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Gerhard Kümmel & Nina Leonhard

**Death, the Military and Society
Casualties and Civil-Military Relations
in Germany**

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<p>ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)</p> <p>The risk of being wounded or even losing one's life is part of a soldier's job description. Yet, since modern societies attach enormous value to each single life, one may assume that both the political as well as the societal legitimation of a military mission correlates with the calculation of one's own soldiers' exposure to danger. In military sociology, this has been termed the 'casualty factor'. So far, the relevance of this casualty factor for civil-military relations in Germany has not yet been more closely examined although, regrettably, the death of a German soldier in mission has increasingly become a reality due to the changes in the Bundeswehr's Mission Statement since the end of the East-West-conflict. The present study is based on six incidents in which German soldiers have come to death on mission and investigates and compares the reverberations their death has produced among the politicians and high-ranking soldiers responsible for the mission and in the press at various times. The findings of the analysis indicate that German society may be less 'casualty shy' than commonly expected and feared. We offer two explanations for this: On the one hand, this may be the result of a process of socialization and learning. In this perspective, German society has learned from the security political changes in the world even to accept casualties among German soldiers for the 'right' cause. On the other hand, this less-than-feared casualty shyness may indicate German society's indifference towards things military. In this vein, casualties among German soldiers are framed as a purely military affair. Further analyses are needed to assess which explanatory hypothesis is valid to which extent for which segments of society.</p>	
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Kurzfassung

Dass Soldaten bei der Ausübung ihres Berufes verletzt werden oder gar ihr Leben verlieren, gehört zur Zweckbestimmung des Militärs gewissermaßen dazu. Da in modernen Gesellschaften dem Leben jedes Einzelnen jedoch ein unschätzbare Wert zugeschrieben wird, ist davon auszugehen, dass die politische wie gesellschaftliche Legitimation eines militärischen Einsatzes nicht zuletzt dadurch beeinflusst wird, wie groß die Gefährdung der eigenen Soldaten ist bzw. eingeschätzt wird. Im Bereich der Militärsoziologie wird dies als 'Casualty-Faktor' bezeichnet. Für die zivil-militärischen Beziehungen in Deutschland ist die Rolle des Casualty-Faktors bislang noch nie näher untersucht worden, obwohl aufgrund der Neuausrichtung der Bundeswehr seit Ende des Kalten Krieges der Soldatentod im Einsatz leider auch hierzulande zunehmend Realität geworden ist. Im Rahmen der vorliegenden Pilotstudie wurden daher anhand von sechs Beispielen, bei denen deutsche Soldaten im Einsatz zu Tode gekommen sind, die Reaktionen seitens der politischen und militärischen Verantwortlichen sowie in der Presse, untersucht und im zeitlichen Verlauf miteinander verglichen. Die Ergebnisse der Analyse deuten dabei darauf hin, dass die deutsche Bevölkerung weniger 'casualty-shy' zu sein scheint, als gemeinhin befürchtet wird. Hierfür gibt es mindestens zwei verschiedene Erklärungsansätze: Einerseits könnte es sich um das Resultat eines Lernprozesses handeln. Die deutsche Bevölkerung hat danach angesichts der veränderten Sicherheits- und Bedrohungslage gelernt, um der 'richtigen' Sache willen den Verlust (auch) von deutschen Soldaten zu akzeptieren. Andererseits könnte man darin auch ein Zeichen von gesellschaftlicher Indifferenz gegenüber dem Militär in dem Sinne sehen, dass Todesfälle, die im Einsatz passieren, von der Bevölkerung in erster Linie als 'militärische Angelegenheit' betrachtet werden. Welche dieser Erklärungshypothesen in welchem Ausmaß und vor allem für welche Teile der Bevölkerung im Einzelnen zutreffen, muss in weiteren Untersuchungen bestimmt werden.

Summary

The risk of being wounded or even losing one's life is part of a soldier's job description. Yet, since modern societies attach enormous value to each single life, one may assume that both the political as well as the societal legitimation of a military mission correlates with the calculation of one's own soldiers' exposure to danger. In military sociology, this has been termed the 'casualty factor'. So far, the relevance of this casualty factor for civil-military relations in Germany has not yet been more closely examined although, regrettably, the death of a German soldier in mission has increasingly become a reality due to the changes in the Bundeswehr's Mission Statement since the end of the East-West-conflict. The present study is based on six incidents in which German soldiers have come to death on mission and investigates and compares the reverberations their death has produced among the politicians and high-ranking soldiers responsible for the mission and in the press at various times. The findings of the analysis indicate that German society may be less 'casualty shy' than commonly expected and feared. We offer two explanations for this: On the one hand, this may be the result of a process of socialization and learning. In this perspective, German society has learned from the security political changes in the world even to accept casualties among German soldiers for the 'right' cause. On the other hand, this less-than-feared casualty shyness may indicate German society's indifference towards things military. In this vein, casualties among German soldiers are framed as a purely military affair. Further analyses are needed to assess which explanatory hypothesis is valid to which extent for which segments of society.

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1 The Military, Death and Casualty Shyness¹

The topic of this paper is death in the military and the meaning and the perception of death in the military by society. An obvious starting point for our analysis, then, is the academic discipline of the sociology of death (cf. Clark 1993) or, to use another phrase derived from the name of Thanatos, the Greek god of death, thanato-sociology. Thanato-sociology is both an interdisciplinary science, a nomadizing and a quite marginal science (Feldmann 2002: 5) since dying and death are hardly perceived as being of “systematic relevance for sociology” (Feldmann/Fuchs-Heinritz 1995: 7).

A quite common finding of this body of literature is the axiom of death repression in modern societies which is most popularly put forward in Philippe Ariès' *History of Death* (1995). Ariès traces conceptions, images and attitudes of death throughout history, identifies phases of different death conceptions, and argues that until the beginning of the 20th century death has been a collective, public event. Since then death and dying have become individualized. According to him, death is no longer visible, but ‘masked’; it has been socially toned down. In this, he is joined by others who – like, inter alia, Norbert Fischer (2001) and the authors in the anthology by Blum/Nessler (1997) – argue similarly. Already earlier on, one of the classics in sociology, Georg Simmel (1984: 30), has compared death to some “dark prophesy” which “looms over life, but usually becomes part of one’s life at the very moment of its realization only”, thereby neglecting the fact that death is part of life from its very beginning. Christian von Ferber (1963) has to be named in this regard as well because he adds another element to this axiom. He perceives the suppression of death as resulting in the “social incapacitation of individuals” (Ferber 1963: 348) and thus as a ruling instrument in defense of the status quo, but identifies critical, enlightening and society-changing elements in death in so far as death repression can publicly be unmasked as a tool to preserve the status quo. In a similar vein, Iring Fetscher (1988: 21) deploras “the unbearable paradox of human behavior in modern, industrialized civilization” that people “desperately try to ward off the unchangeable, but passively accept the changeable as fate”.

To give one last example, Armin Nassehi and Georg Weber (1988, 1989) state that no public sense giving of death takes place in modern societies. They argue that the societal suppression of death is a result of modernization processes and based upon the increasing “incompatibility of social and psychic systems” (Nassehi/Weber 1988: 386); it is to be attributed to “the primary societal mode of differentiation [that] runs contrary to the life-world of the individual,

¹ Whenever, throughout this paper, a German source is cited and the quotation is in English the translation is our translation.

i. e. that the functional relation between the various subsystems primarily serve the self-reproduction of these systems and of society as a whole, but not to give meaning to individuals. Because of this the topos death is irrelevant for these processes of self-reproduction. Death as death of individuals does not disrupt societal and functional chains of continuity, nor do these interconnections have something meaningfully to do with the basic endlessness of human beings. (...) The fact that the supremacy of the functional subsystems of society structurally prevents a public giving of meaning to death – as the societal marginalization of death is functional to the self-reproduction processes of the subsystems and their imperatives of actions – constitutes the social suppression of death.” (Nassehi/Weber 1989: 274)

However, the interpretation of death suppression in modern societies has not remained unchallenged. Werner Fuchs (1973: 228), for example, rejects this notion and rather speaks of some indifference and variability of death conceptions and images in modern societies. Klaus Feldmann (2002: 30f., 57f.) is also quite critical of this axiom, claiming a privatization of death than a repression of it. “[T]he institutions in modern societies have become quite independent from individuals and their bureaucratic structures are impersonal, do not know ancestors and are independent of developments of the economic system of biographies. Systems of kinship have become marginal for modern societies and have sunk into the private life-world of the people. Thus they have lost their ideological and religious connotation. The physical death then has become a problem for the persons affected, because he is socially toned down” (Feldmann 2002: 9). Meanwhile, Armin Nassehi has somewhat qualified his earlier propositions as well. According to him, death is to be seen as the enabler and promoter of communication. Thus, he speaks of the “talkativeness of death”. The assumption of the societal suppression of death is still seen as basically correct, but only if by this term it is meant that there is no binding or even integrative image of death in society. Further implications of death suppression are denied; instead Nassehi points to “the scientification, politicization, economization, medicalization, juridification etc. of death in modern society”. (Nassehi 2003: 301)

By way of conclusion, then, the various positions just sketched are juxtaposed only when superficially looked at. In reality, these positions basically go hand in hand. The talk of death suppression in modern society refers to the death of one single common and obliging image of death in society and can therefore easily be combined with the theses of the privatization, medicalization, politicization etc. of death.

With regard to the military as a subsystem of society, however, the notion of death suppression seems to be questionable since death and the possibility of losing one’s life is part of the

armed forces' job description so to speak. Thus, we hypothesize that death can hardly be marginalized within the military and that the armed forces constitute an environment that is conducive to the creation of a common and obliging image of death within this subsystem. This points to the assumption that due to processes of functional differentiation death may most likely be differently processed and 'digested' in different sub-systems of society (cf. Feldmann 2002: 12). Furthermore, we argue that the death of a soldier in a military mission, especially if it is a combat mission, may have repercussions in and effects on other subsystems of society; e. g., the *social death*² of a soldier may be mourned publicly and may become a subject of politics. In other words, the death of a soldier may be of inter-subsystem relevance and may be more valued than the death of people in other parts of society. As a consequence, the propositions we may start from are: (a) that both the armed forces as an organization and the military's individual members may be treating death differently than others and, in particular, ascribing more importance and meaning to death than others; and (b) that the death of a soldier may not be confined to the military sphere, but transcends societal sub-systems.

In this context, it is interesting to take a look at the academic literature on the issue of casualty aversion, casualty reluctance, casualty sensitivity and casualty shyness (Larson 1996). The fact that the reflection and study of these phenomena has vastly increased in Western countries since the end of the East-West conflict and is indicative of a growing interest in the role of death in military and defense politics, seems to contradict the notion of death repression. At the same time, however, the very fact that this body of literature has emerged in the last decade only may be taken as a confirmation of the repression hypothesis. Is there a logic that covers both of these observations?

First of all, the bipolar conflict between the East and the West, led by the Soviet Union and by the United States respectively, carried with it notions of total, nuclear war which was to be prevented by means of mutual nuclear deterrence. Although there were ambitions on both sides to find ways and means to come out of a nuclear conflict as the survivor and the winner, the main thrust both in Moscow and in Washington was to avert superpower conflict and therefore to avoid any death of one's own or the other's soldiers. This orientation cascaded and diffused into the respective alliance structures and disseminated further on into the societies. It was also propelled by processes renowned sociologists like Ulrich Beck, Norbert Elias, Anthony Giddens, and Ronald Inglehart came to call individualization, civilianization, modernization and post-materialistic value change respectively, implying the break-up of traditional pluri-generational family structures and the shift to core, one-generational family

² Thanato-sociology distinguishes the physiological death, the biological death, the mental death (death of the soul) and the social death (Pattison 1977; Feldmann 2002: 13, 83f.).

structures and to single-parent households. Another consequence of these demographic, mortality and socio-cultural changes has been the shrinking of birth rates in advanced modern societies and the move to smaller families, i. e. families with, if at all, one child at the most, which, in turn, means that the value ascribed to this one child is arguably much higher than in the past when families have had several children and when death rates of children had been high (Luttwak 1994; cf. also Feldmann 2002: 15ff., 34ff.).

As a result, in Western democratic political systems and their societies war overwhelmingly came to be regarded as the unthinkable and the impracticable, even in non-pacifist segments, and the assumption derived therefrom, that (post-)modern, Western, democratic societies had become 'post-heroic societies' (Luttwak 1995; Münkler 2002), circulated extensively in academic, military and political élites.³ This met an international environment at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s in which war was back on stage for Western democratic societies which happened to live in what has been termed the 'OECD-peace', i. e. the overwhelmingly peaceful way in which conflicts were handled and brought to a solution in an area made up by the member countries of the OECD.

Along with this comes concern about the possibly disastrous effects of growing casualty aversion in society upon military preparedness and military effectiveness and thus upon foreign and security policy in general. Quite often this is attributed, in a somewhat Huntingtonian (1957) manner, to the permissiveness and complacency of liberal society and sometimes combined with a call for a revival of conservative values in society. A prominent example is Edward Luttwak who argued in 1995 that the American public had successively become more sensitive to casualties and more and more unwilling to tolerate even very low casualties. According to him, this had sincere policy implications because decisions on the use of force were grounded on cost-benefit calculations, and human losses, actual or expected, were a substantial factor in these equations. As a result, this might produce (at times perhaps too excessive) restraints on political decision-makers in their decision to wage war and employ military

³ To be sure, a post-heroic society does not equal another post-heroic society, which means that there is variance among this group of countries. Arguably, the talk of post-heroism has to be qualified and modified with regard to countries like the United States, Israel, Great Britain, and France, all of which have been involved in military conflicts even before 1989/90. Nevertheless, even for the US having been more often involved in military conflicts and operations than others the attributes post-heroic and casualty shy have been applied. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the notion of post-heroism is also used by the adversaries of Western democratic societies as a tool to excite their followers to engage in asymmetric warfare against the much more powerful enemy and to do so with a certain probability to be on the winning side because this power is hollow since there is no societal combat spirit. The most prominent example of citing post-heroism in society and post-heroism in the conduct of war is Osama Bin Laden who mocked at the US for their 'unmanly' way of fighting.

means and how to do this. The latter indeed seems to have been confirmed by the Revolution in Military Affairs and the shift to high-technological warfare therein: In the 1990's, for example, US military strategy moved to surgical strikes and long-distance warfare and to the avoidance of putting boots on the ground, i. e. of employing ground forces.

Others, however, perceive the casualty issue rather in terms of the civil-military gap. Here, it is argued that casualty sensitivity is much more pronounced in society than within the military and that, perhaps even more important, at the end of the day there may be "civilian leaders with little or no experience in combat and a military they do not understand and fear they cannot command" (Feaver/Gelpi 1999: 5).

In the following, we will take up the discussion about the "casualty factor" (Smith 2003) and apply it to the German case, that is we will analyze the perceptions of and the reactions to German casualties by the political and military élites and by the media, i. e. the press. We will focus our analysis to casualties in the sense of dead German soldiers. To be more precise: While the official use of the term 'casualty' as documented in military and defense dictionaries is a broad one and usually covers both dead and missing, ill and wounded, we take sides with Peter Feaver and Christopher Gelpi who restrict the term to the more common-sensical notion of dead soldiers, i. e. of "those killed in connection with a military operation, whether in combat *per se* or in accidents resulting from activity that is directly a result of the military operation" (Feaver/Gelpi 1999: 1).⁴ Our examination starts with a historical retrospective of the meaning and perception of the soldier's death in a broader sense, moves on more specifically to sketching the history with regard to the *Bundeswehr* and then goes on to describe, compare and analyze what has happened that actually led to German losses of soldiers in a number of cases and how the various actors reacted to this.

2 The Political Cult of Dead Soldiers in Germany in Historical Perspective

As Reinhard Koselleck (1994) points out with respect to the historical development of the political cult of the death, a violent death has always been in need of justification, implicating a conversion of religion and politics. Because regardless of the nature of the political community, those killed in battle or war have always represented a religious element of its constitu-

⁴ For clarification: The meaning and the political implications of casualties do not only belong to casualties meaning *our* soldiers and *our* civilians, but extend to *their* civilians and even *their* soldiers since what may be termed acceptable warfare for democratic societies requires that utmost care to keep human costs low is to be awarded to both friend and foe; civilian losses on the side of the adversary are to be kept at a minimum and enemy soldiers have to be fought hard, but be treated in a civilized way.

tion – if it survived. “The violent death, the ‘sacrifice’ was a pledge of survival, liberation, victory or even redemption.” (Koselleck 1994: 9) Studies about the political cult of the death and war memorials have shown that attitudes towards a soldier’s death and towards war are closely linked – and that they have undergone a considerable change during the last two hundred years (cf. Latzel 1988): In Prussia of the 18th century, for example, the educated bourgeoisie was opposed to the royal wars, and in the military, consisting of foreign mercenaries and forced peasants, a rather fatalistic attitude towards death prevailed. With the introduction of conscription and the spreading of national sentiments after the French Revolution, however, war was more and more regarded as a national affair and as a patriotic obligation for everyone – and the soldier’s death a sacrifice for the nation. In Germany, it was especially during the wars of liberation at the beginning of the 19th century that this reinterpretation of the soldier’s death took place with nationalism and religiosity going hand in hand: the soldier’s death and the martyr’s death were associated and idealized from a national and religious point of view. From then on, the idea of the soldier’s death as a national sacrifice became the predominant view. Interestingly, though, in this process, the religious meaning has been successively losing in importance.

In World War I, the idealization of war and the soldier’s death reached its peak which is aptly illustrated by the broad stream of literature glorifying war and battle in European countries. This, among other things, explains the wide-spread enthusiasm of war in summer 1914. In the following years, however, the experience of trench warfare and mass destruction lead to a general disillusionment because the traditional images of death were not in consonance with the soldiers’ experiences any longer. It is against this background that the flood of monuments erected after the war has to be interpreted: Apparently, they were ‘needed’ to come to terms with the war, the defeat and its consequences and to give meaning to a million deaths (Behrenbeck 1992: 357ff.; Koselleck 1979). Apart from that, the war memorials of World War I demonstrate not only the heterogeneity of German society in the Republic of *Weimar* with respect to the war, but also indicate that eventually the soldier – who fought bravely and selflessly for his country and, by doing this, assumed his civic duties – seemed to have become the only candidate to be commemorated for war memorials the German society at that time could agree upon (Jeismann/Westheider 1994: 39).

After the seizure of power by the National Socialists the idealization of the soldier’s death was intensified and radicalized, not so much by adding new elements or changing others, but rather by reinforcing ideological elements, National Socialist ones and racist ones, to the picture and, in particular, by reaching the masses with a perfected performance of the cult of the

death – and by making a claim for the final values (Reichel 2000: 174ff.): The popularity of the Nibelungen Saga among National Socialist élites serves as a vivid illustration for this.

1945, then, constitutes a fundamental break with the political cult of the death of the past. The monuments and war memorials built after 1945 show this very clearly: In contrast to the monuments of World War I, which are marked by patriotism, but also by righteous defiance, the war memorials of World War II are centered on mourning and characterized by a strange speechlessness. Instead of celebrating the soldiers' sacrifices, they mourn the victims of the war. With regard to the soldier's death, it is interesting to see another reinterpretation of its meaning, implying a shift from 'sacrifice' to 'victim':⁵ During the first years after the war, only the civilian victims, especially those of the concentration camps, were commemorated. But only a few years later – at the time of the debate about the rearmament of the Federal Republic and of the foundation of the Bundeswehr – the soldiers of the *Wehrmacht* began to be integrated into the public mourning; accordingly to the image the Germans had of themselves, the soldiers, too, were now seen above all as 'victims' of Hitler and his National Socialist regime (Wittig 1990; Kühne 2000).

Since then, of course, much has changed: The long and continuous debate about Germany's past, although, for a long time, concentrated on the Holocaust, has not excluded the *Wehrmacht*, and the image of its soldiers as victims has been refuted in many respects (HIS 2002; Müller/Volkman 1999). Overall, we can observe a decline in and discrediting of the meaning and importance attached to war memorials. Koselleck and Jeismann (1984) argue the loss of meaning of war memorials to imply that the survivors do not frame the patriotic death of soldiers as a victim representing a commitment of the survivors to similar devotion; this may be taken as evidence for the death suppression hypothesis being valid for the military also. It is against this background that it seems interesting to explore the way the military and political élites as well as the German public deal with the soldier's death today.

3 Casualties and the German Bundeswehr

As a matter of fact, the Bundeswehr has little experience with violent death and casualties so far. During the first five decades of its existence, German soldiers died of natural causes and because of illnesses; they committed suicide or were killed by accidents – but not in battle, by the enemy, as is evidenced in Table 1 (appendix).

⁵ In the German language, there is no difference between the terms 'sacrifice' and 'victim': the word 'Opfer' contains both meanings and can therefore be interpreted either way.

Interestingly, the bulk of German soldiers did not die while they were on duty; rather they died while they were off duty, most of them in car accidents. This reflects the very fact that the Bundeswehr for the most part of its existence represented a military that has been designed, structured, manned, equipped and trained to deter and, if that failed contrary to common expectation, eventually fight the 'Red' mass armies of the Warsaw Pact countries conventionally attacking Germany and Western Europe in a Cold War turned hot and turning, later on, 'flexible response' nuclear.

With the end of the Cold War and the change of the international macro-constellation this has changed, too. In its foreign, security and military policy the (re-)united and now fully sovereign Germany tried to respond and to adapt to the new international environment, its threats, risks and challenges. In line with the processes of globalization, transnationalization and internationalization German foreign, security and military policy assumed an orientation that was even more globally defined than before. And this implied the operation of German troops abroad and out of area, i. e. beyond the territory covered by NATO member countries. To be sure, this did not come in a sweep; it was rather a protracted process that involved some debate in German politics and in German society. In this regard, in our view there were three watershed events that decisively shaped and defined German policy in the 1990s (see also Schwab-Trapp 2002).

The first event was the second Gulf War in the early 1990s. Here, the conservative-liberal Kohl/Genscher Administration did not participate militarily in the US-led alliance forces against Saddam Hussein's Iraq attacking Kuwait and, interestingly, cited constitutional rather than political reasons for this which would restrain the Bundeswehr's area of operation to NATO territory,⁶ but served as a major financial sponsor of this endeavor. Although this might persuade one not to see any changes at all, this is not corroborated by closer inspection. Indeed, there was an intense debate in German politics and in German public opinion, the most notable feature of which were the incipient attitudinal shifts in segments of German politics and society that were hitherto strongly opposed to any German military participation in a combat mission (cf., e. g. Bittermann 1991).

The second and third event brought this even more to the fore. It was the civil war, the atrocities and the acts of ethnic cleansing on the Balkans on the one hand and the precarious hu-

⁶ As a matter of fact, Germany did not cite *genuine political* reasons for its non-participation as one would have expected. The resort to constitutional arguments, then, was interpreted as an expression of the political inconsequential performance of the Kohl Government which combined the non-participation in the military operation against Iraq and the deployment of German troops to Turkey as an act of alliance solidarity (Bruner 1993: 72f., 88f.).

manitarian situation in Somalia on the other that made Germany rethink substantially the deployment of German soldiers and the participation of the Bundeswehr in out of area missions. Both events triggered another debate within the German polity about war and German participation therein. The result was that German soldiers were involved both in the humanitarian military operation authorized by the United Nations in Somalia and in the wars on the Balkans, i. e. in the peace enforcement missions in Bosnia (with a UN-mandate) and in Kosovo (by a self-mandated NATO which led to severe mass demonstrations in German society). Interestingly, the constitutional arguments used in the first event were overruled by political arguments in the latter two events, the legality of which was testified and stated by the ruling of the German Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) of 1994.

Meanwhile, out of (NATO) area operations are quite common to German soldiers who nowadays are to be found on duty in Afghanistan (ISAF), in Kuwait, in Djibouti, East Timor, on the Balkans, in Congo, in Georgia and elsewhere. In total, currently there are 8–9,000 German soldiers involved in international military missions.⁷ The return of war into the life-world of Western democratic countries has thus reached Germany also. This implied that the Bundeswehr in particular and German society in general had, still has and are going to have to face the issue of casualties. Actually, the Bundeswehr suffered its first ‘real’ casualty in 1993, during the UN mission in Cambodia. Since then and up to 2004, 41 German soldiers have died and have been killed in out of area missions and under various circumstances as Table 2 shows (see appendix). This table also serves to substantiate two propositions: (a) that, in recent years, there is an increase of casualties to be observed; and (b) that these casualties are increasingly combat-related.

Given our coining of the term casualties, in the following sections, we will not cover all of these incidents because most of the German soldiers died in accidents – these accidents were either ones which happened while the soldiers were off duty or they happened while they were on duty, but were not followed by media coverage and public debate. Rather, we will deal with the five combat-related incidents of 14 October 1993, 8 October 2001, 6 March 2002, 29 May 2003, and 7 June 2003. Yet, since the accident of 21 December 2002 was widely discussed in German politics and in the media, we included this additional incident in our analysis. Thus, six incidents in total provide the empirical foundation of our analysis.

⁷ See the complete list in http://www.bundeswehr.de/wir/hintergrund/bisherige_einsaetze.php

3.1 UNTAC: The First German Casualty⁸

In October 1993, only a few weeks before the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) troops (on this mission cf. Findlay 1995) were supposed to leave the country, a sergeant of the German medical corps, one of around 150 Bundeswehr soldiers stationed in Phnom Penh, was killed (on the German participation cf. Fraps 2000). For unknown reasons he was shot in his car by a motorcyclist near the UN headquarters at 8 pm local time when he was on his way to the petrol station. The murderer could not be identified.

This first casualty of the Bundeswehr was largely covered by the German media. In all major newspapers the news of the killed sergeant made it on the front page. In the following days some newspapers continued to report about the incident and gave more detailed information about the situation in Cambodia and the UN mission there, while others confined themselves to evoke the sergeant's death only in relation to the German foreign and military policy and the Bundeswehr's out of area engagements. Because apart from the details of the assassination and the reaction of the German government and the political parties to it, it was Germany's military engagement in Somalia which the attention centered on: Although the mission in Cambodia was not called into question, most commentators expected an intensified political debate about the out of area missions in general and the role of the Bundeswehr in Somalia in particular, after the US had decided to withdraw their troops until April 1994.

However, the expected conflict did not break out. Representatives of the opposition did try to put an examination of the German engagement in Somalia on the agenda, but everyone seemed to agree with the position of Defense Minister Volker Rühle claiming that the incident in Cambodia would not effect Germany's international engagement and the out of area missions of the Bundeswehr. The assassination of the medical sergeant, the minister said, had been a "senseless act of violence" which was to be condemned. It was particularly tragic since the mission of the Bundeswehr in Cambodia on the whole would now be finished "very successfully". And: "We are having now the bitter experience that other nations have had before us." Especially this last sentence of the minister's statement was taken up again and again by the media, because here, the minister did not only express his condolences, but indicated at the same time that Germany – like other (fully sovereign) nations (assuming their interna-

⁸ This section is based on: Die Tageszeitung, 16 October 1993: 1, 10; Die Tageszeitung, 23 October 1993: 4; Die Welt, 15 October 1993: 1, 3; Die Welt, 16-17 October 1993: 1, 2, 6; Die Welt, 18 October 1993: 3, 6; Die Welt, 19 October 1993: 1, 3; Die Welt, 23-24 October 1993: 1; Die Zeit, 22 October 1992: 2; Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 16 October 1993: 1, 2; Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 23 October 1993: 3; Frankfurter Rundschau, 16 October 1993: 1, 5; Frankfurter Rundschau, 23 October 1993: 1; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 15 October 1993: 1, 4; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 16-17 October 1993: 1, 4, 6; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 18 October 1993: 2; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 19 October 1993: 1; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 23-24 October 1993: 6.

tional responsibility) – would have to prepare themselves for (more) casualties in the future. Other comments from members of both the government and the opposition, referring, for example, to the risks of peacekeeping missions like the one in Cambodia, pointed into the same direction. The general message underlying all these statements therefore was the following: The Bundeswehr will continue to participate in international military missions, even if this means that German soldiers might be killed, because this is the ‘price’ Germany has to pay in order to meet its international responsibilities.

This was also taken up by the press. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, for example, commented on October 1993: “After the assassination of the soldier the political climate might change and the role of German troops abroad might be questioned again. However, it would be better if – however painful this process will be – the death of the sergeant would open the eyes for reality: If the Federal Republic does not want to claim a special position in the world, if it wants to keep on helping the community of nations with its medical soldiers, doctors and logistics troops, there will be more victims to mourn.” The same day, Martin S. Lambeck for *DIE WELT* wrote: “The democrats of this country should commit themselves to Germany’s international responsibility. They are supposed to have a common interest in its ability to act in foreign affairs. Who wants this, can never rule out completely any risk.” And the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of 16 October 2003 argued: “Germany is involved in the affairs of this world; thanks to this involvement it enjoys peace and prosperity, but it also takes part in the crises and conflicts of this world. Germany depends on the solidarity of its allies and partners. But this can only be preserved in the long run if the Germans take their share of the responsibility for the world.” Last but not least, even the Berlin left-wing newspaper *Die Tageszeitung* (‘taz’), usually being very critical of the conservative government and its foreign policy, shared these views, while particularly stressing that the medical sergeant was not wearing uniform and therefore could not to have been recognized as a soldier when he was shot. On 16 October 2003 Michael Sontheimer, for example, wrote: “Alexander Arndt [the medical sergeant] found an unspectacular, an ‘unsoldierly’ death. He did not die like the other seventy UN-soldiers in Cambodia of an attack of the Khmer Rouge but of a crime which could have cost the life of any development aid worker or tourist. Deadly shots like those having now hit Alexander Arndt have become the sad normalcy in Phnom Penh. (...) One (...) has to distinguish between the engagement in Cambodia and the one in Somalia as well as all other future attempts of armed ‘development aid’ of the Bundeswehr. One even has to agree, for good reasons a rare event in the taz, with the chancellor when he characterized the engagement being deadly for Arndt as a ‘service for peace’. From the beginning it has been clear that such missions carry deadly risks. Whether they can be justified is a question which especially the *critics* of the foreign policy of Kohl, Kinkel and Rühle have to face.”

The public attention of the first German casualty lasted about ten days – until the official commemoration service (*Gedenkappell*) in a garrison of the Bundeswehr near Hanover. Before the dead medical sergeant was transferred to Germany, a first commemoration service had been held by the UN peacekeeping troops in Phnom Penh, with speeches by the chief of the UN medical corps and the chief of the UN peacekeeping troops in Cambodia, respectively denouncing the assassination as a “senseless act” and a “great injustice”. The official commemoration service in Germany was not only attended by the Minister of Defense and the Inspector General of the Bundeswehr, but also by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and other politicians. All newspapers reported about the ceremony and the official speeches. After the official service, only the immediate family was present at the burial itself.⁹

For the official ceremony, the coffin of the dead medical sergeant had been decorated with the German flag, a blue UN helmet and the UN peace medal *In Service of Peace*. The Inspector General stressed in his speech that the medical sergeant had lost his life in the service of the United Nations. His comrades would remember him “as a selflessly helping comrade”. On the other hand, Defense Minister R  he pointed out that the medical sergeant “died while fulfilling self-sacrificingly and faithfully his duties in the name of his country and in the service of the community of nations”. He himself had been right in acknowledging a few weeks before his death that the UN mission in Cambodia had “served its purpose”, since the UN had made it possible for this country torn by civil war to run free elections and to make a new democratic beginning. Finally, the chairmen of the German parliament’s (*Bundestag*) committee of defense also emphasized that all political parties in the Bundestag had supported unanimously the mission in Cambodia.

“He did not die in vain”, “he is an example for his comrades”, “he will not be forgotten”, – these are the core messages of the official funeral service. It is interesting to see how ‘traditional’ they seem to be, especially with regard to the dead sergeant’s personal qualities evoked

⁹ The burial itself took place in private, with only the closest family present. Nevertheless, had the soldier, e. g. in his testaments, explicitly wanted the Bundeswehr to provide a military frame to this burial, this would have happened. Also, if the soldier himself had not taken care for this, it would have been possible for his family to request a burial with military honors. In this case, the coffin would have been covered with the German flag, a steel helmet on top of it and six soldiers would have been carrying the coffin. A seventh soldier would have carried the decorations the dead soldiers have received in their military career. When the coffin would have been lowered into the grave, there would have been a drum-roll, followed by a trumpet player playing *I once had a comrade*. Thus, the military disposes of certain rituals framing the soldier’s death which comprise not only the social but also the physical death. These rituals, together with the official speeches clearly show that as far as the soldier’s death is concerned, public sense giving of death does take place today also. At the same time, however, the fact that the dead soldier and his family did not wish a military – and in this sense: a public – frame for the burial indicates that today at least the burial of a soldier and so his physical death (Pattison 1977) is socially considered to be a purely ‘private’ affair: In the very end – so it seems – the soldier becomes a civilian again and therefore is buried in a strictly ‘civilian’ and thus private way.

by the official speakers (“fulfilling self-sacrificingly and faithfully his duties”) and corresponding more or less to the ‘eternal soldierly virtues’ promoted and claimed in former times: The medical sergeant’s death is above all interpreted as a sacrifice: for example, he is not presented as a victim of the unstable situation in Cambodia, but rather as a soldier sacrificing himself for ‘a better world’. However, what is fundamentally new, is the fact that this soldier’s sacrifice is no longer an exclusively national one: The German soldier died “in the name of this country and in the service of the community of nations”, that is he died ‘for’ peace and democracy in Cambodia, but also ‘for’ Germany’s contribution to peace and democracy in the world, which corresponds to the official German orientation in international affairs since the end of the Cold War: Germany has and wants to play an important role in the world and therefore has and wants to take on greater responsibility and greater risks.

Nevertheless, the stress on the unanimous support of all political parties for the UN mission in Cambodia, such as the emphasis on the success of this mission indicate that the political leaders considered it necessary to particularly point out the legitimacy of the Bundeswehr’s participation in the UN mission – all members of the Bundestag voted for this mission – and underline its success. So with reference to Hugh Smith (2003), in summary one could say that while claiming not to be casualty averse, the German political élites in fact did fear a casualty reluctance of the public and tried to dispel it from the start. But the worries of the political leaders turned out to be groundless since the media adopted and supported almost immediately the government’s point of view.

3.2 UNOMIG¹⁰

Since 1994, Germany has been contributing a handful of soldiers annually to the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) that was designed in 1993 and manned with about 120 unarmed military observers after Abkhazia had declared its independence from Georgia in 1992 (for an overall account cf. MacFarlane/Minear/Shenfield 1996; for the German participation cf. Karbe von Stünzner 2000). In this peacekeeping mission that has largely been neglected by German public opinion, a German military doctor who was serving as the UNOMIG Junior Medical Officer in the medical facilities for UN personnel in Zugdidi died on 8 October 2001. At 10:00 am local time, a surface-to-air missile hit a UN-white-colored helicopter which was manned with 9 unarmed military observers while they were flying over the Kodori Valley in the border region of Georgia and the neighboring province of Abkhazia. All of the military observers died when the helicopter crashed and although the UN sent an

¹⁰ This section is based on: Die Tageszeitung, 10 October 2001: 11; Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 9 October 2001: 7; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 9 October 2001: 11; Bundeswehr Intr@net Aktuell.

expert team to find out the details of the incident it is still unclear who or which group of the conflict is responsible for firing the missile.

After the incident, the UN flew the dead bodies back home. So the corpse of the German soldier was brought to Germany on 17 October 2001. Here, he was transferred to Rheine-Hopsten, his home unit, where a commemoration ceremony entailing both his family and his comrades was held. A few days later, he was buried in his home town. Later on, as the first German, on 24 July 2003, the military doctor was posthumously awarded the *Dag Hammarskjöld Medal of the United Nations* which had been invented by the UN in 1997 and specifically targeted for UN peacekeepers.

Interestingly, this incident did not make it to the front pages of the newspapers and went by as much neglected as the German participation to UNOMIG in general.

3.3 ISAF I¹¹

In early March 2002 a heavy accident occurred among the German-Dutch-Austrian-Danish International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops in Kabul (on ISAF cf. Friedman 2003; on the German participation cf. Siedschlag 2003). On 6 March at around 5:00 p.m. local time, two German and three Danish soldiers of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit died while they tried to destroy two Russian SA 3 GOA surface-to-air missiles in a location specifically designed for these purposes. In addition to this, five soldiers were heavily wounded and two more soldiers were lucky to survive with minor injuries only. Obviously, the security distance to the missiles had not been kept and there had been some more violations of security regulations due to negligence as the following closer inspection revealed.

After the incident, in the German camp in Kabul (Camp Warehouse) flags were at half-mast and a camp commemoration ceremony took place when, two days after the accident, the corpses were transported to the airport of Kabul. Here, an international commemoration ceremony was held with addresses coming from ISAF Commander John McColl and repre-

¹¹ This section is based on: Berliner Morgenpost, 7 March 2002: 4; Berliner Morgenpost, 8 March 2002: 1; Berliner Morgenpost, 9 March 2002: 6; Berliner Zeitung, 7 March 2002: 1, 4, 10; Berliner Zeitung, 8 March 2002: 1, 8; Berliner Zeitung, 9-10 March 2002: 1, 4f.; Der Spiegel, 11 March 2002: 172-186; Der Spiegel, 25 March 2002: 32f.; Die Tageszeitung, 7 March 2002: 1, 2, 12; Die Welt, 7 March 2002: 1, 3; Die Welt, 8 March 2002: 1f., 8, 10; Die Welt, 9 March 2002: 4, 7; Die Zeit, 7 March 2002: 1; Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 7 March 2002: 1f.; Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 8 March 2002: 1f.; Frankfurter Rundschau, 7 March 2002: 1-3; Frankfurter Rundschau, 8 March 2002: 1; Neues Deutschland, 7 March 2002: 1; Neues Deutschland, 8 March 2002: 1; Neues Deutschland, 9-10 March 2002: 1, 4; Neues Deutschland, 11 March 2002: 1; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 7 March 2002: 1, 4; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 8 March 2002: 1, 4, 8; Bundeswehr Intr@net Aktuell.

sentatives of the government. Through a guard of honor entailing soldiers of all 19 nations participating in ISAF the coffins were carried to the airplane. The Commander of the German ISAF contingent, Brigadier General Carl-Hubertus von Butler plus 20 comrades and pallbearers accompanied the coffins via Termez (Uzbekistan) to the military airport Cologne-Wahn in Germany. Here, Inspector for the Army, Lieutenant General Gerd Gudera was heading a military commemoration ceremony including a military guard of honor and a military band. Afterwards the dead men were transferred to their home garrison in Munster where another military commemoration ceremony took place. Eventually, they were buried in their home towns.

It was Inspector General Harald Kujat who first brought the accident to the attention of the German public. He was obviously touched by the event and pointed out that the explosion was a tragic accident and occurred earlier than expected. Since, as he said, the soldiers had been well-equipped and experts in their fields and since the security regulations had been strictly kept, he could not offer an explanation for what happened and how it happened. Insinuations that their deaths were to be attributed to deficient material, however, were strictly opposed by him. Although he maintained that the German soldiers in Afghanistan "are professional enough to cope with such a situation", he conceded that this "accident does not have positive effects on the soldiers' motivation". In Kabul, the commander of the German ISAF contingent, Brigadier General Carl-Hubertus von Butler assured the relatives of the soldiers his and the whole contingent's empathy and said that it was not easy from then on to go on with the ISAF mission, but that they were determined to continue their mission in the best way they could. In a similar vein, the German press officer in Kabul, Lieutenant Colonel Dietmar Jeserich, commented that the incident would not affect the determination of the German troops to successfully conduct their mission. The Catholic military chaplain Joachim Simon in Kabul, in an interview with the *Berliner Morgenpost* of 8 March 2002, gave meaning to the deaths of the two German soldiers as well. He maintained that it "should not be forgotten, that the soldiers risked their lives to provide security to civil society as far as possible. One could frame it in biblical terms: A richer love has no other than he who gives his life for his friends." Quite another facet is provided for by Colonel Bernhard Gertz, President of the German Bundeswehr Soldiers' Association (*Deutscher Bundeswehrverband*), who pointed to the job description so to speak and called the accident "a piece of soldierly normalcy". Still another facet comes in, when looking at some reports in the Bundeswehr media. Here, it was for example pointed out that, from an emergency-medical perspective, the transfer of the wounded soldiers in a MedEvac Airbus A-301 MRT from Kabul to the Bundeswehr Main Hospital in Koblenz proved the reliability of the MedEvac Airbus and of the German chain of military rescue operations even in extreme situations.

When it comes to the Defense Ministry, upon notification of the incident, Defense Minister Rudolf Scharping, who was on his way to visit the German soldiers in Djibouti, returned to Berlin. The following day, in a press conference, he presented himself deeply moved by the incident and offered the dead soldiers' families his condolences. In addition to this, he declared that this accident would not affect the basic rationale of the Bundeswehr mission in Afghanistan and that a German-Danish team of 10 experts would be sent to Kabul to investigate the details of the incident. Further on in the political realm, President Johannes Rau articulated his empathy and compassion for the families and relatives of the dead German and Danish soldiers by saying he "mourned the death of the two soldiers together with their families and friends" and by paying tribute to their share in helping Afghanistan to find a new political beginning in order for the Afghan people to "live together in freedom and peace". Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder spoke of a "deep grief" that had befallen "everybody" and added that the incident was not directly related to combat activities which would preclude any follow-up thoughts about the deployment of German soldiers; the German participation in the anti-terrorism mission was beyond debate.

Obviously, the German government feared another debate on general principles of the German engagement in Afghanistan and the anti-terrorism activities – all the more so since central conclusions of the report of the Commissioner for Education and Training (*Beauftragter für Erziehung und Ausbildung*) of the Inspector General had been leaked to the press. What obviously made the government somewhat nervous was, in particular, the report's finding that the troops "were no longer unconditionally backing the military leadership". Here, soldiers were reported as doubting the objective of the mission; according to these voices the efforts were too high, the risks too numerous and the reconstruction effects in the country too little. And, indeed, this accident occurred amidst a debate about the possible extension of the ISAF troops and their mandate in Afghanistan to demobilize the Afghan warlords' about 2 million fighters and create national Afghan forces that were capable of providing security in the country. Against this background, in the political debate following the incident representatives of all German parties, except the left-wing PDS which demanded the withdrawal of the Bundestag mandate, and some members of parliament from the coalition parties, the SPD and the Green Party, warned to raise fundamental doubts about the German ISAF mission in general. Instead, they confirmed the political legitimacy of the military mission and argued that it was right to engage in Afghanistan. In a similar way, the Special Emissary of the European Union, the German Klaus-Peter Klaiber, reacted to the incident and showed himself quite concerned that the death of the five soldiers may lead to a withdrawal of the European troops which make up for about 90 percent of ISAF contingents.

Overall, then, the casualty aversion syndrome is clearly to be felt both in the military, in the Defense Ministry and in politics. It also comes to the fore in press comments, e. g. when Constanze Stelzenmueller expressed her concerns in *Die ZEIT* of 7 March 2002: "What will become of morale, if the first Germans die in combat?" The second major German weekly paper, *Der Spiegel*, in a report by Michael Froehlingsdorf and others on 11 March 2002, found German society to be "psychologically disarmed". Critique was then directed towards the policy of the Defense Ministry which was perceived as, to a large extent, being responsible for the situation. In one comment entitled *Death in Kabul* in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of 7 March 2002, the author unleashed a thorough critique of the German government's information policies "which was no information policy" by arguing that the death of the two German soldiers met a German public that was not prepared to receive such news at all and that this situation was in large part due to the government not fully outlining and describing the threats and risks German soldiers were exposed to in Afghanistan. Governmental propositions that one would not engage in adventurism conveyed the image that nobody's life would be exposed to life-threatening situations. The comment concluded: "If the broad societal agreement of the mission in Afghanistan should turn into its opposite due to the deaths in Kabul, this would in the end be the result of a false information policy that believes to hide reality from the eyes of society."

Christian Bommarius, in his comment *Death in War is not an Accident* in the *Berliner Zeitung* of 7 March, also criticized what he saw as an "appeasement policy" of the Defense Ministry and argued that it be made known that "death in war is not an accident, but war's most reliable companion. Other states – the United States also – are familiar with death in war since decades. Germany, however, has to become familiar with this again. The offside as a secure place – this is history, not only since the deaths of Kabul." In a similar way, Werner Kolhoff formulated a critique of the *Lie of Trivialization* in a comment in the *Berliner Zeitung* of 9–10 March 2002. He also complained about the governmental information policies drawing a sweet picture in the beginning of the mission which was successively eroding later on. In particular, he was angry about the administration's hiding of the fact that German soldiers were involved in combat: "German society has a right to know about the tasks and objectives of all military operations, including the deployment of German ABC-soldiers in Kuwait. And German parliament, in a confidential body, simply has to have access to all the information in order to be able to control them. This is the lesson of My Lai and several other incidents that have happened in secret wars."

This charge was quite well to the point and several members of parliament would soon voice their discontent about the secretive information or rather non-information policy of the De-

fense Ministry because German politics and society had to learn from American news reports that German troops were not only acting as defensive police forces, but also as combat forces and that, indeed, about 100 German elite soldiers (*Kommando Spezialkräfte, KSK*) were actively engaged in combat in Afghanistan. The Schroeder government immediately gave in to these demands and provided more information and transparency on the KSK troops. Yet, this could not prevent Axel Vornbaeumen in his comment in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* of 7 March 2002 from interpreting and denouncing the German participation to the US Operation Anaconda as evidence of the detabooization of the military under a red-green coalition government.

Others were less critical on the latter point, but expressed their concern for the backing of Germany's military missions by society. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* commented on 8 March 2002, by using the traditional formula, that the two soldiers died while on duty for their fatherland and went on: "In the end the Bundeswehr soldiers who lost their lives in the fight against terror in Kabul were deployed to Afghanistan for the sake of the security of the Federal Republic of Germany and for the sake of the security of us all. A society which did no longer have the strength and the will to bear this risk and, in the final case, however tragic this may be, to bear the human losses, would have lost the power to uphold itself and its freedom." In a similar vein, Jochim Stoltenberg, in a comment to both *Die WELT* and the *Berliner Morgenpost* of 7 March 2002, perceived German society and politics in a learning and adaptation process: "The two Bundeswehr soldiers are the first German soldiers who die while on duty thousands of kilometers away from home. This is still an extreme experience for a country that has difficulties with his new role, also in military terms, in world politics. Every military mission entails high risks, including life-threatening ones. This was suspected by all and said by many. Now we are forced by the bitter reality to also fully grasp this. This is a bitter, but inevitable learning process."

In contrast to that, Nikolaus Blome, in a comment in *Die WELT* of 8 March 2002, observed that the government as well as the society at large were somehow breathing a sigh of relief that the deaths had occurred due to an accident 'only', and not to combat. Nevertheless, combat deaths lay in the future of Germany and Blome maintained that this would be a real test for the government, parliament and society. "This is postponed only. And all of us suspect this. Are the Germans prepared for this? No. Is it predictable how the Germans as a society and as a political unit will react to this? No. A stigma is neither of both. How could a society prepare itself for these situations, when it was a central element of German state philosophy to preclude them under almost any circumstances. (...) the Germans will have to understand this: Today war may be far away, somewhere in Afghanistan, almost completely silenced by the

government and the whole political class, that can only partially rationalize this as inevitable secrecy.” To help achieve this, he recommended to work at a linking of “pathos and the armed forces”. This somewhat resonates with Michael Stürmer’s comment for *Die WELT* of 9 March 2002 who perceived the word *moved* (‘betroffen’), which had been used over and over again by the acting and commenting people, as a word of embarrassment and argued: “This word reveals that those who use it are short of words, that the state is short of the appropriate rituals, and that the nation is short of grief. The Germans lack the slow march of the British, they lack the Arlington of the Americans, and they lack everything in memory, history and self-conscience that comes therewith. (...) The Defense Minister and the Inspector General (...) have to give meaning to the death of the soldiers, consolation to their families and explanation and legitimation to the nation (...).”¹²

Apart from this it is interesting to look at the hard data of public opinion survey. Here, indeed, an *EMNID* survey following the deaths of the two German soldiers did not find an effect of this incident on public opinion. Asked whether they agree to the current participation of Bundeswehr soldiers in Afghanistan, 55 percent were positive compared to 57 percent before the incident (quoted in *Die WELT*, 9 March 2002: 4). Accordingly, there is some truth in Hugh Smith’s (2003: 1) finding, that governments, politicians and the media may be casualty shy “while the public is casualty ready”, especially in cases when military operations are considered quite legitimate as was the war against terrorism in Afghanistan (in contrast to the Kosovo campaign). Another interpretation might be that the public was much more aware than both politics and the media that this incident, though combat related according to our definition, was much more a military accident involving weapons from the conflict parties. It was Christoph Schwennicke in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of 8 March 2002 who tried to get things straight. He interpreted the reactions of politicians and journalists as over-reactions, coined the term “emotional democracy” (*Wallungsdemokratie*) to characterize this and criticized that the dead soldiers were posthumously martyred although they were not war casualties.

¹² This interpretation is especially interesting since certain military rituals to mourn and valor the soldier’s death do obviously exist in today’s Germany as we have seen above. In fact, Michael Stürmer’s complaint about the Germans’ inability to express their feelings is not new: Since the publication of Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich’s book *The Inability to Mourn* (‘Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern’) in 1967, a psychoanalytical analysis of the Germans’ difficulties and shortcomings of coming to terms with their National Socialist past, the ability and the ‘right’ of the Germans as a nation to publicly express and ‘celebrate’ emotions, e. g. patriotism or national pride, has been the issue of many discussions in the feuilletons and, partly, also in the academic field.

3.4 ISAF II¹³

In December 2002, three days before Christmas, a transportation helicopter of the Bundeswehr crashed only a few kilometers away from the German headquarters in Kabul. None of the passengers survived. With seven dead soldiers, this was the worst accident for the Bundeswehr so far. The helicopter was on a routine tour when the incident happened. Again, the accident of the Bundeswehr helicopter was reported in all big newspapers.

Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder immediately expressed his condolences to the family of the dead soldiers, stressed that the “courageous and responsible engagement” of German soldiers in Kabul deserved “all our respect” and pointed out that “our soldiers fight for human rights, against war and oppression” and that “the defense of freedom and life itself [and of] (...) our value system” were at stake. Thereby he simultaneously provided consolation to the victims’ relatives and legitimacy to the military mission. President Johannes Rau added that “the fatherland can thank the soldiers for their lives lived and their duty fulfilled. (...) We all are dependent upon others risking their lives in order that we may all live in freedom and peace.” He also underlined that these men should have the full approval of what they do by society. Minister of Defense Peter Struck said that “overall Germany is joining you [the relatives, friends, etc.] in mourning” and added to this that the crash had been an accident with no evidence that the helicopter had been shot. Yet, investigations of specialists of the Bundeswehr a few days later revealed that the crash was caused by a technical defect. This, quite naturally, provoked a violent debate on the adequacy and the quality of the Bundeswehr’s equipment in out of area missions.

In several articles in the press, the capacity and the reliability of the Bundeswehr’s equipment in general and of the type of helicopter involved in the accident in particular were discussed. Some representatives of the German Bundeswehr Soldiers’ Association complained about the poor and inadequate equipment of the Bundeswehr and made statements like: “We are flying with antiquated equipment.” Some members of the opposition parties also demanded a thorough examination of the Bundeswehr’s material and financial supplies. Others, however, like

¹³ This section is based on: Berliner Morgenpost, 22 December 2002: 1, 3; Berliner Morgenpost, 23 December 2002: 1f.; Berliner Morgenpost, 27 December 2002: 4; Berliner Zeitung, 23 December 2002: 2, 4; Berliner Zeitung, 24-26 December 2002: 6; Berliner Zeitung, 27 December 2002: 7; Berliner Zeitung, 28-29 December 2002: 5; Die Tageszeitung, 23 December 2003: 1, 7; Die Tageszeitung, 28 December 2002: 12; Die Welt, 24 December 2002: 4; Die Welt, 27 December 2002: 4; Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 23 December 2002: 1, 3; Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 24 December 2002: 3; Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 27 December 2002: 2; Frankfurter Rundschau, 23 December 2002: 1, 6; Frankfurter Rundschau, 24 December 2002: 6; Frankfurter Rundschau, 27 December 2002: 1; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 23 December 2002: 1f.; Neues Deutschland, 23 December 2002: 1, 6; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 24-26 December 2002: 1; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 27 December 2002: 1; Y. – Magazin der Bundeswehr, January 2003; Bundeswehr Intr@net Aktuell.

former Defense Minister Volker R  he, rejected the reproach of the Bundeswehr's deficient material and warned that the accident should not be "used politically to make military demands". The Minister of Defense and representatives of the government coalition also confirmed that the crash was a tragic accident, but, in order not to appear as being indifferent or even cynical in caring for the soldiers, had nothing to do with the Bundeswehr's equipment, which was generally good and adequate.¹⁴

Yet, although several newspapers published chronicles of Bundeswehr casualties since the beginning of Germany's military engagement abroad and especially referred to the dangerous situation in Afghanistan and although Karl Feldmeyer commenting for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of 24 December 2002 explicitly pointed to "the risk of further casualties", the German participation in out of area missions was never generally questioned. Even more: the question of how Germany's and the Bundeswehr's international responsibility should look like, was not even raised, which is to be explained by the very fact of this incident being an accident. Instead, Germany's engagement in Afghanistan was generally taken for granted which is also documented by the very fact that only one day before the crash, the Bundestag had voted with great majority for an extension of the German ISAF mandate for one year. Rather, it was the preparation for and the conditions of such an engagement which the attention focussed upon. So the debate about the Bundeswehr's equipment touched upon the question of the maintenance of the bereaved family¹⁵ and of the size of the defense budget, as well. In this context, some commentators pointed out the special responsibility of the government and the political   lites for the military and its soldiers.

The public debate about the helicopter crash again lasted until the official commemoration ceremony. A first ceremony took place when the dead German soldiers arrived in Germany and were welcomed with a military guard of honor by Defense Minister Peter Struck and his Inspector General, Wolfgang Schneiderhan. A second and this time *public* commemoration service was held a few days later, on 29 December, at the Cathedral of Bonn. Numerous political and military representatives of the Federal Republic attended the ceremony, among them Minister of Foreign Affairs Joschka Fischer, Defense Minister Peter Struck, Inspector

¹⁴ Interestingly, later on the German helicopters have been equipped with dust collectors.

¹⁵ The regulations for what is coined a 'qualified accident' while on duty are as follows: In the case of dead soldiers the family receives a one-time payment of 38,000 Euro; the spouse is entitled to a pension of 60 percent of the salary of the rank the soldier could have normally reached in his or her career. Wounded soldiers incapable of performing their job any longer receive a pension of 80 percent of the salary of the rank they could normally have reached in their military career. This, however, applies only to career servicemembers. Shorter- and longer-service volunteers are not entitled for the so-called 'increased accident pension' due to a 'qualified accident'. This different treatment of career servicemembers and shorter-/longer-service volunteers is especially criticized by the Bundeswehr Soldiers' Association. See, e. g., *Y. - Magazin der Bundeswehr*, February 2003 for more details.

General Wolfgang Schneiderhan and President Johannes Rau who gave the commemoration address speech. The commemoration service, this time, was broadcast by radio and television and widely reported in the newspapers.

In our view, this very fact of a public commemoration service in a public and not 'only' military place to orchestrate the state's grief of the dead soldiers is only to be understood with reference to the systems' logic of the media and in the context of Christmas which is generally felt as being a particularly emotional and sensitive period of the year. This applies also to the military which is evidenced, inter alia, by the 23 December Christmas Address of Inspector General Schneiderhan. There, he used Christmas as the frame in which he paid special and additional tribute to the work and the performance of those soldiers who were on duty in Afghanistan these days and thus had to celebrate Christmas far away from the families, relatives and friends, thereby addressing the soldiers as a group in order to renew and foster their sense of identity.

3.5 ISAF III¹⁶

At around 1:00 p.m. local time on 29 May 2003 German soldiers were driving in two unarmored *Wolf* vehicles on patrol in heavy terrain far out from Kabul, 15 kilometers south of Camp Warehouse when one of the cars came across a mine. While one of the two soldiers in the car was only slightly injured, the other died thereby increasing the German death toll in the ISAF operation to ten. According to Defense Minister Peter Struck who interrupted a visit to Copenhagen, the German patrol was acting on a clear order and the incident was a tragic accident; also, there were no indications that this was a planned and calculated attack on the vehicle and its drivers in particular and on the ISAF troops in general. Nevertheless, a spokesman of the Defense Ministry added that an examination commission to explore the details of the incident would immediately be assembled. At that time Germany was co-lead nation with the Netherlands in the ISAF mission and contributed close to half of the overall ISAF troops of 4,500 soldiers. Contrary to the previous case, and quite surprisingly, media coverage and political debate of this incident was small which is indicative of a vacillating media interest in the topic depending on the specific political situation. Though it may be somewhat speculative, to us one explanation is that, perhaps, this might be considered as

¹⁶ This section is based on: Berliner Morgenpost, 30 May 2003: 1; Berliner Zeitung, 30 May 2003: 2; Die Tageszeitung, 30 May 2003: 2; Die Welt, 30 May 2003: 1; Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 30 May 2003: 1; Frankfurter Rundschau, 30 May 2003: 1; Neues Deutschland, 30 May 2003: 1; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 30 May 2003: 1, 11.

signaling the 'successful' ongoing of the learning and adaptation process in German society and politics which was called for at earlier occasions. A second, much less benign interpretation is that this documents societal 'indifference' (Moskos 2000) to the military and may be taken as evidence of a sincere civil-military gap implying that society does not really and sincerely care about the Bundeswehr and its soldiers.

3.6 ISAF IV¹⁷

Just a few days later, in early June 2003, the ISAF contingent of the Bundeswehr became the scheduled target of an attack that was conducted by a suicide bomber. On 7 June 2003 at 7:50 am local time, this man, in a car full of explosives, followed a German bus that had just left Camp Warehouse to drive along Jalalabad Street to Kabul Airport in order to get the German soldiers to return to Germany. After several maneuvers he set the 120 kg of explosives off to detonate when he was right beside the bus. Four German soldiers died, another 29 German soldiers were injured, in some cases heavily. Casualties would have been substantially higher had the soldiers not worn protection vests. The examination of the incident revealed later that the suicide attack was most likely committed by an Al Qaida member with affiliations to the former Taliban regime and to militia leader Gulbuddin Hekmatjar.

The ensuing ritual of honoring the deaths of the soldiers is quite familiar. Again, a first commemoration ceremony attended by several hundred ISAF troops was held on 10 June at Camp Warehouse with a military guard of honor and some addresses. One came from ISAF Commander Brigadier General Robert Bertholee from the Netherlands who said: "We can show our respect for the sacrifice that our comrades made in one way only: Continue our mission as well as we can; show determination; and make clear that we will not be intimidated. That will also help to overcome our grief. (...) We will not forget them." The wooden coffins were then transferred to Cologne-Wahn where a commemoration ceremony involving the ingredients of the German flag, the steel helmets, photos of the dead being carried, a drum roll, a guard of honor, a trumpet player, and speeches by the Defense Minister, the General Inspector and some military chaplains took place. The ceremony was also attended by several members of parliament and was followed by a private commemoration service and a ceremony in the

¹⁷ This section is based on: Berliner Morgenpost, 8 June 2003: 1, 3; Berliner Morgenpost, 10 June 2003: 1; Berliner Morgenpost, 11 June 2003: 1, 3; Berliner Zeitung, 10 June 2003: 1f., 4; Berliner Zeitung, 11 June 2003: 5; Berliner Morgenpost, 12 June 2003: 4; Die Tageszeitung, 10 June 2003: 1; Die Tageszeitung, 11 June 2003: 11; Die Welt, 10 June 2003: 1, 3; Die Welt, 11 June 2003: 1f.; Die Welt, 12 June 2003: 1, 4; Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 10 June 2003: 1f.; Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 11 June 2003: 1f.; Frankfurter Rundschau, 10 June 2003: 1-3, Frankfurter Rundschau, 11 June 2003: 1; Neues Deutschland, 11 June 2003: 1; Neues Deutschland, 12 June 2003: 1; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 10 June 2003: 1f., 4; Y. – Magazin der Bundeswehr, July 2003: 28f., 64f.; Bundeswehr Intr@net Aktuell.

home units of the soldiers after which the dead bodies were finally buried in their home towns.

On the private commemoration service Defense Minister Struck tried to give meaning and sense to the deaths of the four soldiers by saying that they “had been working for human rights and freedom, against war and to expand security in the country (...). They died in service for us all, they died for peace, for our security and thus for our country.” He also pointed out that the Bundeswehr soldiers were well aware of the fact that something similarly may happen with further casualties and added that the German society had to be well aware of this also. In arguing that way, he was joined by Winfried Nachtwei of the SPD’s coalition partner, the Green Party, but also by Brigadier General Werner Freers who cited “higher values” for a commitment to stay in Afghanistan, as well as by President Johannes Rau who said: “This ruthless act hit young men who have only come to Afghanistan to contribute to the security and stability of the people.”

In the political and public debate following the incident, these propositions went by largely unchallenged by the opposition parties except for the PDS again. Equally unchallenged remained the Defense Minister’s earlier commitment to the continuation of the mission which he perceived as beyond doubt since the determination not to give in, but to continue was something the Bundeswehr felt to be like an obligation to the dead soldiers. Thus, inter alia, he said: “The country would sink into chaos, if we withdrew our troops.” and: “Germany is not willing to give in to terrorist groups”. The Schroeder administration was also fast in conveying this message to and assuring Washington that this incident did not have an impact on the German inclination to continue its mission in Afghanistan. As Schroeder himself put it: “We know about the risks, but we equally know that the fight against terrorism is necessary.”

Yet, the debate became polarized on security issues again because several politicians of both the coalition and the opposition parties demanded that the security of the German ISAF soldiers should be improved by better material and equipment and by more closely followed or even better security regulations. In this vein, Christian Schmidt of the CSU, e. g., requested “an intense debate about the security philosophy of the ISAF troops”, because otherwise public agreement to military missions abroad was endangered. Also, there were demands for increasing the number of the armoured transportation vehicle *Dingo* and for thinking again about buying the improved version of this vehicle, the *Dingo 2*, the acquisition of which had been postponed to the year 2009 just a few days earlier. Furthermore, there were calls for moving heavy tanks of the *Leopard* series to Kabul as well as for a stop to the ongoing considerations of establishing a second German camp in the Herat region. Struck, however, de-

clared that the German contingent would not be equipped with heavier and more armored quipment.¹⁸ He heavily opposed the insinuation that the Bundeswehr had somehow acted negligently and confirmed that Germany was still thinking of an extension of the German ISAF engagement into the Herat region. Likewise, Inspector General Wolfgang Schneiderhan turned down requests for heavier equipment which did not make sense in the light of the situation on the spot from a military point of view. The debate also extended to asking whether the German policy of transparency and openness including a non-martial public appearance in relation to the Afghan people was still appropriate although this policy had bought the German contingent substantial respect, credit and sympathy among the Afghans. Here, Struck defended the policy of little martial appearance in the Afghan public, because “[y]ou cannot generate trust by hiding in armored vehicles”.

That the security issue, i. e. the protection of German soldiers abroad, would be debated was to be expected given the situation in Afghanistan which was characterized by increasing difficulties not only in the regions, but also in Kabul (cf. also Marsden 2003; also Annan 2003). The German secret service, the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (BND), e. g., long before this incident, had been perceiving a mounting instability in the country and thus an increased threat scenario even in Kabul. Wolfgang Gerhardt of the liberal party (FDP) took the occasion to call for a change in the military format structure of the Bundeswehr and a shift to a professional all-volunteer force and Colonel Bernhard Gertz of the German Bundeswehr Soldiers’ Association asked the Bundeswehr either to withdraw completely or to substantially increase the number of German troops in Afghanistan.¹⁹

This was closer to what was debated in the commentaries of the press because it focussed on the objective, the goal and the purpose of the mission and therefore also on the issue of casualties. Karl Feldmeyer nicely put this in a comment *Binding Standard* in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of 11 June 2003: “The decisive question that has received renewed importance revolves around the legitimacy of international military missions and the Bundeswehr’s

¹⁸ Nevertheless, meanwhile several measures have been taken to improve the security situation, among them: changing departure and arrival times of bus shuttles; reminding the soldiers of the security regulations and provisions; reminding them again and again that they be constantly aware that something might happen; screening much more closely than before the about 200 civilian Afghan employees in Camp Warehouse; moving additional military equipment and material to Afghanistan including six mine-proof *Dingo* vehicles and some lightly armored *Wiesel* tanks and armored trucks.

¹⁹ The latter was requested, too, by Nico Fried in his comment for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on 10 June 2003: “The only response to Saturday’s attack is an increased military engagement in Afghanistan; otherwise terror might put an end to the mission very soon.”

participation therein. What reason justifies that German soldiers have to bear life-threatening risks? (...) The Bundeswehr is an especially important instrument of German politics when it comes to prestige, political power and influence among the allies. Her use or non-use impacts on Germany's world political position and Germany's structuring and ordering options. Since this is particularly evident, it is even more surprising that these aspects are somewhat hidden behind humanitarian arguments. This is barely understandable because looking after one's national interests is nothing indecent, but the duty of politics." He added that the political objective of a given military mission "must be realizable and politically and morally tenable. (...) in any case there is one binding standard for each decision to be made. This is the answer to the question whether the respective objectives are worth the life of a single soldier." One day earlier, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* had already commented the attack on 10 June 2003 and had especially emphasized the "political responsibility" that is involved in decisions about military missions. "Defense Minister Struck was bold when he said that Germany would be defended at the Hindukusch. As a matter of fact, in essence the debate centers on how much order the world needs in order to preserve peace and prosperity in the West, in Europe and what Germany may, can, should or has to contribute to this. It is a question that needs sober assessment in every single case also reflecting one's own interests, whether in Afghanistan or in Congo. This portion of scruples and care is not least thanks to those soldiers who are sent into the world in dangerous missions."

Jochim Stoltenberg commented for the *Berliner Morgenpost* of 8 June 2003: "Germany mourns the casualties and eventually gets to learn how dangerous international crisis reaction operations aiming at helping other peoples to a better future really are. (...) Missions like that in Afghanistan are typical now for the Bundeswehr. It is high time that this transformation is not only debated among military and security experts, but in society as well. Because this completely new Bundeswehr (...) is confronted with completely different risks than in the past. The Bundeswehr has become an army in mission. With all the consequences that come with this, including death." Both Knut Pries' commentary in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* of 10 June 2003 and Alan Posener's commentary for *Die WELT* of 10 June 2003 point into the same direction with Posener writing: "Today the dead soldiers come back home. They are the first German casualties due to direct attack upon its forces since the Second World War and the country seems to be almost embarrassed. Rituals are missing as well as words. This nation, this speaks for her, has thoroughly forgotten all this. But she will have to learn again; the four soldiers from Kabul will not be the last casualties. The rash critique on attentiveness and equipment of the ISAF troops does only deflect from this truth. Germany's freedom is to be defended at the Hindukusch Defense Minister Struck said a few weeks ago. He is right." Even the left-wing *Die Tageszeitung* raised similar points and even used, in an affirmative way, the

expression ‘national interest’, a term that had hitherto been anathema to this political segment: “The less clearly practitioners of foreign policy know which interests should guide them, the more they are in danger to entangle themselves and their country in international conflicts. Rightly perceived, national interests can be defining criteria that society may use to control their politicians – and to redirect them from dangers. (...) As a matter of fact the Germans are prone to self-deception: Their willingness to accept casualties is much less pronounced than the high number of international missions of the Bundeswehr indicates. The majority of German citizens is living in the illusion that the recent missions have not implied casualties, own as well as foreign ones. Yet, should the blood toll increase substantially, the Germans will want to know what to date only the Americans and the French are asking: Why did young people have to die?”

One exception to this quite unanimous and coherent way of commenting was *Neues Deutschland*. This daily paper, quite close to the socialist party, the PDS, published a commentary by Wolfgang Huebner on 11 June 2003 in which he precisely lamented this factual giant coalition of conservatives, liberals, social democrats and greens, plus journalists from different newspapers, in basic military policy. He identifies this large-scale consensus as aiming at enabling the Bundeswehr to be even more often deployed abroad in the future, which he, in turn, perceives as evidence of an overall militarization of German foreign policy. But, so far, these voices do not find substantial resonance within the larger public.

Evaluating the suicide attack incident of 7 July 2003, we come to the conclusion that this event, due to its dramatic scope and the attack element in it, served to renew the issues which have been around earlier on. Our impression is that, although no mass demonstrations of society against the mission had ensued, the reactions to this event in politics and the media were of a somewhat higher intensity than before. The consolation provided to the families and relatives of the dead soldiers, the efforts to provide meaning and sense, the affirmation and determination to go on with the mission, the fear of societal casualty shyness – all this seems to have assumed an even greater importance than before, which is also evidenced by interventions in the public sphere on behalf of a transition to an all-volunteer army. While in 1993, with the first German casualty, the political élites and the public opinion agreed that Germany has to accept casualties, one decade later, the question is no longer if Germany should participate in military mission and running the risk of losing German soldiers’ lives. Today, it is rather the question of when and how German soldiers should risk their life – and it has not been answered definitely and unanimously yet. Dealing with casualties, then, has by no means become a routine action.

4 Conclusion

Our analysis comes to an end here. Given the comparatively very limited number of casualties due to the rather recent and short history of Bundeswehr military operations in peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions and in war, our findings are surely somewhat tentative. Nevertheless, we think that there are some quite substantial ones to be derived from the empirical case studies.

The overall number of German soldiers who died in military missions abroad is quite low compared to other countries. Next, the overall number of German dead soldiers is considerably higher than the number of 'real' casualties, i. e., those that are combat related and/or genuinely related to a military mission. Thus, casualties may mean quite different things. One could distinguish between casualties meaning military accidents and casualties meaning 'real' casualties following from 'enemy' contact, i. e. casualties in a narrower sense. Furthermore, casualties are differently perceived depending on the characteristics of the observer: As a general rule, one could argue that the closer you are to the military, the more you are affected by casualties. Equally different are the perceptions of casualty aversion and casualty sensitivity. Our analysis revealed that casualty reluctance may be less pronounced and articulated in society than expected especially by those responsible for deciding on and thus legitimizing military missions.

We offer two hypotheses for this:

- (1) In a benign interpretation, this may signal the success of some socialization and learning process in German society. In this view, German public opinion has learnt the lessons of the changing international system under the auspices of profound globalization and has fully grasped the rules of the international chess board; it has become well aware of the necessity to keep armed forces and of the willingness to use them for the sake of the national interest and in order to make its voice heard internationally and contribute to international stability, peace, democracy, freedom and prosperity.
- (2) In a less benign perspective, our findings are to be taken as an expression of societal indifference to the military. This is in line with the systems theory of functional differentiation; one could argue that, the armed forces being a subsystem of society and of politics and the soldier being a 'personal subsystem' of the military subsystem, the death of a soldier does or even should mainly concern the military and the political actors responsible for the military and not society as a whole. In this regard, it is only 'natural' that casualties are mainly dealt with by the military and funeral ceremonies take place in a military

framework. This could also explain the fact that casualties are taken up the media more or less selectively, that is according to the respective political circumstances and not only to the incident itself.

Nevertheless, the existence of the casualty aversion syndrome can hardly be overlooked and is a permanent element of the political, military and media debate. The overall pattern following from the empirical case studies is familiar: Reactions in both government, overall politics and the media (the press) are dispersed with elements of the casualty shyness syndrome. In the view of both, German society – although some ‘progress’ is acknowledged – is still to be characterized as ‘psychologically disarmed’; at least German society is perceived as being highly sensitive when it comes to dead German soldiers. Therefore, both the government and the Bundeswehr try to contextualize casualties which corroborates our two initial hypotheses, namely that (a) death is attributed higher attention and a much higher degree of uniformity in the military than in other subsystems of society; and that (b) death in the armed forces entails the potential for inter-subsystem repercussion.

Casualties, especially ‘real’ casualties, need be given utmost attention and care; otherwise a loss of authenticity, credibility and legitimacy looms at the horizon. To do so, the German government and the armed forces like any other government and military have developed certain rituals that help to cope with the situation, despite some charges in commentaries that this would not be the case.

These rituals serve different objectives:

- they offer one’s condolences to the families of the dead soldiers;
- they provide meaning and give sense to the loss of life; therefore, the conception of death in the military and in military politics is neither instrumental nor cognitive, but it is normative implying that there is some *kalos thanatos*, i. e. some good and some sense in dying (cf. Feldmann 2002: 13)²⁰;
- they show the organization’s attention and interest in the individual;
- they renew and foster identity construction amidst the military;
- they help the organization to move quite smoothly and fast through the three processual stages of such an event, i. e. transcending from shock to desorganization to reorganization (Schmied 1985: 148ff.);

²⁰ There is a fourth conception of death that can be found in the military as the First World War evidences and that thus needs to be mentioned here; this is the expressive conception entailing notions of the ‘beautiful’, ‘euphoric’, ‘passionate’, ‘heroic’ and ‘patriotic’ death.

- they remind the death soldier's comrades, in fact, all the soldiers, that death is a permanent companion to them and that there is a need to prepare for one's own death, i. e. for some *ars moriendi* (Feldmann 2002: 165), not in a blunt way, but by giving it some consecrated frame based on an *implicit* appeal to a "community until death" (Weber 1921: 548f.);
- they show to the public, in some form of symbolic politics, that those serving and dying some 'altruistic death' – as we may call it paraphrasing and modifying Durkheim (1973: 256–270) – for the community are much respected and honored;
- and, lastly, they prove that the state is not only a symbolic construction, but a real thing (cf. Kertzer 2003).

To us, upon closer inspection, there seems to be a notable shift from the past in valorizing these objectives. Whereas, in the past, these rituals were much more addressed to the public at large, in an individualized, affluent, and postmodern society they seem to particularly aim at the military and the repeated construction of a sense of common purpose and identity therein. The fact that in general funeral ceremonies are held in a garrison or a military airport, i. e. in a public place within the military, show this very clearly. These rituals entail a "process of symbolic reproduction"; "the coming together of individuals, each of whom carries one small part of the collective emotion, creates the collective event and reproduces the community as something that exists independently from the emotions of its individual members." (Bergesen 2003: 50)²¹ Or in the words of David Kertzer (2003: 388): "The ritual creates an image of the world which is emotionally so obliging that it is above discussion."

The contents of the provision of meaning and sense – which still look surprisingly traditional or pre-modern – have also clearly shifted in Germany. Today, much stress is laid upon cosmopolitan and humanitarian causes, like dying for peace, democracy, freedom, human rights, the people of country X etc. compared to the much narrower nationalistic causes of the past. We propose that both of our hypotheses entail some elements of truth – a proposition which is to be further analyzed in more detail in empirical and theoretical studies; indeed, they can easily be combined: According to the systems theory of functional differentiation societal indifference to casualties nowadays is much more pronounced than in the past and is a consequence of modernization. But Germany also seems to have undergone a substantial learning and adaptation process and seems ready to accept casualties for the 'right', the authentic cause. Our assumption is that both of these processes are at work and that they are valid for

²¹ Further on, Bergesen (2003) speaks of a "ritual order" and sketches a three-level hierarchic model of the ritual practice consisting of micro-rites, meso-rites and macro-rites. Rituals we are dealing with here clearly fall into the category of macro-rites.

different segments of society; yet, these parallel processes converge in their result which is: German society is less casualty shy than is mostly assumed.

This finding leads to two conclusions:

The 'socialization/learning hypothesis' points to the need of those involved in the decision-making process to clearly indicate and define the objectives of a mission, to provide strong legitimacy for the mission and to provide the armed forces the respective means to conduct such a mission successfully. In this business of framing, of legitimacy production, however, Germany appears to be somewhat reluctant to resort to the category of interest, especially to the category of national interest. In this sense, the German path may still be regarded a German *Sonderweg*. Yet, this may backfire, because cosmopolitan and humanitarian arguments alone may not hold when a certain threshold of 'real' casualties is surpassed. As Hugh Smith (2003: 2f.) has put it: "The casualty factor increases the further a particular war or military operation is removed from core national interests, and the more that decision-makers are divided amongst themselves. In terms of national interest, there is a hierarchy of causes for which citizens are willing to fight and die, and for which governments are willing to commit their armed forces. The proposition is simply that the lower down the following list of causes a particular conflict is to be found, the more salient will be the casualty factor. (...) Defense of the homeland (...) Defense of allies (...) Promotion of vital interests (...) Punishment of aggression (...) Prevention of genocide, ethnic cleansing (...) Humanitarian assistance." There are indications that this is slowly disseminating into the minds of the decision-makers.

The 'indifference hypothesis' is by no means a cause for complacency. Rather, it is a cause for heightened attention and alert, since, under certain conditions, indifference carries with it the potential for a reversion to difference. In a specific setting, one day German casualties may make a difference to people who have formerly been indifferent to German casualties. Therefore, both politics and the military are called to fight functional differentiation to a certain degree. The indifference hypothesis thus corroborates the finding of the socialization/learning hypothesis: What is needed is nothing less than a broad, explicit and sincere debate about the basics of German foreign, security and military policy within society in order to advance socialization and learning and to fight indifference.

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Appendix

Table 1: Deaths of Bundeswehr Soldiers 1986-2002

	1986		1987		1988		1989		1990	
	On Duty	Off Duty	On Duty	Off Duty	On Duty	Off Duty	On Duty	Off Duty	On Duty	Off Duty
Total	453		471		442		397		397	
Illness	1)		1)		1)		1)		103	
Suicide	1)		1)		1)		1)		62	
Accident	265		279		251		217		232	
Accident	35	230	25	254	37	214	17	200	30	202
Aerial Transport	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	13	1
Car Accident	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	5	178
Train Accident	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	-	-
Water-craft Accident	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	-	-
Sport Accident	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	8	13
Explosives Accident in Peacetime	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	-	-
Machines / Tools Accident etc.	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1	1
Burning; Poisoning	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	-	4
Specific Environmental Influences	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1	1
Fall Injuries et al.	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	2	4

Table 1: Deaths of Bundeswehr Soldiers 1986-2002 (cont.)

	1991		1992		1993		1994		1995	
	On Duty	Off Duty	On Duty	Off Duty	On Duty	Off Duty	On Duty	Off Duty	On Duty	Off Duty
Total	20	184	16	444	20	368	8	357	26	322
Illness	4	1	2	121	8	88	4	88	2	65
Suicide	9	155	8	56	9	53	4	63	6	56
Accident	-	2	-	267	-	227	-	206	-	201
Accident	1	-	-	251	20	207	8	198	26	175
Aerial Transport	4	1	2	-	8	2	4	2	9	1
Car Accident	9	155	8	232	9	170	4	172	6	151
Train Accident	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3
Water-craft Accident	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-
Sport Accident	-	11	2	4	1	6	-	9	1	4
Explosives Accident in Peacetime	2	3	3	2	1	1	-	2	4	-
Machine / Tools Accident etc.	2	1	-	3	-	5	-	-	-	4
Burning; Poisoning	-	6	-	8	-	10	-	3	-	5
Specific Environmental Influences	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	1	2
Fall Injuries et al.	1	5	1	1	1	9	-	8	3	5

Table 1: Deaths of Bundeswehr Soldiers 1986-2002 (cont.)

	1996		1997		1998		1999		2000	
	On Duty	Off Duty	On Duty	Off Duty	On Duty	Off Duty	On Duty	Off Duty	On Duty	Off Duty
Total	18	178	35	148	18	139	16	166	18	142
Aerial Transport	7	-	23	-	7	-	4	1	6	-
Car Accident	8	155	3	135	6	122	6	150	6	131
Train Accident	-	1	-	-	-	3	-	1	-	1
Water-craft Accident	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Sport Accident	2	7	4	3	1	3	1	3	-	1
Explosives Accident in Peacetime	-	-	5	-	1	1	-	-	1	1
Machine / Tools Accident etc.	-	1	-	1	-	1	1	1	1	-
Burning; Poisoning	-	3	-	6	-	7	-	7	2	6
Specific Environmental Influences	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fall Injuries et al.	1	9	-	1	3	2	3	3	2	2

Table 1: Deaths of Bundeswehr Soldiers 1986-2002 (cont.)

	2001		2002	
	On Duty	Off Duty	On Duty	Off Duty
Total	270	120	244	109
Illness	90	-	74	1
Suicide	44	111	38	99
Accident	136	1	132	1
Accident	16	120	23	109
Aerial Transport	7	-	12	1
Car Accident	5	111	4	99
Train Accident	-	1	-	1
Water-craft Accident	-	-	3	-
Sport Accident	1	1	1	1
Explosives Accident in Peacetime	2	1	-	-
Inimical Devices	-	-	2	-
Machine / Tools Accident etc.	-	-	-	-
Burning; Poisoning	-	1	-	1
Specific Environmental Influences	-	3	-	-
Fall Injuries et al.	1	2	-	4

Sources: Gesundheitsjahresberichte der Bundeswehr 1990-2002 (BMVg-InSan 1992ff.)

1) No data available.

Table 2: German Soldiers Died in International Military Missions 1993–2004

Date	Mission	Casualties	Accidents & Illnesses	Combat Related*
14 / 10 / 1993	UN Mission in Cambodia	1		Shot for unknown reasons by a Cambodian
20 / 12 / 1995	Supervision of embargo against Yugoslavia in the Adriatic Sea	1	Squashed between two ships' sides when lowering a dinghy	
15 / 5 / 1997	SFOR	1	Cardiac arrest	
23 / 5 / 1997	SFOR	2	Shot by cartridges from a <i>Luchs</i> tank canon due to negligence	
9 / 9 / 1997	SFOR	1	Car accident	
6 / 7 / 1998	SFOR	1	<i>Fuchs</i> tank accident due to heavy terrain	
15 / 1 / 1999	SFOR	1	Firearm accident	
30 / 5 / 1999	SFOR	1	<i>Fuchs</i> tank accident	
17 / 6 / 1999	KFOR	1	Firearm accident	
12 / 10 / 1999	KFOR	2	Car accident	
30 / 10 / 1999	KFOR	1	<i>Wolf</i> military vehicle accident due to heavy terrain	
31 / 1 / 2000	KFOR	1	Natural death	
20 / 4 / 2000	KFOR	1	Firearm accident	
8 / 6 / 2000	KFOR	2	Military truck accident due to heavy terrain	
? / 8 / 2000	SFOR	1	Car accident	
17 / 9 / 2000	SFOR	1	Firearm accident	

Date	Mission	Casualties	Accidents & Illnesses	Combat Related*
22 / 9 / 2000	SFOR	1	Vehicle accident	
21 / 3 / 2001	SFOR	1	Firearm accident	
23 / 6 / 2001	KFOR	1	Military vehicle accident following an evasive manoeuvre	
31 / 7 / 2001	KFOR	1	Firearm accident	
8 / 10 / 2001	UN Mission in Georgia	1		Helicopter hit by missile
15 / 12 / 2000	KFOR	1	Firearm accident	
6 / 3 / 2002	ISAF	2		Accidental explosion of missile while trying to defuse it
21 / 12 / 2002	ISAF	7	Helicopter crash	
29 / 5 / 2003	ISAF	1		Wolf military vehicle explosion due to a mine
7 / 6 / 2003	ISAF	4		Suicide attack on a bus transporting German soldiers
3 / 10 / 2003	KFOR	2	Car accident	
Total casualties		41	32	9

Sources: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 10 June 2003: 2; Berliner Morgenpost, 8 June 2003: 3; dpa-Dokumentation 2003; Bundeswehr Intr@net Aktuell.

Note: *Entailing weapons, material and/or personnel from the adversary or from one of the conflict parties.

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