
by

Vic Sanceda

June 2020

Thesis Advisor: Donald Abenheim
Co-Advisor: Carolyn C. Halladay

Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.
Since the end of World War II, Germany has integrated into Western political, economic, and security institutions, which has fueled its prosperity today. The national government has emphasized cooperation in lieu of competition in governance, economics, and military. However, as a wave of right-wing populist movements cascade across Europe, new political forces threaten to forget the lessons learned following the destruction from two world wars. Instead of embracing the freedom and security Germany has enjoyed since the fall of the Third Reich, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) resurrects values, prejudices, and language that have been deeply buried by Germany society. Fueled by nativist attitudes toward new immigrants—coupled with years of protracted foreign wars and a cultural divide between a militarily skeptical civilian population and the armed forces who swear an oath to protect the population—the AfD is pulling tricks from pre-1949 German governments and rallying support for their cause. Understanding the lessons from Prussian militarism and Nazi perversion, the Federal Republic of Germany was able to successfully integrate its military into civil society for the first time in its country’s history. However, the AfD aims to reshape the Bundeswehr with policies that reject its founding principles and that can have a ripple effect throughout Germany, Europe, and the transatlantic security alliance.

Vic Sandez
Major, United States Marine Corps
BA, University of California - Los Angeles, 2008
MA, University of Oklahoma, 2015

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES (EUROPE AND EURASIA)

from the

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
June 2020

Approved by: Donald Abenheim
Advisor

Carolyn C. Halladay
Co-Advisor

Afshon P. Ostovar
Associate Chair for Research
Department of National Security Affairs
ABSTRACT

Since the end of World War II, Germany has integrated into Western political, economic, and security institutions, which has fueled its prosperity today. The national government has emphasized cooperation in lieu of competition in governance, economics, and military. However, as a wave of right-wing populist movements cascade across Europe, new political forces threaten to forget the lessons learned following the destruction from two world wars. Instead of embracing the freedom and security Germany has enjoyed since the fall of the Third Reich, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) resurrects values, prejudices, and language that have been deeply buried by Germany society. Fueled by nativist attitudes toward new immigrants—coupled with years of protracted foreign wars and a cultural divide between a militarily skeptical civilian population and the armed forces who swear an oath to protect the population—the AfD is pulling tricks from pre-1949 German governments and rallying support for their cause. Understanding the lessons from Prussian militarism and Nazi perversion, the Federal Republic of Germany was able to successfully integrate its military into civil society for the first time in its country’s history. However, the AfD aims to reshape the Bundeswehr with policies that reject its founding principles and that can have a ripple effect throughout Germany, Europe, and the transatlantic security alliance.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION .......................................................1

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION ..............................3

C. LITERATURE REVIEW .....................................................................4
   1. Objective Control ........................................................................5
   2. Subjective Control ......................................................................7

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES .............................10

E. RESEARCH DESIGN .........................................................................12

F. THESIS OVERVIEW ........................................................................13

## II. AFD’S BACKGROUND AND POSITIONS

A. BACK TO THE FUTURE? THE ORIGINS OF THE AFD .......................16

B. EVOLUTION THROUGH 2017 ...............................................................19
   1. Refugees and Transition to *Voelkisch* Nationalism ....................19
   2. The Young Eat the Old ................................................................21

C. COMPOSITION AND SUCCESS ..........................................................24
   1. Who Is a Member of the AfD? .....................................................24
   2. Electoral Successes—Effects, Opinions, Media, and Traditional Parties Decline ........................................................................25

D. GROWING VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL TURMOIL .........................29
   1. Rise in Violence .........................................................................29
   2. Political Turmoil .........................................................................32

E. CONCLUSION ..................................................................................34

## III. INNERE FÜHRUNG AND AFD MILITARY REVISIONISM

A. WHAT IS THE CITIZEN IN UNIFORM AND WHAT IS INNERE FÜHRUNG? COMMAND, OBEDIENCE, MORALE, AND CITIZENSHIP IN THE GERMAN MILITARY ..................................................35
   1. Origins: Out with the Old and In with the New ............................35
   2. Criticism ....................................................................................39
   3. Today—Still a Success ..............................................................41

B. AFD, THE BUNDESTAG, AND THE BUNDESWEHR—PEOPLE, GOVERNMENT, AND MILITARY .........................................................42
   1. AfD in the Government ..............................................................42
   2. AfD Military Policies .................................................................44

C. CONCLUSION ..................................................................................49
IV. THE SOLDIER, STATE, AND SOCIETY IN THE FRG: ANTIMILITARISM AND THE BUNDESWEHR ...........................................51
A. POST-WWII AND COLD WAR ANTI-MILITARISM .................51
  1. Destroyed By War—Hour Zero .................................................51
  2. Never Again, Never Alone: Building a Government and Military .................................................................52
B. POST–COLD WAR RESTRAINT ON MILITARY ......................53
  1. 1990s: Courts, Morality and Kosovo ........................................54
  2. Afghanistan ...............................................................................55
  3. Libya ..........................................................................................59
C. GERMAN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS ..............................60
  1. Conscription: Its Effects and Abolishment.........................61
  2. Civilians’ and Military Members’ Perception of Each Other .............................................................................63
  3. Veterans Returning from Foreign Campaigns—Past and the Present .................................................................65
  4. Extremism and the Bundeswehr—A Historical Trend and Oversight .................................................................67
D. CONCLUSION ........................................................................71

V. ANALYSIS, TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY, AND CONCLUSION ....73
A. THE AFD’S IMPACT ON GERMANY’S CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS: GOVERNMENT, PEOPLE, AND MILITARY ..........73
B. IMPACT ON EUROPEAN AND TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY .................................................................................75
C. CONCLUSION ........................................................................78

LIST OF REFERENCES ..................................................................79

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST ..................................................................95
# LIST OF FIGURES

<p>| Figure 1. | CDU/CSU and SPD Vote Share in Federal Elections, 1976–2017 ..........29 |
| Figure 2. | Thuringia State Election Comparisons, 2014 and 2019......................33 |
| Figure 3. | Growing Dissatisfaction with the ISAF Mission..........................57 |
| Figure 4. | Soldiers’ Feelings about Their Appreciation from Society ............64 |
| Figure 5. | Bundeswehr Poll on Minister of Defense ........................................70 |
| Figure 6. | Opinion on U.S. Using Military Force to Defend Allies .................76 |
| Figure 7. | EU Members Opinion on Siding with U.S. or Russia .......................77 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AfD</td>
<td>Alternative for Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALFA</td>
<td>Alliance for Progress and Renewal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU</td>
<td>Christian Democratic Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU/CSU</td>
<td>Coalition of CDU and CSU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSU</td>
<td>Christian Social Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>Free Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRG</td>
<td>Federal Republic of Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HQ SHAPE</td>
<td>Headquarters, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISAF</td>
<td>International Security Force Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSK</td>
<td>Kommando Spezialkräfte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSKG</td>
<td>National Socialist Combat Group Great Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSU</td>
<td>National Socialist Underground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDS</td>
<td>Party of Democratic Socialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SED</td>
<td>Socialist Unity Party of Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party of Germany</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to all of my teachers, coaches, friends, and family.
I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Does the soldier in Germany still adhere to pluralistic constitutional principles of the primacy of policy and democratic civilian control, as has been the case since the foundation of the Bundeswehr in 1955? German politics today are in turmoil, and this upheaval has intruded into the ranks of the military. The nationalist Alternative for Germany (AfD) party became the largest opposition party in the Bundestag in 2017 as a part of a greater European trend toward renationalization since the 2008 Great Recession. Though the AfD arose at first amid West German professors and notables of the upper-middle class with objections to various European bailouts amid the euro crisis, it then gained an aggressive mass following in the former East Germany, where anti-immigrant sentiment and AfD’s outsider image resonated. Since first joining local and state governments and then the federal parliament after 2016, the AfD has emphasized the importance of the security sector (i.e., police, intelligence and the military) as a major plank of its opposition platform to the government of Angela Merkel.

---

6 Alternative fur Deutschland, Manifesto for Germany: The Political Programme of the Alternative for Germany” (Stuttgart: Alternative fur Deutschland, 2016), 23–31.
This process went in mid-2019 into overdrive with the publication of the AfD manifesto Streitkraft Bundeswehr,7 which sought to politicize the state of the armed forces for partisan gain versus an apolitical constitutional imperative. With certain former military officers heavily represented among the AfD’s leadership, the party is positioning itself to be the political representative of the military and internal security services.8 Moreover, AfD officials have taken to social media to voice their discontent with the governing coalition’s defense and domestic security policies and have incited dissident general officers to publicly express their opinions contrary to the policy of the Merkel cabinet.9

Germany is a democratic country with a professional military that has 60 years of making soldiers adhere to constitutional principles with profound success.10 The result has been a stable foundation for the security of the continent. However, with the AfD’s rise in popularity and its explicit aim to orchestrate military support for domestic and political purposes, against the backdrop of a citizenry that is skeptical of the military, could the AfD reshape Germany’s civil-military relationship and disrupt the transatlantic security order that Europe has enjoyed since World War II?

---


10 Donald Abenheim, Soldier and Politics Transformed German-American Reflections on Civil Military Relations in a New Strategic Environment (Berlin: Carola Hartmann Miles-Verlag, 2007); Donald Abenheim and Carolyn Halladay, Soldiers, War, Knowledge and Citizenship German-American Essays on Civil-Military Relations (Germany: Carola Hartmann Miles-Verlag, 2017).
B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

From its origin in 1949, Germany’s security policy has been anchored in such multilateral institutions as the United Nations, the Treaty of Brussels of what became the European Union and, as of 1955, in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).\textsuperscript{11} However, with the AfD advocating that Germany’s central European geographic location and economic power entitles it to a leadership role among European NATO partners.\textsuperscript{12} This position is in sharp contrast with the customary security multilateralism since its anchoring in the transatlantic alliance in the 1950s. Taking into account global power shifts, the AfD has gone as far as demanding that Germany receive a permanent seat on the UN Security Council—a position hardly unique to this party.\textsuperscript{13} Proposed political reforms that provide greater unilateral power for Germany shifts its interests to national goals and away from multilateral organizations.

Today’s transatlantic security relationship is the product of two world wars, which Germany attempted to establish dominance by force led by soldiers at the helm—as one of the pillars of the Nazi state.\textsuperscript{14} Since Germany’s unification in 1871, European powers saw Germany as too large, wealthy, powerful, and geographically positioned to be balanced by the rest of the continent.\textsuperscript{15} Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger characterized pre-Cold War Germany as “Too big for Europe, too small for the world.”\textsuperscript{16} However, Germans helped redefine their characterization by voting for centrist to center-right political parties.\textsuperscript{17} Major political parties as the Christian Democrats and

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Working Group Defense of the AfD, \textit{Armed Forces Bundeswehr}.
\item AfD, Manifesto for Germany, 29.
\item Kagan, “The New German Question.”
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotes}
Christian Social Union as well as the Free Democrats and the Social Democrats adopted a “Never again alone” political position via integration in the western powers.¹⁸

West Germany’s military rearmament traded national defense on the old hegemonic model for alliance partnership with NATO membership in 1955.¹⁹ Moreover, the Innere Führung—citizen in uniform spirit was adopted to integrate the armed forces into a pluralist society and guard against the formation of a militarist caste.²⁰ The post-World War II military is an army in a democracy integrated into international security and defense organizations and a radically different institution of power from previous German governments.²¹ However, the nationalist AfD aims to orchestrate a resurgence in military capability with echoes of the period prior to 1955, and this party seeks to use the Bundeswehr for domestic political gain, to reestablish the privileged role of the soldier in German society as in the epoch prior to 1945. The stability of the NATO alliance, which assumes a solidly democratic German civil-military relationship, stands to lose one of its more solid bases amid this renationalization and its impact on military professionalism. This issue lies at the center of this inquiry.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines the historic and developing analysis of objective and subjective civilian control of the military from the 1950s to the current ongoing debate assessing the blurring of soldiers’ political role in counterinsurgency warfare. The literature makes clear that effectiveness and control are counterweights in a nation’s civil-military relationship. Disciples of Samuel Huntington emphasize military effectiveness by providing the military autonomy to achieve its objectives. In Huntington’s view, maximizing soldier’s professionalism can secure civilian control and keep the military

²¹ Abenheim and Halladay, “Stability in Flux,” 305.
removed from politics. The Janowitz school differs, arguing that intrusive government monitoring is needed to educate and integrate the military into the security decision making process.

Both objective and subjective schools are important to assess whether effectiveness and control are in balance with one another. However, the post-Cold War world has seen limited warfare becoming more normative as globalization erodes borders. Modern theorists are identifying that previously well-defined civilian and military lines are becoming blurred and creating more occasions for the military to enter the political spectrum.

1. Objective Control

Objective civilian control allows the military internal autonomy, renders it politically sterile and neutral, and maximizes its professional. Objective control is important to civil-military relations as it provides a framework relationship that governments can adopt with their militaries to protect the country from external threats. In the 1950s, objective civilian control of the military was advocated by Huntington who argued it militarized the military and made that armed forces a more effective means to achieve government policy. Because the U.S. military is comprised of professional officers with expertise in the management of violence, responsibility for the security of society, and corporate character that bonds them into its own self-governed organization; objective control minimizes the military power in society by neutralizing the military from politics. Huntington’s favor of separating the military and relying on its corporatism to maintain political neutrality was written when the United States was

---

25 Huntington, 83.
26 Huntington, 15–16.
27 Huntington, 84.
freshly out of World War II and newly engaged in a global power struggle with the Soviet Union. The government and military had similar priorities—existential external threats—that merged their interests and facilitated cooperation rather than contention.

Though many of Huntington’s positions still hold today, he does not illustrate the conditions needed to reorient the military’s corporatism into the political arena. For example, Amos Perlmutter concurs with Huntington that corporatism is a component of military professionalism, but he argues that corporate orientations are not always positive contributors to political objectivity. Specifically, Perlmutter holds that integrity of military corporatism is subject to stress from civilian reform in military affairs, defeat in war, and a rise in radical left or right movements.

Building from Perlmutter’s conditions that can reorient military corporatism into politics, Peter Feaver adds that as long as military and civilian preferences converge, the government will non-intrusively monitor the military. A non-intrusive government provides the military greater internal autonomy, which is a component of objective civilian control. However, friction develops when government and military interests diverge and can reorient military corporatism into politics. Feaver highlights that friction can be introduced and measured to the degree that the military is willing to voice public opposition to civilian policy.

Feaver’s agency theory highlights that the military is under civilian control, but its corporate character can be reoriented toward politics when a divergence in policy arises with the government. As an example, he cites the popular Gulf War general, Colin Powell, who in 1992 made public his opposition to homosexuals serving in the military,

---

which contrasted with the incoming president’s campaign agenda. As Perlmutter argues, civilian reforms in military affairs stress the integrity of military corporatism; thus, General Powell entering the political debate induced friction with diverging interests between the military and government. The result was a military and civilian compromise with the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy. General Powell influenced politics as the military gained little from the intended policy but could reinforce its autonomy and expertise in determining what was “prejudicial to good order and discipline and small-unit cohesion.” The civil-military relations balance is disturbed when intrusive government policies diverge from the armed forces professional interests. Objective control civilian control separates the military from politics when the government stays out of the internal armed forces affairs.

2. **Subjective Control**

Morris Janowitz takes a sociological approach to civil-military relations advocating subjective civilian measures for the legislature and executive to judge the military’s readiness and effectiveness. He opposes the Huntington camp’s position of objective civilian control, with limited intrusive government policy providing the military autonomy to maximize expertise. Janowitz contends that political education to develop commitment and understanding of the democratic system is required as professional soldiers cannot be divorced from society. Subjective civilian control with intrusive government involvement aims at shaping the military as it is seen as a component in national security decision-making. The corporateness that Huntington believes keeps the military politically neutral is problematized by Janowitz’s observation that military

---


35 Feaver, “Crisis as Shirking,” 418.


37 Janowitz, 439.

38 Janowitz, 343.
officers are plagued with internal differences with no unified perspectives and makes the armed forces ideal to have a role in security policymaking. Janowitz’s argument for government oversight of the armed force’s readiness, political education, and integration into policy-making places greater intrusive and subjective civilian controls over the military.

Huntington argues against subjective control as it diminishes military power and prioritizes the maximization of civilian power, which he sees as obsolete with the development of professional soldiers. He argues that subjective military control aims to make the military a mirror of the state and achieves its ends by civilianizing the armed forces. Huntington holds that civilian control actually decreases with the military more involved in class, institutional, and constitutional politics. With modern societies division of labor creating a distinct class of experts in the management of violence, subjective civilian control of the military is fundamentally out of place.

However, James Burk assesses both Huntington and Janowitz as only addressing part of democratic civil-military relations. In Burk’s view, Huntington focuses on protecting democracy without addressing the sustainment of democratic values, while Janowitz emphasizes the sustainment of democratic values at the risk of protecting the democratic state. Huntington places priority on military effectiveness. In contrast, Janowitz’s greater concern is maintaining civilian control.

Moreover, Huntington and Janowitz’s work are currently applied by modern theorists who are identifying trends of political and military spheres blurring together. The Israeli scholar Rebecca Schiff argues that separation theory is the current status quo

---

39 Janowitz, 343.
41 Huntington, 83.
42 Huntington, 83.
43 Huntington, 80–84.
in civil-military relations scholarship and puts forth her concordance theory which aims to converge agreement amongst the political leadership, citizens, and military as a mechanism to avoid domestic military intervention and is derived more from the experience of Israel than, say, a European nation state in history. She extends concordance theory with targeted partnership to provide political decision-making flexibility by allowing military officers to coordinate with policy makers but constrained by: (1) limited time; (2) specific objective, and (3) not necessarily reflective of the country’s civil-military framework as is the case in Israel with its own particular record of war and the state.

With a view to the United States in the recent past, one can suggest that bogged down in Iraq fighting a counter-insurgency in 2007, General David Petraeus was able to create an atmosphere of targeted partnership with the Joint Strategic Assessment Team. General Petraeus was able engage in a formal dialogue with civilian leadership on the best military strategy to defeat the insurgency. Petraeus’s dialogue blurred the military’s traditional division from politics as a means to wage a successful counterinsurgency campaign.

Hew Strachan embraces Janowitz in his analysis of British limited warfare as it was the British army’s professionalism that impelled them into politics, and it’s the strength of the government's framework it operates it which restrains it from greater political intervention. His assessment of the British Army’s evolution, he found that it was the collaborative nature of civilians and military that helped integrate the armed forces into political affairs and made provided more influence to their professional

---


47 Schiff, “Concordance Theory,” 326.

48 Schiff, 329.


50 Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army*, 266.
expertise as civilian decision makers faced with defense matters tended to trust the experts opinions—the military.\textsuperscript{51}

Douglas Porch aligns with Strachan’s view that counterinsurgent soldiers are highly political as they militarily operate in the government’s sphere of nation building.\textsuperscript{52} Because counterinsurgent warfare involves attrition, high human costs, and greater moral scrutiny, more political intrusion is inevitable in the operational and tactical levels of war.\textsuperscript{53} Additionally, Porch connects the battlefield abroad to the homeland with the observation that politicians must be prepared to reintegrate counterinsurgent soldiers that operated in the political sphere constrained by government intrusion.\textsuperscript{54}

The principles that Huntington established more than a half century ago are being stretched in the modern battlefield as soldiers are needing to engage in the political sphere to achieve their military objectives. The literature shows that subjective control of the military voluntarily incorporates the armed forces into the political spectrum with intrusive measures to maintain control. Objective control aims at maximizing capability and is vulnerable to the military entering the political debate when its serves their professional interests.

**D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES**

The purpose of the thesis is to assess what changes, if any, the AfD’s populist rise and militaristic policies may have on German civil-military relations and affect transatlantic security. To assess any changes, German political, military, and cultural history must be laid out from the FRG’s founding in 1949 to the present.

First, the AfD’s emphasis on the armed forces as a pillar in German society must be analyzed in relation to the Bundeswehr’s and FRG’s founders. The FRG and Bundeswehr were both structured as an antithesis and response to the rise of National

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{51} Strachan, 267.

\textsuperscript{52} Douglas Porch, *Counterinsurgency Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 333.

\textsuperscript{53} Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, 334.

\textsuperscript{54} Porch, 334.
\end{footnotesize}
Socialism and reorienting the military to become an instrument of a criminal regime. If the AfD’s policies, though militaristic in nature, are compatible with the principles of the Bundeswehr’s and FRG founders, then it could be assessed that the country’s integration between government, military, and citizens may be unaffected. However, if the AfD’s policies are assessed as being in contradiction to 1950s German policies, and more in line with previous regimes such as the Third Reich or Prussian militarism, then a conclusion can be drawn that if the AfD’s political success continues to grow, it can reshape how the country’s government, military, and citizens interact.

Second, following years of protracted war deployed outside of the German borders, a new generation of German soldiers may be socially disconnected from a civilian population who traditionally harbors skepticism towards the armed forces. To assess if the AfD have any means to shape or capitalize from a large number of combat veterans who must reintegrate into the civilian population, AfD policies and leadership must be analyzed. If the AfD representation in government and policies are in contrast to traditional parties with greater representation and emphasis on a younger, deployed military culture, then the party could alter Bundeswehr heritage to reflect new voices. Any changes could be in stark contrast with the founders of the FRG and Bundeswehr’s principles.

Finally, the Bundeswehr’s capability within the transatlantic security alliance will be assessed from its original purposes in relation to the AfD’s policies. The Bundeswehr was created as a military incorporated into a multinational alliance as a response to the threat of Communism. However, as a current reunified Germany does not face the same security concerns as it did from the 1950s to the 1980s, nor does it currently have the same positive relationship with American leadership, an opportunity arises to reorganize its military structure. Assessing both the aims of the AfD wanting to create a general staff in relation to Bundeswehr’s role with European and transatlantic security partner will demonstrate if the its policies are consistent or in contradiction to the FRG’s and German armed forces role for over the past half century.
E. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis assesses Germany’s politics, military, and citizenry in relation to each other and the rise of the AfD. Though many Western democracies are currently experiencing a trend with right-wing populists’ movements, Germany and the AfD were selected as the country exercises a key leadership role in the European Union and has been a pillar of Western security since the end of World War II.

The majority of this thesis focuses on the AfD’s effects on the German government, armed forces, and citizens since 2013 but does chronologize key political, military, civilian events and ideas from the 20th century. Other major time periods discussed is the end of World War II and subsequent 10 years with the formation of the FRG and post-Cold War international security events.

Secondary sources consisting primarily of academic books, peer reviewed journal articles, and think tank reports comprise much of the research presented. In addition, primary sources such as election results and opinion polls are integrated throughout. Because this topic a combination of current affairs and recent history, online newspaper articles have been integrated as source evidence for meaningful events. Material was primarily drawn from English language texts and supplemented by German language sources that were translated by Internet-based software.

The term voelkisch nationalism is used to describe the AfD’s style of nationalism. voelkisch nationalism can be described as extreme nationalism or even racism. The early 20th century Voelkisch movement had anti-Semitism as a pillar of its ideology and was a motivating principle for numerous Voelkisch movements whose members became the early core of the Nazi party. In assessing the AfD’ brand of nationalism in its relation to immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East, voelkisch nationalism best describes the party’s ideology.

---


F. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis is organized into five chapters; the competing models of objective versus subjective controls governments exercise over its armed forces, the rise and evolution of the AfD and its effects on German politics and population, the focus on military reforms by the AfD to restructure the country’s civil-military relationship, the history of militarily skeptical German population and its relationship with the armed forces; the final chapter contains analysis and assessments of the AfD’s policies on Germany’s politics, people, and military that can have a negative impact on transatlantic security with a conclusion that the AfD reject Germany’s post-WWII values.

Chapter II establishes the AfD’s roots in Euroskepticism following the 2008 global financial crisis. The chapter then illustrates the party’s embrace of voelkisch nationalism as a result of the growing number of migrants entering Germany and new leaders replacing the founders and rebranding the party’s ideology. The chapter then details the characteristics of an average party member and provide quantifiable data to show its growth in success along with traditional political parties decline. The chapter will end illustrating the recent trend in violence amongst immigrants along with political scandals that have been linked to the AfD or sympathetic right-wing nationalists.

Chapter III shifts focus to the Bundeswehr foundation and the AfD’s aims and relationship with Germany’s military. First, the Bundeswehr’s founding as an army in a parliamentary democracy and the restraints its founders put in place to avoid the disasters of previous absolutist regimes. It will demonstrate the heritage and principles of Innere Führung which has served as the foundation for Germany’s civil-military relations since the Bundeswehr’s founding. Second, it will show the divide between the AfD and traditional political parties and how its military policies are in contradiction to Innere Führung and the armed forces relationship to the government that it has experienced for over 60 years.

Chapter IV chronologically focuses on the German population embrace of Western institutions and skepticism towards military conflict since the founding of the FRG. Following the Cold War, the people and its government tackled new challenges
that tested its post-WWII culture. The chapter details the divergence of shared values between a new generation of combat experienced German soldiers and a militarily skeptic civilian population who is no longer tethered to the country’s security through mandatory service.

Finally, Chapter V analyzes the AfD’s political rise and military policies in context of 70 years of post-WWII German culture. The chapter attempts to draw conclusions that the AfD policies are a rejection of the principles and foundations of the FRG, Bundeswehr, transatlantic multilateralism, and the tenets that have sustained security on German soil since 1945.
II. AFD’S BACKGROUND AND POSITIONS

The AfD’s political roots lie in its focus on a revival of nationalism as well as a purported defense of the German “national interest” overall, and, specifically, in the impact of the common currency on this “national interest.” As became manifest after the 2008 world economic crisis, circa 2012–2013 the AfD was a Eurosceptic party that rejected further political integration with neighboring countries in the wake of the sovereign debt crisis, especially visible in the Greek bailout. However, since its inception in 2012–13, the AfD has expanded its agenda to encompass a variety of social, economic, and security policies—making the AfD a party with mostly contrarian positions on all major political topics in Germany today. Some of these nationalist or extreme right-wing positions are very much at odds with the post-war consensus in the Federal Republic—and arguably, the AfD’s evolution and ability to offer nationalistic solutions to the public’s concerns resulted, in the national election of 2017, in the party being seated in the Bundestag and in all 16 state legislatures.

The AfD’s rise as a right-wing political force emphasizing the German nation and rejecting decades of multilateral European integration has unfolded while the classic FRG national parties on the left and right have lost voters to the AfD, the sum of which has robbed the center of its once iron clad grip on the parliament. In this aspect, the German party landscape in 2020 again has nationalist and more or less Marxist parties, which during the best years of the FRG were not operative at all. Germany’s normally placid domestic politics is a thing of the past.

This chapter examines the rise of the AfD in four parts. First, it highlights the AfD’s origins as a nationalist and populist anti-European Union political party. Second, it demonstrates how its platform evolved to embrace anti-immigration policies as its cornerstone, especially after the refugee crisis of 2015. Third, it profiles the AfD demographic composition and factors contributing to its electoral rise. Finally, the chapter provides examples of the destabilizing effects the AfD has pressed on what is normally a stable German political scene since its national breakthrough in 2017. This chapter illustrates that the AfD’s attacks on minority rights, independent political
institutions, and embracement of racists and xenophobic positions are a threat to Germany’s liberal democracy. Noteworthy in this process is the trajectory from being more or less a party of well-heeled skeptics of the Merkel government to a party with more or less open ties to neo Nazi thugs and the brown mob, which have long been a lesser or greater feature of German political culture since the rise of the NSDAP in the 1920s.

A. BACK TO THE FUTURE? THE ORIGINS OF THE AFD

Though the AfD has evolved in the past decade or so with anti-Bonn and Berlin republic policies as pillars of its platform, its original leaders were members of the educated middle class and managerial elites who nurtured a kind of DM conservatism that then swerved widely to the right as events unfolded. Indeed, the AfD’s founding members are products of the West German educated class who grew disenfranchised with Angela Merkel’s grand coalition regime, in the post Helmut Kohl Christian Democratic Union (CDU). The issue that most immediately inflamed this process was Germany’s financial contributions to the EU in the wake of the euro crisis of 2008—especially to Greece, Spain and Italy. In 2012, these newly dissident but also longtime CDU members Konrad Adam, Alexander Gauland, and Bernd Lucke, created a political organization called Wahlalternative 2013; they formally founded the AfD in February 2013 with the plan to run in that year’s election. Both Gauland and Adam were not fringe members of society but were well-known conservative journalists, and Lucke worked as an economist. These men were more of the school of the 1980s Bonn Republic, which had also enclosed a more deeply conservative and quasi nationalistic strain in the old CDU. They became disaffected in the process after 2005 of grand coalition governments in which Merkel drifted to the left to mollify the SPD.


The AfD primarily focused on economic issues in the lead up to the 2013 federal election. As a professor of economics and the party’s chief economic expert, Lucke represented the German economists who felt it has not been in the country’s interest to give up the deutschmark and adopt a common European currency under the Kohl government at the time of unification. Lucke had significant influence in the Wahlalternative manifesto’s goals to reembrace individual nationalistic values such as readopting national currencies, voter referendums on new intranational regulations, and stopping Germany from financially bailing out other European countries. At the time, Germans largely viewed the AfD’s opposition platform as a single-issue party that opposed the government policies and responses to the Euro crisis. Before the AfD, only the Die Linke (Left Party, that is, the heir to the Socialist Unity Party of Germany [SED] and the Party of Democratic Socialism [PDS]) clearly opposed the government’s bailout policy—the opposition Social Democrats and the Green Party both supported rescue packages—opening a gap in the political discourse that the AfD stepped up to fill, from the nationalist right. By focusing solely on economics and having a fierce anti-European Union agenda in the lead up to the 2013 federal election, the AfD was able to garner enough publicity and support to affect national politics.

The 2013 federal election allowed the AfD to rise as a new nationalist party in Germany, which told all that it was just a true conservative party. Even though the party only formed earlier in that year, the AfD was able to achieve 4.7 percent of the total second ballot votes in the 2013 federal election. That is, it nearly broke through the 5% barrier. This total was insufficient to garner the party any seats in the Bundestag, but it

---

60 Arzheimer, “The AfD,” 540.
61 Gedmin, “Right-Wing Populism in Germany.”
had outsized ramifications in German politics since it heralded the return of a nationalist party to German national life mostly unseen since the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) in the period 1964–1969. For one thing, the AfD’s anti-European Union platform helped squeeze the perennial junior member of the coalition government, the market-liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP), out of the new government altogether. Their share of the electorate slipped from 14.6 percent in 2009 to 4.8 percent in 2013—below the 5-percent threshold to be seated in any parliament in Germany.66 The eclipse of the FDP in the world since Dietrich Genscher and other Bonn Republic stalwarts has unsettled German politics overall, as the liberals have played a key role in the formation of governments since the 1950s and were also a means to absorb Nazis in the Bonn Republic and transform them into citizens of the Basic Law.

As a result, the center-right CDU had to reach across the political spectrum to the liberal SPD to form a grand coalition government.67 This “grand coalition” necessarily tended toward the political center and compromise to the left, which, in turn, propelled voters on the conservative or nationalist wing of the major parties to the platforms of the more extreme parties of the right and the left.

The AfD built from its 2013 success and went on to wins in supranational and local elections the following year. In 2014, the AfD garnered 7.1 percent of the national vote and received seven of Germany’s 96 seats in the European Parliament.68 Additionally, in September 2014, the AfD won between 9.7 percent and 12.2 percent in the Saxon, Brandenburgian, and Thuringian state elections, which provided it greater influence with local governments.69

66 The Federal Returning Officer, “Bundestag Election 2013: Germany.”
69 Schmitt-Beck, 124.
B. EVOLUTION THROUGH 2017

In response to the 2015 refugee crisis, the AfD exploited a political opportunity and shifted its focus from economic Euroscepticism to xenophobia. The political transition created changes in leadership and spun off competing right-wing parties.

1. Refugees and Transition to Voelkisch Nationalism

The AfD started as Eurosceptics but evolved into a political party embracing integral nationalism, xenophobia and mob rule. Arab, Afghan and African refugees fled political oppression and such war-torn countries as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan and flocked to Europe in 2015 in the late summer events that transfixed the spectacle of hundreds of thousands of refugees stretched out along the axis from the Aegean to the Munich train station.\(^{70}\) Enabled by the government’s decision to allow the refugees to enter Germany en masse, the summer of 2015 showed Germany’s \textit{Wilkommenskultur} [culture of welcome] as a kind of atonement for the inhumanity of the past, but it also augured a kind of domestic political upheaval that certain figures in government and society poorly understood.\(^{71}\) A majority of the country supported the federal government’s open-border policy toward refugees in the first months of the refugee crisis.\(^{72}\) In total, Germany’s Federal Office of Migration and Refugees reported the country’s migration balance increased by 1.14 million people and marked the highest increase of foreigners ever recorded in the country’s history, excluding the refugees who came to the western zones of occupation in the years 1946–1949, which was significantly higher in number, nor the displaced persons and otherwise ethnic relocations in wartime.\(^{73}\) With the major conservative party, the CDU-Christian Social Union (CSU)


\(^{71}\) Gedmin, “Right-Wing Populism in Germany.”

\(^{72}\) Stürmer et al., Muslim Immigration, Critical Events, and the Seeds, 135.

alliance, leading the government with the major socialist party, the SPD as the junior member, critics could purport that none of Germany’s largest parties seemed to speak for those citizens who were not in favor of the government’s migration policy.

The AfD’s position against the CDU and SPD government’s immigration policy provided it a political opportunity when the public’s mood shifted drastically to a negative view of migrants following Islamist extremist terrorist attacks in Paris and mass sexual assaults on New Year’s Eve 2015–2016 in Cologne by North Africans.74 The AfD already had a voelkisch nationalist policy, and 81 percent of AfD supporters strongly supported a cap on refugees as well as a reform of the Basic Law against political asylum overall.75 The AfD’s political future now lay not in Euroscepticism, but anti-immigration policies amid the deterioration of civic peace that became obvious in the period 2015–16.

The AfD’s shift from a single-issue focus to a broad platform with voelkisch nationalist policies at the core of its agenda is illustrated through its 2016 Manifesto for Germany: The Political Programme of the Alternative for Germany. The AfD’s manifesto targets refugees’ Islamic religion and demands the closure of Islamic qur’an schools as it perceive them to be breeding grounds for unconstitutional indoctrination.76 Additionally, citing reports from the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution that show associations and activities directed against the constitutional state, the manifesto calls for the banning of “legalistic” Islam and Salafism as they are unconstitutional and a threat to internal security.77 By targeting refugees’ religion as a feature that separates it from the German public, the AfD carved out a political cleavage

75 Gedmin, “Right-Wing Populism in Germany.”
76 AfD, Manifesto for Germany, 54.
77 AfD, 48.
that disassociated it from the government’s pro migration policies. Specifically, the AfD exclaims, “Islam doesn’t belong in Germany.”

The AfD also tapped into repressed German nationalism of its pre 1945 version (i.e., the voelkisch, racist model) to fuel its political rise. First, the AfD wants German to be declared as the country’s official language in the constitution as it sees it as a reflection of the country’s culture, history, values, and identity. The emphasis on the German language as the foundation of the German people rejects European integration but also heavily reflects the AfD’s repudiation of the influx of refugees who do not share its language, history or identity. Second, the AfD rejects multiculturalism and strictly defines the roots of the German national character as found in Christian tradition, the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment, and Roman law. The emphasis on features that distinctly separate Germans from refugees borrows from the old textbook of the Deutsches Volk circa either 1813 or 1936. Both language and a selective reading of history are core elements the AfD emphasized to gain support from voters who opposed the CDU led government’s refugee policies.

The combination of nationalism and xenophobia creates is tantamount to nativism or integral nationalism. Nativism as a voelkisch concept advocates for a homogenous culture because persons not within the native culture create a risk to the nation state. AfD ideology puts the German nation interests ahead of all others—and, thus, puts it at odds with over a half century of German national policies.

2. The Young Eat the Old

Even as the AfD was gaining political momentum with voters, the party still fractured into various splinter groups and factions as has generally happened on the German radical right. Founding member Bernd Lucke was forced out as the party’s

---

78 AfD, 48.
79 AfD, 46.
80 AfD, 46.
81 Arzheimer, “The AfD,” 537.
82 Arzheimer, “The AfD,” 537.
leader in 2015 as more extreme elements came to the fore. Lucke formed the Alliance for Progress and Renewal (ALFA) party, his departure shifted the balance of power in the party toward the right-wing populist wing.

Dr. Frauke Petry succeeded Lucke and aimed to widen the representation of the party’s platform and shift from economic to social issues as she manifested the political power in the federal state of Saxony with its own particular record. Petry is very much a product of the German professional establishment as she is a chemist and entrepreneur. Petry was instrumental in shifting the AfD’s platform from economic to immigration and anti-refugee issues at just the right time in 2015 before public sentiment turned against government policies. However, similar to Lucke, Petry then also fell victim to the extreme right wing of the AfD (the so called der Flügel) and defected in September 2017 to form the Blue Party.

At the center of the right-wing shift and oustings of Lucke and Petry was Björn Höcke—a political figure who makes little attempt to camouflage his obvious ties to the brown underworld that has waxed and waned in the FRG since 1949. Höcke’s family heritage derives from the old FRG and previously East Prussia—now Russian or Lithuanian territory—which shapes his revanchist ideology for a lost homeland and the Prussian, authoritarian, and militaristic dogma, which is just a kind of caricature of Nazism. As the chairman of Thuringia’s AfD, Höcke associates with members from the extreme New Right and NPD, who, for a brief time in the 1960s, influenced politics with their voelkisch nationalist politics against migrant workers. Höcke’s extreme political

---

83 Gedmin, “Right-Wing Populism in Germany.”
84 Decker, “Alternative for Germany,” 9–11.
85 Gedmin, “Right-Wing Populism in Germany.”
87 Gedmin, “Right-Wing Populism in Germany.”
88 Gedmin.
90 Henry Ashby Turner Jr., Germany from Partition to Reunification, (New Haven: Yale University, 1992), 145–146.
associations have not limited his role within the AfD as he exercises significant influence over the so called der Flügel, “The Wing,” the extreme right contingent of the party, which, by 2020, has become a target of internal security observation in the wake of increased political violence.91 Approximately 40 percent of AfD members identify themselves with “The Wing” and Höcke as its leader.92 The Wing’s voelkisch agenda came under investigation from Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz [Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution] in 2020 because political parties advocating for tenets of Nazism like ethnic Volk, racism, and antisemitism are subject to secret service investigations.93 This event followed in the wake of the political murder of a CDU regional political figure, Walter Luebcke, in June 2019.

However, Höcke’s expulsion was abandoned following Lucke’s ousting as party leader in July 2015.94 When Petry was removed via intrigue as party chair in 2016, she cited other AfD members’ extreme views on Muslims as the reason for her move.95 Höcke’s right-wing affiliations were on full display when he marched at neo-Nazi rallies in Chemnitz in 2018 next to Lutz Bachman,96 leader of the Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (PEGIDA), who oppose the dilution of German identity with an influx of Muslim immigrants.97 Höcke also publishes opinion pieces in neo-Nazi publications under the pen name Landolf Ladig.98 He recently exercised his de

---

92 Hänel, “AfD’s Björn Höcke: Firebrand of the German Far Right.”
94 Decker, “Alternative for Germany,” 1–12.
96 Klikauer, “Germany’s AfD,” 2–4.
98 Klikauer, “Germany’s AfD,” 2–4.
facto leadership role in July 2019. Nine of the 12 leadership board members in the West German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, including the moderate chairman Helmut Seifen resigned following the growing influence by “The Wing” faction of the AfD.99 “The Wing’s” growing influence under the AfD under Höcke’s guidance has completely transformed the AfD from western academic Eurosceptics to xenophobic right wingers and what are for all intents and purposes a camouflaged group of neo Nazis even though many AfD voters surely reject neo Nazism.

C. COMPOSITION AND SUCCESS

The average AfD members’ gender, age, education, income, and sources of information are contributing factors to its divergence from mainstream political parties and shift toward the radical right that has been manifest since 2017.

1. Who Is a Member of the AfD?

The composition of AfD membership provides context to the break from traditional mainstream political organizations and factors pulling the party into a more nationalist and right-wing direction. In general, men and younger voters are overrepresented in the party along with those in the lower brackets of education and income.100 Following decades of economic, social, and political integration through the European Union, the above demographics can be described as those whose social class have been stagnant or retracted in the face of the dislocations, first, of unity in the five new states that were the former DDR and those who have been unhinged by globalization and the common European area of Schengen. Traditional media outlets through television, radio, and newspaper offer little or no primary news sources for AfD members as 77 percent of them receive their news from the internet.101 Internet reliance on nationalist, alt-right, and demagogic media in its variety helps explain why 60 percent of AfD members consider the German public media as untrustworthy. The AfD voter makes

100 Decker, “Alternative for Germany,” 11.
101 Klikauer, “Germany’s AfD,” 2.
generous use of such websites as Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp that help create echo chambers that reinforce users’ established worldviews and recycle a form of nationalist, voelkisch or moderately camouflaged Nazi propaganda that, formerly, operated on the fringe of the old FRG and only had a minimal impact.102

The personal attributes of the average AfD member contribute to the party’s anti-immigration and pro German sentiments. Not surprisingly, 87 percent of members believe migrants commit more crimes than Germans while another 64 percent of members believe that foreigners are a source of drugs and crime.103 As an effect of Germany’s recent immigration policies, a most striking statistic is that because of Muslims in the country, 96 percent of AfD members feel foreign in Germany.104 In addition, 38 percent of AfD members admit to believing that “the international Jew has too much influence.”105 New prejudices coexist drearily easily with old ones in the AfD.

2. Electoral Successes—Effects, Opinions, Media, and Traditional Parties Decline

The September 2017 national election marked a turning point for the AfD in its political rise when it exceeded the five-percent threshold to be seated in the German Bundestag. In the election, the AfD received 12.6 percent of the second ballot votes and 94 seats in parliament,106 owing in no small part to slogans like “Der Islam gehört nicht zu Deutschland” (Islam doesn’t belong in Germany).107 Though the FDP returned to the Bundestag in this election, winning 10.7 percent of the second ballot votes and 80 seats, it could not form a coalition government with the CDU, which had lost 55 seats (while sister party, the CSU, lost 10 seats).108 The SPD also lost 40 seats,109 but it retained

102 Klikauer, 2.
103 Klikauer, 2.
104 Klikauer, 2.
105 Klikauer, 2.
106 The Federal Returning Officer, “Bundestag Election 2017: Germany.”
107 Gedmin, “Right-Wing Populism in Germany.”
109 “Bundestag Election 2017: Germany.”
enough seats to re-form a grand coalition government with the CDU and CSU. In fact, the formation of a new Merkel government took months in a fashion unprecedented in the record of the FRG and recalled unpleasant events in the Weimar Republic, where a variety of parties struggled to build governing coalitions that could endure.

Analysis of the 2017 Bundestag election shows that the migration crisis was an important factor for German voters as well as the general collapse of norms that pivoted on the Brexit vote in June 2016 and the Trump presidency in November 2016. The Center for Insights in Survey Research from the International Republican Institute poll taken on the eve of the 2017 Bundestag election showed that 54 percent of Germans believed the country was moving in the wrong direction. Notably, domestic issues were foremost on the minds of voters with the poll showing that the top concerns were poverty and social inequality at 18 percent, German refugee policy at 16 percent, then terrorism at 8 percent, and pensions and unemployment at 7 percent. An influx of refugees into the German state stresses the country’s capacity to maintain services for the population.

When asked about which issues threatened Germany’s way of life, the polls skewed even more nationalist and voelkisch. Terrorism, extremism, and political violence soared to 40 percent; loss of culture, values, and the way of life we grew up with polled at 19 percent; and migration and demographic change garnered 15 percent of the poll. When asked about Europe as a whole, terrorism, refugee policy, immigration control, and rise of extremism combined to comprise 52 percent of respondents’ views on the single biggest problem. Across the board, Germans were having buyers’ remorse for the current government’s refugee policy. The AfD was the only national party with a


112 Center for Insights, “Public Opinion in Germany.”

113 Center for Insights.

114 Center for Insights.
message that resonated with a large portion of the German population’s most important concern.

A 2017 study illustrates that anti-immigrant sentiment was the largest substantive effect AfD voters had and was twice the effect of any other variable. It showed that AfD received support from previous non-voters and all other political parties who were upset with the current government’s refugee policy. The major focus on a single issue drew support to the AfD across all demographics regardless of employment, education, gender, union membership or employment status. The AfD’s 2017 political success owed very much to the government then in power—and its seeming unwillingness to entertain dissent or disagreement on the main issue.

Based on its policies aimed at the issues that were spiking with voters, the AfD received substantial assistance from media outlets. Such key AfD issues as immigration and Euroscepticism received much more reporting prior to the election than traditional issues like the economy and jobs. The AfD also achieved notoriety and follow-on publicity for salacious behavior in the lead up to the 2017 Bundestag election. Far-right online trolls aimed to intimidate opposition opinions in the digital domain by harassing politicians, activists, and female journalists into silence. For example, leading up to the 2017 Bundestag election Green Party and Bundestag member running for reelection, Özcan Mutlu, who is a German with Turkish descent, received death threats to “send him to the gas chamber.” The AfD was promoted by the right-wing network, Reconquista Germanica, whose 8,000 members made a mission of attacking political opponents.

---


117 Hansen and Olsen, 15.


119 Guhl, Ebner, and Rau, The Online Ecosystem of the German Far-Right.


121 Guhl, Ebner, and Rau, The Online Ecosystem of the German Far-Right.
Reconquista Germanica post manipulated photos online of Angela Merkel, refugees, and the media, but have not targeted the AfD.\textsuperscript{122} The Office for the Protection of the Constitution considers Reconquista Germanica as supporting an intellectual breeding ground to encourage right-wing violent attacks.\textsuperscript{123} The AfD and its supporters have inundated social media by creating the most positive or negative attention.\textsuperscript{124} The AfD was Twitter’s most talked about political party in Germany and created Facebook’s most engagement.\textsuperscript{125}

Compounding the AfD’s salience was the growing decay of the major parties’ influence. As illustrated by Figure 1, the combined total votes for the CDU, CSU, and SPD in federal elections have been steadily declining from 91.2 percent in 1976 to 53.4 percent in 2017.


\textsuperscript{125} Stier et al., “Systematically Monitoring Social Media,” 19–20.
D. GROWING VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL TURMOIL

Since the AfD entered the political mainstream, violence and conflict associated with right-wing extremism have surged in Germany, which has seen episodes of political violence, the worst of which was from 1929–1933 and led to the death of the First Republic.

1. Rise in Violence

In 2011, the events surrounding the so called National Socialist Underground (NSU) returned neo Nazi violence as a theme of national life, which, in decades prior, had come to the conclusion that such racist violence was a thing of the past. The epoch of neo Nazi mob violence in the streets of recently unified east Germany also receded into memory and one could describe the FRG was happily free of such miseries. The murder

---

of ten or more Turkish Germans by the NSU in years prior to 2011 and the dramatic trial of the sole remaining NSU perpetrator, Beate Tschaepfe, symbolized a turning point.¹²⁷

Right-wing extremist crimes have been rising in Germany since 2016. In 2018, violent crimes committed by right-wing extremist increased by 3.2 percent.¹²⁸ Though not a large number on the surface, when compared to 8,113 hate crimes recorded by the police in 2018, increased from 3,598 in 2016, illustrates the country is experiencing an influx of violence directed at specific groups—even if they cannot be linked to right-wing extremism.¹²⁹ In the first half of 2019, German police registered 609 attacks on refugees.¹³⁰ According to the Interior Ministry, in the same period, German authorities registered more than 8,600 right-wing extremist crimes.¹³¹

On June 2, 2019, fateful enough, Walter Lübcke, CDU member and head of Kassel’s regional council in the federal state of Hesse was murdered by a gunshot wound to the head at close range.¹³² The accused, Stephan Ernest, had associations with neo Nazi groups and racist violence.¹³³ Initially, Ernst admitted to murdering Lübcke for his pro-immigrant views before the former withdrew his confession.¹³⁴ Then CDU party leader and defense minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer stated that the AfD, in embracing hate and incitement, has overturned taboo language and foments such

¹³¹ “Germany: Over 600 Attacks on Refugees in First Half of 2019.”
violence. Arguably, this desensitization of the language has been a stage in the escalation from brutal political polemics to violence culminating in political assassination as in former times.

Anti-Jewish, neo Nazi violence occurred in Halle on October 9, 2019, on the holiest of Jewish holidays, Yom Kippur, when Stephen Balliet attempted to enter a synagogue and livestream a mass execution. After failing to enter the synagogue, Balliet turned his lethal attention to patrons of a nearby Turkish restaurant, whom he shot. Balliet had served as a conscript in the Bundeswehr in 2010, and blamed his unemployment and living with his mother on mass migration and a Jewish conspiracy. His “manifesto” was published online and fueled cynical jokes about if he had lived up to similar attacks in El Paso, Texas, and the Christchurch in New Zealand. Websites like 4chan and 8chan gossiped about Balliet’s attack, which are havens for disinformation campaigns, political harassment, and coordinated support for the AfD.

In Hanau, Germany February 19, 2020, nine people were killed at two hookah bars. The murderer was identified as Tobias R. and is believed to have been

---


139 Guhl, Ebner, and Rau, The Online Ecosystem of the German Far-Right.

140 Koehler, “The Halle, Germany, Synagogue Attack” 15.

141 Guhl, Ebner, and Rau, The Online Ecosystem of the German Far-Right.

142 Guhl, Ebner, and Rau.

radicalized online by far-right conspiracy theories. The chair of the European Network Against Racism, Karen Taylor, believes that there is a “whole web of potential violent terrorists” and links it to a racist party in the Bundestag that engages with constitutionally illegal far-right groups. The Director of the German Institute on Radicalization and De-radicalization Studies, Daniel Koehler, connects the recent far-right radical environment to the AfD normalizing racism and dehumanizing rhetoric.

2. Political Turmoil

As illustrated by Figure 2, in the eastern state of Thuringia, the AfD increased its total percentage votes by more than 12 percent while the CDU lost nearly 12 percent, SPD lost 4.2 percent and the FDP reached the 5-percent threshold to be awarded seats in the Landtag.

---


145 Hurst, “Hanau Attacks.”

146 Hurst, “Hanau Attacks,” In the past five years, far-right motivated terrorism has increased by 320 percent internationally and is attributed to the toxic far-right online ecosystem.

The election results show a rejection of CDU-SPD coalition national government and people look towards smaller political parties with less diverse platforms as their answer. As a result of the divided elections, the following months were riddled with no coalition government as the Left Party, SPD, and Greens did not have sufficient seats to form a majority.

Thuringia exploded into national controversy in February 2020 as a third round of voting for state premier resulted in the FDP candidate, Thomas Kemmerich, receiving the necessary number of votes only with the support of the AfD. Immediate outrage erupted as political parties previously refused any cooperation with the AfD. The uproar immediately led to Kemmerich resigning his newly elected office, followed at the

---


The Thuringian debacle highlights the historical sensitivities Germans have for the state. Following the short-lived election of Kemmerich with the AfD’s support, the previous governor, Left Party member Bodo Rambelow tweeted quotes from Adolf Hitler, “We achieved the biggest success in Thuringia…There we are today really the decisive party. The parties in Thuringia that have governed so far, are unable to get a majority without our assistance.”\footnote{Katrin Bennhold, “Germans Unnerved by Political Turmoil That Echoes Nazi Era,” \textit{New York Times}, February 7, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/07/world/europe/germany-thuringia-afd.html.} Indeed, similar to the AfD fracturing the distribution of votes today, Wilhelm Frick and Fritz Sauckel were able to lead the Nazi’s party as a splinter political group and participate in the state government following the 1929 election.\footnote{Donald R. Tracey, “The Development of the National Socialist Party in Thuringia, 1924-30,” \textit{Central European History Society} 8, no. 1 (March 1975): 23-31, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938900017738.} Ultimately, Bodo Ramelow won the premiership as the CDU abstained from voting.\footnote{“Left Party Politician Bodo Ramelow Wins Key German State Vote,” \textit{Deutsche Welle}, March 4, 2020, https://www.dw.com/en/left-party-politician-bodo-ramelow-wins-key-german-state-vote/a-52635758.} For the moment, at least, partnering with the AfD represents a spectacle that mainstream Germany is unwilling to accept.

\section{Conclusion}

The AfD is not like normal German political parties. Its support comes from those disenfranchised with traditional parties to include large numbers of racists, xenophobes, anti-Semites, and ultranationalists. Though their original leaders were products of West Germany and European integration, the party has metamorphized into a rejection of all matters not associated with so called, German identity. Racist policies and rhetoric along with association with illegal right-wing groups has spurred violence in social media and death in German streets.
III. INNERE FÜHRUNG AND AFD MILITARY REVISIONISM

The term *Innere Führung*, which is wrongly translated as “leadership and civic education,” has been the trademark of the Bundeswehr since 1955. That is, a style of command that embraces the citizen in uniform versus the subject of the king or the *Volksgenosse* at arms in service of the Fuehrer. As such it has been also a trademark of civil military relations in the FRG which a fraction of the public remain skeptical about the heritage of the soldier and the role of the soldier in the state. The AfD has claimed that it is the party of German soldiers and that it embraces *Innere Führung*, but in reality, the AfD in civil military relations has an ambiguous role which defies easy generalization. When one examines the military policy of the AfD, it is hard to suggest that such policy embraces the record of German civil military relations since 1955. The danger exists that a nationalist party can revive aspects of formerly extinct militarism, a proposition that is examined in this chapter.

This chapter is organized into two major parts with subsections. First, it illustrates the origins, criticism, general current status of the Bundeswehr’s *Innere Führung* concept. Second, it examines the AfD’s military affiliation and policies towards the Bundeswehr in its attempt to become the soldier’s party.

A. WHAT IS THE CITIZEN IN UNIFORM AND WHAT IS INNERE FÜHRUNG? COMMAND, OBEDIENCE, MORALE, AND CITIZENSHIP IN THE GERMAN MILITARY

1. Origins: Out with the Old and In with the New

The government in Bonn in 1949 had to build a new state without the Prussian heritage of the soldier, the dynasty, the court and a people at arms. Rather, the government had to reconcile national defense with the higher imperative of human rights in the Basic Law. The Adenauer government believed that for the first time in German history, the military had to be subordinate to civilian leadership which symbolized the Bonn government’s most dramatic break from the country’s Prussian-German military

---

156 Turner Jr., *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 125.
As early as 1947, an ex-staff officer who in the 1950s was the public face of the ideal of the citizen in uniform, Wolf Graf von Baudissin, advocated for contextual meaning for future soldiers in a new German military that must be an organization that serves humanity.¹⁵⁸ When Adenauer called together a group of ex-soldiers in the Eifel Mountains to plan for an FRG role in a European Army, the October 1950 Himmerod Memorandum stated that the new force must not resemble the old Wehrmacht, as its soldiers needed to believe democracy was the only option for their way of life.¹⁵⁹

The answer to generations of undemocratic militarism was the creation in 1953 of the *Innere Führung* concept as Germany’s civilian-military control mechanism and an anchor for Bundeswehr command and obedience.¹⁶⁰ When Germany created the Bundeswehr and adopted *Innere Führung*, the Bonn government wanted to prevent the reformation of a military caste that Gordon Craig characterized as a “state within the state.”¹⁶¹ *Innere Führung*’s core ideal is that soldiers’ are “citizens in uniform” with principles of command, leadership, and morale that integrates them into a plural democratic society, which serves as a guard against the recreation of separate military caste.¹⁶² Unlike previous Prussian and German militaries that exercised exclusive political and social ethos, Bundeswehr soldiers would be true citizens in uniform with the right to vote.¹⁶³ Integrating subjective government controls into the newly created


¹⁶⁰ Michael G. Lux, *Innere Fuehrung: A Superior Concept of Leadership?* (Berlin, Germany: Carola Hartmann Miles-Verlag, 2009), 150.


¹⁶³ Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 98.
military was essential to the Bundestag that a parliamentary commissioner was assigned to oversee the army’s inner structure.\textsuperscript{164}

\textit{Innere Führung} is a distinctly German principle that is not comparable to other countries’ approaches to integrate the military and civilian populations.\textsuperscript{165} \textit{Innere Führung}’s four goals—legitimacy, motivation, integration, and design of inner order have sustained the citizens in uniform concept.\textsuperscript{166} Because of the war crimes committed by the \textit{Wehrmacht}, \textit{Innere Führung}’s leadership philosophy requires Bundeswehr soldiers to consider whether orders are legal, lawful, and compatible with their conscience.\textsuperscript{167} Wolf Graf von Baudissin, World War II prison of war from the failed North African campaign and widely hailed as the father of \textit{Innere Führung}, rejected the idea that soldiers were not responsible for the orders they carried out.\textsuperscript{168} The 1957 Handbuch \textit{Innere Führung} reinforced soldiers’ moral responsibility as, “Humanity is not divisible. If it is now to be the preserve only of particular groups, it will be lost completely. The soldier who has no respect for his fellow human – and the enemy, too, is his fellow human – is not tolerable, neither as a superior nor as a fellow soldier nor as a fellow citizen.”\textsuperscript{169} Morality as was central tenant for Graf von Baudissin who wanted the citizens who joined the armed forces to be regarded as free men, good citizens and full soldiers.\textsuperscript{170} Graf von Baudissin’s principles were supported by other reformers who

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{164} Abenheim, \textit{Reforging the Iron Cross}, 124.
\textsuperscript{165} Lux, \textit{Innere Fuehrung}, 59.
\textsuperscript{166} Lux, 82.
\end{flushright}
desired soldiers in the new army to first be a human being; second, be a citizen; of Germany and third, be a soldier in the Bundeswehr.\textsuperscript{171}

Graf von Baudissin believed that tradition was an integral part of the military.\textsuperscript{172} Today’s Bundeswehr sees tradition as a means to communicate across different generations.\textsuperscript{173} That communication is engrained German Armed Forces’ pillars of tradition: Prussian reforms from 1807–1819, the 20 July 1944 assassination attempt on Hitler, and the eigene Tradition of the Bundeswehr.\textsuperscript{174} Baudissin believed the civil-military relations reforms by Gerhard von Scharnhorst and other Prussian officers in the early 19\textsuperscript{th} Century was a template for the creation of Bundeswehr’s heritage.\textsuperscript{175} Scharnhorst helped reforms turn subjects into citizens, created civic notions that all citizens are defenders of the state, reformed the degrading military justice system of its time.\textsuperscript{176}

The assassination attempt on Hitler was incorporated as soldiers who resisted the Nazi regime had to rely on their inner morality to guard against the outer leadership who ordered them to do injustices.\textsuperscript{177} It was the conspirators of July 20, 1944, who assumed responsibility in a morally unclear situation and a model for Bundeswehr soldiers to emulate.\textsuperscript{178}

\textsuperscript{171} Abenheim, \textit{Soldier and Politics}, 24.
\textsuperscript{172} Beardsley, “Citizens in Uniform,” 28.
\textsuperscript{174} Abenheim and Halladay, \textit{Soldiers, War, Knowledge and Citizenship}, 81.
\textsuperscript{175} Beardsley, “Citizens in Uniform,” 10.
\textsuperscript{178} Dörfler-Dierken, “Reflections on Ethical Standards.”
The Bundeswehr’s eigene Tradition links the current armed forces to its founding as citizens in uniform in a democratic and constitutionally controlled alliance army.179 The German Basic law is the source for the pillars of Bundeswehr tradition as it instills the rule of law, democracy, human dignity and the obligation to fight for freedom and peace.180

2. Criticism

From its origins in the period 1950–1953, military conservatives and nationalists who saw no failing in the Wehrmacht in national socialism have attacked Innere Führung. The code of command has wrongly been criticized for its abstract features that struggle to create positive identity for Bundeswehr soldiers.181 An example of this criticism with relevance for the role of the AfD with the Bundeswehr in the year 2020, a half century ago, the Army Chief of Staff, Albert Schnez, wrote in the so called “Studie des Heeres” that Innere Führung as to focused on theory and counterproductive to military effectiveness.182 Critics regularly apply simplistic concepts of war with a primacy of tactics over any and all other issues in assessing Innere Führung’s effectiveness in combat.183 Innere Führung has been compared to fabric softener and its unsuitability for survival in war.184 In addition, for some soldiers, democratic values are too vague in the face of deployments and places many in search for soldierly identity.185 This is an old canard that since the Afghan mission of the Bundeswehr in ISAF has been

180 Bundeswehr, “The Tradition of the Bundeswehr.”
183 Hartmann, “What’s the Matter with Innere Führung?” 25.
resurrected by a young cohort of officers who embrace the undying virtues of the warrior throughout all of time and so forth.

With an emphasis on COIN and on the ideological and colonial warfare brutalities of such theaters as Afghanistan and elsewhere, certain thoughtful but more or less militarist post-Cold War young officers have grown skeptical of the current application of *Innere Führung*. Observers have characterized *Generation Deployment* as younger officers whose identity has been built from overseas deployment especially in the ISAF mission and a break from the Bundeswehr’s Cold War origins. For many who belong to *Generation Deployment*, the guiding culture of senior officers don’t reflect the experiences 21st Century soldiers suggesting *Innere Führung* an irrelevant relic. Younger veterans’ associations such as *Bund Deutscher Einsatzveteranen* [Association of German Mission Veterans] and the Combat Veterans have sparked debate as they want an operational deployment to be criteria to label a former soldier as a veteran which the German Bundeswehr Association warns how a definition could divide the troops. Senior leaders who tie *Innere Führung* to maturity and experience fail to adapt it to modern times with the divide between those soldiers who have deployed and those who have not. After overseas deployments that have contributed to deaths and disabilities, soldiers return to be unrecognized by a disinterested public and illustrates that modern citizens in uniform can feel like strangers in society.

186 Beardsley, 3.
187 Beardsley, 18.
191 Wiesendahl, “Bundeswehr Without Cohesion,” 44.
3. Today—Still a Success

Though today’s debate is different from previous generations about the effectiveness and relevancy of *Innere Führung*, the 2008 Joint Service Regulation ZDv 10/1 still stipulates, “The core of *Innere Führung* is unchangeable.”192 Like society, the Bundeswehr is a system of values that are subject to change and makes *Innere Führung* durable to complete the mission at hand.193 It is understandable that *Innere Führung* is becoming less relevant with the younger generation as its justification for creation was built from the civil-military failures of the Weimer Republic and the Third Reich.194 However, with young combat veterans returning from irregular warfare to a democracy whose citizens they may have little identity with, more and not less emphasis is need to adapt and modernize *Innere Führung*.195

*Innere Führung* traditions have been reassessed with the 2006 Ministry of Defense White Paper that reinforced, “The cultivation of traditions in the Bundeswehr focuses on the Prussian army reforms, military resistance to the National Socialist regime, and the history of the Bundeswehr itself.”196 Because the Third Reich’s military was guilty of war crimes that inflicts wounds to the Bundeswehr to this day, its history is incompatible as a basis for tradition for a modern democracy’s military.197

---


Despite new technologies and combat deployments, Innere Führung’s emphasis on moral and legal obligations make it remain valid today.\textsuperscript{198} Innere Führung has been the trademark of the Bundeswehr’s 60-year history and even helped it reunite the country both politically and militarily with the former Democratic Republic of Germany.\textsuperscript{199} Though many young soldiers identifying with Generation Deployment doubt its Innere Führung’s relevancy, skepticism that is reinforced with current German and European social upheaval, it should continue as the armed forces professional code.\textsuperscript{200} Innere Führung is the foundation that ensures the Bundeswehr remains an army reflective of the Basic Law, German democracy and the transatlantic security community.\textsuperscript{201}

B. AFD, THE BUNDESTAG, AND THE BUNDESWEHR—PEOPLE, GOVERNMENT, AND MILITARY

1. Afd in the Government

The AfD break from traditional political parties as it advocates that because of the dwindling cultural remembrance of National Socialism, the country should broaden its historical lenses to encompass more positive aspects of the nation’s history to establish greater cultural identity.\textsuperscript{202} Historical events, such as the Holocaust, that create negative images of Germans, has created political turmoil by AfD Bundestag members. Expelled CDU-CSU member, and Bundestag representative for the AfD, Martin Hohmann,\textsuperscript{203} downplayed the importance of the Holocaust and made it a heated aspect in his 2017 Bundestag campaign.\textsuperscript{204} Alexander Gauland, the AfD party chairman, aimed to redefine

\textsuperscript{198} Lux, Innere Fuehrung, 155.
\textsuperscript{199} Hartmann, “What’s the Matter with Innere Führung?” 22.
\textsuperscript{200} Abenheim and Halladay, “Professional Soldiers and Citizens in Uniform, 3.
\textsuperscript{201} Abenheim and Halladay, “Stability in Flux,” 305.
\textsuperscript{202} AfD, Manifesto for Germany, 47.
Germany’s collective guilt under the Third Reich as he referred to the Nazis as, “bird shit in 1,000 years of successful German history.”205 Björn Höcke, the AfD leader in Thuringia, wants a revision of the country’s history to focus on German victims in World War II and even declared that the Holocaust memorial in Berlin is a “memorial of shame.”206

AfD government leaders’ reinterpretation of German history creates debate for the country to reintroduce previous generations’ values. National Socialism perverted Prussian military virtues through the manipulation of patriotic symbols for political means with ceremonies like Hitler and Hindenburg’s wreath laying at the Potsdam Church in 1933—linking and legitimizing Nazi authority to the Prussian kings.207 Hitler’s corruption of Prussian pathos destroyed generations tradition as it helped lead to the Germany’s destruction.208 Currently, because of its connection through Nazism to the Holocaust, the historic Potsdam Church remains an unwarranted tradition in the modern age and its rebuilding is mired with protests from the current generation.209

Unlike other mainstream political parties’ like the CDU, SPD, Greens, and FDP, the AfD advertises and places the spotlight on its former soldiers who serve in the

206 “AfD Lawmakers Walk Out.”
207 Abenheim, Reforging the Iron Cross, 33–34.
Berenger Elsner von Gronow, Gerold Otten, Jens Kestner, Jan Nolte, and Rüdiger Lucassen are former professional soldiers who run the AfD’s Bundestag Defense Working Group and published “Streitkraft Bundeswehr” in 2019. Streitkraft Bundeswehr publishes the AfD’s policies towards the military.

2. AfD Military Policies

Streitkraft Bundeswehr advocates for the creation of a national military general staff to increase operational capability and effectiveness. Since West Germany recreated a national military with the Bundeswehr, its military structure above the squadron level has been incorporated into international organizations such as NATO. In 2007, General Norbert van Heyst met with commanders who returned from foreign missions and concluded, “The Bundeswehr is good at ceremonies; militarily it is ineffective” and a suggestion was to create a General Staff to overcome poor control measures. The slow bureaucratic gap between the ministry of defense and deployed Bundeswehr resulted in significant delays in support in 2008 as request for devices to neutralize roadside bombs were not filled though they were requested in 2003—General

---


217 Working Group Defense of the AfD.

218 Abenheim, Reforging the Iron Cross, 106.

219 Hersspring, Civil-Military Relations and Shared Responsibility, 130.
van Heyst’s report argued that authority to control the transfer and deployment of troops should be given to the chief of staff.\textsuperscript{220}

Historical restraint in recreating a national military general staff persists as post World War II public opinion has felt German militarism should be destroyed as it was embodied by the German Staff and High Command of the German Armed Forces’s employment of the Wehrmacht’s service to the Nazis racial extermination.\textsuperscript{221} Though Germany’s last general staff was not convicted as a criminal organization, its senior leaders Wilhelm Keital and Alfred Jodl were condemned to death by the Nuremberg Trial in 1946—forever linking the German Staff and High Command of the German Armed Forces to the atrocities committed by the Third Reich in World War II.\textsuperscript{222}

The AfD’s emphasis on unilateral national defense is at the expense of its commitment to multilateral cooperation. Without a General Staff, the AfD observes Germany has weaker defense capabilities, is more dependent on the abilities of NATO, and prevents it from taking military leadership role with European partners.\textsuperscript{223} The AfD calls for a national safety strategy that incorporates cyber, coastal, air, and ground security with the armed forces able to cover the entire conventional warfare spectrum.\textsuperscript{224} In addition, the AfD aims to have the Bundeswehr participate with civilian law enforcement for population protection.\textsuperscript{225} However, German Basic Law’s restrictions fuel AfD advocates to adapt it and allow the Bundeswehr to react to threat scenarios like captured airplanes terrorist raids, and drone attacks.\textsuperscript{226} The employment of military forces in support of domestic security has recently been a popular policy amongst Central

\textsuperscript{220} Herspring, \textit{Civil-Military Relations and Shared Responsibility}, 130.


\textsuperscript{222} Barry A. Leach, \textit{German General Staff}, (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1973), 158.

\textsuperscript{223} Working Group Defense of the AfD, \textit{Armed Forces Bundeswehr}.

\textsuperscript{224} Working Group Defense of the AfD.

\textsuperscript{225} Working Group Defense of the AfD.

\textsuperscript{226} Working Group Defense of the AfD.
European right wing parties.\textsuperscript{227} The Bundeswehr’s command and control would improve with a General Staff, make it more individually capable, and less reliant on NATO partners. However, its adoption would reject post-World War II multinational integration with its redirection of the military to be a political instrument for domestic security.

Streitkraft Bundeswehr advocates that because of the special considerations of military service, the Bundeswehr should compose its own military justice system.\textsuperscript{228} Previous right wing parties such as the National Democratic Party (NPD) advocated for the reinstitution of military judges and was met with civil protests from the 1950s to 1970s.\textsuperscript{229} However, removing the military from the federal courts jurisdiction would create a barrier to prevent the formation of a military caste—a goal of Innere Führung. Before the founding of the Federal Republic, Prussian army officers were subject to trial only by their military peers, which separated them legally from the civilian population.\textsuperscript{230} A military justice system removed from civilian courts would be a retrenchment from integrating soldiers into civilian society and contradict the foundation of Innere Führung. Bundeswehr founder Wolf Graf von Baudissin wanted soldiers as citizens subject to civilian oversight and a separate military justice system would be a rebuke of his ideals.\textsuperscript{231}

The AfD advocates that the Basic Law governing the federal budget and military funding should be adapted to increase the Bundeswehr’s readiness.\textsuperscript{232} Shortages on ammunition in addition to inoperable jets and ships have led to Social Democrat, Hans-Peter Bartel and Bundestag member in charge of Bundeswehr monitoring to admit there

\textsuperscript{227} Abenheim, Hartmann, and Rosen (Hrsg.), “Bundeswehr and Alternative Fur Deutschland,” 55.
\textsuperscript{228} Working Group Defense of the AfD, \textit{Armed Forces Bundeswehr}.
\textsuperscript{229} Abenheim, Hartmann, and Rosen (Hrsg.), “Bundeswehr and Alternative Fur Deutschland,” 60.
\textsuperscript{230} James Hawes, \textit{The Shortest History of Germany}, (Devon, Great Britain: Old Street Publishing, 2017), 133.
\textsuperscript{232} Working Group Defense of the AfD, \textit{Armed Forces Bundeswehr}.
is not enough personnel or material. The AfD want to readopt military conscription and aim to increase the military to 230,000 active duty soldiers. From its maximum number of 600,000, the Bundeswehr was reduced to 370,000 in 1994, to 250,000 in 2010, to its present number of 183,000 active duty soldiers. Military officers, defense civilians, and veterans have been voicing concerns about the army’s diminished role in the state since the end of the Cold War and appears to not be addressed by the government.

Streitkraft Bundeswehr aims to create civilian appreciation of Germany’s soldiers. The AfD aim to create mutual loyalty between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Bundeswehr and see an emotional connection between soldiers and citizens as necessary. Unlike the victors of World War II like the United States, United Kingdom and even France, Germany is a country where veterans who dress in clothes that associate themselves with military service can be insulted or laughed at. The Third Reich propagandized the Wehrmacht with public parades during the day and torchlight marches at night to reinforce the military’s special role in society and deflected political turmoil. In similar fashion to the Nazi regime, the AfD want to hold capital parades with German units. To further display the Bundeswehr to the public, the AfD

238 Working Group Defense of the AfD, Armed Forces Bundeswehr.
239 Working Group Defense of the AfD.
242 Working Group Defense of the AfD.
call for military recruiting offices to be placed in city centers reminiscent of the United States’ armed forces center at the heart of New York’s Time Square. AfD aims to distinguish soldiers from civilians reflects other western cultures, previous German regimes, and not reflective of Federal Republic of Germany, Bundeswehr’s, or the citizen in uniform Innere Führung concept.

The AfD further aim to separate soldiers’ identity from the citizen population by amending labor law so it does not apply to the armed forces. In addition, hostilities committed by civilians against soldiers in uniform in public would be considered criminal. Daily life military rituals with soldiers in public ceremonies were specifically aimed to be eliminated by the new Federal Republic of Germany in its early years.

Based on Streitkraft Bundeswehr, it appears clear that the AfD aim to redefine what it means to be a citizen in uniform in German society by rekindling an emotional connection between the military as the defenders of the country and the men and women who comprise the civilian population. The granting of social privileges to soldiers and reconnecting the Bundeswehr to centuries of military tradition threaten to recreate a “state within the state.” Though government policy still rules out honoring most soldiers from the World Wars, the Guidelines on Traditional Understanding and Traditional Care states, “Establishment of tradition and cultivation of tradition are dynamic and never-ending actions that elude all attempts to determine it centrally or

---

245 Working Group Defense of the AfD, Armed Forces Bundeswehr.
246 Working Group Defense of the AfD.
247 Abenheim, Reforging the Iron Cross, 130.
249 Working Group Defense of the AfD.
250 Craig, The Politics of the Prussian Army, 217.
251 Herspring, Civil-Military Relations and Shared Responsibility, 124.
permanently.” The impermanent status of tradition reflects the durability of *Innere Führung* and the German government—nothing is permanent. The current accepted tradition is illustrated by former Minister of Defense, Ursula von der Leyen’s order to rename barracks named for World War II officers, including Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, to illustrate that Bundeswehr’s tradition are not rooted in the *Wehrmacht*. However, the AfD advance a counter traditional narrative with its deflection of the cultural importance of the Holocaust towards Germans’ glorious history.

C. CONCLUSION

AfD leaders have started publicizing the term *Soldatenpartei* [soldiers party], and for good reason. As of February, 2019, before the publication of Streitkraft Bundeswehr, the AfD’s already amassed a military following as 2,100 of its 35,000 members were professional soldiers. Its goal to elevate soldiers to special positions in civil society is not in keeping with *Innere Führung*’s citizen in uniform concept and regresses back to militarism under Prussian and Third Reich leadership. However, the durability of *Innere Führung* and commitment to no fixed heritage creates opportunities for the AfD to exploit. Years of government neglect and growing divide between the military and civilian population separates soldiers from society and affords them a base of political support to serve as their means.

---


256 Kain and Scheucher, “Will the AfD Become the New Soldiers Party?”
Because of the devastation and defeat in World War II, a society that had embraced the people at arms and endured the effort of total war grew skeptical about military institutions. All the same, within a decade of war’s end, the two German states each had their own new army. Especially in the FRG (but surely also in the GDR) these new armies were regarded with skepticism and, in some cases, open hostility. The role of the former military elite in the FRG, that is the old officer class and its relation to politics, was also an issue in the first decades of the Bonn Republic and was regarded as potential problem as had been the case in the period 1919–1933, when the military caste had ended up actively destroying the republic. This problem of extreme nationalists in uniform has more or less been a constant concern in episodes since the 1950s, and with the advent of an extreme nationalist party in the 21st century, this old concern has reappeared.

The AfD’s nationalist positions does or does not provide cover for right-wing extremists serving in uniform to operate against the constitutional order. This chapter has three main parts with subdivisions. First, it illustrates the civil military relations that developed following a divided Germany’s defeat in World War II and the establishment of the Federal Republic’s Bundeswehr. Second, German citizens’ skepticism of military affairs is not an absolute defining feature; however, it is adopted by enough of the population to wield a significant amount of restraint with policy makers with operations abroad in the post-Cold War world. Finally, in view of the abolition of conscription in the defense reform of the year 2011, it examines Germany’s post-conscription society and the friction between those skeptical of the country’s military and defense policy that is necessary for national defense and has a history with right-wing extremists.

A. POST-WWII AND COLD WAR ANTI-MILITARISM

1. Destroyed By War—Hour Zero

The war which began in 1939 was the second in a quarter century and ended with six million German dead out of a total of some fifty five million worldwide and the
destruction of Germany’s cities and its moral collapse with millions more who suffered disabilities.\textsuperscript{257} Nearly all of the 11 million members of the military were imprisoned, with many serving as slave laborers in the Soviet Union for years.\textsuperscript{258} Still, the population of postwar East and West Germany still grew from 59 million in 1939 to 64 million in 1946 as 10 million-12 million German refugees fled the nations behind the Iron Curtain.\textsuperscript{259} The growth in population faced the challenge of rebuilding a country that had 25 percent of housing destroyed and some cities exceeding 50 percent.\textsuperscript{260} Starvation and deprivation reigned in all the zones of occupation in the hour zero until, at least in the west, the currency reform operated in 1948–9 and brought some relief.\textsuperscript{261}

Thomas Berger describes post-war Germany as physically and psychologically shaken to its core as old nationalist dreams of empire ended in divided nation among the four victors that was populated by a war-weary disillusioned public.\textsuperscript{262} The German public turned inward and in part came to grips with the effects of national socialism and militarism while other parts of society evaded this responsibility and blamed the allies.\textsuperscript{263}

2. **Never Again, Never Alone: Building a Government and Military**

The Bonn Republic that emerged slowly from 1948 was led by the Cologne mayor Konrad Adenauer, whose central idea was to integrate the new FRG into the West, i.e., the Euro Atlantic West that emerged in the years 1946–55.\textsuperscript{264} As a part of its statecraft,\textsuperscript{265} the FRG integrated its security within western powers military’s by joining

\begin{itemize}
  \item[257] Turner Jr., *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 3.
  \item[259] Turner Jr., *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 6.
  \item[260] Turner Jr., 6.
  \item[263] Berger, 27.
  \item[265] Schmidt, “Germany: The Grand Coalition State,” 84.
\end{itemize}
NATO in 1955, Ascension into an multinational alliance limited the old militarist caste and excluded German aggression and was key to reduce fear from European countries as the Belgians wanted the Germany army strong enough to defeat the Soviet Union but weak enough to be deterred by Belgium. West German multilateralism and skepticism towards militarism became a kind of civil religion in the FRG which all the same in the cold war, had a considerable military force, but has ensured the country is not diplomatically isolated and reassures the security of its neighbors. It also has become a defining characteristic in the postwar German self-image and this civil religion of no more national socialism, although this taboo has begun to collapse in the past decade.

B. POST–COLD WAR RESTRAINT ON MILITARY

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, end of the Cold War, and subsequent German unification returned Germany to a role of power and centrality in Europe. International pressures compelled the government into military conflicts while it was still restrained by the post-WWII policies of no to anything other than national defense in the most limited sense. Three major cases can be examined to show the Bundestag’s recent evolution. The 1990s Balkans and Bosnia/Kosovo conflicts show the German people’s willingness to support military mission. The challenges of the NATO ISAF mission in Afghanistan illustrate the difficulties of the security building role in the post 11 September atmosphere of German military role in alliance cohesion and popular attitudes of anti-Americanism and displeasure with a government which portrayed the Afghan role as security building when after 2009 it devolved into open warfare. The 2011 NATO Libyan operation illustrated the functional limits of a custom of no to former out of area operations especially in North Africa and the role of the FDP in the coalition in combination with public skepticism of UK and French action against Ghadaffi via NATO.

---

1. **1990s: Courts, Morality and Kosovo**

The restrictive constitutional definition of Article 87a as to the defensive mission of the Bundeswehr was tested in the 1990s once the eastern and central European state system rearranged itself and did so violently in the wars of the Former Yugoslavia Republic in the 1990s. This process of reorientation had begun with the 1990–1991 Gulf War, in which the FRG had not participated, but in which the question of the limits on the operations of the Bundeswehr became urgent in alliance cohesion and national politics. The upshot of this was that the parliament put the issue to the constitutional court in Karlsruhe. July 12, 1994, was a landmark day for Germany’s military, foreign policy, and anti-war public as its Constitutional Court ruled that Bundeswehr could employ Article 24 of the Basic Law as concerns Germany’s role in collective security to endorse military action. As a result of this reinterpretation, a German role in the EU and NATO missions in in the Former Yugoslavia Republic was allowed under the Basic Law and gave legal justification for future deployments in a range of missions provided the approval of parliament.269 Granted the close relations between, say, Croatia and Germany, and the manner in which the siege of Sarajevo and the slaughter of Bosnian Muslims by Bosnian Serb militias had unfolded, a humanitarian imperative for intervention operated first in the Kohl government’s justification for authorize use of military force for the first bombings in 1994 by NATO aircraft. The country had not outlived the crimes of the Nazi regime a half century earlier as government leaders explicitly argued that because of Germany’s past, it had a moral obligation through collective action and force to preserve peace in Europe.270 German moral responsibility to protect innocent life only grew greater following the 1995 Srebrenica massacre which deeply affected Germany’s policy makers.271 Though post-WWII society heavily rejected war beyond the limits of the old

---


270 Longhurst, *Germany and the Use of Force*, 67.

Article 87a, Germany was finding itself politically motivated by humanitarian considerations to use it military outside of its borders.

In the case of the Kosovo intervention in 1998–9, the German people were morally able to reconcile their identity with their responsibilities to European security and human rights. Around 60 percent of the population approved of the Bundeswehr’s deployment to Kosovo, although 57 percent of the population in the east disapproved because of the legacy of the GDR and a hostility to the U.S. and to NATO that is deeply ingrained there. Following the earlier military operations of the 1990s, and especially true after the siege of Sarajevo and the slaughter in Srebrenica, the moral aspect of the growing humanitarian need in Kosovo struck a chord with a majority of the German people. Germans were determined to be on the right side of history as they were confronted with Serbian atrocities and ethnic cleansings that equated to crimes committed by the Nazi regime in World War II. Because Germany’s post-WWII identity was crafted by a general rejection of wars of aggression and militarism as well as singular German bids to rule Europe as a master race, broad public support developed for military intervention to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.

2. Afghanistan

Following the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001, Germany again faced the question on whether it should use military force and what restraints its population would place on it. NATO invoked Article 5 on September 12, 2001, and the Bundeswehr deployed in support of the U.S. led special operations included in the limited Operation Enduring Freedom that was manifestly not under NATO command.

---


274 Hyde-Price, “Germany and the Kosovo War,” 22.

275 Hyde-Price, 22.

Germany’s culture of restraint would heavily influence battlefield operations as it was the country’s first large scale non-humanitarian military operation away from Europe since the Nazis held power.\textsuperscript{277} Social Democrat leader and Chancellor Gerhard Schröder wanted to deploy troops to the northeast part of Afghanistan which had no Taliban presence.\textsuperscript{278} Outside of a small number of special forces conducting combat operating in eastern Afghanistan, the 1,100 soldiers who comprised the bulk of Germany’s contribution to ISAF was confined to the Kabul region.\textsuperscript{279} In order to authorize movement of personnel outside of Kabul and be sent to Kunduz Province, the Bundestag had to approve it in October 2003.\textsuperscript{280}

In addition to approval from Berlin, the German government also placed caveats on soldiers and operations. NATO countries individually decide in what capacity to support operations and with what restraints.\textsuperscript{281} Caveats installed by Berlin included restriction on troop movements at night and all patrols requiring ambulances.\textsuperscript{282} In essence, government restrictions were heavily removing German soldiers from significant danger and former Supreme Allied Commander—Europe, General James Jones warned against restrictive national caveats as they diminish deployed forces ability to accomplish missions.\textsuperscript{283} Jones failed to remember, however, what Clausewitz wrote, that the more limited a war in its nature, the more political it does become. Jones also failed to see that from Mons in Belgium at Headquarters, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (HQ, SHAPE) opinions about domestic politics can only go so far. The ambiguities of the COIN mission that then unfolded in NATO ISAF. The Afghan mission was marred for its

\textsuperscript{277} Lindley-French, 227.
\textsuperscript{280} Lindley-French, Chronology of European Security & Defence, 251.
\textsuperscript{282} Rashid, Descent into Chaos, 354.
start by strategic and operational missteps which then eventuated as conflicted civil military relations (see McChrystal) and the German/NATO/ISAF experience was no exception.

From the years 2004 until 2009, as the character of the conflict in Afghanistan worsened and the U.S. role of all out combat became more prominent, public support for the German role in ISAF deteriorated. As depicted in the Figure 3, as the Bundeswehr maintained a footprint in Afghanistan, the German public grew progressively dissatisfied with its mission in Afghanistan because of the general problems of policy strategy and operations in a theater of war that has generally ruptured the plans of outside powers in campaigns of attrition and heart break.

The Bundeswehr should leave Afghanistan now:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Support (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 2002</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2004</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2006</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2007</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2008</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Infratest Dimap, Der Spiegel, July 6, 2009

The German public’s growing dissatisfaction of the war has multiple contributing factors. From the beginning, Germany was ISAF’s third largest contributor of forces in Afghanistan. Since operations started in 2001 in the various campaigns in Afghanistan, 53 Germans serving in the army, air force, police, or Georgian army have

---


died.  Of those 53 deaths, 37 were due to hostile enemy action which then as of about 2009 became manifest. Afghanistan represents the largest number of casualties German has suffered since the end of World War II.

This transition from the limited ISAF security role in Kabul in 2002–2004 through the burden shifting increase of a NATO ISAF across the breadth of Afghanistan by 2009 led to German public discontent with operations in Afghanistan. In 2009, a reduction in the restriction of rules of engagement resulted in a German request for an air strike that killed several dozen civilians in what was or was not a friendly fire episode. Controversy surrounded the command decisions that had led to the incident and it became embroiled in parliamentary controversy and public opinion that resisted the expanded combat mission with ISAF. Newly appointed Minister of Defence Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg forced the resignations of Bundeswehr Chief of Staff Wolfgang Schneiderhan and Deputy Defence Minister Peter Wichert for the subsequent handling of the mission. The cabinet asserted that the Bundeswehr was “enforcing a United Nations mandate rebuild Afghanistan” but the public debate perceived its operations as combat in service of an aggressive U.S. and such operations had little to do with stabilization and reconstruction efforts. Disconnect from military operations, to civil military command and oversight, and the public’s understanding allowed for greater freedom of operations until the friendly fire event in 2009–2010 led to a crystallization of anti ISAF sentiment especially in The Left which put the great coalition government about the strategic problems of the mission.

---


290 Noetzel, 402.
As of 2019, the Bundeswehr had up to 1,300 troops deployed to Afghanistan. The Train Advise Assist Command – North is under German command. Even with the Bundeswehr’s presence, Germany has not suffered a casualty from hostile enemy fire since 2013. As a result of time, casualties, and high profile events, the anti-war German public has been able to constrain its government from allowing to engage in operations that put German lives at major risk.

3. Libya

Germany’s vote on the 2011 United Nations’ use of force in Libya showed the traditional skepticism on the part of the coalition, in this case, the FDP foreign minister Westerwelle, to military operations over and above the ISAF mission in that year. The German people and its government were split on the country’s position on the UN Security Council vote for the authorized use of force in Libya in 2011. Not the best demoscopic source notwithstanding, Stern magazine published a poll illustrating that 88 percent of the population opposed German troops involvement in Libya. Stern magazine is not the “will of the German people” by any measure. The will of the German people is either a vote in parliament or a national election.

Thus, Libya placed the government between civil military doubts and sustaining good relations with its NATO allies. As a result of such dissent, fierce debate occurred in the Bundestag over the UN resolution proposal for an enforced no-fly zone over Libya. Poorly communicated changes in the U.S. position before the UN Security Council Resolution vote on March 17, 2011 resulted in Germany breaking from the

---

293 iCasualties Iraq: Afghanistan Fatalities, “Afghanistan Fatalities Total: 3573.”
294 Brockmeier, “Germany and the Intervention in Libya,” 73.
295 Brockmeier, 65.
United States, United Kingdom, and France and abstaining from voting along with Russia, China, Brazil, and India.296

Germany’s separate path from its European allies caused alarm in neighboring capitals, where skepticism of German power is ever present, and the question operated about a German special path in statecraft that combined with its economic power meant problems for collective defense.297 Critics argued that Germany’s abstention damaged its reputation and trustworthiness in NATO and its isolation and semi-neutral strategy could undermine the western alliance.298 German Minister of Defense Thomas de Maizière defended Germany: “We are not convinced of this military action…We do not see ourselves as obliged here now, but we do support when others do so, but without our participation.”299 The government’s abstention was supported by 56 percent of the population and reflected overall public opinion as a clear majority was against German military engagement in Libya but more supportive of the overall NATO mission itself.300 To quell concerns about German alliance cohesion, and send a signal of alliance solidarity, Berlin made available 300 more German troops to support AWACS reconnaissance flights in Afghanistan.301 However, the anti-interventionist section of the German public proved to be a critical restraining factor over government policy within the NATO alliance.

C. GERMAN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

The soldier and the state in contemporary Germany contain military institutions amid sectors of society that are hostile to the armed forces because of historical memory

296 Brockmeier, 63.
297 Brockmeier, 63–64.
300 Oppermann, “National Role Conceptions,” 514.
301 Oppermann, 514.
and political perspective. The Bundeswehr has endeavored to manage this challenge through various civil military means, none of which has been especially vital or strong since the 2010–2011 defense reform which included the end of conscription, which was seen at the time a relic of the cold war and as unsuitable for the kind of expeditionary security mission as visible in ISAF.

1. **Conscription: Its Effects and Abolishment**

Conscription was a pillar of the FRG’s defense structure for decades. A conscription law was adopted in 1956 that obligated all able-bodied young men upon their eighteenth birthday, excluding conscience objectors, to serve in the Bundeswehr. As Henry Turner Jr. illustrates, conscription was the government’s “method to prevent a predominance of professional military men.” The German Ministry of Defense 1971/72 White Book highlights that the importance of conscription and its ensuing identity between German society and its military. Reflecting civilian society in the Bundeswehr was a rejection of Hans von Seeckt, chief of staff of army command in the inter-war period who reorganized the *Reichswehr* with his preference for officers with aristocratic and old military families who could carry on Prussian traditions. The 1970s saw the Bundeswehr grow in numbers close to half-million and reflects the 1971/72 White Book’s call for a reflection of German society in its military.

In 2010, the Merkel-led German government announced it would abolish the country’s conscription requirement. At the time, roughly 72,000 of the 250,00 German

---

302 Turner Jr., *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 125.
303 Turner Jr., 125.
306 Turner Jr., *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 126.
soldiers were conscripts. The Germany’s Ministry of Defense still considers the Bundeswehr as a reflection of all socially relevant groups as thousands of men and women enter and depart active service each year and supplemental reserves help interaction between the military and civilian population. Though the Bundeswehr was able to recruit a sufficient number of personnel after five years from the suspension of compulsory service, it still lacked engineer, medical, and information technology personnel along with female and ethnic minority volunteers. Competition from the police force and private sector along with record-low unemployment has created great difficulty for the Bundeswehr in sustaining its personnel numbers. The Bundeswehr saw its just 23,000 new recruits in 2017 and then even fewer in 2018 with only 20,000.

Because of new security requirements in response to Russian aggression, the Ministry of Defense aimed at increasing the number of its armed forces from its historic low of 166,500 in 2016 to 200,000 by 2024. To meet demand for personal, German officials launched a reality show called “The Recruits” [Die Rekruten] to introduce military life to the civilian population. The show was promptly decried by the parties on the left of the political spectrum—the Greens and The Left—as deceptive and militaristic propaganda.

308 Pietras, “Military Conscription to End in Germany.”
312 Buck, “German Army Struggles to Attract Much-Needed Recruits.”
314 “Army with a Reality Show.”
2. Civilians’ and Military Members’ Perception of Each Other

The German public’s post-WWII antimilitarism shapes its perception and the government’s policies towards the armed forces. Confrontations between a militarily skeptical population the armed forces have persisted from the beginning as youth groups, pacifists, and trade unionists protested the creation of the Bundeswehr in 1955.315 This cultural struggle continues into the current century and percolates into the media regularly. Fighter Squadron 74 was named after World War II pilot Colonel Werner Moelders, but in 2005 his name was removed as it was discovered that Moelders conducted missions in Spain apart of the Legion Condor and is now considered attached to the criminal Wehrmacht.316 Later that year, the Bundeswehr celebrated its 50 year anniversary with a ceremonial tattoo [parade] but was met with 1,200 protestors,317 which included parliament members from the Left Party.318

Public hostility towards the armed forces has reciprocated mistrust and has helped plunge the Bundeswehr’s morale. In 2007, 73.5 percent of surveyed uniform members responded that they “would not recommend the Bundeswehr to their friends.319 Only 3 percent of those surveyed believed they were supported by policy makers.320 The Bundeswehr Institute of Social Sciences conducted a 2012 population survey and showed that 44 percent of the population opposed a day to honor veterans of the Bundeswehr. This minority is substantial especially when compared to other western countries that

316 Herspring, Civil-Military Relations and Shared Responsibility, 123.
317 Herspring, 124.
319 Herspring, Civil-Military Relations and Shared Responsibility, 126.
320 Herspring, 126.
have national holidays for veterans. A 2014 Helmut Schmidt University and Bundeswehr University survey convey similar results as 77 percent of respondents would not recommend the military to their friends or family. Additionally, 66 percent of respondents had to defend their decision to serve in the Bundeswehr. Figure 4 depicts that 84 percent of respondents little to no appreciation from society.

![Fig 4](https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=2f1b18c9-a6b3-9a28-5722-f78315f1a87c&groupId=270955)

**Figure 4. Soldiers’ Feelings about Their Appreciation from Society**

The statistics illustrated show that the Bundeswehr as a whole do not necessarily share or reflect the same values as their civilian population. Following a brief confrontation with antimilitary demonstrators, Bundeswehr recruiter, Major Marcel

---


323 Fogarty, “Backing the Bundeswehr,” 750.

324 Fogarty, 746.

325 Source: Fogarty, “Backing the Bundeswehr,” 746.
Bohnert conveyed to *Deutsche Welle* documentary his concern for the growing German civil-military divide.

You could say that the Bundeswehr is gradually becoming separated from society. That has to do with the end of conscription and the fact that troop numbers have been going down for years. We have vanished from public view by closing down garrisons and we’re involved in missions abroad that take place without most of society being aware of them. Or interested in them.326

Unfortunately, though only a fraction of the German population protest and rebuke social support for the armed forces, scandal further divides the civil population and feeds soldiers’ discontent. The opening of the Bundeswehr Showroom in Berlin, which is a source or information and recruitment, was met with protests in 2014.327 Additionally, in 2015, the Bundeswehr Showroom was splattered with red and blue colors in an act of antimilitarist protest.328

3. **Veterans Returning from Foreign Campaigns—Past and the Present**

For the first time since World War II, Germany’s antimilitaristic population has been reintegrating veterans with significant combat experience back into the civilian society. Currently, Afghanistan marks the fiercest ground combat operations the German military has endured since World War II.329 In addition to Afghanistan, in total, over 400,000 German soldiers have supported operations in Kosovo, and Mali.330

German history must be examined to foretell new frictions and increased division between the antimilitarist population and soldiers returning from combat environments. Following years of conflict with millions serving in combat, president of the first German Republic, Social Democrat, and leader of the Weimer Republic, Friedrich Ebert’s

---

326 *Deutsche Welle*, “An Army on the Ropes.”


328 “Color Attack on Bundeswehr Showroom in Berlin.”


acceptance of allied demands was a seed that grew into the into the “stab in the back” myth.\textsuperscript{331} The division between military leaders and civilians with the truth of German forces exhaustion proliferates the myth as media concentrated on Germany’s eastern victories and promise of total victory—Nazis used this myth to discredit their enemies and support their right-wing agenda.\textsuperscript{332}

Similar to 1918 and post-World War II eras, German society has had to reintegrate large numbers of combat veterans into civil society. In addition to the millions who served, starting in 1946, over 1.1 million prisoners of war were repatriated from the Soviet Union in which over 700,000 resettled in West Germany and Berlin.\textsuperscript{333} However, unlike World War I and subsequent Treaty of Versailles, the German army was utterly defeated in 1945 and removed any interpretation for a “stab in the back” myth to blossom.\textsuperscript{334}

Based on Germany’s history and modern antimilitaristic culture, caution must be paramount as combat veterans whose interests differ from many civilians are reintegrated into society. First, for years German politicians labeled the Afghanistan mission as peacekeeping and training even though German soldiers were dying and returning home traumatized.\textsuperscript{335} However, the Good Friday battle in April 2010 forced German politicians to publicly face their constituents with the truth that peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan constituted a legitimate war.\textsuperscript{336} Similar to the disconnect with information from the battlefield to the civilian population in World War I, the government must be prepared to bridge the military and civilian populations’ understanding of its foreign war. Second, Hew Strachan warns that governments who engage in counterinsurgency operations must be ready to deal with large numbers of

\textsuperscript{334} Biess, \textit{Homecomings}, 43.
\textsuperscript{335} Barkin, “Where Veterans Aren’t Thanked.”
\textsuperscript{336} \textit{Deutsche Welle}, “An Army on the Ropes.”
returning soldiers who have operated in blurred political-military environments and are estranged from their home culture.\textsuperscript{337} There is a danger of domestic blowback from imperial battlefields that fuel political turmoil and fringe political movements.\textsuperscript{338} Domestic blowback is an even greater danger today as intelligence agencies and law enforcement have warned against disillusioned veterans as prime targets for recruitment by right-wing extremists.\textsuperscript{339}

4. Extremism and the Bundeswehr—A Historical Trend and Oversight

Since its founding and not without justification, the Bundeswehr has been under suspicion for connection to right-wing extremists. Its origin was tainted with its affiliation to the Third Reich because out of necessity, the Bundeswehr hired 300 Waffen-SS officers and over 12,000 Wehrmacht officers including over 40 Nazi generals to fill its ranks in the early years.\textsuperscript{340} As late as 1967, 41 percent of the Bundeswehr officer corps served in the \textit{Wehrmacht}.\textsuperscript{341} At least three active duty Bundeswehr soldiers were members of the 1970s criminal organization, the Nationalsozialistische Kampfgruppe Großdeutschland [National Socialist Combat Group Great Germany – NSKG], which claimed to be the embodiment of Hitler’s last wishes and aimed to execute bombings and kidnappings against Jews, Communists, and the government.\textsuperscript{342} In the late 1970s, the Wehrsportgruppe Rohwer [Military Sports Group Rohwer] was the first post-World War II right-wing extremist organization to be legally classified as a terrorist group as they conducted robberies against German army personnel and was provided detailed knowledge of military installations security procedures by an active

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Porch, \textit{Counterinsurgency}, 334.
\item Abenheim and Halladay, “Professional Soldiers and Citizens in Uniform,” 4-5.
\item Smelser, and Davies, \textit{The Myth of the Eastern Front}, 76.
\item Koehler, “A Threat from Within?”
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
duty Bundeswehr corporal. Authorities found a cadre of right-wing extremists soldiers in 1997 who possessed bomb manufacturing manuals, weapons, detonators, and an anti-tank rocket launch pad.

In recent years, the elite commando unit Kommando Spezialkräfte (KSK) has been linked to multiple right-wing extremism on multiple occasions. KSK soldiers deployed to Afghanistan in 2006 were found to use the Wehrmacht’s Afrika Korps emblem on their vehicles. The 70-person unit came under fire in 2017 after a farewell party which had right-wing rock music and one soldier fined 4,000 Euros for performing a Sieg Heil salute. The most recent KSK incident came in 2019 when a Lieutenant Colonel, who had been monitored by military intelligence since 2007, was suspended for posting on social media extreme right-wing comments.

Probably the most high-profile Bundeswehr member linked to right-wing extremism is Lieutenant Franco Albrecht who had been posing as a Syrian refugee and planning a terrorist attack. Franco previously escaped suspicions of right-wing links when his master’s thesis was flagged for xenophobic and racist ideology—reprimanded by superiors however not reported to the Bundeswehr’s counter-extremism intelligence unit. Franco and the KSK have links to the right-wing Nord Kreuz (Northern Cross) group through a private security company who actively recruits former and active soldiers called Uniter. The Nord Kreuz prepper network was initially uncovered by

---

343 Koehler.
344 Koehler.
345 Koehler.
347 Koehler, “A Threat from Within?”
349 Koehler, “A Threat from Within?”
350 Koehler.
the Franco investigation as a group who believe in the collapse of Germany society, labeled “Day X” and have members horde weapons, ammunition, and body bags.351

Uncovering Franco ignited an immediate probe into right-wing members of the Bundeswehr from then Minister of Defense Ursula von der Leyen who ordered a search of military barracks.352 In total, 41 items associated with the Wehrmacht were uncovered in the search of military barracks.353 As illustrated by Figure 5, the Bundeswehr polled overwhelmingly supported the defense minister’s discussion about problems in the military but the majority felt right-wing extremism was more prevalent in Germany society than the military.

---


The Militärischer Abschirmdienst [Military Intelligence] (MAD) is responsible for identifying, investigating, and removing extremist soldiers from service. From 2008 to 2017, 200 soldiers were classified as far-right extremists which Green Party lawmaker, Irene Mihalic criticized recruitment of 20 extremists a year as a serious challenge to security. MAD announced that suspected extremists in the Bundeswehr increased 30 percent in 2019. In January, 2019, the country’s federal domestic
intelligence service took aim at the AfD’s Der Flügel [The Wing] and youth group Junge Alternative [Young Alternative] as suspected extremists.358

Following the abolishment of conscription in 2011, experts predicted more right-wing extremists would be attracted to voluntarily serving in the military.359 Based on a 2007 study of 2,300 students at the armed forces universities revealed 13 percent identified with the New Right and 4 percent had right-wing extremist opinions.360 However, greater numbers of right-wing extremists may exist in the military who choose to use coded language as dog whistles to hide their true political views. Ex-Nazi and Bundeswehr soldier who was discharged for his extremist view, Christian Weissgerber, explains the subtle language adopted by neo-Nazis to avoid investigations and links it to the rhetoric promulgated by the AfD.

You normally only find what you are looking for. And if there just looking for supposedly open racists or anti-Semites and so-forth, the old school Nazis you could say, then they probably won’t find many. But if, and this is the problem in our society, they go looking for the neo-Nazis who like calling themselves the New Right because it sounds a little bit nicer, then they would find many more…People who are to become soldiers are more likely to relate to the typical ideas that are widespread in the right-wing scene…I’m a nationalist. I’m a nationalistic-socialist. Which at that time was a kind of cosmetic label suggesting I’m not a national-socialist, I’m not a racist but an ethno-pluralist. We hear that now a days in the debate about the AfD and the like. They all say they are not racists or Nazis and I used those tricks too.361

D. CONCLUSION

Post-WWII antimilitarist German culture has restrained the Bundestag’s commitment of the Bundeswehr in operations abroad. In a post-conscription Germany, the military and population are diverging in understanding and acceptance of each other. Conscription was a key component of the Bundeswehr’s citizen in uniform philosophy as

359 Koehler, “A Threat from Within?”
360 Koehler.
361 Deutsche Welle, “An Army on the Ropes.”
it ensured the armed forces would represent cross-sections of society.\textsuperscript{362} However, with troops returning from combat operations abroad facing a population that is disinterested at best, or antagonistic at worse, fuels discontent amongst veterans and opens political opportunities for right-wing extremists to exploit. To compound this, the Bundeswehr’s troubled past with neo and actual Nazis creates greater suspicion as the AfD have legitimized in the mainstream racist rhetoric that previously could only be whispered.

\textsuperscript{362} Wagener, “The Bundeswehr’s Image Problem.”

72
V. ANALYSIS, TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY, AND CONCLUSION

A. THE AFD’S IMPACT ON GERMANY’S CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS: GOVERNMENT, PEOPLE, AND MILITARY

The center of German politics is eroding as the AfD eats away at the CDU/CSU voting base. Therefore, the governing from the center model of government is fracturing as a result of the AfD’s rise on the right and the Left Party and Greens’ success on the political left. Similar to the CDU/CSU losing support to the AfD, the SPD has recently lost voters and influence in local and national government to the Left/Greens. Today’s growing polarization between German political far left and far right parties is reminiscent of the parliamentary gridlock that characterized the late interwar years which fueled the rise of the Nazi party.363 The AfD’s far right-wing populist agenda is incompatible with parliamentary centrist governance.

The AfD’s voelkisch nationalist agenda has carved out enough political representation that it creates questions about the stability of the country’s embrace of pluralist values that were accepted in the founding years of the new republic.364 Similar to the Nazis’ building their support from antiliberalism, anticommunism, and anti-Semitic rhetoric,365 the AfD has tapped into anti-immigrant sentiment to fuel its political rise.366 The AfD’s philosophy in broadcasting the threat of Muslim migration to Europe has more in common with Generation Identity and less with a liberal democratic Germany.367 The AfD’s voelkisch nationalist and anti-immigrant policies are incompatible with 70 years of Germany’s pluralist Wilkommenskultur (culture of welcome).


365 Brustein, The Logic of Evil, 50.


The AfD’s emphasis on soldiers’ importance in society contradicts the Bundeswehr’s citizen in uniform principle and *Innere Führung*. German soldiers are intended to reflect a pluralistic and democratic Germany. Policies aimed to elevate soldiers socially and separate them from the citizenry represent ideals that the Bundeswehr founders want to avoid. Germany’s suspension of conscription removed an important political integration function that ensured the Bundeswehr at least in part, reflected greater German society, and not just those who made a choice to serve in the armed forces. The AfD’s aim to rekindle soldiers’ importance in German society only exacerbates this growing divide and is incompatible with 70 years of citizen in uniform principles.

The return of soldiers who identify with *Generation Deployment* and may feel neglected by militarily skeptical citizenry, in addition to a government that was arguably slow at supporting forces bogged down for decades in a long protracted war, creates new vulnerabilities. The opportunity to create a false myth like the Lost Cause of the Southern Confederate States or a Stab in the Back narrative that fueled German right-wing support in the interwar period is possible. As soldiers integrate back into civil society, political institutions must compete to represent their interests. A party such as the AfD can craft a narrative to attract more veteran support. Additionally, soldiers returning from foreign operations can reshape the culture and identity of the German armed forces. The durability of *Innere Führung* provides disgruntled combat veterans the means to reshape their role in the Bundeswehr and, in effect, alter their civil-military relationship.

Political forces are the custodians of acceptable national and military history and traditions. The AfD’s rhetoric downplaying the historical significance of the Holocaust creates division and undermines Germans 20th Century shared history. As an instrument of the Third Reich’s crimes, the *Wehrmacht* is tarnished and excluded from the Bundeswehr’s traditions. However, because the cultivation of tradition is never-ending and not permanent, the durability and pillars of *Innere Führung* are amendable and open to perversion from political forces.\(^{368}\) The AfD’s reinterpretation of German history is

\(^{368}\) Ministry of Defence, *Guidelines on the...Tradition in the Bundeswehr*. 74
incompatible with *Innere Führung*, as it idolizes instruments of criminal regimes and is a threat to citizens in uniform of a democratic parliament.

**B. IMPACT ON EUROPEAN AND TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY**

The AfD rejects Germany’s post-World War II never again and never alone mantra at a time when confidence in European and transatlantic security is weak. Rebuilding a general staff illustrates that the AfD want capacity to be able to conduct military operation alone, and outside of NATO and multilateral security organizations. In addition, the AfD’s emphasis on independent and unilateral interests, such as securing national borders instead of regional security multilateralism, rejects the country’s post-WWII principles of peace through cooperation.

Though the AfD advocate Germany to embrace national solutions instead of regional cooperation, current Merkel led government is still attempting to reinforce partnerships. Germany and France launched the “Alliance for Multilateralism” in September 2019 with Western and non-Western countries to create a league of democratic states that can defend a liberal international order.\(^369\) A September 2019 Pew Research Center survey showed that 60 percent of Germans see France as its most important foreign policy partner.\(^370\) French President Emmanuel Macron proposes the need for European sovereignty as a response to predatory great powers but under the leadership of France.\(^371\) The French-German relationship will determine the continent’s leadership and feasibility of accomplishing any defense and foreign policy agenda.\(^372\) However, with the AfD selling a Germany first agenda and growing in support, any new initiatives for multilateral cooperation will be constrained by its political representation.


\(^{372}\) Quencez and Besch, *The Challenges Ahead for EU Defense Cooperation*. 75
Europe’s crisis of leadership comes at a time when faith in the transatlantic security community and the United States is in decline. Questions have been raised if the era of Pax Americana is coming to an end as the transatlantic alliance—an anchor in the world order since WWII is deteriorating.\textsuperscript{373} In Germany itself, only 17 percent of the population approve of the leadership in the United States, with 73 percent disapproving—marking a negative 5 percent change from the previous year.\textsuperscript{374} As illustrated by Figure 6, Europeans’ confidence in leadership of the United States is sliding downwards.

![Figure 6](https://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/247169/rest-world-knows-pax-americana.aspx)

**Figure 6.** Opinion on U.S. Using Military Force to Defend Allies \textsuperscript{375}

In addition to diminishing confidence in U.S. leadership, Figure 7 illustrates that if Germans had to choose sides in a conflict between the United States and Russia, most would prefer to remain neutral.

---


Part of this pivot away from the United States to neutrality or even pro-Russia is due to the growth of European right-wing populists parties such as the AfD in Germany, Frances’ National Front, and Austria’s Freedom of Austria, who have held conferences with Russian officials. AfD leaders have been accused of a pro-Russia agenda as they are not concerned with Moscow’s homophobic, anti-liberal, and anti-America ideology. With the current weakness in transatlantic security coupled with the rise of the AfD’s populist ideology, German foreign policy could shift away from the west and oriented eastward. The interconnection of the FRG’s economic, diplomatic, and military structures into the European and transatlantic system was the greatest achievement of the Konrad Adenauer’s government in the 1950s. However, the combination of the AfD’s Germany first and pro-Russia agenda at a time when confidence in the United States has waned, creates vulnerability in the European and

---


378 Amann and Lokshin, “Moscow’s Fifth Column: German Populists Forge Ties with Russia.”


380 Dueck, “Eastern Promises.”
transatlantic security system that can be exploited by adversaries. The AfD’s domestic security policy on national borders, in addition to its foreign policy toward aggressors like Russia, is incompatible with the FRG’s early government focus on orientation toward cooperation and integration into the European and transatlantic system.

C. CONCLUSION

Overall assessment is that the AfD reject many of the values instituted by the FRG in its early years to sustain a stable democracy. Its hostility towards immigrants is reminiscent of the Third Reich. Its emphasis on soldierly virtues harkens more towards Prussian militarism and does not resemble Inner Führung’s citizen in uniform principle. The AfD’s aim to remove many of the subjective control measures of the military to create a more objectively independently capable Bundeswehr that can operate outside of European and transatlantic security organizations at a time when American influence is in retrenchment goes against the ideals of the founders of the FRG. Ultimately, if the AfD continue to gain political influence and able to apply any number of its security proposals, it will be a pivot away from cooperative transatlantic security, which has been the foundation since the end of World War II, and a step towards independent German security which characterized the country’s history up to the end of the Third Reich.

The FRG’s civil-military relationship between the government, citizenry, and military, which has its foundation in the post-WWII era, is vulnerable to AfD policies and influence. The AfD’s agenda in the Bundestag can create a more independent armed forces, redirect focus from multilateral security to national borders, and reorient strategic partnerships. At a time when volunteer recruitment is not sustaining personnel numbers, the AfD’s embrace of Prussian militarism further divides a skeptical population of the military from those who serve in uniform. Finally, the AfD’s focus on recreating special roles for soldiers in civilian society is in direction contradiction with the founders of the FRG and Bundeswehr’s goal to never have a “state within a state” again. The AfD does not look to synchronize the country’s government, citizens, and military, but actually distinctly divide them further from each other.


INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Defense Technical Information Center
   Ft. Belvoir, Virginia

2. Dudley Knox Library
   Naval Postgraduate School
   Monterey, California