about strengthening the stability of liberal democracy, these security challenges and what role the military could play in dealing with them are referred to. Of course, there are many other possibilities to strengthen the stability of liberal democracy, which are not in the realm of the military. For example, the election process, the institutions of liberal democracy or the legal framework. These possibilities fall outside of scope for this research.

9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the results of this research, several recommendations for future research can be identified.

Civil-military relations in times of democratic backsliding and a changing security environment

Civil-military relations research traditionally focuses on democratizing countries or the role of the military in autocratic regimes. Relatively little research has been done on civil-military relations in stable liberal democracies that are confronted with both democratic backsliding and a changing threat environment. This research has provided some insights in the possible implications for civil-military relations of these developments. However, more research is needed to better understand the impact of these trends and to develop new models for civil-military relations in the new context.

More cases in other areas

This research is based on only three case studies in a specific region, namely Northwestern Europe. It would be interesting to do further research in other parts of Europe and in western liberal democracies outside of Europe to find out whether the same trends are visible in those areas and whether the findings can be generalized to more western liberal democracies. Possibly, clusters of similar countries can be identified. This could contribute to the development of a new model for civil-military relations in established liberal democracies, including a new way to operationalize the concept of civilian control. This would subsequently facilitate a more quantitative way of researching the topic.

Synergy between stability operations and a domestic role

As shown in this dissertation, the participation of the Dutch armed forces in stability operations stimulated civilian authorities in the Netherlands to call upon the developed capabilities in a domestic context as well. The prime example is the development of search capabilities in Afghanistan, where they were used to find IED's. Upon return to the Netherlands, these same capabilities have been used to support the police in search operations as part of the fight against organized crime.

Interestingly, the same development has not taken place in Sweden and Finland while these countries have been involved in stability operations as well. It turns out that Sweden only used police personnel for stability operations. Finland did use armed forces personnel but abolished those capabilities when they were not needed anymore instead of finding a different use for them. It would be interesting to learn more about the choices other western liberal democracies have made in this regard and the extent to which institutional interests—namely, the desire to maintain newly acquired capabilities—have prevailed in different nations.

Additionally, it would be interesting to investigate what other synergies can be found between operations in a domestic context and stability operations. What capabilities used by the armed forces during stability operations are useful in a domestic context as well? And the other way around: to what extent can supporting the civilian authorities at home provide training possibilities for missions abroad? A recent report in the Netherlands suggests finding such possibilities in intelligence (see also below for 'grey-zone threats') (Onderzoekscommissie Land Information Manoeuvre Centre, 2022). And more on a general level, could 'normalizing the role of the military in politics' lead to a different status of the military advise in political decision-making on military missions abroad? Dutch history has had a few examples, Srebrenica being the most painful one, where critical advice by the military was apparently not a decisive factor considered by the government in the decision to send Dutch troops. The question that arises is will this

change if the military is increasingly immersed in public administration and strategy? Interestingly, this was also the only known case in Dutch history where the government apologized to veterans of the Dutchbat-III rotation (that served during the fall of the enclave) for sending them on an impossible mission (Chafekar, 2023; Rutte, 2022). This could be another indication that civil-military relations in the Netherlands are changing. Finally, there are clear parallels between the comprehensive approach used in stability operations to involve all actors in a mission area and the comprehensive security model used in Finland. It would be interesting to examine the parallels and discrepancies between the two models in more detail.

Military and society

This dissertation has looked at relations between the military and society from different angles. The research suggests that (a form of) conscription could contribute to social cohesion, while the suspension of conscription has led to a disconnect between the armed forces and society in the Netherlands, and to a lesser extent Sweden. With the reinstatement of conscription for part of the generation in Sweden and the implementation of the 'year to serve' in the Netherlands, it would be interesting to perform longitudinal research on the participants, comparing them with their peers on various indicators for social cohesion.

Polling results from Sweden suggest that the population is quite positive about a larger domestic role for the armed forces, while the political elite and the military are more hesitant. It would be interesting to investigate whether these differences exist in other western liberal democracies as well (and if they differ in the same direction), and if so, how the differences in opinion between the public and the elite can be explained and whether this will eventually lead to different policy decisions as well.

Another related topic concerns militarization. An increasing immersion of the armed forces in society could lead to a better connection between the armed forces and society, but also to the militarization of society. The Swedish decision to move several civilian agencies to the Ministry of Defense is interesting in that respect. In Sweden as well, some academics have criticized the responsabilization strategy employed by the Swedish government to make citizens more and the state less responsible for their security, which may induce fear and anxiety in the population. What would be the 'ideal distance' or 'ideal closeness' between the armed forces and society? To what extent can the militarization of society be necessary (for example, to foster resilience in the population), and when does 'necessary' evolve into 'surplus' militarization? To what extent can a 'whole of society approach' shift responsibility for security matters from the government

to the citizens? With the heavy investments in defense budgets and the increasing immersion of the military and civil domain, it seems time to examine boundaries.

Path dependence and institutional interests

Related to the previous point is path dependence. As described in chapter 2, the domestic use of the armed forces in Latin America has increased a lot in the past decades. Authors studying these developments have concluded that a process of path dependence is taking place. Increased violence by organized crime has led to a larger role for the armed forces and instead of leading to de-escalation, violence has only escalated, leading to an even larger role for the armed forces to get the problems under control and bring back stability. In Europe as well, governments in Belgium, France, and the UK have struggled with an exit strategy after using the armed forces in support of the police in response to terrorist attacks. It cannot be ruled out that institutional interests of the armed forces play a role in these processes as well, sometimes aiming for a larger domestic role and other times for a smaller domestic role. Following the argument of Brooks (Brooks, 2019) and normalizing the role of the military in politics, meaning that the military is seen as a bureaucratic actor like other government actors, calls for a critical attitude in case a new task or larger role is asked for, and if it concerns a temporary role, arrangements need to be set up from the start for scaling down of this task or role. This relates to Schulzke's ideas on necessary and surplus militarization as well (Schulzke, 2018).

Grey-zone threats

This research has explored policy options for the armed forces related to 'new' security threats that cross borders. Two areas where a larger role seems reasonable but difficult within existing legal frameworks are the cyber domain and intelligence operations. The cyber domain is borderless, and it is usually difficult to establish responsibility for an attack: organized crime, a foreign state, a terrorist group, or something else. Even the more skeptical respondents recognize that the armed forces should be involved in fighting threats in the cyber domain to some extent. However, given the relative newness of cyber threats, in all case studies, authorities are struggling to define a possible role and arrange for the appropriate legal framework.

The same holds true for intelligence operations. As I described in the Dutch case study, respondents recognize the complementarity of the armed forces *modus operandi* versus that of the police (looking outside-in instead of inside-out). During the COVID-19 crisis, an Army experimental unit performed open-source intelligence operations in the Netherlands, aiming to better prepare operations during that time. However, the current legal framework does not allow the armed forces to perform intelligence operations in a domestic context, and the unit was shut down. A recent report, mentioned above as

well, has advised the government to revise the legal framework for the armed forces, to facilitate the use of the armed forces for new threats in the grey zone between peace and war (Onderzoekscommissie Land Information Manoeuvre Centre, 2022).

Another grey-zone threat, which perhaps surprisingly has hardly been mentioned by my respondents, concerns the weaponization of migration (Adamson & Greenhill, 2023; Lubinski, 2022; Petty, 2022). In the last decade, there have been several examples of countries leading migrants to western countries in an effort to destabilize the receiving country, for example Russia leading migrants to the northern tip of Norway but also to Finland in 2015/2016, and Belarus establishing an air bridge with some Middle eastern capitals in 2021/2022 and leading migrants to Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland.

A role for the armed forces with respect to these threats is foreseeable (or already in place) and further research is needed to establish options and boundaries.

9.4 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Coming back to my positionality, as an aspiring 'pracademic' (practitioner-academic), it has been important for me from the start of my PhD to think about the practical implications of my research results. In this section, some recommendations for practice are made, with a focus on the Netherlands, but also making a few suggestions for the other two cases.

1. Normalize the role of the military in politics. The comprehensive security model used in Finland can be a good model to get all the relevant security players at the table, preferably from both the public and the private sector. Such a model matches the whole-of-society approach that the Dutch government has recently embraced. Ideally, coordination takes place at the level of the Prime Minister, with the help of a National Security Council. Such a council, when given the proper mandates, can enhance both military effectiveness and civilian control (Bruneau et al., 2009). Both the Netherlands and Sweden have recently decided to create such a council and include the armed forces as a regular participant. For Finland, this would mean redesigning the Security Committee and reducing the military footprint. Foresight capabilities could be a useful element of such a model, and it can be explored if and how civil-military cooperation can be improved by practicing and training together.

Liaisons can be a good means to enhance cooperation between the various security actors. Fulfilling a post at a civilian security partner could therefore be made a required element in the career of a military officer (and vice versa). Another possibility to explore is the use of reservists for civilian security tasks. It should become easier

to 'job-hop' between organizations in the security domain, for example starting a career in the armed forces, move to the Police or Customs or even a private security organization, and at a later age return to the armed forces. Normalizing the role of the military in politics could also have implications for the role that military advise plays in political decision-making about military operations. In the Netherlands, this would mean taking the military advise more seriously and adjusting the organization of the Ministry of Defense and the decision-making process accordingly.

2. Take the domestic role of the armed forces more seriously. In all three countries, the domestic role of the armed forces is relatively underdeveloped. In Sweden and Finland, it formally gets last priority; in the Netherlands, all three core tasks are officially equal, but in practice the support to civil authorities gets last priority. This also has an effect at the strategic level, with relatively few policy capabilities dedicated to the development of this role. At the operational and tactical level, it means that pursuing a career in the national operations domain is virtually impossible. Dutch respondents in this field even state that fulfilling a post in this domain is considered bad for your career. Being an equal partner in cooperation with other security organizations means this will have to change.
3. Implement a Comprehensive Security Course in the Netherlands. Both Finland and Sweden have good experiences with their *National Defence Courses*, to enhance awareness of relevant security issues, practice relevant scenario's and create a network among participants. The research suggests the relevance of creating such a course in the Netherlands as well. This could possibly be a joint effort under the responsibility of the National Security Council and the possibility should be explored to open the course to senior level personnel from security organizations, government institutions, companies, but also to personnel from other sectors, such as the cultural sector, the health sector, politics, etc. These courses can be organized on lower (provincial, local) levels as well.²¹
4. Design new ways of working and organizing to deal with grey-zone or hybrid threats. These threats cannot be classified as either 'internal' or 'external' threats, which means they cannot be dealt with by a pillarized system. Trying to deal with these threats with a pillarized approach is difficult and can lead to unwanted side effects,

21 In april 2023, a first try-out Masterclass National Security was organized jointly by the Netherlands Defence Academy and the National Coordinator for Terrorism and Security. Currently, this has developed into a *Leadership in National Security Course*, which takes place three times a year, with around 20 participants, and lasting for 9 days spread out over a few months. A future National Defense Course (with more participants, fulltime) could be the result of further development.

such as a militarization of the police or the military operating outside of the law, as has been seen in the Netherlands with the Army unit that was collecting open-source intelligence on the Dutch population during the COVID-19 pandemic. As this research shows, hybrid organizations such as the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee or to a less extent the Finnish Border Guard (and its cooperation with Police and Customs) can facilitate a layered approach and make it easier to deal with these threats. Sweden could consequently consider the usefulness and appropriateness of a hybrid organization as well, or other options to facilitate cooperation, such as joint units comparable with the Special Interventions Unit in the Netherlands.

At the same time, all three countries struggle with threats in the cyber domain and with legal possibilities (and obstacles) to share intelligence between security partners. This calls, in addition to a comprehensive approach and better cooperation between or integration of (certain units of) security organizations, for an adjustment of the legal framework, particularly for the grey zone between peace (regular laws) and war (emergency laws). However, this is the area where the third security challenge for liberal democracy identified, the undermining of liberal democracy by the state, becomes relevant as well. Ways must be found to enhance cooperation and sharing of intelligence without becoming a surveillance society.

Grey zone threats include foreign influence operations with the use of disinformation by foreign actors. As described in chapter 6, the Swedish government has created a special agency to counter these operations and to create awareness in the population, thereby contributing to a resilient population. In times of war, the agency also gets an offensive task, in countering these foreign influence operations. The new government installed in 2022 moved this agency from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Defense, under a new Minister for Civil Defense. Finland has a long history of resilience building measures in the population as well, amongst other measures making use of voluntary defense organizations. The Netherlands could learn from these examples, investing in population awareness, including for example media literacy training for younger and older generations.

5. Expand the possibilities for military and social conscription. Recent research and experiences in Finland show that conscription contributes to social cohesion. With social cohesion under pressure in liberal democracies, my research shows this could be a valuable means to foster cohesion and stimulate a sense of collectivity in younger generations. Sweden already has call-ups and an online assessment for all 18-year-olds and an increasing number of young people serve. Assessing all 18-year-olds would be useful in the Netherlands and Finland as well. As shown, Finland has been struggling with how to make conscription gender-neutral, as it does not want to double the yearly number of conscripts in the military. Expanding conscription

to social conscription would be a possible way to deal with this. Finland has also decided to introduce a 'call-up day' for all 18-year-olds, making sure that all young people learn about the armed forces and consider this a viable career option. For the Netherlands, in addition to an online assessment for all 18-year-olds, the 'year to serve' could be offered to a higher number of participants, and a similar option could be created at the police and other relevant sectors such as health care. Youth can be stimulated to participate, for example, by offering them a (financial) contribution to their subsequent education or even, as has recently been suggested by a Dutch opinionmaker, by offering them a start-up capital to invest for example in a house (Schimmelpenninck, 2023). In addition to fostering social cohesion, (social) conscription can also help prevent labor shortages in participating organizations (both for regular and reserve personnel) and can help these organizations in dealing with new threats (think for example of the Swedish and Finnish cyber-conscripts). The next step for the Netherlands would be to include more obligatory elements in the process.

6. Define clear boundaries for the support of the armed forces to civil authorities in a domestic context. The research shows that the Dutch armed forces increasingly support the civil authorities, particularly the police, in policing tasks. In the fight against organized crime, which is becoming more violent, this is defensible. Having the armed forces assist the police in security and surveillance tasks can free up police capabilities for other tasks, such as criminal investigations. The same goes for search capabilities, as has been seen in the Netherlands as well. At the same time, using the armed forces in public order management, where there is a risk of using violence against civilians, is rightly more controversial. However, with protesters becoming more violent and/or using heavy materiel, as has happened in the Netherlands with the farmers protests, the authorities need to be able to act decisively, which could call for involvement of the armed forces. As explained, in Sweden legal provisions forbid the use of violence by the armed forces against civilians, with the only exception being a terrorist attack. For the Netherlands as well, I would recommend debating the possibilities for the armed forces to support the civilian authorities in policing tasks and set clear boundaries for this support. This could entail legal provisions about the armed forces support always being used under civilian control, only using personnel that has received police training, only using armed forces materiel but not personnel for public order management and/or only using the armed forces for public order management tasks as a last resort. Both organizations (armed forces and the police) share the monopoly on violence, but public order management and law enforcement within state borders – in peace time – are primarily the responsibility of the police, which calls for clear boundaries for the support of the armed forces to civil authorities in a domestic context.