

## **Introduction**

What is the relationship between the role of the modern German military and the formation of German national identity today? Over fifty years have passed since the end of the Second World War and the trauma of the Nazi campaign still haunts the concept of a German military force. However, Germany's authoritarian past did not prevent it from participating in NATO missions in Bosnia. It is unclear how Germany's tragic history has affected its recent decision to station troops abroad. Indeed, Germany is grappling with both a "normalized" and nuanced military role. Given the tone of recent news coverage, political discourse and elements of pop culture regarding the military, I argue that the role of the military in Germany exemplifies the overarching problematic affecting the postwar norms of German national identity.

As the largest country in the EU and third largest economy in the world, Germany's actions and reputation prove to be regionally and internationally significant. German leadership and representation in international bodies communicate strategic interests and present strong voices in the formulation of policy, which inevitably achieve global impact. The military philosophy of the United States has pushed the European continent and the international community to prioritize the discussion of preemptive military ventures and foreign occupational forces and to articulate both oppositional and complementary security positions. It has therefore also become a political necessity for the German government and the extension of its power as a member of international organizations to deal with the heightened importance of issues of global terrorism (in particular, as dictated by the U.S.). In dealing with the intense international pressure for military action in response to perceived terrorist threats, Germany has had to make decisions

involving the deployment of its own troops.

The most important international engagement of German forces currently is in the northern region of Afghanistan, where about 3,500 soldiers are stationed. Controversy has recently surfaced regarding both an increase in the number of German soldiers in Afghanistan, as well as a shifting of more soldiers to the South, where the resistance of the Taliban fighters is the strongest. Pressure has been coming from Germany's NATO allies, who would like to see such an enlargement in the military capacity of German troops, in contrast to the disapproval of the German public, who would largely like to see its soldiers leave Afghanistan. This dynamic will continue to affect relations with the US, in a serious way, due to our projected long-term Middle East agenda, and will affect future relations with any and all international powers when crises arrive that call for collecting forces for the purpose of facing a conflict. As a country of means (capital and human capital), it is worthwhile to examine Germany's navigation of accelerating supranational responsibilities in order to see how it could contribute to such trends, especially when the power of memory may still impact German and regional politics and public consciousness.

In my research I hope to add to the academic literature propounding Germany's thorough transformation since the trauma of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I will argue that the current national debate regarding German troop engagement, while obviously political, is also inherently cultural and psychological. Furthermore, the terms of the discussion demonstrate a transformation of postwar German identity norms. This debate is indicative of the intersection of several socio-cultural factors pulling German identity in different directions. German politicians from the first postwar generations are being pulled in two different directions. On the one hand,

they are still determined to maintain Germany's reputation for institutional diplomacy, multilateralism and general passivity or unwillingness to commit boots on the ground. On the other hand, the government is feeling pressured by the responsibilities expected of NATO/EU member states and by the current security climate in a post-9/11 world. The German youth who face a military service requirement are similarly divided. While in some respects they are more ambivalent towards German statehood, they are also open to societal norms associated with a "healthy" sense of nationalism. All of these perspectives are affected by the greater trends that point to a weakening of the state, the technological complication of security threats, and the globalization of identity.

Bearing this in mind, I will present the findings of a three-pronged investigation into the perspectives of government and society towards the affairs of the modern German military. I will investigate what type of language is used in government documents and by government officials to describe and justify the use of German forces. I will also explore the media coverage of political developments concerning German soldiers and military operations in order to evaluate how the most circulated publications are depicting these situations. Finally, I will consider several recent German films that address the social and psychological aspects of German military engagements in the twenty-first century. I expect to be working with English language media and academic sources as well as German language primary sources by using German internet search engines and the websites of the most widely-circulated German newspapers and magazines. My goal is to put together a comprehensive picture of what impact the attitudes towards Germany's military has on German identity formation today by submitting an explanation of the international politics involved alongside of the consequences of both politically correct and

inevitably emotionally-charged opinions.

## Methodology

I first analyze sources of German print news media. Why newspapers and news magazines? Germany has an exceptionally strong culture of freedom of the press and newspaper and news magazine readership. The German people, in general, (due in part to the financial ease of obtaining a university education) put consistent effort into and take pride in staying informed on political issues, especially in order to involve themselves in heated political discussion with family, friends, and colleagues. Germany ranks fifth in the world for newspaper sales; 305 local, regional, and national papers are sold in Germany for every 1,000 inhabitants.<sup>1</sup>

I have selected relevant articles from a range of German news sources: *Die Tageszeitung*, a left-leaning newspaper, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a right-leaning newspaper, *Die Zeit*, the most read newspaper in Germany, *Der Spiegel*, a renowned German news magazine, which also happens to be Europe's largest weekly news magazine, and provides excellent coverage of the German military presence in Afghanistan, for example, and finally, *Die Bild*, a tabloid newspaper of sorts, which is the most widely read newspaper of its kind in Germany. Relevant articles in *Die Bild* lack depth, but their sensationalism provides unique insight into the political-cultural climate concerning the German military. I accessed these articles primarily through what is available for access on their websites, and in the case of *Der Spiegel*, the hard copy available from the AU library subscription. These publications make up the bulk of

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1 "The Press in Germany," *BBC News*, Published online 31 October, 2006. Available at:

material representing media coverage of German military policy.

What I looked for in these articles is the way in which they are depicting events or describing the discourse or contributing to the discourse around the use of the German military, namely the use of language. I asked, what conclusions do these articles draw? How do the articles relate government to society to the military? What is the tone of the articles? How balanced is the coverage? What actors are included in the reporting? How do the articles refer implicitly or explicitly to the German state, nationalism, and/or German identity?

After analyzing these more formal news-specific media outlets, I explored four films whose pop culture elements prove applicable to the German's view of their military and are insightful in looking at the formation of German identity. I looked specifically at the films, *Nacht Vor Augen* (2008), a documentary about a German soldier who comes home from a stint in Afghanistan, *Kein Bund für's Leben* (2007), a somewhat crude teen comedy about a guy who involuntarily signs up for military service, *Die Innere Sicherheit* (2001) and *Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei* (2003), which depict German anarchist voices towards postmodern identity and the state, and finally, *Snipers Valley: Mörderischer Frieden* (2007), an action drama that depicts the actions of German troops during the Bosnian intervention. These films offered an obvious juxtaposition of German military and German identity, ideal for putting together a broad picture of the social forces at work in German society in direct relation to political mandates. I looked specifically at how the characters in the films represent actual groups in German society, how political topics are shown to affect social relations and the identities of individuals, and how abstract institutions are depicted, such as government and the military, as affecting individual

lives and society as a whole. I considered questions such as, how do these films present the attitudes of different generations? Is the military portrayed in a positive or negative or mixed light? Is the military given a role to play in German society?

Finally, I analyze the language used in government reports and in speeches made by Chancellor Merkel. The German Congress makes available online extensive documents organized according to the topics covered at various hearings. I searched the online databases on government websites using specific search terms. I was able to access a wide array of documents published by the *Bundestag* (German Congress) and *Bundeskanzleramt* (Chancellor's Office) for documents relevant to the affairs of the *Bundeswehr* (German army). On both of these sites, I found short reports which summarize Congressional debates, comprehensive brochures that deal specifically with the German military presence abroad, as well as full transcripts of Chancellor Angela Merkel's speeches. From the hot button topic of the German troop engagement in Afghanistan, I was able to put together broader themes of general government policy and ideological position regarding the use of force. In considering these sources, I asked, on what terms does Congress discuss the role of the military? What issues related to the military garner government attention? What language does the Chancellor use when referring to issues related to the military? How does the Chancellor relate Germany as a state or a society or a nation (again, what terminology is used?) to its military forces?

In pursuit of exploring the relationship between German identity and the role of the German military, I have examined newspaper and magazine articles, films, and government documents using interpretive analysis. Through my own subjective reasoning, I have related the data to my own beliefs concerning future world order and civil society. In this context, I argue

that the debate over the role of the German military implicates the significance of certain trends such as regionalism, the Europeanization and individualization of identity, human security, and the decline of the state. Most pertinent to the academic field (and most interesting for me) is the potentially wide-ranging applicability of connecting transnational *national* military engagements and national identity formation, as interpreted in a German context, to other governments and societies. This potential is partially realized and comes about organically in my analysis, while I seek to prove and explain the relationship between a transnational phenomenon and a domestic population.

In my research, I have sought to explore and uniquely interpret the discourse concerned with the German military as indirectly constructing a relationship between the role of the German military and German identity formation. I attempt to contextualize my findings in terms of several current overarching trends in the international relations field with regard to human rights, security, and global governance. I expected to examine sources whose language depicts an ambivalence regarding German identity in Germany's attempt as a nation to balance pragmatism and idealism, directly relatable to the legacy of the Second World War in questions of security policy. Because I interact with my primary source material in a way which conveys my own bias in looking at Germany, this research is subjective in its analysis. This analysis is thoroughly based on post-positivist assumptions, which reject the use of meta-narratives to explain phenomena and instead identify multiple interrelated facets that affect and create a complex reality.

In support of this purpose, I rely heavily upon an interpretative analysis of qualitative sources. My primary sources provide qualitative data, whose normative interpretations of

political events and circumstances having to do with the German military I have attempted to tease out. The data adequately represents the groups I need to sample in order to present my argument. While this qualitative data set is useful to me in proving or disproving my own position in connecting the depiction of the German military in the media and in government to German identity formation, my research would have benefited from interview data. Due to time and feasibility constraints, I was not able to conduct any interviews with German soldiers or civilians. Such testimony would vitally strengthen a future version of this inquiry.

## **Academic Background**

### Defining Identity

When considering how to analyze German identity, some basic conceptual clarification is required. “Collective identity” and “national identity” are not easy concepts to understand empirically. In order to avoid the many criticisms of “collective identity” as an analytical term that overly assumes homogeneity, Peters attempts to develop a more multidimensional way of evaluating national identity. Nonetheless, he is forced to work from the long academic tradition of looking at national identity within simplistic, and often arbitrary, categories. Friedrich Meinecke first articulated a dichotomous typology of nationhood, coming specifically from the German context, by distinguishing between the “Kulturnation” and the “Staatsnation”. Emerich



K. Francis<sup>2</sup> similarly described nationhood using the terms “ethnos” and “demos”. Both authors ultimately refer to national identity as composed of two competing parts, the “ethnic,” which includes ideas of common genealogy, a common history, shared cultural traditions and customs, and the “civic,” which refers to a shared understanding of self-governance and democracy where legal and political equality guaranteed among citizen-members.” R. M. Lepsius<sup>3</sup> further divided these two categories into four separate types: ethnic, cultural, political, and class. More recent variations include that of S. N. Eisenstadt and Bernhard Giesen<sup>4</sup> who reject the problematic “class” category, distinguishing instead just three “codes” of national identity, namely, “primordial,” “cultural,” and “civic.” More specific to the German debate regarding identity is the contested concept invented by Sternberger<sup>5</sup>, “constitutional patriotism,” which was later considered in detail by Jürgen Habermas.

Peters’ argument concerning the contemporary formation of German identity is a critique of the normative discussion of “ethnic and possibly cultural conceptions of nationhood.”<sup>6</sup> In the scholarly literature, we find an unsubstantiated classification of countries such as France and the United States as examples of “civic” national identity in comparison to Germany’s supposed “ethnic” understanding of identity (Finkelkraut, 1987; Schnapper, 1991; Muller, 1994; Schnapper, 1995). The evidence for this contrast has simply been a comparison of naturalization policy, that is, the application of *ius sanguinis* (citizen by blood) versus *ius soli* (citizen by

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2 Emerich K. Francis, “The ethnic factor in nation-building,” *Social Forces* 68 (1968): 338–46.

3 Rainer Maria Lepsius, „The Nation and Nationalism in Germany,“ *Social Research* 52, no. I (1985): 39-65.

4 S. N. Eisenstadt and Bernhard Giesen, “The Construction of Collective Identity,“ *Archives Europeenes de Sociologie*, XXXVI (1995): 72-102.

5 Dolf Sternberger, *Verfassungspatriotismus*. Frankfurt am Main: Insel-Verlag, 1990.

6 Bernhard Peters, “A New Look at ‘National Identity’: How should we think about ‘collective’ or ‘national identities’? Are there two types of national identities? Does Germany have an ethnic identity, and is it different?” *Arch. Europ. Social*. XLIII no. I (2002), 5.

birth).<sup>7</sup> Peters argues that looking only at naturalization policies alone is an inadequate way of analyzing the formation of national identities. Furthermore, that the various conceptions of national identity are considered competing and/or incompatible categories of identity cannot fully account for the complexity of identity formation within democratic societies. Peters' conceptualization of national identity, therefore, refers to identity formation as a process of creation and reproduction of "the public culture of a modern state-bounded society."<sup>8</sup> By "public culture" Peters means the formal and informal structures that make up the political and social orders of a national public. Peters further argues that national identity formation must be seen as a process "with a past and a future which transcends individual life-spans."<sup>9</sup> National identity must then be seen as an "intergenerational" identity and as a product of socialization. Peters points out the need to consider the presence and authenticity of multiple national identities.\

### Behavior, Culture, and Identity

The pluralistic approach to the study of national identity guides my own thinking in attempting to analyze today's discourse surrounding the role of the German military. I also take into consideration Peters' contention that certain German manifestations of national identity have attempted to construct a kind of legitimized/acceptable version of patriotism strengthened by concern about a supposed resurgence of ethnic nationalism.<sup>10</sup> In other words, I attempt in my research to test the idea that German identity is formulated in such a way as to intentionally

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7 As of 2000, Germany's naturalization policy has been reformed and is no longer based on the concept of *jus sanguinis*.

8 Peters, 12.

avoid undesirable/negative elements of national identity (with regard to the view of the military specifically). I am conscious of Peters' determination that the political Left continues to attribute national identity to a collective responsibility for upholding the principles of democracy whereas the Right more often connects national identity to the idea of national pride. However, I disagree with Peters' characterization of the Right's approach as an example of a "positive" national identity and the Left's portrayal of national identity as necessarily negative in its tendency towards self-criticism.

Habermas' philosophical explanation characterizes German identity formation as "some kind of abstract moral consciousness or even as some structure of rational deliberation"<sup>11</sup> and is often defined using "universalistic principles."<sup>12</sup> I view such articulations of national identity as evidence for the transformative potential of European society. Additionally, if Germany is indeed moving beyond a public appreciation for national identity and demonstrating a preference for more "collective representations" of identity, it seems possible to consider the supranational socio-political implications. To be more specific, as one part of the analytical backdrop of my research, I have considered the importance of national identity for the stability of the state as the main actor in the political order. While Kielmannsegg (1994) argues that a legitimate democracy cannot fully function without, what amounts to, an observable national identity, I would take this a step further and argue that the issues affecting German national identity are attributable to both historical remembrance and the future outlook of Western democracy and nationhood. This argument is supported by the work of Zürn (2000), which defines collective identity as an

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>10</sup> Dieter Oberndörfer, "Nationales oder republikanisches Staatsverständnis," *Sonde* 3 (1988): 3-10.

<sup>11</sup> Jürgen Habermas, „Citizenship and National Identity: some Reflections on the Future of Europe," *Praxis*

understanding involving “solidarity, mutual trust, the mutual acceptance of political measures which in the name of social justice presumably violate or transcend individual self-interest,”<sup>13</sup> in that the idea of legitimacy as the basis of collective identity does not presuppose the state as the social and political construct of identity. Collective identity described as “community of experience” or “community of remembrance” likewise contains no assumption of the state as the underlying organizational space for identity formation.

My research expands upon this identity literature by showing that the German experience potentially challenges traditional notions of national identity formation. As mentioned above, this is possible when taking into account the concept of modern German statehood, which is characterized in the foreign policy literature that debates Germany’s military role. Germany’s interaction with international organizations, i.e. its unequivocal promotion of multilateralism, and perceived position in world politics, i.e. its reluctance to engage its military abroad, challenges the traditional state system. Furthermore, the foreign policy literature describes a problematic tug-of-war between international pressure from governments and supranational institutions to expand German troop participation internationally and domestic pressure to remain semi-pacifist. Authors portray an interconnectivity that suggests that German identity formation is taking place within a web of agency and structure. For example, European institutions and public opinion shape the decisions of the German government at the same time that public opinion is being influenced by European institutions, domestic political culture (and pop culture), as well as by the independent news media.

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*International* 12 (1992-1993): 1-19.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Zürn, „Democratic Governance Beyond the Nation-State: The EU and Other International

Essential to this argument and inherent in the foreign policy literature is the idea that political developments parallel social transformations. Many authors seek to explore the extent of Germany's *political* transformation from a "civilian power" to a "normal" political player. I argue that this transformation necessitates a look at an identity-driven transformation of German civil society in order to discover and explain the relationship between identity and Germany's role in the international arena. I reject the argument made throughout the literature that German foreign policy is avoiding or moving slowly along the road to "normalization," when the term is equated exclusively with militarization. I would argue that Germany's behavior, the result of an evolving national identity, undermines social and political expectations.

Huelisse argues that EU identity is best characterized as "supra-nationalist" rather than post-national, because it continues to construct itself in opposition to an "other." I would counter that although the discourse regarding EU membership is reminiscent of national identity politics, especially in regard to the debate about Turkey, the concept of the EU remains contingent on the possibility of post-national identity formation.

Maull<sup>14</sup> asserts that Germany remains true to its role as a civilian power through a neorealist perspective. He shows how the instances of straying from the "civilian power" path were in many ways fluke situations, and strong evidence suggests that it is precisely in Germany's national interest to continue to promote institutional integration and minimize military engagements of any kind. Duffield, conversely, portrays Germany as a country that

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Institutions," *European Journal of International Relations* 6, no. 2 (2000): 183-221.

<sup>14</sup> Hanns W. Maull. "Germany and the Use of Force: Still a 'Civilian Power?'" *Survival* 42, 2 (Summer 2000): 56-80.

"confounds Neorealism"<sup>15</sup> in that Germany failed to meet neorealist expectations following reunification. Neorealist theorists predicted several scenarios in which Germany would move post-reunification to increase its sphere of influence.

Baumann and Hellmann<sup>16</sup> reject "structuralists" who focus only on political culture and also "actionalists" who emphasize too strongly the role of politicians pushing for remilitarization. They call their approach "interactionist" and put German "decision-makers" in a tug-of-war between an international environment pressuring for Germany to meet heightened military responsibilities and a population uninterested in sending German troops out of the country. Wagner<sup>17</sup> also self-designates his work as "interactionist" and attempts to explain the interplay between "agency" and "structure," for example how both European institutions themselves and Germany's participation in them have come to shape German identity.

Sten Rynning analyzes EU security by examining the ability of its multilevel governance structure to execute military policy in an effective and timely manner. Rynning is navigating between two lines of argument: one in which he deems "optimistic" about the EU "gaining strategic coherence," which argues that the EU can and is successfully retaining its civilian identity while acquiring the ability to use military means, and one which argues that the EU does not have the capacity to respond militarily to external threats due to incompatible domestic security cultures. The latter argument posits the idea that while the EU has developed a common liberal-based political ideology, attitudes towards security issues remain diverse across countries.

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<sup>15</sup> John Duffield. "Political Culture and State Behavior: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism," *International Organization* 53, 4 (Autumn 1999): 765-803.

<sup>16</sup> Rainer Baumann and Gunther Hellmann. "Germany and the Use of Military Force: 'Total War', the 'Culture of Restraint' and the Quest for Normality," *German Politics* 10, 1 (April 2001): 61-82.

<sup>17</sup> Wolfgang Wagner. "De-Europeanization by Default? Germany's EU Policy in Defense and Asylum," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1, 1 (February 2005): 143-164.

I disagree with Rynning's proposition that in order for the EU to fulfill its liberal mission, that is, "the Union must not merely defend its interests but assert its identity,"<sup>18</sup> the EU's organizational military apparatus must be restructured, and according to his suggestions, apparently de-democratized. Rynning seems to use the terms, "weak," "weakness," and "powerlessness" arbitrarily or, at least, narrowly, to describe the EU itself as well as member states. His evaluation of whether or not the EU collectively is or is not becoming more willing to respond to security issues militarily is problematic. An exposition of the few and specific circumstances in which the EU debated and/or decided to use or not to use force cannot ultimately determine the EU's theoretical willingness or unwillingness to become involved militarily, given the infinite number of possible situations that may or may not warrant the use of force. I argue that it makes more sense to be conscious of the greater reality of German political and civil attitudes towards the use of force as existing independently of current, specific engagements.

Despite this criticism, Rynning's application of the idea of a "strategic culture" is helpful to my analysis. Like Rynning, I argue culture and behavior cannot be separated, and, furthermore, that culture should be viewed as the context in which state behavior takes place. I concur with the significance Rynning gives to the new tension arising from perceived terrorist threats in a post-9/11 security climate. Rynning characterizes the tension as the inability of the EU to reconcile its liberal mission of "benevolent progress" with bitter taste of "lethal combat." I would add to this thought by arguing that terrorism as a perceived security threat today challenges the identities of both national and supranational entities as well as those of Europeans

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<sup>18</sup> Sten Rynning, "Towards a Strategic Culture for the EU," *Sage Publications* 34, No. 4 (2003): 483.

as individual citizens of the world. My argument expands upon Rynning's observation in that I see identity as the key to understanding the relationship between political, civil, and security cultures.

While I applaud Rynning's brief consideration of the implications of terrorism's effect on an increasingly complicated postmodern European identity, when he argues that "this particular brand" of terrorism today fundamentally threatens "the West's basic identity and way of life," I find his conclusions ultimately inadequate. That is to say that his argument goes too far in assuming what's primarily needed is the strong and rapidly-executable military means to respond to a threat to Western identity. Relatedly, I also disagree with Rynning's negative perception of a reality in which "the EU is not ready to link the defense of its values to the idea, much less the practice, of pre-emptive strikes."<sup>19</sup> He advocates on behalf of allowing less bureaucratically constrained coalitions to undertake collective EU defense missions. I do not read the same kind of "powerlessness" as Rynning does in an EU both unified by an overarching, yet dynamic, liberal ideological culture as well as remaining grounded by a somewhat diverse set of well-informed and rightfully-concerned national publics. Rynning comes across as skeptical of the European public, claiming that this "era of continuing national diversity" "haunts Europe," and argues that for the sake of security the EU must move to "prevent renewed nationalism and disintegration."<sup>20</sup> I argue that this statement indicates a false reading on Rynning's part of public opinion and mobilization. My analysis of identity themes in German pop culture will attest to the idea that civic skepticism and critical oversight of the use of European military forces abroad are indicative of historical scars and postmodern identity uncertainty, *not* some resurgence of

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<sup>19</sup> Rynning, 489.



nationalism.

Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen explores a cultural explanation for Germany's formal refusal to support the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. In doing so, she lays out the cultural context of German military history including and following the 1991 Gulf War. Given this history, she concludes that Germany's oppositional stance in 2003 does not indicate a "reversion to a pacifist stance," nor is it "a sign of a more nationalistic Germany."<sup>21</sup> I agree with Dalgaard-Nielsen's framing of the argument from a "culturalist" perspective, in which a state's behavior is thought to be a reaction to domestic culture rather than simply a direct response to external events.<sup>22</sup> However, I take issue with Dalgaard-Nielsen's distillation of Germany's strategic culture into a competition between two schools of thought: those who insist, "Never again war," and those who have settled for, "Never again alone." She adds that the former group would evolve to champion the more complicated stance, "Never again Auschwitz." While I concede that these groups might accurately portray the conflict within the discourse of Germany's political elite, I would interpret the disagreement as indicative of a larger identity crisis occurring across the constituent elements of government and society. I find that Dalgaard-Nielsen underestimates of the potential influence of German public opinion on German security culture. My findings suggest that diverse voices within German society are well represented in two politically significant and wide-reaching public forums: print news media and feature film.

The distance between my findings and those of Dalgaard-Nielsen becomes apparent when she attempts to predict future German security behavior according to her cultural

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 491.

<sup>21</sup> Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, "The Test of Strategic Culture: Germany, Pacifism and Pre-Emptive Strikes," *Sage Publications* 36, No. 3 (2005): 339.

categorizations. Her depiction of the stance of German public opinion on the decision to deploy German troops abroad as solely dependent upon the resolution of these two misleadingly distinct frameworks incorrectly divides public sentiment. Instead, I offer the argument that dividing the German public into the categories, “Never again war” and “Never again Auschwitz” becomes irrelevant, when we consider that both stances ultimately represent reactions towards the Second World War that are fundamentally incompatible with current political and military conditions.

In other words, the political stances of both groups employ a problematic logic when they obfuscate definitions of “war” and “genocide” and falsely identify and equate disparate situations by using these terms. National, transnational and supranational identity distinctions are critical to accounting for this confusion. It is for this reason that I find it almost inappropriate to legitimize German political positions which apply 1940s political and cultural norms to policy issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. More helpful would be to acknowledge the tension in German society between postwar social-democratic norms that hold the state responsible for the well-being of society and an utter distrust of the state when it comes to the role and use of military force.

### Normalization

Much of the literature that discusses the role of the German military ultimately questions whether or not Germany can still be labeled a "civilian power," or whether or not Germany has achieved "normality" in its position towards international security. Some authors point immediately to stark changes in Germany's position concerning the role of its military, while

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<sup>22</sup> Dalgaard-Nielsen, 340.

others argue that Germany has not strayed from its image even if certain actions at first appear to prove otherwise. Authors also diverged in their interpretation of the consequences of actions perceived as departures from the post-wars German norm. They either portrayed the events as drawing Germany back to its original attitude/behavior or minimally touched on an analysis of the aftermath in order to insist on an entirely new horizon for German security policy.

The German foreign policy literature on relies heavily upon a complex and evolving German national identity as the explanation for either the exceptionalism or normalization process it exhibits on the global security stage. The authors differ on their analyses of the context of the German military's future participation internationally, ranging from the extremes of the possible development of a semi-isolationist outlook due to an utter lack of resources and popular support to a revamped sense of national self and multilateral responsibility as illustrated by stark social transformations and its negotiated participation in NATO missions.

Cooper<sup>23</sup> attributes the trend towards a "normalization" in Germany's security policy to the media framing of international crises. She explores how the media's portrayal of the Bosnian crisis as a peace-keeping mission to stop a genocide was able to turn around public opinion only two years after eliciting across-the-board ambivalence or worse towards involvement in the Gulf War. Karp<sup>24</sup> views Germany's evolution from fundamentally militarist to fundamentally pacifist as a uniquely German experience. She dismisses putting Germany into any black and white category, and, interestingly, posits the idea of a correlation between the politicization of U.S. foreign policy towards Europe and Germany's perceived passivity.

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<sup>23</sup> Alice Holmes Cooper. "Media Framing and Social Movement Mobilization: German Peace Protest Against INF Missiles, the Gulf War, and NATO Peace Enforcement in Bosnia," *European Journal of Political Research* 41, 1 (January 2003): 37-80.

Almost every author references the term, “normalization,” which is defined as the process of Germany gaining the ability to act freely to pursue its national interests like any other sovereign state of similar size and wealth. However to these authors, normalization is consistently linked to militarization, or at least, an increased willingness to use force to meet its foreign policy objectives. No consideration has been made for the alternative idea that a “normal” global power today might determinedly avoid and consistently relegate the use of military force as an option of last resort. The assumed association of “normalization” with trigger happy foreign policy is admittedly attributable to a realist perspective of international relations. Hyde-Price and Jeffery<sup>25</sup> come the closest to addressing this issue when they, through a social constructivist lens, reject the idea of “normalization” as Germany becoming “rationalist.” They argue that Germany’s foreign policy remains socially constructed and bound by norms, which have become ingrained into the German political establishment.

Germany’s exceptional commitment to the integration and even the creation of international institutions is consistently explained in terms of a somewhat forced political tradition and propensity towards moral considerations, born of both post-WWII political/economic limitations as well as the lessons of the terror of Nazism defining acceptable political practice. However, the literature reveals only a handful of authors who only infrequently and subtly frame Germany’s loyalty to multilateralism and institutionalization as having to do with a practical political agenda very much in support of and even promoting Germany’s national interests. Could it not be possible that German politicians, media and public opinion

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<sup>24</sup> Regina Karp. “The New German Foreign Policy Consensus,” *The Washington Quarterly* 29, 1 (Winter 2005-06): 61-82.

<sup>25</sup> Adrian Hyde-Price and Charlie Jeffery. “Germany in the European Union: Constructing Normality,” *Journal*

regard German foreign policy, which avoids any form of military involvement, as simply the most effective policy rather than as the only policy available to them due to the impact of a complicated, debilitating amalgamation of latent societal guilt and political paranoia?

Minimal attention is given in the literature to the international terrorism phenomenon as a point of controversy regarding Germany's use of its military. Developments in international military cooperation in the global war on terror are relatively recent and continue to challenge Germany's commitment to effective multilateralism in fulfilling its role as a European partner and as a world power. I incorporate today's current military affairs into the bigger picture of a progressive German identity and, like Karp, avoid any narrow conclusions for the sake of fitting into one of the mutually exclusive competing frameworks.

### **German Identity and the Role of the Military**

The German *Bundeswehr* is made up of about 245,000 soldiers.<sup>26</sup> 190,000 of these soldiers are career soldiers; 33,600 are at any given time fulfilling their military service requirement (*Wehrpflicht*), which since 2002 has been set at 9 months; some 21,400 are volunteers who have lengthened their required time of service.<sup>27</sup> About four percent of the active duty troops are women (military service was opened to women in 2001).<sup>28</sup> Germany allocated a

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of *Common Market Studies* 39, 4 (November 2001): 689-717.

<sup>26</sup> Deutscher Bundestag. „Die Bundeswehr.“ Published June 18, 2008. Made printable online in 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

defense budget of over 29 million Euros in 2008.<sup>29</sup> Germany categorizes its conflict forces (*Streitkraefte*) thusly: about 35,000 soldiers quickly able to be mobilized for multinational crisis interventions of a high intensity<sup>30</sup>, about 70,000 soldiers for peacekeeping and stabilization of middle intensity<sup>31</sup>, and about 147,000 soldiers to make up support forces engaged in training, logistics and administration<sup>32</sup>. In terms of actual overseas engagements, the *Bundeswehr* has participated in:

- The Kosovo Force since June 1999, where today about 2,870 soldiers are stationed there with the mandate: "Development of a multiethnic, peaceful, lawful, and democratic environment, broad humanitarian aid."<sup>33</sup>
- The European Union Force in Bosnia-Herzegovina since November 2004, where about 140 soldiers are stationed with the mandate: "special military security of the Dayton Peace Treaty."<sup>34</sup>
- Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean since November 2001 with the mandate: "Surveillance of Reports on the Mediterranean with regard to the fight against international terrorism,"<sup>35</sup> (though no soldiers are currently stationed there).
- the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur since November 2007, where one soldier is stationed with the mandate: "Support of the Darfur Peace Accords from May 2006 and the current peace negotiations."<sup>36</sup>
- the United Nations Mission in Sudan since April 2005, where currently 38 unarmed soldiers are stationed with the mandate: "Supervision of peace treaties, Pacification of the conflict region, Darfur."<sup>37</sup>
- the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon since September 2006, where currently 470

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, "Schnell einsetzbar, fuer multinationale Kriseninterventionen hoer Intensitaet."

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, "Friedenserhaltende Stabilisierungsmass nahmen mittler Intensitaet."

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, "Hauptsaechlich in Ausbildung, Logistik und Verwaltung taetig."

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, "Entwicklung eines multiethnischen, friedlichen, rechtsstaatlichen und demokratischen Umfelds, umfassende humanitaere Hilfe," 14.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, "Insbesondere militaerische Absicherung des Friedensvertrags von Dayton," 14.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, "Ueberwachung von Bereichen des Mittelmeers im Rahmen der Bekaempfung des internationalen Terrorismus," 14.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, "Unterstuetzung des Darfur-Friedensabkommens vom 5. Mai 2006 sowie der derzeit stattfindenden Friedensverhandlungen," 14.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, "Ueberwachung des Friedensvertrags, Befriedung der Konfliktregion Darfur," 14.

soldiers are stationed with the mandate: "Supervision of the ceasefire on the 121 kilometer border with Israel."<sup>38</sup>

- the International Security Assistance Force since December 2001, where currently about 3,470 soldiers and six "tornado" jets are stationed with the mandate: "Human rights protection, Establishment and protection of internal security."<sup>39</sup>
- the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia since June 1994, where currently 3 soldiers, 2 doctors, and 6 sanitation sergeants are stationed with the mandate: "Observance of ceasefire agreement, Mitigation of conflict between the ethnic groups of Georgians and the Abkhassians."<sup>40</sup>
- the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea since January 2004, where one unarmed soldier as observer is stationed with the mandate: "Observance of the ceasefire and the demilitarized zone between both states."<sup>41</sup>
- Operation Enduring Freedom on the Horn of Africa since November 2001, where currently 250 soldiers are stationed with the mandate: "Sea region surveillance and protection of sea lanes in the fight against international terrorism."<sup>42</sup>

Starting at the age of 18, *Wehrpflicht* is required of all German men. Conscripted soldiers are not permitted to participate in engagements abroad. This duty can also be carried out in the form of civil service if the claim of conscientious objection is made. According to the *Bundeswehr* website, several reasons for the draft are outlined: protection of Germany, European cooperation, experience, intelligence, and training.<sup>43</sup> More specifically, conscripted German soldiers provide help to the German people during natural disasters, prevent terrorist attacks, cooperate and work together to fulfill NATO and the EU security policy, gain practical and

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, "Ueberwachung des Waffenstillstands an der 121 Kilometer langen Grenzlinie zu Israel," 15.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, "insbesondere Wahrung der Menschenrechte, Herstellung und Wahrung der inneren Sicherheit," 15.

<sup>40</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, "Einhaltung des Waffenstillstandsabkommens, Entschärfung des Konflikts zwischen den ethnischen Gruppen der Georgier und den Abchasen," 15.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, "Ueberwachung des Waffenstillstands und der entmilitarisierten Zone zwischen beiden Staaten," 15.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, "Seeraumueberwachung und Schutz der Seeverbindungslien zur Bekaempfung des internationalen Terrorismus," 15.

<sup>43</sup> Frank Boetel, „Gruende,“ Bundeswehr.de. April 7, 2004. "Schutz Deutschlands, Armee im Buendnis, Erfahrungen, Integration und Qualitaet."

theoretical knowledge, and have the opportunity to interact with young people from all levels of society.<sup>44</sup> The webpage concludes in boldface type, "The conscripted army is a more intelligent army," (*Die Wehrpflichtarmee ist die intelligentere Armee*).

The *Bundeswehr* website also highlights the historical background of conscription in Germany beginning as far back as wars of freedom against Napoleon. Later Prussian rule established the idea of military service as the moral duty of every citizen. After the First World War, under the Treaty of Versailles, *Wehrpflicht* was banned. This section then claims that as a consequence of isolating the army from civil society, the German people developed an indifferent attitude towards combat forces, which would oppose the democratic system and bring about the dangerous "state within a state" scenario during the period of National Socialism. At the end of this history overview, it states that today's *Wehrpflicht* exists in full representation of the constitution of the reunified Germany. The minister of defense himself, Dr. Franz Josef Jung, is quoted stating that the most important reason for conscription remains, "that the army remain deeply ingrained in our society," (*dass die Bundeswehr tief im Bewusstsein unserer Gesellschaft verwurzelt bleibt*).<sup>45</sup>

It follows logically, then, that the concept of the *Parliamentsarmee* (Parliament's army) would be central to the national image of the German military today and its function generally. In the summer of 2008, the German Congress (*Bundestag*) published a full-color, civilian-friendly special report on the very definition of the German army, titled *Bundestag* and

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, "Hilfeleistungen bei Naturkatastrophen," "Verhinderung, Abwehr und...Bewaeltigung von terroristischen Anschlaegen," „Deutschland traegt zu gemeinsamen Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa, der NATO und der EU bei,“ „praktische und theoretische Intelligenz,“ „Junge Menschen aller sozialer Schichten kommen zur Bundeswehr.“

<sup>45</sup> *Bundesministerium der Verteidigung*. "Moderne Wehrpflicht fuer die Bundeswehr der Zukunft," Berlin: March 2007.



*Bundeswehr*.<sup>46</sup> As the title implies, the report seeks to remind readers that the German army does not operate outside congressional authority. Furthermore, the report puts surprisingly explicit emphasis on the uniquely German quality of the relationship between the *Bundestag* and *Bundeswehr*. Two phrases are used to characterize the modern German soldier: “the Citizen in Uniform” and “Inner Guidance.”<sup>47</sup> The report states that the highest spiritual law defining the service of the “Citizen in Uniform” is the concept of “inner guidance.”<sup>48</sup> “Inner Guidance” means listening to one’s own conscience and not following blindly orders received from above.

“...from the beginning, the *Bundestag* saw in self-assured and independent persons in uniform an important guarantee against a relapse into old times with painful experiences.”<sup>49</sup>

In addition to this indirect reference to the activity of the *Bundeswehr* during the Third Reich, the section also openly refers to disreputable terms associated with Nazi rule (“Vaterland,” and “Befehl und Gehorsam”<sup>50</sup>) in justification of philosophical transformation of the modern German army.<sup>51</sup>

The most interesting identity aspect of this report is the way in which this national orientation of the German soldier’s identity merges seamlessly with the transnational orientation

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<sup>46</sup> *Deutscher Bundestag*. “Spezial: Bundestag und Bundeswehr,” Berlin: June 2008.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, “Staatsbuerger in Uniform,” “Innere Fuehrung,” 11.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, “Das Konzept der Inneren Fuehrung ist die wichtigste geistige Grundlage fuer den Dienst in der Bundeswehr.”

<sup>49</sup> *Deutscher Bundestag*, “...der Bundestag sah von Anfang an im selbstbewussten und selbstverantwortlichen Menschen in Uniform eine wichtige Garantie gegen einen Rueckfall in alte Zeiten mit leidvollen Erfahrungen.”

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, „Order and Obedience.“

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, “Es ist der radikale Bruch mit den traditionellen und landlaeufigen Vorstellungen vom Militaer,” (It is a radical break with the traditional and accepted ideas of the military).

of *Bundeswehr* objectives introduced at the end. The majority of the report reads like a reminder of what kind of mindset distinguishes the *German* soldier, as if answering the questions, who *is* the German soldier, and, how is he/she held accountable? The portions that reference the role and objectives of German soldiers assume a transnational context. The report puts forth an interesting question that it cannot answer. "How does the *Bundeswehr* soldier on assignment deal with comrades from other countries as well as with civilians of other cultures and nations?"<sup>52</sup>

Although not explicitly stated, the timing of this publication hints at a probable motivation for its release: to assuage the fears and concerns of the German public towards German military operations abroad and to specifically address the two-thirds of the German population who do not support the German troop presence in Afghanistan. It features a diagram that organizes and explains the decision-making process between government bodies regarding German troop deployment. It includes a two page world map that indicates each and (presumably) every international location in which German troops are currently stationed, as well as a brief, bulleted history of that stationing. It becomes clear that none of the engagements have been independently undertaken by the German government. Over half of the engagements use the words "peacekeeping" or "human rights" in the mandate.

"Peacekeeping," "human rights," and "humanitarian aid," are continually emphasized in both the reports from the Ministry of Defense and from the *Bundestag*. The closest any of the documents come to describing a combat role for German troops is to use the every form of the apparently unassuming word, "security." Oddly enough, while the sensitive subject of actual combat is carefully avoided, the reports are rife with large, high quality photos of

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, "Wie geht der Bundeswehrsoldat im Einsatz sowohl mit Kameraden aus anderen Laenden als auch mit

camouflage-uniformed soldiers carrying intimidating guns, big guns mounted on rows of tanks rolling through the dust, even fighter planes. These potentially startling images are paired with staged-seeming snapshots of helmet-free troops talking animatedly with bearded villagers leading donkeys. And just when you think to admire German altruism, the bolded caption reads, "Peace and Development in Afghanistan - Security for us" (*Frieden und Entwicklung in Afghanistan - Sicherheit fuer uns*).<sup>53</sup>

The apparent overlap of the German government's dual justifications for the occupation paints a confusing picture of political motive. The intentions intersect in a way that appears hypocritical: Germany is prioritizing peace in Afghanistan while also claiming that its troop presence looks after German national security at the same time as citing regional and international security concerns as reasons for NATO involvement in Afghanistan's domestic affairs. Rather than assert and emphasize any one identity, Germany seems to accept that 21st century security concerns assume identity fragmentation. These complex and almost contradictory political rationales could be an awkward attempt to accommodate the competing identity constructions that currently characterize German society.

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den Zivilisten anderer Kulturen und Nationen um?"

<sup>53</sup> *Bundesministerium der Verteidigung*. "Unsere Bundeswehr in Afghanistan: Fuer Sicherheit und Frieden," Berlin: August 2008.

## **Terrorism, Identity, and the State in German News and Film**

The German news media has not shied away from confronting the German public with sensitive topics. "It is damned hard," says one article from *Die Zeit*, for example, "to establish our own national German memorial tradition for the death of soldiers." The article ends, "It is high time that this debate begin." A simple scan of article titles proves this eagerness for a debate about the role of the German military in today's security climate, as well as an obvious ability to exploit said sensitivity. Titles range in shock-value from "W is for War," "Order and Obedience," "No End in Sight," "Terrorism-fighting is not War-conducting," "The citizen soldier dies, for what?" and "Die for Afghanistan?" In stark contrast to the multilateralism-heavy rhetoric of German government reports, the language used in a great number of journalistic pieces conveys an acute sense of skepticism, uncertainty, even fear, concerning both the nature and very purpose of German troop stationing abroad.

The print news media has especially capitalized on the Germans' sensitivity to the word, "war" (*Krieg*). Several articles, particularly editorials, covered the notorious, and telling, press conference in October of 2008 in which a journalist asks the German Minister of Defense, "Are we at war?" He answers earnestly, "We are not at war!" Next to him sits the American four-star General and ISAF Commander, David McKiernan, who turns to the journalist and corrects, "Of course we are at war." This small, yet serious, disagreement over the use of a single word evidences clearly the cultural bubble surrounding Germany in terms of how the German people identify with the use of the military. The situation itself indicates an essentially identity-based discussion that the German government has avoided addressing fully. The psychological weight

of the word, *Krieg*, on the German people indicates the extent to which historical memory continues to influence national identity. NATO's agreement to support the American mission in Afghanistan, a mission the U.S. refers to as being part of the "War on Terror," alienates an identity intrinsically opposed to German involvement in activity deemed, 'war.'

Perhaps the best context in which to view and analyze the alienation of identity, however, is the situation of the German NATO soldier stationed beyond the German border. *Nacht Vor Augen*, a very recent film which premiered at the 2008 Berlinale, intensely personalizes the psychological effect of service abroad on a German soldier, David, who returns from Afghanistan and attempts to reenter civilian life. David's acclimation devolves into a struggle for sanity against a nightmarish internal turmoil, a result of an atrocity he committed abroad. The film ultimately indicts the German government in having the David's superiors sweep both the incident (in which he shot and killed an innocent Afghan child) and his subsequent post-traumatic stress under the rug by awarding him a medal of honor and recommending a therapist. German society is depicted as incredibly ignorant. David's girlfriend expects immediate sexual gratification, and his father-in-law makes an ironic crack about his "looking like he just got back from the war." His family glamorizes his service, calling him a hero and making vague references to protecting Germany and its neighbors. The film centers on the relationship between David and his young cousin, Benny, which calls the viewer to connect the identity of a soldier to that of a child. Through their tense but touching interaction, we see how soldiers and children are prone to both innocence and violence in that they can be manipulated by orders from above. They are both burdened by individualized experiences of guilt, the unfair side-effects of their assigned identities. David and Benny are good souls that have been

corrupted by their environments, namely, the organizational power hierarchies which comprise government and society.

*Snipers Valley: Moerderischer Frieden* (2007) similarly uses its depiction of the messiness of reality to indict the naivety of idealistic Western governments. I would argue that this disconnect comes from an incompatibility of identities, resulting in the patronization of an “evolved” transnational identity (NATO troops) towards nationally-identified groups (Serbs and Albanians). Throughout the course of the film, the occupied society members confront the German troops with suspicion pertaining to their representing both transnational and national identities.

Indeed, such tension has played itself out in recent articulations of German foreign policy. Although it could be argued that a confident, specifically German national identity has been expressed politically in relation to the U.S. and the EU member states (for example, when Germany rejected the U.S. decision to invade Iraq), a palpable anxiety related to identity (European, postmodern, and German), has developed with regard to the particularly sensitive situations of multilateral military presences. In *Moerderischer Frieden*, German soldiers stationed in Kosovo are pushed to evaluate their own presence in a foreign country according to a morally-ambiguous historical context revealed to them over the course of the film. The film implies that German troops are sent across borders unprepared for and ignorant of the cultural history between their nations and within the occupied society itself. That the German soldiers are confronted with the imperialist implications of foreign occupation forces betrays the film’s ultimate skepticism towards Germany’s military involvement abroad.

Right away at the beginning of the film we are told the official objective of the German troops in Kosovo: protect the Serbian people and find the weapons holdings. The benign nature of these orders sets up the German troops as the “good guys,” and early scenes emphasize their roles as such. An ethnic child laughs at and pulls a gun on two German soldiers in a Jeep. The same soldiers risk their lives to save a nurse, an innocent civilian targeted by a hidden sniper. German soldiers stop to talk with and have tea with a pair of old, Serbian farmers (who end up dead a few days later). The simplicity of these original orders breaks down into a chaotic reality with German troops striving for neutrality caught in the middle of an intense atmosphere of ethnic vengeance. While theoretically, the film wants to trust Germany’s admirable allegiance to NATO’s peacekeeping mission, the soldiers themselves are rendered speechless when questioned regarding political motives.<sup>54</sup>

Soldier 1: “How can we protect you if you don’t trust us? We have a mandate from your people. Let us do our jobs.”

Serb: “In your eyes, we Serbs are simply war criminals. That is the problem!”

Soldier 2: “We’re here to end the killing.”

Serb: “Peace propaganda! It’s about power and profit. Hitler occupied the Balkans.”

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<sup>54</sup> The following translation is approximate. Because the film did not have the option of German subtitles, I

Albanian: “What do you know about our country? You just follow orders. My grandfather fought side by side with the SS here in Kosovo. Now you protect our murderers!”

Even the text on the back of the *Moerderischer Frieden* DVD case exploits the controversy of German troop involvement abroad, when it advertises itself explicitly as “the first German feature film to show the story of young German soldiers in a foreign occupation.”<sup>55</sup> In this way, the film is conscious of its own political weight. One can assume that in addition to entertainment, attention has been given to some amount of historical accuracy. It is telling, then, that the film is decidedly sympathetic to all of the parties involved in the conflict. In the same vein, the film also condemns each group of actors, highlighting the surprisingly fine line between vulnerability and aggression. Various forms of corruption taint all. As one main character rightly states, “This is not about guilty and innocent.”<sup>56</sup> It is about the impossibility of navigating morally ambiguous socio-political contexts that complicate the choices individuals have to make between right and wrong. The film seems to document the hypocrisy of differentiating between “good guys” and “bad guys,” which for me, represents an indirect criticism of NATO missions. By frustrating the attempts of these characters to claim neutrality between the warring factions, the film may be suggesting that it is too soon for German soldiers to disregard the cultural and political implications associated with their national identity. In this way, I find the film to be an accurate presentation of the dichotomous problematic of the nation state in the twenty first

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was not able to transcribe direct German quotations.

<sup>55</sup> “*Moerderischer Frieden* zeigt als erster deutscher Kinofilm die Geschichte junger Bundeswehrsoldaten im Auslandseinsatz.“



century, that is, the interaction between supranational bodies and the (often ideological violence-ridden) societies that continue to pursue nationhood.

On a lighter note, another recent film, “Kein Bund fuer’s Leben” (2007) pokes fun at the military service required of all German men and in doing so exemplifies the cultural changes that have come to define the younger generation of Germans. Many of the jokes appear politically controversial. Others depict the cultural norms of a multicultural German society and of a globalized world. In terms of identity, the film ultimately depicts national identity as arbitrary, even absurd. The characters channel the façade of national pride into coming-of-age camaraderie where cooperation between friends creates confident individuals.

The film opens with a *Bundeswehr* advertisement playing on television. The advertisement states<sup>57</sup>: “Make something out of yourself. Realize your potential. Become the person you always wanted to be. Learn how to exceed your own expectations. Become a part of something bigger. Begin the adventure of your life. Together with us, get to know an entirely new side of yourself.” The joke is that after we watch the advertisement, the camera pans to a room of blank faced youth sitting in the waiting room of a recruitment center. The very next scene shows young men making drug deals in the bathroom in an attempt to receive exemption from military service. One is selling vials of urine, some tainted with Syphilis, others with Diabetes. A few scenes later a young male requests help from a friend in writing his letter of conscientious objection. The real and historically-sensitive conscientious objector exemption option in the *Bundeswehr* is mocked when he writes in his letter that he played with Barbies as a boy.

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<sup>56</sup> Approximate translation. Original German text unavailable.

When the young man is eventually drafted into the *Bundeswehr*, he asks an already recruited friend what he is doing there. He responds, “Someone has to defend the Fatherland!”<sup>58</sup> He goes on to explain in apparent seriousness, “Behind all the rules and regulations, it’s a real paradise here!”<sup>59</sup>

Several interesting connotations can be drawn from the film’s depiction of other national militaries, specifically depictions of the Japanese and American armies. The film takes playing on the idea of allies and enemies to the extreme. Two German recruits get caught stealing official *Bundeswehr* thongs from a women’s bunk. The thongs, the friend explains, sell well to the Japanese. The same recruits swap the film reel during a shared viewing between German and American troops of *Saving Private Ryan* with the porn film, *Saving Ryan’s Privates*. Due to the accidental antics of German recruits, occupied American outhouses explode. The American flag is set on fire. German recruits urinate on heavily camouflaged American troops mistaken for shrubbery. These ridiculous scenes, while obviously serving the slapstick comedic purpose of the film, at the same time indicate the young German generation’s radical transcendence of postwar cultural and political military norms.

It’s obvious that the film derives much of its humor from confrontations between German recruits and American soldiers. Their differences, which the film exploits for the sake of entertainment, suggest serious ideological differences regarding the role of the military as well as national identity. The American troops are depicted as robotically disciplined, physically and technically prepared, and as having both serious and arrogant personalities. The film depicts the

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<sup>57</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>

“Einer muss ja das Vaterland verteidigen!”

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“Hinter den ganzen Vorschriften und Regeln ist das hier ein richtiges Paradies!”

German recruits, in comparison, as misfits, uninterested or otherwise inept at “being soldiers.” The recruits call the Americans, “gorillas.” While the Americans seem ready and eager for battle, the Germans question the very purpose of their service.

“We’re clearly not here to fight. We’re here to...”

“Yeah, to what?”

“To... Tank party!”<sup>60</sup>

Full of postmodern irony, a group of German recruits ends up driving a tank into a McDonald’s drive-thru, cementing the film’s depiction of *Bundeswehr* service as an “adventure vacation”<sup>61</sup> comprised of burgers, booze, girls, and cigars. To these young Germans, life is a party, and any real use for tanks and guns seems impossible.

Of course, the film eventually makes two attempts to legitimize the existence of the *Bundeswehr*. Both contain interesting implications regarding identity and the role of the military. The film offers only one character that represents an intelligent and successful German soldier. This female character is not even a combat soldier but a medical student whose studies are being paid for by the *Bundeswehr*. I would interpret her character as a suggestion that German youth, in general, are more likely to legitimize the military as a means of obtaining an education (a parallel could be drawn to the American R.O.T.C. program) than as an institution actively defending the German nation. The film’s depiction of modern German youth evidences this generation’s dismissal of the military both as a successful career path and as an effective or even necessary entity.

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<sup>60</sup> “Wir sind doch nicht hier um zu kaempfen. Wir sind hier um...” “Ja, um was?” “Um... Panzerparty!”

<sup>61</sup> “Abenteuerurlaub.”

“What is a girl like you doing in the *Bundeswehr*? You’re intelligent and attractive...”<sup>62</sup>

“That means that only ugly idiots sign up for service?”<sup>63</sup>

Although she defends her being in the army, she herself has no interest in politics or war. The misfit recruits eventually become invested in their soldier status for the satisfaction of developing friendships amongst each other as well as the ability to stand up for themselves as individuals with self worth. Their only real articulation of national pride is thickly veiled in an absurdity that undermines a potentially controversial patriotic sentiment: “We aren’t losers! We’re Germans! If we were losers, would we have won both World Wars?”<sup>64</sup>

This joke also serves to highlight one of the most interesting aspects of this film that is its willingness to fashion jokes out of references to the Second World War. In response to his friend’s suddenly angry demeanor, one recruit jokes, “Nefzat, don’t pull an Adolf!”<sup>65</sup> Later on, the recruits’ commanding officer accidentally blackens his upper lip with shoeshine polish. Perhaps the humor would have seemed understandable and unsurprising coming from a more boundary-ignoring independent film. The fact that it could be featured in such a mainstream teen comedy struck me as bafflingly inappropriate. That such loaded material could find itself so prominently in a feature film with well-known actors (who have appeared in films like *Goodbye Lenin*) becomes a strong indicator of new and accepted German identity formation.

These German youth feel little if any connection to their country’s Nazi past. Nationalism as a construct of identity is no longer feared, as it may have been in earlier postwar generations, but disregarded, even ridiculed. German youth now associate militarism, a concept that once and

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<sup>62</sup> “Was macht ein Maedchen wie du be idem Bundeswehr? Du bist intelligent, du siehst gut aus...”

<sup>63</sup> “Das heisst, nur haessliche Idioten kommen freiwillig hierher?”

<sup>64</sup> “Wir sind keine Loser! Wir sind Deutsche! Wenn wir Loser waeren, haetten wir die beiden Weltkriege

perhaps continues to haunt German identity, with what it means to be American. Transatlantic foreign policy themes play themselves out in this film in that the German recruits both demonstrate their preference for cooperation and multilateralism by training alongside the American troops as well as display pride in their uniqueness as misfits. The film takes for granted the fact that some characters are *German* while others are *American*. In the end, what matters is that both sides work together and that each soldier has the ability to assert his or her individual personalities.

### **Conclusion**

In my research, I set out to explore what the role of Germany's modern military and the discussion surrounding that role, specifically in reference to foreign occupations, say about the idea of German national identity today. I predicted that my sources would show a dearth of national understandings of identity and prove a reorientation towards transnational articulations of identity. I expected to see an indication of a kind of identity crisis taking place within the various levels of discourse. Indeed, I found that the reactions (of government and the media) towards the combination of Germany's traumatic past and the transnational dislocation of German soldiers uniquely portray the function of national identity as a paradigm. Most of my sources seemed to simultaneously challenge and assert national identity without presenting contradictory messages. Rather, the reports, articles and films seem to accurately represent the identity-related ambiguities resulting from a period of globally shifting political and cultural

norms.

The phenomenon of international terrorism as a perceived security threat today especially challenges the identities of national and supranational entities as well as those of Europeans who increasingly see themselves as citizens of the world. In order to rationalize its deployment of troops abroad, the German government (like others) has had to offer dichotomous arguments to appeal to two different identity preferences. The government's emphasis on the international significance of the German presence in Afghanistan evidences the preference of a majority of Germans towards a more transnational understanding of identity. The government's lesser referenced contention that these foreign engagements meet national needs demonstrates the waning influence of nationalism on German identity formation. The news media has exploited both the intense nature of the "new war" created by international terrorism and Germany's special sensitivity towards the use of its soldiers. In feeding the flames of controversy, the media has indirectly acknowledged that identity issues lurk beneath the surface of the foreign policy discussion.

Two twenty-first century feature films that have received widespread acclaim, *Die Innere Sicherheit* (2001) and *Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei* (2003) acknowledge the existence of anarchist undergrounds in Germany. Both set intelligent, moral protagonists against faceless, conspiratorial police units, causing the viewer to sympathize with the characters' experience of alienation from society. The films imply that the soul-searching that came to define German culture in the aftermath of World War II continues to influence the formation of identity today. The identity depicted, particularly, is formed in reaction to a kind of hyper-capitalist

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<sup>65</sup> "Nefzat, mach' hier nicht den Adolf!"

environment that the younger generation has been handed down from parents, many of whom also lived through the radical political years of the 60s and 70s. This is a youth with strong beliefs regarding the military and nationalism, as well as the capitalist economic order. That both films portray incidents of domestic terrorism, perpetrated by seemingly well-educated whites presents an interesting aspect of alternative German culture to compare to a security climate concerned with international Islamic-claimed terrorist attacks.

My sources have depicted a German identity laden with guilt, only some of which can be traced back to the events of the Second World War. A large part of it derives from the effect of a post-modern paradox upon identity formation. This paradox involves a moral confusion regarding political, cultural, and economic expressions of individual, national, and transnational identities. As Germans continue to identify more and more with universalistic social-democratic principles that transcend national borders, they will continue to call into question the actions and importance of national institutions and ways of thinking. Germany's demonstrated inability and unwillingness to ignore the historic vision of a German military that once traumatized millions around the world actually encourage the prioritization of transnational identity. Though, for better or worse, the Nazi experience and the lessons learned unite Germans using a national context, this unity has cemented German society's cautious and critical eye towards government. The German people have come to expect transnational articulations of German identity by the government and in the news and in film. The multilayered national/transnational identity affecting German society encourages public scrutiny of nationally-representative policy, for example, having to do with German soldiers. The challenge remains whether Germany's unique understanding of identity as expressed through the military can successfully withstand false

appeals to shared ideals by co-opted supranational organizations, like NATO, suffering in today's ambiguous security climate.