



# Preparing for war: citizenship, militarization and the agencies of children and youth in security politics

**Kathrin Hörschelmann and Lukas Dreßen**

Department of Geography, University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany

**Correspondence:** Kathrin Hörschelmann (hoerschelmann@uni-bonn.de)

Received: 19 August 2024 – Revised: 15 December 2025 – Accepted: 19 December 2025 – Published: 16 March 2026

**Abstract.** This paper examines how military recruitment intersects with biopolitical governance and the forging of particular subjectivities for young people as subjects of (in)security. It considers young people’s enrolment in the politics of killing and letting die as a form of necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003, 2019) that is enabled by generational injustice and the complex positioning of children and youth as political subjects within liberal governmentalities. It is shown that closer attention to the interrelations between sovereignty, discipline, and government is needed, considering also questions of authority, lethality, and coercion, in order to comprehend young people’s contradictory subjectivations in and through military logics and practices. Based on the analysis of the three case studies of military recruitment and citizenship in France, Sweden, and Latvia, the paper argues for greater attention to the militarization of young people’s lives and to the ethical and generational justice implications of this.

## 1 Introduction

Children and youth are multiply enrolled in the politics of militarization and war. This has been demonstrated by scholarship across different disciplines, including historical research on the recruitment of young volunteers and conscripts during the First and Second World War (Mosse, 1990; Brocklehurst, 2005; 2006; Collins 2011/2023; Marten, 2002), analyses of the severe humanitarian consequences of war for children (Boyden and de Berry, 2004; Boyden, 2007; Wessells, 2016), and critical debates on child soldiering and the agencies of young combatants in violent conflict (Beier, 2011, 2017; Hart, 2006; Boyden, 2007), as well as work on everyday militarization and the “military-industrial-academic complex” (Giroux, 2007; cf. Beier and Tabak, 2020; Basham, 2024; Woodyer and Carter, 2020; Woodyer, 2012; Robbins, 2008; Lutz, 2007; Rech, 2014; Wells, 2014a; Hörschelmann and Dreßen, 2026). Such work has shown the crucial role played by young people, both as violated and as active subjects, in the politics of military conflict and war (cf. Beier, 2015). However, these insights have received little track in political geography, international relations, security studies, and critical geopolitics to date. There continues to be a lack of “sceptical curiosity” (Enloe, 2015:7) on questions of

generation, age, and inequality, including intersections with other relations of power (Beier, 2011, 2015; Beier and Tabak, 2020, 2021; Brocklehurst, 2017).

This paper argues that addressing this lack and paying greater attention to the work that generation- and age-related power does in the perpetuation of militarism and war is a key task for critical scholars of militarization and security in political geography, security studies, and international relations (Beier and Tabak, 2020, 2021; Cockburn, 2008, 2010; Enloe, 2016; Hyndman, 2004; McSorley, 2013; Rech et al., 2015; Sjoberg and Via, 2010; Sylvester, 2013; Woodward, 2004; Woodward and Duncanson, 2016). Through engagement with the existing literature on a wider range of contexts and three case studies of military recruitment and citizenship in Sweden, France, and Latvia as examples from European NATO states, this paper seeks to demonstrate that the enrolment of young people in military logics, practices, and labour is not an exceptional, untypical aspect of liberal democracies but a key element of the securitization of society and state.

In order to disentangle the seeming paradox that young people’s subjectivation in the liberal biopolitics of “making live” also provides the grounds for enrolling them – in uneven ways – in the military politics of death, the understand-

ings of Foucault (1997, 2003) of power, security, and subjectivity are drawn on and extended to analyse young people's roles in military securitization. The case studies show that to fully understand the subjectivation and enrolment of young people in military securitization, greater attention needs to be paid to the intersections between biopolitical and disciplinary power, the necropolitical implications of biopolitical securitization, and the role of sovereignty and authority in biopolitical governance. Arguments by Mbembe (2003, 2019) on necropolitics are further drawn on to make the ethical and political tensions that arise from young people's militarization explicit and to open them up for further inspection and debate. We remain mindful, however, of the contextual and political specifics of Mbembe's work that we specify below. It is not our intention to relativize them here.

The paper proceeds by first summarizing Foucault's analytics of power, showing how young people's uneven military recruitment can be understood through his analytic as enabled rather than prevented by liberal biopolitical governmentalities. We then discuss the relevance of Mbembe's work on necropolitics for understanding the enrolment of young people in military politics. Building on this, we argue for more attention to the role of sovereign power and authority to fully understand the generational relations of power through which children and youth become recruited to potentially lethal military work. The paper then goes on to present an analysis of three different approaches to young people's military recruitment that are implemented in the EU states which have been part of NATO for varying lengths of time: France (rejoined NATO military structures in 2009), Latvia (member since 2004), and Sweden (member since 2024). These examples were selected because a comparison between them allows identification of both the systemic nature of generational injustice and subjectivation – shared by all three of the models of militarized (youth) citizenship – and the contingencies that their differences and ongoing renegotiations reveal.

For all their differences, the three cases show the strikingly enduring force of sovereign power, exercised through disciplinary, biopolitical, and necropolitical means, on and through the politicized subjectivities and bodies of children and youth. Recognizing this leads us to caution, in our conclusion, against decreasing the protection rights for children and young people if this is to be a precondition for their greater political enfranchisement.

## 2 Securitization, subjectivation, and the military recruitment of children and youth

How are young people subjected to and subjectivized through military politics? How is this legitimized? And how can it be contested (Rech, 2014)? To begin to answer these questions, we turn first to Michel Foucault's analytics of power to map how the necropolitical consequences of young

people's military subjectivation are related to the interconnections between biopower, discipline, and sovereign power (Dean, 2007, 1999/2009, 2025; Dillon, 1995, 2008). We relate this to the political positioning of children and youth as citizens-in-becoming (cf. Bartos, 2015; Wood, 2022), showing that the ambiguous subjectivities that underpin young people's citizenship in (neo)liberal societies lead to a gap that enables their recruitment into military logics and practices, including military work. This gap is, however, also productive of tensions and contradictions. It enables contestation and problematization within biopolitical liberal governmentalities (cf. Hörschelmann, 2025).

### 2.1 Biopolitical subjectivation and the military enrolment of children and youth

Michel Foucault famously proposed to analyse power not as something to be possessed and exercised over things but as relational, dispersed, facilitative, and capillary (cf. Dean, 1999/2009; Dean and Henman, 2004; Foucault, 1980; Philo, 2016). As explained by Philo (2016:343, original italics), he was “*not* striving for a total theory of power” but wished “to interrogate the many different dimensions of power traversing ‘real’ societies” (cf. Coleman and Grove, 2009; Foucault, 1980). Foucault identified “different but overlapping, complementary, and often rivalrous strategies” (Dean and Henman, 2004:486) that intersect with but also exceed and stand in tension with sovereign power (cf. Dillon, 1995; Dean, 2002, 1999/2009, 2025; Dean and Larsson, 2021). His genealogical analysis of the emergence of modern forms of government led him to identify disciplinary power, biopower, pastoral power, and governmentality, with the latter becoming increasingly dominant in post-war liberal societies (cf. Dean and Larsson, 2021; Dean, 1999/2009).

Foucault traced the emergence of governmentality as “a distinctly new form of thinking about and exercising of power in certain societies” (Foucault, 1991:102–104; cited in Dean, 1999/2009:19). Entailing both a novel rationality of government and new practices and technologies of rule, namely the “conduct of conduct” (Foucault, 1994; cf. Dean, 1999/2009; Dreyfus and Rabinow, 2014), governmentality is required “to be a government of ‘each and all’, evincing a concern for every individual and the population as a whole” (Dean, 1999/2009:19). Modern governmentality entails processes of subjectivation that produce individuals as subjects in the two meanings of the word: subject to and subject of. Applied particularly to the analysis of power in liberal societies, new subjectivities emerge that cast individuals as subjects able and needing to self-govern “through freedom”. This means that subjects regulate their own conduct “freely” but in ways that coincide with dominant discourses of how to secure the life of the population as a whole (defend society) under conditions of contingency and constant risk (Foucault, 1994, 2003; cf. Dean, 1999/2009; Rose, 1999).

Intriguingly for analysts of militarization and security, Foucault saw “apparatuses of security” (including standing armies but also health, education, social welfare, and economic management systems) as “essential mechanisms” of this new form of government which did not dispense with or succeed sovereign or disciplinary power but recast them (cf. Foucault, 1991:102; Dean, 1999:20; Powel, 2017). Together with his understanding of politics as the continuation of war with other means (Foucault, 2003:15), this conception of power and liberal governmentality has been recognized as highly valuable for analyses of power in contemporary international relations, security politics, and military affairs (cf. Dillon, 1995; Dillon and Reid, 2009; Dillon and Neal, 2008; McSorley, 2013; Wells, 2014a, b). While Foucault has been criticized for not specifying sufficiently the intersections between biopower, discipline, and sovereignty and the role of authority (Dean 1999/2009, 2025; Dean and Larsson, 2021; Dillon and Neal, 2008; see below), his analytics have inspired critical scholarship in international relations, security studies, and military studies to move “beyond the limitations of the juridical conception of power as a matter of command and will, largely concerned with rights relating to the exercise of coercion and constraint, traditionally enframed within political discourse by reference to subjectivity, territoriality, and the problematic of sovereignty” (Dillon, 1995:323f).

For the analysis that we undertake here, its relevance consists particularly of the attention that it draws to the paradoxes of, as well as solutions sought to, the problem of military recruitment in liberal democracies, namely that of reconciling individual liberties and freedoms with generational dependencies and the biopolitical demand to secure the population. Foucault addressed the paradox of how biopolitical governance, in order to secure and improve the life of (national) society, nonetheless also has to deal with the issues of death within this society. Asking how it is possible, under these conditions, “for a political power to kill, to call for deaths, to demand deaths, to give the order to kill, and to expose not only its enemies but its own citizens to the risk of death” (2003:254), he answered by introducing a conceptualization of racism as a “biological caesura” (Foucault, 2003:255), a kind of dividing structuration throughout society which draws a line between those whose life should be saved, secured, prolonged, and improved and those who can, if necessary, be exposed to death for the greater purpose of “defending the society”. Thus, Foucault described racism not (only) as a biologizing category, but as a general “way of separating out the groups that exist within a population” (Foucault, 2003:255), “a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power’s control: the break between what must live and what must die.” (Foucault, 2003:254; cf. Su Rasmussen, 2011).

The tensions that emerge from this divisive biopolitical logic are acute in relation to the military and the question of voluntary service versus universal conscription, as debates in the field of civil–military relations have shown

(cf. Cowen, 2008; Friedman, 1962, 1967; Huntington, 1957; Krebs, 2006, 2009; Levy, 2013; Mannitz, 2012; Rech, 2014). Such debates have centred strongly on the apparent contradictions that liberal framings of citizenship produce between the notion of the rights-bearing, emancipated individual and constraints on those rights in relation to national defence and thus the risk of death in the name of collective security. Despite these contradictions, however, the liberal biopolitical requirement to govern through freedom and through individuals’ capacities to self-govern can in fact also be employed both in the discourses and practices of military recruiters and in militarized youth citizenship schemes (cf. Basham, 2016; Kaempf and Stahl, 2023; Stengel and Shim, 2022; Wells, 2014a). Thus, the advertising of voluntary military service schemes or military careers as opportunities for character building, self-improvement, career development, and responsible citizenship fits with logics of (neo)liberal self-governance, as can be seen in the case of Sweden below (Rose, 2007; Rabinow and Rose, 2006; Hörschelmann and Dreßen, 2026). Direct benefits such as financial compensation, job and education prospects, and indirect benefits related to status or to defining oneself as an active, responsible citizen concur with such logics. They also risk exploiting social inequalities by presenting the military as an “attractive employer” (cf. Basham, 2016; Hörschelmann, 2017; Hörschelmann and Dreßen, 2026). It should be noted here that, in addition to overt recruitment campaigns that emphasize opportunities for self-development, the biopolitical normalization and legitimization of militaristic discourses and practices further entails the targeting of children and youth as consumers and the selling of war as playful and spectacular, e.g. of militaristic games, media, toys, fashion, and other consumer items (Woodyer and Carter, 2020; Shaw, 2010; Beier and Tabak, 2020).

However, discursive framings of military service as a free, individual choice and the framing and targeting of children and youth as a market for militaristic consumer cultures risk disguising the more fundamental centrality of young people to biopolitical securitization. It is the biopolitical framing of security as “making life live” in itself that places them at the heart of securitization. As the quintessential “future of society”, they become invested with all manner of hopes and fears concerning their ability to secure society through their own “secure” development. This means, however, that their military subjectivation entails not only voluntary engagement, but also obliges children “to subject themselves to the state’s authority in the name of their own freedom and development” (Wells, 2016:242; cf. Ailwood, 2004; Lee and Motzkau, 2011; Philo, 2010). As Wells (2016:242) explains: “The justification for the expansion of government powers rests on the maxim that *Society Must Be Defended* (Foucault, 2003) and children are one of the central figures through which society is constituted” (original italics). It is thus a paradox, but not a complete contradiction, that children and youth are exempted as a generational group, inter-

secting with other social divisions. Their social construction as citizens-in-becoming upon whose development the security of society depends justifies all manner of sovereign interventions, coercions, and disciplinary measures, confirming the contention of Dean and Henman (2004:487) that “an analysis of the productive powers over life and freedom (of biopower and liberal government) cannot be divorced from a consideration of issues of subordination, obligation, coercion, and violence [...]” (see also Dean, 1999/2009).

Militaristic discipline as a form of subordination that works on the body may thus still be employed “for the production of docile and useful subjects” (Dean, 1999/2009:102), including the subjecting and subjectivizing of young people as (future) citizens in line with security agendas that frequently construct (certain) groups of young people themselves as a security risk (Bartlett and Lutz, 1998; Collins, 2011/2023; Lutz, 1995; Marten, 2002). The divisive logics which underpin biopolitics partly explain why such overt subordination may continue within liberal governmental regimes. Modern constructions of childhood and youth as phases of developmental potential, incompleteness, and risk mean that, by definition, young people become subject to such interventions, both in general and through further social division along axes of perceived risk. The disciplining of young people through militaristic and other practices thus confirms Foucault’s warning that in biopolitical governmental regimes, those who are regarded as posing a risk to the life of the population may, in the name of defending society, be exposed “to all sorts of disciplinary, biopolitical and even sovereign interventions” (Wells, 2016:242). Populations are divided accordingly “on the basis of those who avail themselves of the opportunity for improvement and those who do not” (Dean, 1999/2009:133). Combining penalization with redirection and training, military discipline serves as one such way to redeem oneself and to become a “deserving” citizen. It is applied particularly to young people from marginalized communities, and here mostly to young men (Giroux, 2007; Kershner and Harding, 2019; Robbins, 2008). Thus, Robbins (2008) has traced the effects of extending militarized, punitive “zero tolerance” governance in US schools amidst a climate of fear, within which “zero tolerance marks the routinization of a growing ‘war’ mentality that is central to a militarizing social order in which brute force, fear, and exclusion prevail over dialogue and critical debate, democratic engagements with difference and inclusion, and mutual responsibility for a shared social fate” (Robbins, 2008:4). Wells (2014a) and Basham (2016) have further demonstrated how militarization through military ethos campaigns has targeted working-class boys and other young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in particular (Wells, 2014a; Basham, 2016; see also Sangster, 2013). As Basham (2016:260) explains, these schemes emphasize “martial values such as self-discipline” and have thus turned education into “a commodity through which appropriately self-reliant, economically productive subjects can be made”.

In as far as the military is tied to national constructions of identity and to the geopolitical securitization of nations as territorialized political communities, it also contributes to and builds on the subjectivation of young people as national citizens-in-becoming. The responsibilities for securing societal futures that they are charged with intersect here with the command to “serve the nation” through military labour. Such notions of service to the nation through military labour are reflected particularly in civic republican understandings of citizenship that “promote a civic identity among young people characterized by commitment to the political community, respect for its symbols, and active participation in its common good” (Abowitz and Harnish, 2006:654; see also Bosniak, 2000). Elements of duty in national defence policies, such as compulsory military service, and compulsory elements of education that include defence or the promotion of militaristic values could thus be interpreted as republican modes of subjectivizing young people as national citizens-in-becoming and as potential recruits. Moral associations of militaristic values and practices with the national “common good” in turn legitimize the use of military disciplining in institutions designed for the education and upbringing of children and youth (cf. Burrige and McSoreley, 2013; Giroux, 2007; Lutz, 1995; Kershner and Harding, 2019; Hörschelmann and Dreßen, 2026).

## 2.2 The military subjectivation of young people as an element of necropolitics

The uneven and divisive intersections between biopolitics, discipline, and sovereignty that we have identified above in our discussion of the military subjectivation of young people confirm Foucault’s warning that liberal governmentalities continue to expose parts of the population to the risk of death (Dean, 2002, 2007; De Larrinaga and Doucet, 2008; Dillon, 2004, 2015; Dillon and Reid, 2009; Evans, 2010). For Foucault, this includes “every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on” (Foucault, 2003:256). Noting that Foucault did not reflect much further on this beyond observations of Nazi Germany and state socialist racism, Dillon argues that “[I]iberal peace is a necropolitics of security which makes permanent war against life on behalf of life” (Dillon, 2008:177).

The concept of necropolitics was proposed by Achille Mbembe (2003, 2019) to “address the ways in which entire classes, peoples, and lives are deemed ‘surplus’ to the requirements of increasingly inhospitable social formations” (Brennan, 2024:3). Building on the recognition of Foucault (2003) that biopolitical securitization inevitably involves exclusion and death, Mbembe (2003) argued nonetheless that “the notion of biopower is insufficient to account for contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death” (p. 39). He noted a contemporary “*exiting from democracy*”

and a “suspension of rights, constitutions, and freedoms” that “are paradoxically justified by the necessity to protect these same laws, freedoms, and constitutions” (Mbembe, 2019:40, original italics). Tracing this inversion of democracy back to the history of colonialization and slavery, Mbembe regarded sovereignty as continuing to play a key role in defining “who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not” (Mbembe, 2003:27). Sovereignty, according to Mbembe, consists of the power to “manufacture an entire crowd of people who specifically live at the edge of life [...] people for whom living means continually standing up to death” (Mbembe, 2019:38). This necropolitical function of sovereignty must, he argued, be distinguished from disciplinary coercion, since the latter – up to a point – still includes through exclusion: it holds out the promise of individuals “regaining value” for society. The dark side of disciplinary power is, however, a necropolitical refusal to extend care to those who fail to regain such value and who are then left without protection.

The arguments of Mbembe (2003, 2019) are based on a critical analysis of (post)colonial power, racism, and the brutal relations between democracy and colonial violence. They address the “expulsion from humanity altogether” of those subjected to (post)colonial violence (Mbembe, 2003:21). Mbembe is also careful to distinguish between different contexts and forms of necropolitics. Concerning warfare in the present day, he builds his arguments against a background of (at least in parts) eroded state monopolies of violence and considers the impacts of a wider array of military forces and of what he calls “war machines” (Mbembe, 2003:30). It is therefore deeply problematic to attempt an equation between (post)colonial necropolitics and the situation of those whose positioning is with the past or contemporary colonizer, especially in security politics. Instead, we seek to do something less appropriating and decontextualized in this paper. We propose to problematize the simultaneous de- and politicization of children and youth as a necropolitical enabling of militarized security politics (cf. Brocklehurst, 2005, 2006). Generational power relations through which young people are positioned as citizens-in-becoming underpin and make possible the deployment of armed force and thus the destruction of persons and the “creation of death-worlds” (Mbembe, 2003:40), including in societies that have only recently emerged from colonial rule, i.e. the postcolony (Mbembe, 2001). Generational hierarchies serve to replenish the reserve army of military labour for these necropolitics.

Mbembe’s conceptualization of necropolitics is also a helpful starting point, for recentring the violent and lethal aspects of military recruitment. It draws attention to the tensions that remain between different logics of security in the militarization of children and youth, especially that concerning the contradiction between demands for their protection in the name of defending society and the politics of death that accompanies military securitization. Framing generational inequality in militarization and enrolment as necropo-

litical brings the production of (some) youthful subjects as those that are most disposed to the deadly risks of being made to kill and being let to die in western military politics more starkly into relief. It makes visible that the politics of death is not “waged on behalf of the existence of everyone” and not by “entire populations” (Foucault, 1978:137). Young people are – to different degrees and in relation to other intersectional inequalities, such as those of class, gender, and ethnicity (Basham, 2016; Cowen, 2006, 2008; Wells, 2014a) – multiply enrolled in military work as the work of death, even where it is purportedly carried out in the name of making live (Dillon, 2008).

However, to recognize the full ethical and justice implications of generationed security politics and account for the role of generational power relations in this, a more expansive definition of military work is required. This definition needs to include pre- and non-recruitment aspects of disciplining, educating, and identity construction as systemic planks in the politics and production of war. Depending on the extent to which militarization is part of young people’s schooling and of formal citizenship education, they are from that moment on subjects of and subjects to the sovereign politics of death.

Historically specific, carefully contextualized analyses are necessary to account for the ways in which sovereign, disciplinary, biopolitical, and necropolitical power are assembled, become legitimized, and are (re)produced via generational political practices, remembering that socially uneven distributions of risk are part and parcel of how “society must be defended” (Foucault, 2003). It is an important and complex task for critical scholars to trace the specific constellations of injustice that define “who matters and who does not” (Mbembe, 2003:26) in different military citizenship regimes. As the following case study examples show, children and youth ought to be centrally included in such an undertaking, as their enrolment into military securitization is tied systemically both to the legitimization and naturalization of the continued exercise of the state’s military monopoly of violence and to the sustaining of the military apparatus, e.g. by securing a constant supply of military personnel – reserve and actual, quickly deployable armies of military labour.

### 3 Citizenship and military subjectivation: three case study examples from European NATO states

As Pfaffenzeller (2010) has noted, conscription becomes “incompatible with a classical liberal view of society once it is no longer based on an existential threat to the liberal democratic order” (Pfaffenzeller, 2010:494). Nonetheless, since the recent Russian attacks on Ukraine, there have been moves to reinstate conscription in several states, returning to a more republican model of citizenship which regards military service no longer as an individual decision but as a necessary service to national community. The following three examples of France, Sweden, and Latvia will illustrate the range of

approaches to the balance between individual freedom, free choice, and public duty while also indicating where there is an evolving trend towards the latter, reemphasizing the role of sovereignty and generationed authority.

### 3.1 Case selection and methodological approach

Our case study analysis is based on a review of defence policies of the European NATO member states and Sweden, which joined NATO in 2024. We compared each country's current defence policy – as expressed in national strategy papers, official press releases, and legislative texts that can be found on the websites of the national defence departments<sup>1</sup> – with its predecessors and focused especially on changes that have occurred in national laws over roughly the last 10 years regarding military recruitment, the status of recruits, and the strategies to acquire military personnel. We analysed these documents from 2013 onwards in order to trace changes in defence policies since the Russian annexation of Crimea (2014). Although it was not before its 2022 Strategic Concept that NATO prominently mentioned the “Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine” as having “gravely altered our security environment” (NATO, 2022:1), several NATO member states, especially on the northern and eastern flank, began to change security doctrines in reaction to Russian action on and against Crimea in 2014 (cf. Czech Ministry of Defence, 2015:6; see also Saeima, 2016:2). In order to illustrate these sometimes significant and rapid changes, after scanning the defence policies of all European NATO states, we decided as a second step to focus on two states which recently reintroduced compulsory forms of military service – Sweden in 2018 and Latvia in 2024 – and on France, which does not have conscription but is of high interest with regard to the discursive legitimization of public duties such as military service. These three countries vividly illustrate the spectrum of different ways in which young people can be addressed in terms of biopolitics and necropolitics, even within neoliberal forms of government. The three case studies were also chosen since they allow analysis of different biopolitical logics in the military enrolment of young people in liberal democracies.

We conducted a more detailed qualitative document analysis for these cases, supplemented – especially in the case of France – by a discourse analysis of governmental speeches. Our analysis focused on the question of young people's subjectivation in relation to militaristic education and recruitment, including questions such as how are young people addressed as potential soldier-citizens or military recruits and (how) are they addressed as citizens? (How) is the relationship between military and civil citizenry or citizenship generally conceptualized and illustrated? And what does this mean in terms of a necropoliticization of young citizens? These

<sup>1</sup>We used the AI tool “deepL” to translate original language material.

questions should help as a guideline to throw a light on the systemic positioning of young people in national security agendas.

### 3.2 Example 1: Sweden

The Swedish example combines (neo)liberal incentives on the one hand with the resurrection of compulsory military service on the other. “Service is good for you” declares the Swedish Defence Conscription and Assessment Agency (Plikt- och prövningsverket, 2023:6) in one of its brochures and hence stresses benefits of military service for the individual – a typical element of (neo)liberal governmentalities that emphasize individual freedom and decision. Detailed information about the Swedish armed forces is offered on an online portal entitled “My Armed Forces” (“Mitt Försvarsmakten”; Försvarsmakten, 2024a), which also constructs associations of collective defence with personal decision and lifestyle. There is also information on basic training in the Swedish armed forces, which starts by highlighting nine benefits of service (Förmåner) for those serving (Försvarsmakten, 2024b), the first of which is that military training is free of charge. The same website describes basic military training as an opportunity to “get to know both new friends and yourself” and to gain “lots of experience that opens up many opportunities in the Armed Forces“, which once more focuses on individual benefits and individual choice instead of highlighting the potentially deadly character of military service. This is why Swedish researcher Sanna Strand speaks of “The birth of the enterprising soldier” (Strand, 2022). According to Strand, a “distinct soldier image” has been created, one that is “closely associated with the neo-liberal ideal of responsible, active, and entrepreneurial citizenship, in the context of Sweden” (Strand, 2022:225). Strand further argues that “the potential conscript is constructed as a subject who does not respond to duties but to alternatives; the possibility to choose” (Strand, 2023:11).

In seeming contrast to this, Sweden reintroduced compulsory service in 2018. Already in a defence bill of 2015, the Swedish government stressed the importance of increasing “the operational warfighting capability of the Armed Forces and to ensure the collective force of the Swedish Total Defence” (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015:1), and the number of conscripts serving in the armed forces is planned to be increased from 5000 (2019) to 9000 (2025) (Plikt- och prövningsverket, 2024). This obvious paradox of the praxis of conscription embedded in a neoliberal discourse is upheld by a highly selective recruitment process, based on an online survey with 40 questions. Completion of the questionnaire is mandatory for everyone – both men and women – who reaches 18 years of age in the respective year. Based on the answers to the survey, the Pliktverket then decides who is needed by and in the Armed Forces. In this way the military is able to present “mandatory military training as an obligation but also, first and foremost, an opportunity, for a selected

few” (Strand, 2023:13). National duty thus takes on a neoliberal guise: military service is voluntary, unless you are forced to.

In contrast to the French example below, the Swedish recruitment approach is based less on a universal republican national citizenship model. It appeals instead to the personal responsibility of self-entrepreneurs and ignores the fragile citizenship status of young people below the age of 18. Even when it comes to the scenario of total defence, which Swedish law clearly defines as a “legal duty” (Plikt- och prövningsverket, 2024), this is framed as a duty of every single person “as a private individual” (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2018:5) and not as a member of the national community. The sovereignty of the state is enacted here through the neoliberal model of personal decision-making. The liberal national state organizes its defence apparatus by “conducting conduct” in its favour and by giving apparently beneficial opportunities to those who are vulnerable to this promise (especially regarding the high rate of unemployed youth in Sweden).

### 3.3 Example 2: France

Contrasting the Swedish example with its neoliberal focus on benefits of national defence for the individual, France, although having abolished conscription in 2011, is characterized by a discourse that emphasizes the at least moral duty to fulfil the role as a potential defender of the state throughout publications of the different defence agencies.

The French Ministry of the Armed Forces (Ministère des Armées) explicitly declares policy towards youth as “a priority” (une priorité) of its policies: “It is at the heart of the goals that it has given itself aiming to enhance the attractiveness of defence professions, to transmit a defence culture, to develop citizenship and contribute to national cohesion” (Ministère des Armées, 2023a).

This discourse combines notions of self-government (the “attractiveness of defence”) with the reference to the embedding of the individual in the greater notion of a national entity, whose security is a concern for every citizen under its command. Defence service (or at least a notion of collective national defence) here is explicitly connected to the development of citizenship. This has been so since at least 1955, when a special Youth Army Commission (Commission armées-jeunesse, CAJ) was introduced in France with the aim “to promote the spirit of defence among young people and to prepare them for their responsibility of citizenship and national community and the army” (Ministère des Armées, 2023c). Hence, citizenship here is not only a legal status but goes along with citizens’ responsibilities towards the national community.

Consequently, even if without conscription, in France there is an obligation to take part in a national defence day (Journée Défense et Citoyenneté, JDC) as a precondition, for example, to obtain the right to get a driving licence. The

French government indeed intends to tighten this connection between becoming a citizen and national duties with the implementation of a compulsory Universal National Service (Service National Universel, SNU), which will consist of three phases for young people between the ages of 15 and 17. The SNU is currently in a voluntary pilot phase, but the then Prime Minister of France, Gabriel Attal, announced in his general policy address on 30 January 2024 that the Service will become obligatory in secondary schools from 2026 onwards, in the context of a “civic rearmament” (“réarmement civique”; Attal, 2024).

Parallel to this, there are efforts under way to bundle the different governmental defence policies regarding young people in France in one scheme, including the SNU, in a “plan” entitled “Youth Army Ambition” (Ambition armées-jeunesse) of the Ministry of the Armed Forces (Ministère des Armées, 2023b). The plan includes four different steps as part of a parcours, of which “awakening the spirit of defence” (éveiller à l’esprit de défense) is the first (Ministère des Armées, 2023b).

The notion of citizenship (or of becoming a citizen) in France thus continues to be deeply anchored in a discourse highlighting military duties especially for young people below the age of full citizenship, even without conscription. Young people are cast in the position of those who have to earn their rights through the fulfilment of (defence) duties, even if these consist “only” of knowledge about military history, leading to a sense of national cohesion and identity. This is all the more true for the establishment of defence education in secondary schools or in sponsored partnerships between school classes and military units (classes de défense), which, institutionalized in the Interministerial Protocol developing links between youth, defence, and national security of 2016, weave a strong bond between growing up, becoming a citizen, and military discourses (cf. Ministère des Armées, 2022).

Although France does not apply compulsory military service, this case shows the potential entanglement of republican notions of citizenship and their emphasis on national community and duty, with the necropolitical (re)politicization of childhood. Although children and young people seem to fall outside the political categories of citizenship, the process of becoming citizens is tied to defence politics and thus to the question of (whose) lives to potentially sacrifice for state sovereignty and its power to make live and die. That this is, however, not spelled out clearly is part of the paradox way in which liberal democracies have to deal with issues of death within its biopolitical way of governing societies.

### 3.4 Example 3: Latvia

The Latvian government, too, lists the “Benefits of the State Defence Service” prominently on its Homepage (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, 2024). Here, too, a neoliberal

eral strategy of incentives appears to be applied to acquire recruits. However, Latvia has recently reintroduced compulsory military service due to the “lack of new recruits volunteering for professional service” (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, 2024). The need to conscript young people to the military has been legitimized explicitly by references to the Russian invasion in Ukraine since February 2022 (cf. Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, 2024). Changes in defence policies, especially regarding young people, had, however, been under way since the 2016 adoption of the National Defence Concept (Saeima, 2016:2).

The Latvian recruitment strategy bears some similarities with the Swedish (neo)liberal model – especially regarding the reintroduction of compulsory service. Thus, a pilot phase from July 2023 until the end of the same year focused on attracting volunteers for military service by offering them higher salaries than those paid to conscripts from the beginning of 2024 onwards. Volunteers were paid EUR 600 per month, while conscripted soldiers only received EUR 300 monthly (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, 2024). Enlisting for military service in the form of 11 months of basic training became compulsory for all men aged 18–27 in Latvia at the start of 2024. A certain number of conscripts of this age cohort are selected randomly at the beginning of each year, if the requirements identified by the Ministry of Defence are not met with volunteers. Alternatively, young people can decide voluntarily on a 5-year contract with the Latvian National Guard “Zemessardze”, which then requires a minimum of 3 weeks of military training per year, but this does not rule out the possibility of being drafted into the State Defence Service (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, 2024)

However, the Latvian approach does not only focus on recruiting people for the military itself. It also aims to spread and foster a general willingness to participate in defence among Latvian people. This can, for instance, be seen in the following statement by the then Latvian Minister of Defence, Ināra Mūrniece, who in spring 2023 declared: “We can see from the Ukrainian experience that without a morally resilient and prepared society it is impossible to confront an aggressor” (Aizsardzības ministrija, 2023). Young Latvians in particular are in the focus of Latvia’s Defence Strategy. Pilot projects on National Defence Education (NDE) were introduced in 2018. These became obligatory for secondary schools from the beginning of the school year 2024/2025. They entail a workload of 112 h of defence training for all pupils aged 15–17 years (cf. Jaunsardzes Centrs, 2024:4). The objectives of the Defence Curriculum, as described in an “Information Report” (Informatīvais ziņojums, Aizsardzības ministrija, 2019) of the Latvian Ministry of Defence, are to strengthen the bodily fitness of young people and their sense of national identity, their loyalty to the state of Latvia, and their patriotism (Aizsardzības ministrija, 2024). The NDE will include a “National Defence Skills” module (Jaunsardzes Centrs, 2021:5), which aims “to encourage a sus-

tained interest in the development of national defence, camaraderie, leadership, courage, discipline and independent physical development to further education and career development within a comprehensive national defence system. To become an active, mobile and capable member of society, willing and able to defend themselves, their fellow citizens and Latvia in the event of a crisis” (Jaunsardzes Centrs, 2021:5). This emphasis on responsibility for the whole of society is an expression of how Foucault viewed the biopolitical organization of the modern state, in which the individual has to be sacrificed for the community in the worst case. It logically goes along with the – physical and mental – readiness to defend the country by force of arms. Namely, besides these rather soft skills that can be summarized under the term of willingness to defend, Latvian National Defence Education includes a total workload of 31 h dedicated to “safe handling of weapons and shooting with air rifles” (Jaunsardzes Centrs, 2020:38). The circumstance that these lessons are taught to teenagers below the age of 18 rather than (young) adults again raises questions about the positioning of young people within the sovereign state’s defence organization.

In addition to the National Defence Education scheme, the Latvian Defence Ministry provides summer camps for pupils of grades 10 and 11 – thus 16- to 17-year-olds. Complementary to National Defence Education, these camps are intended to deepen knowledge about defence matters and improve skills in military fighting techniques such as field combat skills and small-calibre and assault rifle shooting (Jaunsardzes Centrs, 2021:55–58). In fact, the camps provide a course that explicitly equates with the first phase of basic military training (Aizsardzības ministrija, 2019:10). Latvia is a special case among the several European countries that provide military summer camps, as the Latvian Defence Concept of 2020 explicitly stated that these camps “train reservists who are resilient to threats and able to mobilize in a critical situation. In a crisis, this will be the most active, mobile and capable part of society, able to defend themselves and their fellow human beings” (Saeima, 2020:19). Although this paragraph is missing in the most recent Latvian Defence Strategy Paper (Saeima, 2023), the camps are still planned to educate around 5000 young people annually. They are implemented as part of the infrastructure of the Latvian defence apparatus (cf. Aizsardzības ministrija, 2019) and provide basic training for the reserve service (Aizsardzības ministrija, 2019:10f). Hence, young people in Latvia are decidedly thought of as potential defenders of the country, even before reaching the age of full citizenship. This becomes even clearer in the case of the Latvian “Young Guard” (Jaunsardze). Young people from 10 to 21 years of age, who voluntarily sign contracts with Jaunsardze, are explicitly raised here as defenders of the country. The “Young Guards” take a symbolic solemn pledge with which they “promise to perform the duties of a youth guard” (Jaunsardzes Centrs, 2023) and live under the motto “let’s grow for Latvia” (Jaunsardzes Centrs, 2023). They consequently embody republican ideals

par excellence: duties and personal sacrifice for the (national) community, which, in the case of Jaunsardze, are explicitly militarized. Although the programme focuses on military soft skills – e.g. medical first aid, the leading of groups, military mindsets like comradeship, discipline, and knowledge about history and structure of Latvian defence – the public appearance of Jaunsardze is military, if not militant. Images published by Jaunsardze, for instance on Flickr, frequently depict young people in military uniform who stand and walk in line (Jaunsardzes Centrs, 2023).

The Latvian model thus does not only take citizens' duties as the logical counterpart of citizens' rights. In comparison to the French model, the Latvian Defence Strategy does not construct defence education as one of many stations on young people's pathways to citizenship. Instead, it explicitly subjectivizes young people as "Young Guards" who, if they decide to join a military summer camp, for example, are seen as potential military reservists for Latvia's defence, ready and prepared to fight and sacrifice themselves for the country even at a young age. The question of who defends whom and the origins of sovereignty and the decision of whom to employ for securing "the society" become obvious here.

### 3.5 Summary: the militarization and subjectivation of young people in European NATO States

The examples of Sweden, France, and Latvia are specific but not exceptional. Similar processes of youth militarization can be observed in other NATO states (cf. Basham, 2016; Giroux, 2007, 2012; Hörschelmann, 2017; Hörschelmann and Dreßen, 2026; Kershner and Harding, 2019; Wells, 2014a, 2016). The three examples thus rather exemplify and illustrate different ways in which the dictum "society must be defended" leads to the generational separation of who is to defend whom, even at risk of death.

In Sweden, young people's military subjectivation appears to follow the lines of neoliberal governmentality: conducting conduct through incentivization and the promise of benefits while appealing to potential recruits as entrepreneurial subjects. The seemingly unpolitical subjectivation of young people as free individuals striving for the best possibilities enables their necropolitical enrolment as "enterprising soldiers" (Strand, 2022). Such a model may disguise but nonetheless exploit social inequalities in as far as the military is presented as providing job opportunities. The paradox of liberal democracy having to ensure security even if this risks the death for some of its citizens finds expression, however, in the selective conscription mode. Sovereign power returns when there are not enough volunteers and conscription thus becomes obligatory.

In France, this paradox makes way for a republican discourse of moral duty, compared with elements of legal obligations, which connect full rights strictly to defence contributions. In November 2025, the Chief of Defence Staff of France, Fabien Mandon, warned that French Society had to

"accept the risk of losing *children*" (authors' emphasis, "accepter le risque de perdre des enfants"; Maires de France, 2025). This phrasing exemplifies once more the divisive generational logics of necropolitical military subjectivation. It finds its political expression in the declaration of youth politics as "a priority" of French defence politics.

In Latvia, this same prioritization has led to the introduction of a form of national defence education in schools that entails the disciplining of pupils through their bodies and as "capable members of societies", due to their apparent usefulness for national defence. The NDE also normalizes defence duties in Latvia's public discourse by making them a regular part of every children's upbringing. The summer camps and Young Guards further subjectivize children and young people through military discipline.

## 4 Conclusion

What happens when militarization provides the most legitimate framing mechanism for how we relate to ourselves, each other and the rest of the world? (Giroux, 2012:239)

The recruitment of young people to war is not a marginal issue – quite the reverse. As we have sought to demonstrate in this paper through a Foucauldian reading of military subjectivation, military security builds on generational hierarchies and the gaps and ambiguities that arise from them. The paper has aimed to demonstrate through three case study examples that children and youth are drawn into military politics through processes of biopolitical subjectivation which in turn legitimize the continual reproduction of military violence and the unequal distribution of life and death. We have shown that liberal rationalities of self-governance can be mobilized for military recruitment, but that this does not replace the sovereign power of the state in enforcing the enrolment of young people into military discourses and practices. Coercion, discipline, and exploitation continue not least because of the centrality of children and youth for securing societal futures – the biopolitical imperative of making life live. Drawing on Mbembe's concept of necropolitics, we have further argued that military recruitment exposes young people to death and violence in the name of defending life while enlisting them in necropolitical securitization.

The subjectivation of young people within liberal biopolitical regimes also produces contradictions, however, that can form the basis for de-normalizing and problematizing militarization (Basham et al., 2015; Enloe, 2015; Rech et al., 2015; Sylvester, 2013). To pay attention to generational hierarchies and the necropolitical enrolment of young people by means of military subjectivation enables the recognition of tensions in ethical frameworks, narratives of security, and logics of democratic citizenship. It raises questions about what young people's agency in security politics means (cf. Beier, 2011, 2015), where responsibility starts and ends, and

how generation- and age-related power relations that mould, restrain, and exploit this agency can be made visible. Problematizing current normalizations in military security logics can lead to the kinds of politicization that are urgently needed if democratic rather than authoritarian solutions are to be found. For, as Dean (1999/2009:37) explained:

By becoming clear on how regimes of practices operate, we become clear on how forms of domination, relations of power and kinds of freedom and autonomy are linked, how such regimes are contested and resisted, and thus how it might be possible to do things differently.

Ethically, it is not an alternative, in our view, to decrease protection rights for children and young people in exchange for political enfranchisement at an earlier age, especially given the risks of enrolment in the politics of death qua militarization. We agree with Philo and Smith (2013:143–144) here, who view children and youth as “determinedly part of the body-politic” but argue that “adult politics should be precisely about protecting them from the press of much that is so problematic about the politics of adulthood, while still seeking to ascertain their needs and wants, their hopes and fears, and striving to create conditions and resources able to realize not just their survival but also their flourishing”.

**Data availability.** No data sets were used in this article.

**Author contributions.** LD conducted the case study research, analysis, and presentation. KH led the development of the conceptual framework and authored the literature-based, theoretical sections of the article with contributions from LD.

**Competing interests.** The contact author has declared that neither of the authors has any competing interests.

**Disclaimer.** Publisher’s note: Copernicus Publications remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims made in the text, published maps, institutional affiliations, or any other geographical representation in this paper. The authors bear the ultimate responsibility for providing appropriate place names. Views expressed in the text are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher.

**Review statement.** This paper was edited by Lucas Pohl and reviewed by two anonymous referees. The editorial decision was reached by both guest editors, Lucas Pohl and Jan Hutta.

## References

- Abowitz, K. K. and Harnish, J.: Contemporary Discourses of Citizenship, *Rev. Educ. Res.*, 76, 653–690, <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543076004653>, 2006.
- Aizsardzības ministrija: Saeima apstiprina Valsts aizsardzības dienesta likumu, Latvian Minister of Defence, Ināra Mūrniece, <https://www.mod.gov.lv/lv/zinas/saeima-apstiprina-valsts-aizsardzibas-dienesta-likumu> (last access: 15 August 2024), 2023.
- Aizsardzības ministrija: Informatīvais ziņojums. Par valsts aizsardzības mācības ieviešanu un Jaunsardzes attīstību 2019–2027, Gadā, Rīga, 2019.
- Aizsardzības ministrija: Valsts aizsardzības mācība, <https://www.mod.gov.lv/lv/nozares-politika/visaptverosa-valsts-aizsardziba/sabiedribas-izglitosana/valsts-aizsardzibas-maciba> (last access: 23 October 2025), 2024.
- Ailwood, J.: Genealogies of governmentality: Producing and managing young children and their education, *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 31, 19–33, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03249526>, 2004.
- Attal, M. G.: Déclaration de politique générale de M. Gabriel Attal, Premier ministre, sur les grandes orientations de la politique gouvernementale notamment en matière d’industrialisation, de santé, d’éducation, de sécurité et d’agriculture, à l’Assemblée nationale le 30 janvier 2024, <https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours/292847-declaration-de-politique-generale-gabriel-attal-30012024> (last access: 15 August 2024), 2024.
- Bartlett, L. and Lutz, C.: Disciplining social difference: Some cultural politics of military training in public high schools, *The Urban Review*, 30, 119–136, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1023252527956>, 1998.
- Bartos, A. E.: Children and young people’s political participation: A critical analysis, in: *Politics, citizenship and rights*, edited by: Kallio, K. P., Mills, S., and Skelton, T, Springer, Singapore, 15 pp., [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4585-94-1\\_1-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4585-94-1_1-1), 2015.
- Basham, V. M.: Raising an army: the geopolitics of militarizing the lives of working-class boys in an age of austerity, *Int. Polit. Sociol.*, 10, 258–274, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olw013>, 2016.
- Basham, V. M.: Everyday modalities of militarization: beyond unidirectional, state-centric, and simplistic accounts of state violence, *Critical Military Studies*, 10, 142–146, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2022.2070692>, 2024.
- Basham, V. M., Belkin, A., and Gifkins, J.: What is Critical Military Studies?, *Critical Military Studies*, 1, 1–2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2015.1006879>, 2015.
- Beier, J. M.: *The Militarization of Childhood*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, New York, <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137002143>, 2011.
- Beier, J. M.: Children, childhoods, and security studies: an introduction, *Critical Studies on Security*, 3, 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21624887.2015.1019715>, 2015.
- Beier, J. M.: *Childhood and the Production of Security*, Routledge, London, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315628233>, 2017.
- Beier, J. M. and Tabak, J.: Children, childhoods, and everyday militarisms, *Childhood*, 27, 281–293, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568220923902>, 2020.
- Beier, J. M. and Tabak, J.: Other Childhoods: Finding Children in Peace and Conflict, in: *Childhoods in Peace and Conflict*,

- edited by: Beier, J. M. and Tabak, J., Springer International Publishing, Cham, 19 pp., [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-74788-6\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-74788-6_1), 2021.
- Bosniak, L.: Citizenship denationalized, *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, 7, 447–508, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20644737> (last access: 15 January 2026), 2000.
- Boyden, J.: Children, war and world disorder in the 21st century: a review of the theories and the literature on children's contributions to armed violence, *Conflict, Security & Development*, 7, 255–279, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800701333051>, 2007.
- Boyden, J. and de Berry, J. (Eds.): *Children and youth on the front line*, Berghahn, New York, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781782381891>, 2004.
- Brennan, E.: Necropolitics and surplus life: Mbembe and beyond, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 41, 3–19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764241229203>, 2024.
- Brocklehurst, H.: Just war? Just children?, in: *Just war theory: a reappraisal*, edited by: Evans, M., Edinburgh University Press, 114–133, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-10912-5\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-10912-5_6), 2005.
- Brocklehurst, H.: Who's afraid of children?: Children, conflict and international relations, Routledge, London, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315234106>, 2006.
- Brocklehurst, H.: The state of play: Securities of childhood–insecurities of children, in: *Childhood and the Production of Security*, edited by: Beier, J. M., Routledge, London, 39–56, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315628233>, 2017.
- Burridge, J. and McSorley, K.: Too fat to fight?: Obesity, biopolitics and the militarisation of children's bodies, in: *War and the Body*, edited by: McSorley, K., Routledge, London, 62–77, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203081419>, 2013.
- Cockburn, C.: From where we stand: War, women's activism and feminist analysis, Zed Books, London, ISBN 9781848136786, 2008.
- Cockburn, C.: Gender relations as causal in militarization and war: A feminist standpoint, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 12, 139–157, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616741003665169>, 2010.
- Coleman, M. and Grove, K.: Biopolitics, Biopower, and the Return of Sovereignty, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 27, 489–507, <https://doi.org/10.1068/d3508>, 2009.
- Collins, R. F.: Children, War and Propaganda, *Mediating American History*, no. 6, Peter Lang Publishing, New York, ISBN 9781433103827, 2011/2023.
- Cowen, D.: Fighting For “Freedom”: The End of Conscriptio in the United States and the Neoliberal Project of Citizenship, *Citizenship Studies*, 10, 167–183, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621020600633101>, 2006.
- Cowen, D.: *Military Workfare: The Soldier and Social Citizenship in Canada*, University of Toronto Press, <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442688629>, 2008.
- Czech Ministry of Defence: *Koncepce výstavby Armády České republiky 2025*, Praha, [https://mocr.mo.gov.cz/images/id\\_40001\\_50000/46088/KVA\\_R\\_ve\\_ejn\\_verze.pdf](https://mocr.mo.gov.cz/images/id_40001_50000/46088/KVA_R_ve_ejn_verze.pdf) (last access: 14 January 2026), 2015.
- De Larrinaga, M. and Doucet, M. G.: Sovereign power and the biopolitics of human security, *Security Dialogue*, 39, 517–537, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010608096148>, 2008.
- Dean, M.: *Governmentality: Power and rule in modern society*, Sage, Los Angeles, ISBN 9781847873842, 1999/2009.
- Dean, M.: Liberal government and authoritarianism, *Economy and Society*, 31, 37–61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03085140120109240>, 2002.
- Dean, M.: *Governing societies: Political perspectives on domestic and international rule*, McGraw-Hill Education (UK), Maidenhead, ISBN 9780335208975, 2007.
- Dean, M.: The concept of authoritarian governmentality today, *Global Society*, 39, 16–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2024.2362739>, 2025.
- Dean, M. and Henman, P.: *Governing society today: Editors' introduction*, *Alternatives*, 29, 483–494, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030437540402900501>, 2004.
- Dean, M. and Larsson, O. L.: Sovereignty and sovereign powers in global governmentality, in: *The Globality of Governmentality*, edited by: Busse, J., Routledge, London, 85–102, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003044727>, 2021.
- Dillon, M.: Sovereignty and governmentality: from the problematics of the “new world order” to the ethical problematic of the world order, *Alternatives*, 20, 323–368, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030437549502000303>, 1995.
- Dillon, M.: The security of governance, in: *Global governmentality*, edited by: Larner, W. and Walters, W., Routledge, 76–94, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203458488>, 2004.
- Dillon, M.: Security, Race and War, in: *Foucault on politics, security and war*, edited by: Dillon, M. and Neal, A., Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 166–196, <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230229846>, 2008.
- Dillon, M.: *Biopolitics of Security: A political analytic of finitude*, Routledge, London, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315725017>, 2015.
- Dillon, M. and Neal, A.: Introduction, in: *Foucault on politics, security and war*, edited by: Dillon, M. and Neal, A., Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, and New York, US, 18 pp., <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230229846>, 2008.
- Dillon, M. and Reid, J.: *The liberal way of war: Killing to make life live*, Routledge, London, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203882542>, 2009.
- Dreyfus, H. L. and Rabinow, P. (Eds.): *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*, Routledge, London, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315835259>, 2014.
- Enloe, C.: The recruiter and the sceptic: a critical feminist approach to military studies, *Critical Military Studies*, 1, 3–10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2014.961746>, 2015.
- Enloe, C.: *Globalization and militarism: Feminists make the link*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, London, ISBN 9781442265455, 2016.
- Evans, B.: Foucault's legacy: Security, war and violence in the 21st century, *Security Dialogue*, 41, 413–433, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010610374313>, 2010.
- Friedman, M.: *Capitalism and Freedom*. University of Chicago Press, ISBN 9780226264219, 2002 [1962].
- Friedman, M.: *Why Not a Voluntary Army?*, *New Individualist Review* 4, 3–9, 1967.
- Försvarsmakten: *Jobb & Utbildning*, <https://jobb.forsvarsmakten.se/sv/> (last access: 15 August 2024), 2024a.
- Försvarsmakten: *Förmåner och villkor under grundutbildning med värnplikt*, <https://jobb.forsvarsmakten.se/sv/utbildning/grundutbildning/villkor/>, (last access: 15 August 2024), 2024b.

- Foucault, M.: *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: The Will to Knowledge*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Penguin, Harmondsworth, ISBN 9780141037646, 1978.
- Foucault, M.: *Power/knowledge. Selected interviews and other writings 1972–1977*, edited by: Gordon, C., Pantheon: New York, Pantheon, ISBN 978-0394739540, 1980.
- Foucault, M.: *Governmentality*, in: *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by: Burchell, G., Gordon, C. and Miller, P., Harvester Wheatsheaf, London, 87–104, ISBN 9780226080451, 1991.
- Foucault, M.: *Dits et écrits IV*, Gallimard, Paris, ISBN 2070739899, 1994.
- Foucault, M.: *Ethics: subjectivity and truth: essential works of Michel Foucault 1954–1984*, edited by: Paul Rabinow, Penguin Books, London (UK), ISBN 9780141991382, 1997.
- Foucault, M.: *Society Must Be Defended. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, Picador, New York, ISBN 9780312422660, 2003.
- Giroux, H.: *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex*. Boulder: Paradigm, Boulder, ISBN 978-1-59451-423-4, 2007.
- Giroux, H.: *Disposable Youth: Racialized Memories, and the Culture of Cruelty*, Routledge, New York, ISBN 9780415508131, 2012.
- Government Offices of Sweden: *Sweden's Defence Policy 2016 to 2020*, [https://government.se/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/sweden\\_defence\\_policy\\_2016\\_to\\_2020](https://government.se/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/sweden_defence_policy_2016_to_2020) (last access: 15 August 2024), 2015.
- Hart, J.: *The Politics of "Child Soldiers"*, *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 13, 217–226, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24590655> (last access: 15 January 2026), 2006.
- Hörschelmann, K.: *Crossing points: Contesting militarism in the spaces of children's everyday lives in Britain and Germany*, in: *Children, young people and critical geopolitics*, edited by: Benwell, M. C. and Hopkins, P., Routledge, London, 29–44, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315562827-2>, 2017.
- Hörschelmann, K.: *Mind the gap: citizenship, militarisation, and the agencies of children*, *Critical Studies on Security*, 13, 281–284, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21624887.2025.2503576>, 2025.
- Hörschelmann, K. and Dreßen, L.: *Loyal subjects? Logics of military recruitment in contemporary Germany*, in: *Childhood, Militarism and Everyday Life*, edited by: Beier, J. M. and Tabak, J., Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2026.
- Huntington, S.: *The soldier and the state*. University of Harvard Press, Cambridge, ISBN 9780674817364, 1957.
- Hyndman, J.: *Mind the gap: Bridging feminist and political geography through geopolitics*, *Political Geography*, 23, 307–322, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2003.12.014>, 2004.
- Jaunsardzes Centrs: *Valsts aizsardzības mācība*, [https://www.jc.gov.lv/sites/jic/files/document/VAM\\_programma\\_2021.pdf](https://www.jc.gov.lv/sites/jic/files/document/VAM_programma_2021.pdf) (last access: 20 January 2026), 2020.
- Jaunsardzes Centrs: *Interesu izglītības*, Rīga, [https://www.jc.gov.lv/sites/jic/files/document/JS\\_programma\\_apstiprinata-1.pdf](https://www.jc.gov.lv/sites/jic/files/document/JS_programma_apstiprinata-1.pdf) (last access: 14 January 2026), 2021.
- Jaunsardzes Centrs: *Kā kiūt par jaunsargu*, <https://jc.gov.lv/lv/ka-klut-par-jaunsargu> (last access: 15 August 2024), 2023.
- Jaunsardzes Centrs: *Valsts aizsardzības mācība*, Rīga, [https://rjv.lv/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Valsts-aizsardzibas-maciba\\_programma-2024\\_1.pdf](https://rjv.lv/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Valsts-aizsardzibas-maciba_programma-2024_1.pdf) (last access: 14 January 2026), 2024.
- Kaempf, S. and Stahl, R.: *Elimination Games: The Global Rise of Military Reality TV and the Shaping of the Citizen Subject*, *Millennium*, 51, 643–662, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298231175980>, 2023.
- Kershner, S. and Harding, S.: *Militarism goes to school*, *Critical Military Studies*, 5, 191–194, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2019.1634321>, 2019.
- Krebs, R. R.: *Fighting for Rights: Military Service and the Politics of Citizenship*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, ISBN 9780801444654, 2006.
- Krebs, R. R.: *The citizen-soldier tradition in the united states: Has its demise been greatly exaggerated?*, *Armed Forces & Society*, 36, 153–174, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X09337370>, 2009.
- Lee, N. and Motzkau, J.: *Navigating the biopolitics of childhood*, *Childhood*, 18, 7–19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568210371526>, 2011.
- Levy, Y.: *How military recruitment affects collective action and its outcomes*, *International Studies Quarterly*, 57, 28–40, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2012.00762.x>, 2013.
- Lutz, C.: *Making Soliders in the Public Schools: An Analysis of the Army JROTC Curriculum*, Diane Publishing, Collingdale, ISBN 0788118951, 1995.
- Lutz, C.: *Militarization*, in: *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*, edited by: Nugent, D. and Vincent, J., Blackwell Publishing Ltd., New Jersey, 318–331, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470693681.ch20>, 2007.
- Maires de France: *Le chef d'État-major des armées demande aux maires de préparer la population aux futurs conflits*, <https://mairesdefrance.com/congresdesmaires-chef-etat-major-armees-demande-preparer-population-aux-conflits-article-28728-0> (last access: 28 November 2025), 2025.
- Mannitz, S.: *Conceptualizations of the democratic soldier in twenty-first century Europe: Competing norms and practical tensions*, in: *Democratic Civil-Military Relations*, edited by: Mannitz, S., Routledge, New York, 3–22, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203113912>, 2012.
- Marten, J. (Ed.): *Children and war. A historical anthology*, New York University Press, ISBN 0814756670, 2002.
- Mbembe, A.: *On the Postcolony*, University of California Press, Berkeley, ISBN 9780520204355, 2001.
- Mbembe, A.: *Necropolitics*, *Public Culture* 15, 11–40, <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-15-1-11>, 2003.
- Mbembe, A.: *Necropolitics*, Duke University Press, New York, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478007227>, 2019.
- McSorley, K. (Ed.): *War and the body. militarisation, practice and experience*, Routledge, London, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203081419>, 2013.
- Ministère des Armées: *La Jeunesse Au Coeur De La Defense*, [https://www.defense.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/sga/2022\\_NP\\_SGA-DSNJ\\_Vade-mecum-classe-de-defense.pdf](https://www.defense.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/sga/2022_NP_SGA-DSNJ_Vade-mecum-classe-de-defense.pdf) (last access: 15 August 2024), 2022.
- Ministère des Armées: *Jeunesse*, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/sga/au-service-nation-du-public/jeunesse> (last access: 15 August 2024), 2023a.
- Ministère des Armées: *Plan "Ambition armées-jeunesse"*, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/sga/au-service-nation-du-public/jeunesse/plan-ambition-armees-jeunesse> (last access: 15 August 2024), 2023b.

- Ministère des Armées: Commission armées-jeunesse (CAJ), <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/sga/commission-armees-jeunesse-caj> (last access: 15 August 2024), 2023c.
- Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia: Frequently asked questions about the National Defence Service, <https://www.mod.gov.lv/en/state-defence-service/frequently-asked-questions-about-state-defence-service>, last access: 15 August 2024.
- Mosse, G. L.: *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, Oxford University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195071399.001.0001>, 1990.
- NATO (Ed.): *NATO Strategic Concept 2022*, Madrid, <https://www.nato.int/content/dam/nato/webready/documents/publications-and-reports/strategic-concepts/2022/290622-strategic-concept.pdf> (last access: 15 January 2026), 2022.
- Pfaffenzeller, S.: *Conscription and Democracy. The Mythology of Civil–Military Relations*, *Armed Forces & Society*, 36, 481–504, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X09351226>, 2010.
- Plikt- och prövningsverket: *Mönstring & Värnplik*, Karlstadt, 2023.
- Plikt- och prövningsverket: *Om myndigheten* In English, <https://plikverket.se/om-myndigheten/in-english>, last access: 15 August 2024.
- Philo, C.: *Foucault’s children*, in: *Geographies of Children, Youth and Families*, edited by: Holt, L., Routledge, London, 47–74, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203863305>, 2010.
- Philo, C.: “Bellicose History” and “Local Discursivities”: An archaeological reading of Michel Foucault’s *Society Must be Defended*, in: *Space, Knowledge and Power*, edited by: Crampton, J. and Eldon, S., Routledge, London and New York, 341–368, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315610146>, 2016.
- Philo, C. and Smith, F. M.: *Guest editorial: Political geographies of children and young people*, *Space and Polity*, 7, 99–115, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1356257032000133883>, 2013.
- Powel, B.: *The soldier’s tale: Problematising Foucault’s military foundations*, *Review of International Studies*, 43, 833–854, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210517000171>, 2017.
- Rabinow, P. and Rose, N.: *Biopower today*, *BioSocieties*, 1, 195–217, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1745855206040014>, 2006.
- Rech, M. F.: *Recruitment, counter-recruitment and critical military studies*, *Global Discourse*, 4, 244–262, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23269995.2014.909243>, 2014.
- Rech, M., Bos, D., Jenkins, K. N., Williams, A., and Woodward, R.: *Geography, military geography, and critical military studies*, *Critical Military Studies*, 1, 47–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2014.963416>, 2015.
- Robbins, C. G.: *Expelling Hope: The Assault on Youth and the Militarization of Schooling*, Cambridge University Press, <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.18253489>, 2008.
- Rose, N.: *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought*, Cambridge University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511488856>, 1999.
- Rose, N.: *Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century*, Princeton University Press, ISBN 9781400827503, 2007.
- Saeima: *Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija*, Riga, [https://www.mod.gov.lv/sites/mod/files/document/VAK\\_2016\\_2020.pdf](https://www.mod.gov.lv/sites/mod/files/document/VAK_2016_2020.pdf) (last access: 15 January 2026), 2016.
- Saeima: *Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija*, Riga, [https://www.mod.gov.lv/sites/mod/files/document/AiMVAK\\_2020\\_projekts.pdf](https://www.mod.gov.lv/sites/mod/files/document/AiMVAK_2020_projekts.pdf) (last access: 15 January 2026), 2020.
- Saeima: *Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija*, Riga, [https://www.mod.gov.lv/sites/mod/files/document/AiMVAK\\_2020\\_projekts.pdf](https://www.mod.gov.lv/sites/mod/files/document/AiMVAK_2020_projekts.pdf) (last access: 15 January 2026), 2023.
- Sangster, E.: *The military’s influence in UK education*, in: *Sowing Seeds: The Militarization of Youth and How to Counter It*, War Resisters International, edited by: Everett, O., 86–93, <https://wri-irg.org/en/story/2013/militarys-influence-uk-education> (last access: 15 January 2026), 2013.
- Shaw, I. G. R.: *Playing war*, *Social & Cultural Geography*, 11, 789–803, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2010.521855>, 2010.
- Sjoberg, L. and Via, S. (Eds.): *Gender, war, and militarism: feminist perspectives*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing, Santa Barbara, ISBN 9780313391439, 2010.
- Stengel, F. A. and Shim, D.: *Militarizing antimilitarism? Exploring the gendered representation of military service in German recruitment videos on social media*, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 24, 608–631, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2021.1935289>, 2022.
- Strand, S.: *The birth of the enterprising soldier: governing military recruitment and retention in post-Cold War Sweden*, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 47, 225–247, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2021.1997797>, 2022.
- Strand, S.: *The Reactivation and Reimagination of Military Conscription in Sweden*, *Armed Forces & Society*, 0, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X231164740>, 2023.
- Su Rasmussen, K.: *Foucault’s genealogy of racism*, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 28, 34–51, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276411410448>, 2011.
- Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency: *If Crisis or War Comes*, Karlstad, <https://rib.msb.se/filer/pdf/28706.pdf> (last access: 9 February 2023), 2018.
- Sylvester, C.: *War as experience: Contributions from international relations and feminist analysis*, London: Routledge, London, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203100943>, 2013.
- Wells, K.: *Marching to be somebody: a governmentality analysis of online cadet recruitment*, *Children’s Geographies*, 12, 339–353, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2014.922680>, 2014a.
- Wells, K.: *Children, youth, and subjectivity*, *Children’s Geographies*, 12, 263–267, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2014.927053>, 2014b.
- Wells, K.: *Governing the global child: Biopolitics and liberal subjectivities*, in: *Geographies of global issues: Change and threat*, edited by: Ansell, N., Klocker, N., and Skelton, T., Springer, Singapore, 237–255, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4585-54-5\\_26](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4585-54-5_26), 2016.
- Wessells, M. G.: *Children and armed conflict: Introduction and overview*. *Peace and Conflict, Journal of Peace Psychology*, 22, 198–207, <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000176>, 2016.
- Wood, B. E.: *Youth citizenship: Expanding conceptions of the young citizen*, *Geography Compass*, 16, e12669, <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12669>, 2022.
- Woodward, R.: *Military geographies*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., Hoboken, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470774793>, 2004.
- Woodward, R. and Duncanson, C.: *Gendered divisions of military labour in the British armed forces*, *Defence Studies*, 16, 205–228, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2016.1180958>, 2016.

Woodyer, T.: Ludic geographies: Not merely child's play, *Geography Compass*, 6, 313–326, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2012.00477.x>, 2012.

Woodyer, T. and Carter, S.: Toying with militarization: children and war on the homefront, in: *Discovering Childhood in International Relations*, edited by: Beier, J. M., Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 155–178, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46063-1\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46063-1_8), 2020.