

Abstract

While conscription has been experiencing a modest, albeit notable comeback in the past decade, the emergence of its gender-neutral variant is largely overlooked. Through a comparative case study of Norway, Sweden, and Finland, this thesis explores the reasons that led to or hindered the introduction of gender-neutral conscription in the three Nordic countries. Given the countries' similarities in many areas, the thesis aims to explain why Norway and Sweden introduced gender-neutral conscription, whereas Finland retained conscription only for men. To do that, the three cases are analysed using an original framework based on the surveyed literature, which features the following factors: national security situation, role and character of conscription, its legitimisation, integration of women into the military and thematization of gender equality in the military. On the one hand, the analysis identifies common patterns in the cases of Norway and Sweden across most of the factors. In the two countries, the security situation was perceived to be relatively favourable, conscription was used as a tool for the recruitment of future active-duty soldiers and thus the practice was considerably selective, conscription was reformulated to address changing circumstances, women were integrated into the military early, and gender inequality in the AFs was perceived as a problem. In Finland, on the other hand, Russia has been perceived as a somewhat of a threat, the objective of conscription is to train as many people as possible, conscription is legitimised on the same grounds as before, women were allowed into the military comparatively later, and gender equality in the military is not considered a priority.

