



# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

## THESIS

**GERMAN REARMAMENT: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS  
FOR APPLICATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

by

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**GERMAN REARMAMENT: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS FOR APPLICATION  
IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
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## ABSTRACT

The 2022–2023 war in Ukraine triggered what appeared to be a sharp turn in Germany’s commitment to rearmament; however, Germany has faced similar challenges throughout its post-war history. A study of Germany and the Bundeswehr during two critical periods—the years following the end of World War II and the years following the end of the Cold War—can inform contemporary debates about the role and prominence of the armed forces in the Federal Republic and in NATO. The Bundeswehr is a stable element within Germany’s democratic society and remains committed to preventing the repeat of past mistakes through the practice of its ethos—*Innere Führung*—and its ability to adapt while remaining an army in a democracy. Furthermore, the Bundeswehr also remains an army in alliance, most crucially in NATO. Answers to questions regarding Germany’s ability to adapt and commit to NATO are found in its past. This analysis reveals Germany’s past success in response to internal and external threats and suggests its ability to apply similar methods in the future.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EDC	European Defense Community
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NVA	Nationale Voksarmee (National People's Army)
TCE	Territorial Command East

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# I. INTRODUCTION

How has the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) overcome political, cultural, and strategic barriers to achieve a stable army in a democracy and adapted its role in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) throughout volatile international security environments? The 2022 war in Ukraine triggered what appeared as a sharp turn in Germany's commitment to rearmament. Nevertheless, Germany has faced similar challenges throughout its post-war history. This thesis examines Germany and the Bundeswehr during two critical periods in its history—the years following end of World War II and German Unification at the end of the Cold War. Specifically, it describes contemporary debates about the rightful role and prominence of the armed forces in the Federal Republic and in NATO.

## A. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The capability, capacity, and readiness of the German armed forces has been subject to severe criticism, especially since 2014.<sup>1</sup> Germany's commitment to NATO also has come into question on several occasions in the decades following Germany's unification.<sup>2</sup> Some scholars argue that war changed after the end of the Cold War, and former enemies would unite against terrorism and other types of disruptive non-state

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Donald Abenheim and Carolyn Halladay, "Germany: An Army in a Democracy in an Epoch of Extremes," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics, December 22, 2021, 3, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1892>; See also, Elbridge Colby, "What Does German History Actually Say About German Defense Spending?," Center for a New American Security, April 30, 2019, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/commentary/what-does-german-history-actually-say-about-german-defense-spending>; General Alfons Mais's claim that the Bundeswehr is bare, with limited options: Alfons Mais, LinkedIn, February 24, 2022, <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6902486582067044353/>; and Nette Nöstlinger, "'I Am Pissed off!' German Army Official Bemoans 'Bare' Forces as Russia Invades Ukraine," POLITICO, February 24, 2022, <https://www.politico.eu/article/i-am-pissed-off-chief-of-the-german-army-alfons-mais-states/>. that reported Christine Lambrecht's claim that, as the reporter summarized it, the "Bundeswehr was reaching its capacity limits and demanded more financial support from Finance Minister Christian Lindner and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz."

<sup>2</sup> Markus Kaim, "Germany, Afghanistan, and the Future of NATO," *International Journal* 63, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): 608–9, 613–14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070200806300311>; Jonathan Dean, "Losing Russia or Keeping NATO: Must We Choose?," *Arms Control Today* 25, no. 5 (June 1995): 5, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/211217310/abstract/AF4D3576C94D48F9PQ/1>; Helga Haftendorn, Robert O. Keohane, and Celeste Wallender, eds., *Imperfect Unions: Security Institutions over Time and Space*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004), 196.

actors;<sup>3</sup> they were only partly correct. Russia has demonstrated its willingness to threaten Western security, most recently in 2014 and 2022. The United States needs reliable and capable allies to defend Europe and maintain peace. Threats of armed conflict in Europe and international crises remain relevant today and require NATO and its allies to remain committed and prepared for defense. Germany has remained at the heart of the NATO alliance since 1955 and its ability to adapt to future threats to international security must be sustained.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section traces two interrelated themes that provide the essential context for the question of Germany at arms in the contemporary period. The first theme is the domestic cultural debate—inside a country that experienced the extremes of militarization and total war, then demilitarization in the formative years of its democracy. The second theme concerns German politics and debates regarding the role and capabilities of the armed forces for the Federal Republic. The literature broadly agrees that the main issue has been the quest for balance that could finally provide answers to the so-called “German Question” and secure peace in Europe in perpetuity.<sup>4</sup> There is less scholarly consensus on how and why this balance can be fostered or maintained.

### **1. German Culture**

Germany’s infamous militant nationalist culture was not created in the years leading to either world wars; it was forged in the early nineteenth century and intensified

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<sup>3</sup> Martin L. van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991), <http://archive.org/details/transformationof00vanc>.

<sup>4</sup> For more detailed discussion regarding the various German Questions, see Timothy Garton Ash, “The New German Question,” *The New York Review*, August 15, 2013, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2013/08/15/new-german-question/>; Robert Kagan, “The New German Question: What Happens When Europe Comes Apart?,” *Foreign Affairs* 98, no. 3 (2019): 108–21, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26798156>; Lawrence S. Kaplan, *NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance*, Updated ed, Twayne’s International History Series, no. 1 (New York : Toronto : New York: Twayne Publishers ; Maxwell Macmillan ; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1994), 43–49; Large, *Germans to the Front*, chap. 2; Timothy A. Sayle, *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2019), 222–29; Lilly Weissbrod, “Nationalism in Reunified Germany,” *German Politics* 3, no. 2 (August 1994): 222–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644009408404362>.



through liberations, revolutions, and conflict.<sup>5</sup> Hans Ernest Fried argues “liberation from militarism has been impossible in Germany because German militarism has succeeded, at crucial moments, in posing as liberation and, indeed, revolution.”<sup>6</sup> Fried also notes that Germany’s “transition from the different varieties of autocracy and feudalism to the various forms of responsible government has generally been accomplished by violence.”<sup>7</sup> Germany’s geopolitical location is the source of German militarism according to A.J.P. Taylor.<sup>8</sup> He argues that “if a natural cataclysm had placed a broad sea between the Germans and the French, the German character would not have been dominated by militarism.”<sup>9</sup> The constant threat that surrounded Germany, according to Taylor, “Shaped a German national character strong enough to withstand the increasing changes in social circumstance which occurred in Germany in modern times.”<sup>10</sup> Thomas Berger argues that “there are few countries in the world where the past weighs more heavily on the present than the Federal Republic of Germany.”<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, Berger claims that the “events of the Second World War represented a seminal event that profoundly changed Germany’s traditional political-military culture and opened a window of opportunity in which traditional ways of thinking about defence and national security were progressively rejected.”<sup>12</sup>

The cultural environment that existed in Germany after World War II was created by decades of militarization, total war, defeat, occupation, and demilitarization. James Diehl argues that the “violent paramilitary subculture that emerged in Germany in the 1920s

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<sup>5</sup> Hans Ernest Fried, “German Militarism: Substitute for Revolution,” *Political Science Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (1943): 481–513, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2144945>.

<sup>6</sup> Fried, 481.

<sup>7</sup> Fried, 481–82.

<sup>8</sup> A. J. P. Taylor, *The Course of German History* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962), 15, <http://archive.org/details/courseofgermanhi0000ajpt>.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Taylor, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas U. Berger, “The Past in the Present: Historical Memory and German National Security Policy,” *German Politics* 6, no. 1 (April 1997): 39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644009708404463>.

<sup>12</sup> Berger, 42.

helped greatly to pave the way for Hitler's Third Reich."<sup>13</sup> The atrocities that were revealed after Germany's defeat, destroyed the nation's pride even for those who were proud of Germany's return to power.<sup>14</sup> "For many Germans," according to Henry Tuner, "their national heritage seemed bankrupt...1945 became the 'year zero.'"<sup>15</sup> He argues that Germans reluctantly acknowledged the horrors of the Nazi regime and that "something approaching a national amnesia gripped the country."<sup>16</sup> While Germans sought to forget their recent past, the Allied victors aimed to force reconciliation and penitence to prevent Germany from ever again having the ability to return to its militant heritage. Before the war ended, President Roosevelt declared that "it is of the utmost importance that every person in Germany should realize that this time Germany is a defeated nation."<sup>17</sup>

Preventing future threats to Europe required the Allies to solve the German problem once and for all and solutions varied greatly. Henry Morgenthau proclaimed that "it is not enough for us to say, 'We will disarm Germany...and hope that they will learn to behave...' Hoping is not enough."<sup>18</sup> Morgenthau proposes that "two Germanys would be easier to deal with than one,"<sup>19</sup> and argues for Germany to be divided into two demilitarized agrarian states so Germans would not starve, but never again regain the capacity to threaten Europe.<sup>20</sup> Louis Koenig argues that Morgenthau's plan failed because it threatened to "weaken the whole fabric of the Western European economy."<sup>21</sup> John Snell claims the plan

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<sup>13</sup> James M. Diehl, *The Thanks of the Fatherland: German Veterans after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 1.

<sup>14</sup> Henry Ashby Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, Revised (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 8, [http://archive.org/details/isbn\\_2900300053479](http://archive.org/details/isbn_2900300053479).

<sup>15</sup> Turner, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Turner, 8.

<sup>17</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1947*, Columbia Studies in Contemporary American History Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 119.

<sup>18</sup> Henry Morgenthau Jr., *Germany Is Our Problem*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945), xii.

<sup>19</sup> Morgenthau Jr., 155.

<sup>20</sup> Morgenthau Jr., 48–50, 155–80; Benn Steil, *The Marshall Plan: Dawn of the Cold War*, A Council on Foreign Relations Book (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 8, 89–90.

<sup>21</sup> Louis W. Koenig, "The Morgenthau Influence," ed. John Morton Blum, *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 44, no. 1 (1968): 143, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26442848>.

gave way due to the Soviet Union's reparations extraction plan and competition from within occupation zones regarding Germany's industrial production.<sup>22</sup> The economic alternative was the Marshall Plan, but Daniel Yergin argues that the program, which aimed to enable European and German recovery, was "a countermove to Soviet expansion."<sup>23</sup> Benn Steil argues that the Marshall Plan set the stage for Soviet aggressive opposition in Germany.<sup>24</sup> According to Steil, the Marshall Plan was the catalyst to igniting the Cold War and brought renewed Allied attention to solving the German problem.<sup>25</sup> James Corum argues that by 1949 in the midst of its economic recovery, "it was clear that Germany would align itself in some way with the West..., [but] the idea of reestablishing German armed forces was a very difficult concept for many Germans to accept, even though the Germans faced a palpable threat from the Soviet Union."<sup>26</sup>

The Allied occupation forces attempted to remove all elements of militarism from Germany and promote pacifism in the hearts of its former enemy.<sup>27</sup> Germany was divided after the war in what Taylor calls "a stroke of luck" and an "accidental return to the old device of a divided Germany which saved Europe trouble over many centuries."<sup>28</sup> Taylor argues that "it [was] not a good solution, but it [was] better than none at all."<sup>29</sup> Abenheim claims that the allied efforts after the war "revealed to the average German that soldierly virtues and military tradition had been in reality camouflaged immorality."<sup>30</sup> Donald Abenheim claims that the Allies linked the professional soldier to the horrors of Germany's

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<sup>22</sup> John Snell, *Wartime Origins of the East-West Dilemma Over Germany* (New Orleans: The Hauser Press, 1959), 227–28.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1990), 321.

<sup>24</sup> Steil, *The Marshall Plan*, 147–77.

<sup>25</sup> Steil, 307–37.

<sup>26</sup> James S. Corum, ed., *Rearming Germany*, *History of Warfare*, v. 64 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2011), x.

<sup>27</sup> Sheldon A. Goldberg and Ingo Trauschweizer, *From Disarmament to Rearmament: The Reversal of U.S. Policy toward West Germany, 1946–1955*, *War And Society In North America* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2017), 41–42, 69, 189–94.

<sup>28</sup> Taylor, *The Course of German History*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Taylor, 9.

<sup>30</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 40.

military history and marked the end of the soldierly profession.<sup>31</sup> Kurt Tauber claims that after the war, “the prestige of the military elite, even among the Germans, had crumbled to dust along with the armies it had led.”<sup>32</sup> Nathan Loomis posits that anti-militarism amongst German citizens ensured “the traditional role of the German military...was never to be repaired in any fashion reminiscent of the past.”<sup>33</sup> Then, a country that swore never again to possess the ability to wage war was asked to take up arms once again in 1955.

Whether pacifism was ever the majority position in Germany is debated. According to Walter Henry Nelson, Germans realized the horrors of militarism and “a passionate antimilitarism developed” following World War II.<sup>34</sup> Berger argues that “whereas traditional German attitudes towards the armed forces and the high esteem accorded to the...military were quintessentially militaristic, those emerging in the post-war era [are] distinctly anti-militaristic in character, if not downright pacifist.”<sup>35</sup> Additionally, David Large claims that after the war, some Germans believed that war would surely return if Germany possessed an army.<sup>36</sup> Following Germany’s reunification, Elbridge Colby claims Germany’s postwar “role for its military...was a powerful force dedicated to collective defense...within an Allied framework—not pacifism or disarmament.”<sup>37</sup> Thomas Bagger disagrees and claims that German pacifism was a product of its past and strengthened by a peaceful reintegration of the two Germans.<sup>38</sup> Both arguments could be correct, to some

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<sup>31</sup> Abenheim, 40.

<sup>32</sup> Kurt Tauber, *Beyond Eagle and Swastika: German Nationalism Since 1945*, vol. 1 (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), 255.

<sup>33</sup> Nathan Loomis, “German and Italian Aversion to War: Background, Contemporary Issues, and Security Implications for Allies” (Master’s Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2018), 20, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/62800>.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Henry Nelson, *Germany Rearmed* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 16.

<sup>35</sup> Berger, “The Past in the Present,” 42.

<sup>36</sup> David Clay Large, *Germans to the Front: West German Rearmament in the Adenauer Era* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 45.

<sup>37</sup> Elbridge Colby, “What Does German History Actually Say About German Defense Spending?,” Center for a New American Security, April 30, 2019, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/commentary/what-does-german-history-actually-say-about-german-defense-spending>.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Bagger, “The World According to Germany: Reassessing 1989,” *The Washington Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (October 2, 2018): 55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2018.1558609>.

degree, but Bagger argues that the peaceful unification of Germany decreased public support for defense and amplified the role of peaceful European integration.<sup>39</sup> The fact German pacifism has been questioned since the end of World War II demonstrates the complexity Germany faced in overcoming cultural obstacles to field an armed force.

German cultural reluctance to generate significant military power is not unique in Europe. James Sheehan offers that following World War II, “European states were made by and for peace.”<sup>40</sup> He argues that European citizens were committed to “escape the destructive antagonisms of the past and a deep concern for those economic interests and personal aspirations that dominated...the second half of the twentieth century.”<sup>41</sup> Berger predicts that “German defence and national security policy is bound to continue to evolve in response to developments in the international and domestic political scenes...” and also that it is “highly likely that change will continue to come in an incremental fashion and Germany policy makers will seek to keep as closely as possible to the established patterns of behaviour.”<sup>42</sup> These claims question the speed with which Germany will adapt to changes in the international security environment.

## **2. German Politics and Strategy**

Bagger argues that Germans feel “comfortably safe and prosperous in the heart of Europe without any sense of urgency about potential disruptions—be they monetary, economic, or security related.”<sup>43</sup> Bagger argues that after unification, Germans believed that “the future belonged to the trading state...rules and institutions would replace military might and the use of force as the arbiters of conflicting interests.”<sup>44</sup> Abenheim and Carolyn

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<sup>39</sup> Bagger, 56.

<sup>40</sup> James J. Sheehan, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone? The Transformation of Modern Europe* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 221.

<sup>41</sup> Sheehan, 220.

<sup>42</sup> Berger, “The Past in the Present,” 56.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Bagger, “Germany, Europe, and the Power of Narratives,” in *International Negotiation and Political Narratives: A Comparative Study*, ed. Fen Osler Hampson and Amrita Narlikar, Routledge Studies in Security and Conflict Management (London ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2022), 50–51, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003203209-5>.

<sup>44</sup> Bagger, 51.

Halladay argue that German political culture does not support a greater military role because of its history and the increased focus on civilian institutions.<sup>45</sup> They claim that while “German power in the past might have been measured in an array of armor and aircraft on the march, this phenomenon in political and strategic culture expired in 1945 and has not been resurrected since national unity.”<sup>46</sup>

Political support for the armed forces and their role in Germany has significantly varied since the end of World War II. As an example, Nelson claims a West German politician promised to “cut off his arm rather than ever hold a weapon again” but supported rearming Germany a decade later.<sup>47</sup> Patrick Keller claims that “Germany’s political leadership is instinctively reluctant to use hard power.”<sup>48</sup> Keller notes that, in addition to the Nazi shame that the nation shares, the use of its military rarely succeeds in “producing desired military outcomes and always incurs political costs at home.”<sup>49</sup> Keller argues that two competing German schools of thought existed by 2014—one that focuses on the progress Germany made and Bundeswehr deployments around the world since reunification to adapt to changing security environments, and the second that claims Germany is stuck in the middle between the risk of opposing its allies while attempting to never again go to war.<sup>50</sup> Keller argues that though the first school’s claims are correct, “it has never [deployed the Bundeswehr] by its own initiative.”<sup>51</sup> He further argues that Germany’s politicians only do what is necessary to avoid “losing face among allies and friends.”<sup>52</sup> Additionally, some believe Germany should do more, given its political

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<sup>45</sup> Donald Abenheim and Carolyn Halladay, “Stability in Flux: Policy, Strategy, and Institutions in German,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Cristiana Matei (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 305, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203105276>.

<sup>46</sup> Abenheim and Halladay, 305.

<sup>47</sup> Nelson, *Germany Rearmed*, 17.

<sup>48</sup> Patrick Keller, “German Hard Power: Is There a There There?,” *A Hard Look at Hard Power: Assessing The Defense Capabilities of Key U.S. Allies and Security Partners* (Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2015), 107, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12000.8>.

<sup>49</sup> Keller, 107.

<sup>50</sup> Keller, 107.

<sup>51</sup> Keller, 96.

<sup>52</sup> Keller, 96.

influence in Europe, but Keller argues that “would require much stronger leadership on German security policy than the country has enjoyed [since unification].”<sup>53</sup>

Where key political priorities are at stake, Germany has led on certain hallmark issues, notably NATO enlargement. Indeed, in this connection, Ronald Asmus claims that “Germany’s position was key.”<sup>54</sup> Chancellor Kohl assured Clinton “that his goal was to broaden the trans-Atlantic link, not push the U.S. out of Europe” and that “enlargement ‘will not work’ if the West used harsh, anti-Russian language;” in his opinion, expanding NATO would only work if “if Russia—and Ukraine as well—are part of the process.”<sup>55</sup> Asmus argues that though Kohl supported expansion, he was most concerned with Russia’s response and advised patience to his fellow NATO members.<sup>56</sup> The fluidity of Bonn’s support and Kohl’s tepid negotiations with President Yeltsin threatened to undermine the entire process.<sup>57</sup> Asmus claims that Kohl’s diplomatic skills were the key to creating the partnerships between Russia and the United States that resulted in the expansion of NATO.<sup>58</sup>

On the other hand, support for German military personnel does not resonate in German politics as one might expect. The image of the new German soldier, according to Abenheim, is firmly rooted by how the founders of the Bundeswehr described the soldier’s role—“first a human being; second, a citizen; and third, a soldier.”<sup>59</sup> According to Paul Lever, the Bundeswehr maintains distance from society as demonstrated by the lack of means to perform in ceremonies or conduct public displays.<sup>60</sup> By 2014, for the first time in generations, German volunteer soldiers deployed and carried “the burden of the German

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<sup>53</sup> Keller, 114.

<sup>54</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 102.

<sup>55</sup> Asmus, 102.

<sup>56</sup> Asmus, 102, 142.

<sup>57</sup> Asmus, 143.

<sup>58</sup> Asmus, 181–88.

<sup>59</sup> Donald Abenheim, *Soldier and Politics Transformed: German-American Reflections on Civil Military Relations in a New Strategic Environment* (Berlin: Carola Hartmann Miles, 2007), 24.

<sup>60</sup> Paul Lever, *Berlin Rules: Europe and the German Way* (London New York: I.B. Tauris, 2018), 95.

armed role [in] collective security and counterterror operations in such places as Afghanistan and West Africa, only to be generally scorned at home.”<sup>61</sup> Abenheim claims that society recognized the sacrifices and professionalism of the Bundeswehr, but wanted no part.<sup>62</sup> Lever notes that the government did not honor soldiers who were killed in Afghanistan but rather brought them home quietly and without ceremony.<sup>63</sup> In such episodes, Germany’s anti-militarist culture and its defense and security politics converge amid tensions wrought of continuity and change.

### C. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Germany, throughout its post-war history, demonstrates a continual search for the appropriate role for its military within its own unique cultural and political setting. Germany faced an external threat to its existence from the Soviet Union following World War II and throughout the Cold War. During the Adenauer era (1949–1963), the creation of the Bundeswehr supported sovereignty and provided full membership in NATO. Throughout the Cold War, the Bundeswehr provided substantial contributions for NATO defense against Soviet aggression while securing Germany’s acceptance by the West and securing its future role in Europe.<sup>64</sup> With the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the absence of an external threat, Germany faced a potential internal threat during the unification period. The Bundeswehr integrated a former enemy, the *Nationale Volksarmee*—National People’s Army (NVA)—into its ranks without destroying its democratic founding principles while expanding its role in NATO.

This thesis makes two assumptions. First, that cooptation of internal opposition was critical to overcoming political and cultural obstacles and in creating and maintaining an army in a democracy. Second, that Germany’s membership and contribution to the NATO

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<sup>61</sup> Donald Abenheim, “The Soldier’s Tradition and Civil-Military Relations in Germany,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Florina Cristiana Matei, Carolyn Halladay, and Thomas C. Bruneau, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2022), 261, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003084228>.

<sup>62</sup> Abenheim, 261.

<sup>63</sup> Lever, *Berlin Rules*, 95.

<sup>64</sup> Lever, 93.



alliance, central to continued European security, was and remained the solution to the evolving “German Question.”

#### **D. RESEARCH DESIGN**

This thesis uses a contemporary historical approach to answer the research question. Germany will be examined as a single case study. This thesis considers international events and their effect on German decisions to overcome obstacles to achieve its goals. A historical analysis of Germany’s decision-making methods in the face of changing security environments reveals consistencies and variations with respect to the outcomes.<sup>65</sup>

#### **E. THESIS OVERVIEW**

This thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter introduces the research question, provides context, and the research design. Chapter II is a case study of Germany during the post–World War II period. It investigates how Germany created the Bundeswehr by innovating the citizen-in-uniform concept and establishing an ethos for soldiers to confront the past, integrate into the new democracy, and secure its future. Additionally, it examines Germany’s admittance into NATO and acceptance by the West through political maneuvering that accepted limitations to its sovereignty and promoted international security.

Chapter III is a continuation of the case study during the years following the end of the Cold War when the FRG peacefully united the state and the Bundeswehr with its former German enemies in East Germany while maintaining democratic stability. Further, it describes how Germany remained committed to peace in Europe by legitimizing an enhanced role in NATO by overcoming domestic political opposition. Chapter IV summarizes the findings and concludes that though both periods entailed significant change, the Bundeswehr demonstrates its ability to remain an adaptive yet stable army in

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<sup>65</sup> Research design was inspired by Jeffrey Arroyo, “AFDS Rise: The Historical Significance and Impact on German Politics” (Master’s Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2018), 13, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/60373>.

a democracy. Additionally, it posits that Germany remains committed to its NATO allies and preserves the Bundeswehr's role as an army in an alliance that can respond to future threats to Germany and international security. Finally, it proposes two areas for future research—an examination of Germany's comprehensive response to Russia's increasing threat following the invasion of Ukraine, and how the all-volunteer Bundeswehr performs throughout the first major conflict after the abolition of universal conscription.

## II. GERMANY AND THE BUNDESWEHR AFTER WORLD WAR II

The German Bundeswehr (armed forces) was formed and performed all that was asked of it following the end of World War II. The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) overcame cultural and political barriers to create an army in a democracy and overcame strategic barriers to fulfill a critical role in the defense of Western Europe within the new North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). These barriers are examined in this chapter to determine how leaders and citizens established the Bundeswehr and joined NATO so soon after Germany's overwhelming defeat. This chapter argues that Germany overcame these barriers through three accomplishments: revitalizing the citizen-in-uniform concept guided by *Innere Führung*,<sup>66</sup> establishing limitations and controls in the Basic Law (Constitution), and accepting subordinate military leadership roles in the Atlantic alliance. Through these accomplishments, Germany created an army in a democracy and in an alliance, setting the foundation for future peace in Europe.

### A. ARMY IN A DEMOCRACY

The reconstruction period and establishment of the FRG and the Bundeswehr have received particular attention given their unique situation.<sup>67</sup> West Germany was granted sovereignty while still occupied by the Western allies and prior to the establishment of the Bundeswehr. Germany was largely in ruins after the war; the Wehrmacht had been disbanded, military bases and academies were closed,<sup>68</sup> war veterans' pensions were

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<sup>66</sup> *Innere Führung* is a leadership concept of soldierly conduct and governance that is difficult to directly translate. For more detailed explanations, see Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 44; Steven Beardsley, "Citizens in Uniform: The Bundeswehr's *Innere Führung* and the Cold War Divide," *Robert Bosch Foundation Alumni Association*, 2019, 2, [https://www.boschalumni.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Steven-Beardsley\\_Citizens-in-Uniform.-The-Bundeswehrs-Innere-Fuehrung-and-the-Cold-War-divide.pdf](https://www.boschalumni.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Steven-Beardsley_Citizens-in-Uniform.-The-Bundeswehrs-Innere-Fuehrung-and-the-Cold-War-divide.pdf); Klaus Naumann, "The Battle over 'Innere Führung,'" in *Rearming Germany*, ed. James S. Corum, History of Warfare, v. 64 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 205.

<sup>67</sup> Large, *Germans to the Front*, 265; Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 292.

<sup>68</sup> Beardsley, "Citizens in Uniform: The Bundeswehr's *Innere Führung* and the Cold War Divide," 3.

abolished,<sup>69</sup> and the remaining war factories were gutted. Rebuilding military capacity would require tremendous political effort and support from a defeated nation.

The United States and its allies faced the realization that without German soldiers,<sup>70</sup> NATO forces could be inadequate in a war against Russia.<sup>71</sup> At the end of the war, Soviet troops occupied most of Eastern Europe. The key threats to Western Europe and Germany after 1949 were the militaries of Russia and the Warsaw Pact countries and communism.<sup>72</sup> The threat of another war was ever present throughout the entire process of rearming and democratizing West Germany.<sup>73</sup> NATO's capability gaps required the FRG to prioritize territorial defense with the Bundeswehr eventually serving in the vanguard alongside its new allies.<sup>74</sup> As East-West relations deteriorated after the Allied victory,<sup>75</sup> borders created the front line of a potential war,<sup>76</sup> with Germans finding themselves on both sides. FRG sovereignty was recognized by the international community in May 1949; the first 101 commissions and enlistments into the Bundeswehr occurred in November 1955.<sup>77</sup> The new democratic state was prioritized, but Steven Beardsley notes that it was fundamental for citizens to "believe that democracy [was] the only option for the West German government and way of life,"<sup>78</sup> and that the Bundeswehr was essential for its security.

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<sup>69</sup> James M. Diehl, *The Thanks of the Fatherland: German Veterans after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 1–3.

<sup>70</sup> The term "soldier" is used throughout this thesis to include members of all branches of the Bundeswehr.

<sup>71</sup> Large, *Germans to the Front*, 39; White House, *A Report to the President Pursuant to the President's Directive of January 31, 1950* (Washington, D.C.: White House, 1950), chap. VI, C, [https://hv.proquest.com/pdfs/002196/002196\\_038\\_0572/002196\\_038\\_0572\\_From\\_1\\_to\\_118.pdf](https://hv.proquest.com/pdfs/002196/002196_038_0572/002196_038_0572_From_1_to_118.pdf).

<sup>72</sup> Konrad Adenauer, "Germany and Europe," *Foreign Affairs* 31, no. 3 (1953): 366, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20030970>.

<sup>73</sup> Large, *Germans to the Front*, 265.

<sup>74</sup> Michael R. Seyda, "The German Military Turnaround—Repair, Reorganization, or Rearmament?" (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2018), 20, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/59589>.

<sup>75</sup> Goldberg and Trauschweizer, *From Disarmament to Rearmament*, 51–52.

<sup>76</sup> Lawrence S. Kaplan, *NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance*, Updated ed, Twayne's International History Series, no. 1 (New York : Toronto : New York: Twayne Publishers ; Maxwell Macmillan ; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1994), 60.

<sup>77</sup> Large, *Germans to the Front*, 243.

<sup>78</sup> Beardsley, "Citizens in Uniform: The Bundeswehr's Innere Führung and the Cold War Divide," 4.

## 1. Confronting Postwar German Culture

The Allies previously planned for and made considerable efforts to demilitarize Germany.<sup>79</sup> In the aftermath of the war, allied occupation forces attempted to remove all elements of militarism from Germany and promote pacifism into the hearts of its former enemy.<sup>80</sup> The Allies' primary goal, especially for the United States, was to erase all cultural militaristic traits from Germany.<sup>81</sup> Removing equipment was one thing, changing an entire social culture was something else altogether.<sup>82</sup> Concurrent with allied demilitarization efforts, parallel plans were made by both the FRG government and its Allies in secret to devise a solution to enable the creation of a new democratic army.<sup>83</sup>

To build an army for the new democracy, the FRG needed to confront the divided culture in Germany created by decades of militarization followed by occupation and demilitarization. Abenheim describes the complexity of the cultural rearmament dilemma since it was “the third time in a single generation... [that] a new army was to be raised on German soil.”<sup>84</sup> Only a decade after Germany's defeat, Germans were asked to take up arms and join the allied defense of Europe, and “for the majority of West Germans, the sudden shift...came too soon and too fast.”<sup>85</sup> The FRG needed to revitalize the citizen-in-uniform concept and assess how these soldiers, including Wehrmacht veterans, could be incorporated into the Bundeswehr. Most importantly, the FRG required a revolutionary ethos capable of guiding Bundeswehr soldiers and preventing the repeat of past mistakes.

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<sup>79</sup> Goldberg and Trauschweizer, *From Disarmament to Rearmament*, chap. 1.

<sup>80</sup> Goldberg and Trauschweizer, 41–42, 69, 189–94.

<sup>81</sup> J. V. Stalin, Harry S. Truman, and C. R. Attlee, “The Big Three Report on The Potsdam Conference,” *Current History* 9, no. 49 (1945): 243, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45306784>; Goldberg and Trauschweizer, *From Disarmament to Rearmament*, 53.

<sup>82</sup> Goldberg and Trauschweizer, *From Disarmament to Rearmament*, 48.

<sup>83</sup> Goldberg and Trauschweizer, 4–9.

<sup>84</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 43.

<sup>85</sup> Donald Abenheim, *The Citizen in Uniform: Reform and Its Critics in the Bundeswehr*, NPS-56-88-008 (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 1988), 7, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/28882>.

a. *The Citizen-in-Uniform*

Forming the Bundeswehr required a defeated nation to accept that an army was necessary for its security—and then agree to serve. Rearming Germany “was much more than a military and political issue.”<sup>86</sup> Chancellor Adenauer believed that Germany’s security was a responsibility of all its citizens.<sup>87</sup> The return of German military power was problematic for the new Federal Republic and its citizens even with aggressive actions exhibited by the Soviet Union.<sup>88</sup> Officials and former Reich military officers debated not only how the Bundeswehr should be organized, but whether it should be established at all.<sup>89</sup>

The horrors of the past two wars greatly influenced citizens’ willingness to serve in a German military force. Nelson argues that Germans realized the horrors of militarism and “a passionate antimilitarism developed.”<sup>90</sup> Early on, as Large identifies, West Germans were not as amenable to rearming as the allied powers had predicted.<sup>91</sup> The creation of the new German citizen-in-uniform was essential to the Bundeswehr but was met with considerable resistance;<sup>92</sup> many Germans protested and embraced the *ohne mich* (“count me out” or “without me”) position.<sup>93</sup> Large argues that many German citizens questioned whether the world was safer without a German military.<sup>94</sup> Some Germans believed that war would surely return if Germany possessed an army.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Corum, *Rearming Germany*, xi.

<sup>87</sup> Adenauer, “Germany and Europe,” 364.

<sup>88</sup> Corum, *Rearming Germany*, x.

<sup>89</sup> Adam Seipp, “A Reasonable ‘Yes’: The Social Democrats and West German Rearmament, 1945–1956,” in *Rearming Germany*, ed. James S. Corum, History of Warfare, v. 64 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2011), 63–66.

<sup>90</sup> Nelson, *Germany Rearmed*, 16.

<sup>91</sup> Large, *Germans to the Front*, 3.

<sup>92</sup> Large, 225–26.

<sup>93</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 43; Beardsley, “Citizens in Uniform: The Bundeswehr’s Innere Führung and the Cold War Divide,” 8.

<sup>94</sup> Large, *Germans to the Front*, 6, 45, 268–69.

<sup>95</sup> Large, 45.

For the FRG to ensure its new army would serve its democratic interests it needed to pacify popular fears and reluctance. Colby claims Germany's planned postwar "role for its military...was a powerful force dedicated to collective defense...within an Allied framework."<sup>96</sup> The FRG promised its citizens that the army would only be defensive and maintained under civilian control with expenditures determined and controlled by the democratic parliament.<sup>97</sup> Further, the use of universal conscription would prevent the establishment of a professional military class. To appease remaining opposition in West Germany, conscripts could claim conscientious objector status and be given the opportunity to perform non-military roles when called upon to serve.<sup>98</sup>

Experienced soldiers from the former non-democratic military structure were necessary to create the foundation of an effective force. The Bundeswehr utilized former Wehrmacht officers,<sup>99</sup> but regardless of efforts to separate the Bundeswehr from the past, initially, Hitler's officers and noncommissioned officers served in Adenauer's army.<sup>100</sup> To overcome this challenge, veteran applicants were screened and required to dedicate themselves to the new democratic ideals guaranteeing they were free from any negative past influence.<sup>101</sup> The Bundeswehr's heritage and links to Germany's militaristic past were at the forefront of the cultural dilemma.<sup>102</sup> Even for those who supported rearmament, the Bundeswehr was viewed as an unfortunate requirement of deterrence.<sup>103</sup> The Bundeswehr

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<sup>96</sup> Colby, "What Does German History Actually Say About German Defense Spending?"

<sup>97</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation: A History of Germany, 1918–1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 260–61.

<sup>98</sup> Fulbrook, 261.

<sup>99</sup> Douglas Carl Peifer, "Establishing the Bundesmarine: The Convergence of Central Planning and Pre-Existing Maritime Organizations, 1950–1956," in *Rearming Germany*, ed. James S. Corum, History of Warfare, v. 64 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2011), 117–41; Beardsley, "Citizens in Uniform: The Bundeswehr's Innere Führung and the Cold War Divide," 4.

<sup>100</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 292.

<sup>101</sup> Peifer, "Establishing the Bundesmarine: The Convergence of Central Planning and Pre-Existing Maritime Organizations, 1950–1956," 134–41; Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 136–40.

<sup>102</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 46; Beardsley, "Citizens in Uniform: The Bundeswehr's Innere Führung and the Cold War Divide," 26–27.

<sup>103</sup> Large, *Germans to the Front*, 265.

needed to support the new democracy without containing negative elements of the past; it required a balance of old and new traditions of German military history.<sup>104</sup>

Creating the citizen-in-uniform was, in essence, a causality dilemma. Proposed solutions ranged from creating apolitical soldiers to simply conscripting citizens and training them to be soldiers.<sup>105</sup> American military advisors were unwilling to assist in conceptual reforms;<sup>106</sup> the new concept needed to be a German effort. According to Klaus Naumann, creating the citizen in uniform required the “fundamental unity of the person of soldier and citizen—who served as two parts under the concept of full citizen.”<sup>107</sup> The key element of creating citizens-in-uniform was conscription. Conscripts developed strong democratic convictions through military education and training and became “a fully developed citizen.”<sup>108</sup> The essential democratic element of the citizen-in-uniform was *Innere Führung*.

**b. *Innere Führung***

Germany’s peaceful military role in Europe required the creation of *Innere Führung* to serve as the guiding ethos of the new Bundeswehr.<sup>109</sup> The concepts of military reform and the creation of *Innere Führung* began in 1950. At the new Bonn government’s request, fifteen former military officers met in secret and drafted the Himmerod Memo to formulate the reforms necessary to establish the army divisions for service on the eastern flank.<sup>110</sup> The opinion of the group, especially Wolf Graf von Baudissin, was that Wehrmacht veterans would require rehabilitation.<sup>111</sup> Baudissin is widely credited with creating *Innere*

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<sup>104</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 292.

<sup>105</sup> Naumann, “The Battle over ‘Innere Führung,’” 214.

<sup>106</sup> American military officers within the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) were unsupportive and largely advised on practical matters of training. See Naumann, 209.

<sup>107</sup> Naumann, 213.

<sup>108</sup> Naumann, 215.

<sup>109</sup> Beardsley, “Citizens in Uniform: The Bundeswehr’s *Innere Führung* and the Cold War Divide,” 8–9.

<sup>110</sup> Beardsley, 4.

<sup>111</sup> Beardsley, 4–5.



*Führung* and it is argued that he was heavily influenced by his military service during Nazi Germany and his experiences as a prisoner during the war.<sup>112</sup> According to Beardsley, Baudissin believed Wehrmacht soldiers bore a level of responsibility and “envisioned military reforms that codified the soldier’s responsibility.”<sup>113</sup> The new ethos would serve as a guiding principle and negate the military’s ability to diverge from democratic principles.

Bundeswehr soldiers required more than military training, they needed to be integrated into the democratic republic to successfully serve in an army in a democracy. *Innere Führung* guaranteed the same rights of citizens to soldiers serving in the Bundeswehr—the right to vote, participate in politics, and “contribute to the formation of the political will of the people.”<sup>114</sup> Soldiers would be integrated into society, the military would be firmly under civilian control, blind obedience would be forbidden, and soldiers would be guided by morals.<sup>115</sup> Most importantly, Bundeswehr soldiers were expected to question orders to avoid ever again executing criminal orders.<sup>116</sup> The creation of the Bundeswehr was a reform of German military history that balanced old traditions with the new armed forces and *Innere Führung* guaranteed that the reforms would last.<sup>117</sup> Through conscription and the establishment of *Innere Führung*, soldiers would be citizens first and support the democracy they were asked to uphold and defend. According to Abenheim, “The new army would adopt nothing from the past without making certain that it was still valid for the present.”<sup>118</sup> *Innere Führung* ensured the success of the military reforms.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Martin Kutz, “Innere Führung – Leadership and Civic Education in the German Armed Forces,” *Connections* 2, no. 3 (2003): 113, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26323013>; Beardsley, “Citizens in Uniform: The Bundeswehr’s Innere Führung and the Cold War Divide,” 4–7.

<sup>113</sup> Beardsley, “Citizens in Uniform: The Bundeswehr’s Innere Führung and the Cold War Divide,” 4.

<sup>114</sup> Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, 261.

<sup>115</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 292–93.

<sup>116</sup> Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, 261.

<sup>117</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 292.

<sup>118</sup> Abenheim, 3.

<sup>119</sup> Abenheim, 44.

## 2. Constitutional Restraint

The FRG struggled to find balance between forming a new democracy and creating an army, one that would be properly controlled. The establishment of the Bundeswehr overcame political barriers by constitutionally limiting its ability to be outside civilian government control or to become a pillar of strength for the state as it was in Nazi Germany.<sup>120</sup> The FRG Basic Law military limitations overcame political opposition to the Bundeswehr and paved the way for NATO membership and acceptance in the West. The clear message to the citizens of Germany, and to the world, was that Germany was committed to democratic values, to joining the West, and to never again allow war in Europe to originate from German soil,<sup>121</sup> but also that a strong military was needed to secure its freedom alongside western allies.<sup>122</sup> Adenauer wisely claimed in 1953 that for Germany to return to normal, a new form of central government needed to be established, one that was committed to international cooperation.<sup>123</sup>

Though West German citizens largely opposed the establishment of the Bundeswehr, the Basic Law, Germany's constitution, was amended to permit an army.<sup>124</sup> The Basic Law codified two core elements central to its commitment to peace. First, the preamble made it clear that all German citizens were subject to the government and held the government fundamentally responsible for protection of the individual.<sup>125</sup> Second, it affirmed the government's commitment to peace by criminalizing any preparations for wars of aggression or manufacturing weapons without the government's explicit permission.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Beardsley, "Citizens in Uniform: The Bundeswehr's Innere Führung and the Cold War Divide," 4.

<sup>121</sup> Federal Ministry of Defence, *White Paper 1970 on Security of the Federal Republic of Germany and on the State of the German Federal Armed Forces* (Berlin: Federal Ministry of Defence, 1970), 3.

<sup>122</sup> Federal Ministry of Defence, 3.

<sup>123</sup> Adenauer, "Germany and Europe," 361.

<sup>124</sup> Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, 260.

<sup>125</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, "Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany," May 1949, 13, <https://www.btg-bestellservice.de/pdf/80201000.pdf>; Beardsley, "Citizens in Uniform: The Bundeswehr's Innere Führung and the Cold War Divide," 9.

<sup>126</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, "Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany," art. 26.

German political parties were split on rearmament goals due to the larger question regarding Germany's future in Europe.<sup>127</sup> The Social Democratic Party and Christian Democratic Union / Christian-Social Union politicians recognized Germany's historic challenge, that is, Germany never balanced a strong military with a strong democracy.<sup>128</sup> There was considerable debate, especially within the Social Democratic Party, whether it was morally right or practical for Germany to have a military.<sup>129</sup> Above all, politicians demanded the new army be integrated into the democracy to avoid mistakes of the past.<sup>130</sup> Both sides reached a compromise by cementing constitutional limitations for the Bundeswehr in the Basic Law.<sup>131</sup>

Adenauer delayed rearmament to satisfy political opponents and to ensure proper civilian control of the military despite promises to NATO to establish forces quickly.<sup>132</sup> Large argues that delays benefitted the process by allowing more public participation than would have been possible had the Bundeswehr been established earlier.<sup>133</sup> Activists were largely opposed to rearmament since they believed it would threaten Germany's reunification.<sup>134</sup> Adenauer claimed rearmament was necessary to join NATO, and that membership would bring reunification.<sup>135</sup> The Adenauer parliament established the

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<sup>127</sup> Seipp, "A Reasonable 'Yes': The Social Democrats and West German Rearmament, 1945–1956," 56–70.

<sup>128</sup> Abenheim, *The Citizen in Uniform*, 122–23.

<sup>129</sup> Corum, *Rearming Germany*, xi.

<sup>130</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 122.

<sup>131</sup> Seipp, "A Reasonable 'Yes': The Social Democrats and West German Rearmament, 1945–1956," 56–70.

<sup>132</sup> Ingo Tauschweizer, *The Cold War U.S. Army: Building Deterrence for Limited War*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 101.

<sup>133</sup> Large, *Germans to the Front*, 268.

<sup>134</sup> Beardsley, "Citizens in Uniform: The Bundeswehr's Innere Führung and the Cold War Divide," 8.

<sup>135</sup> Rolf Steininger, *The German Question: The Stalin Note of 1952 and the Problem of Reunification*, ed. Mark Cioc, trans. Jane Hedges (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 116–17. Later Steininger, using previously classified documents, claims the chancellor was not at all committed to unification and was instead committed to western integration at the potential cost of 18 million East Germans.

necessary foundations for the Bundeswehr with reluctant support of opposition parties; this first test provided maturity to the world's newest democracy.<sup>136</sup>

## **B. ARMY IN AN ALLIANCE**

NATO required the Bundeswehr for its security because it would fill the military capability gaps for the United States, France, and Great Britain in Western Europe against the Soviet Union. The strategic problem for Germany was two-fold. Externally, the allied powers desired rearmament so long as Germany remained contained and controlled.<sup>137</sup> Internally, leaders balanced the return of a military role in society while forming a new democratic state.<sup>138</sup> Large argues that the horrors of the last government and war overshadowed both sides of the problem for a country that had been destroyed physically and economically.<sup>139</sup> The threat of another war was ever-present throughout the entire process.<sup>140</sup> To gain membership in the alliance, Germany accepted two key elements—the Bundeswehr would be subordinate to a NATO supreme command and former occupations forces would remain stationed in Germany, but now as allies.

The process of rearmament and the international debates that ensued centered around how Germany would fulfill capability gaps in Western Europe. The Allies faced political, diplomatic, and military obstacles to rearm their former enemy.<sup>141</sup> Previous Allied plans to demilitarize Germany were made without considering the strategic consequences.<sup>142</sup> Many worried that rearming Germany would result in the resurgence of a former enemy with the potential to be even stronger than before.<sup>143</sup> Confronting this potential problem required the United States to commit to defending Europe against Soviet

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<sup>136</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 167; Large, *Germans to the Front*, 265–69.

<sup>137</sup> Large, *Germans to the Front*, 265.

<sup>138</sup> Large, 265.

<sup>139</sup> Large, 265.

<sup>140</sup> Large, 265.

<sup>141</sup> Goldberg and Trauschweizer, *From Disarmament to Rearmament*, 7, 116–18.

<sup>142</sup> Goldberg and Trauschweizer, 1.

<sup>143</sup> Goldberg and Trauschweizer, 3.

aggression while also preparing to defend Europe against Germany in the chance that the Bundeswehr solution backfired.<sup>144</sup> Adenauer's commitment to joining the West and the reversal in U.S. disarmament policy were the largest contributing factors that allowed Germany to rearm and join the alliance.<sup>145</sup> The democratic allies were understandably skeptical, but recognized that Germany had taken steps to limit its military role and to "consent to such limitations upon its sovereign powers as will bring about and secure a lasting peace in Europe"<sup>146</sup> in its Basic Law.

One strategic barrier for the FRG was the question of what role the Bundeswehr would serve for the defense of Europe. There were alternatives to the NATO solution before the FRG and its Bundeswehr joined NATO as a full member with constraints. France recognized that defending the West required a German military contingent but feared a resurgent German force before France regained its military strength.<sup>147</sup> France opposed any proposal that considered German rearmament at the Tripartite Meeting in September 1950.<sup>148</sup> The French proposed an alternative, the Pleven Plan, named after the French prime minister, which called for a unified European army and command structure controlled by European political institutions, but the U.S. military argued the plan would render NATO obsolete.<sup>149</sup> France refused to consider any alternative to their plan until the United States threatened withdrawal of its military contribution.<sup>150</sup> The only thing that the Allies agreed upon was that a solution had to be reached that included a German military contribution.

Germany supported any plan that led to rearmament, sovereignty, and acceptance by the West. Adenauer supported the Pleven Plan as a method of integration into European

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<sup>144</sup> Goldberg and Tauschweizer, 6.

<sup>145</sup> Goldberg and Tauschweizer, 8–9; Large, *Germans to the Front*, 268.

<sup>146</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, "Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany," art. 24.

<sup>147</sup> Goldberg and Tauschweizer, *From Disarmament to Rearmament*, 121.

<sup>148</sup> Goldberg and Tauschweizer, 122.

<sup>149</sup> Goldberg and Tauschweizer, 129.

<sup>150</sup> Goldberg and Tauschweizer, 130.

security.<sup>151</sup> He prepared his government for the necessary compromises to contribute militarily based upon Germany's ability to gain equal political rights. On 8 November 1950, Adenauer addressed the Bundestag in support of the French plan identifying it as a "valuable contribution to the integration of Europe."<sup>152</sup> In April 1953, Adenauer publicly supported the creation of a European Defense Community (EDC) to provide full German membership but with only a link to NATO.<sup>153</sup> The Allies were unable to reach a compromise that satisfied questions regarding control of national armies, command integration, and German contributions to the EDC command structure;<sup>154</sup> on 30 August 1954 the French National Assembly voted against the EDC and the plan was cancelled.<sup>155</sup> The EDC would have subordinated every German soldier to foreign commanders. Though Adenauer supported the EDC, with its failure, a path to full NATO membership was possible. As the Allied demands for Germany's rearmament increased, the higher Bonn's price grew for agreeing to rearmament.<sup>156</sup> From a FRG political standpoint, it had outmaneuvered France and progressed towards a stronger position in Europe.

In the early years of NATO, the alliance was determining how it should be organized and supported by its members. To prevent a vacuum in the center of Europe that the Soviet Union would surely fill, NATO formulated plans based on two key principles: forward defense in Germany and a German army within NATO ranks.<sup>157</sup> The United States recognized that war with the Soviets would require more military strength than it possessed in 1950.<sup>158</sup> The United States believed that only by leading an alliance would it be able to

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<sup>151</sup> Seth A. Johnston, *How NATO Adapts: Strategy and Organization in the Atlantic Alliance since 1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 56.

<sup>152</sup> Goldberg and Trauschweizer, *From Disarmament to Rearmament*, 130.

<sup>153</sup> Adenauer, "Germany and Europe," 364.

<sup>154</sup> Jonathan M. House, "The European Defense Community," in *Rearming Germany*, ed. James S. Corum, History of Warfare, v. 64 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2011), 73–92.

<sup>155</sup> Goldberg and Trauschweizer, *From Disarmament to Rearmament*, 156.

<sup>156</sup> John A. Reed Jr, *Germany and NATO* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1987), 35.

<sup>157</sup> Steininger, *The German Question*, 106.

<sup>158</sup> Large, *Germans to the Front*, 39; White House, *A Report to the President Pursuant to the President's Directive of January 31, 1950*, chap. VI, C.

maintain global hegemony.<sup>159</sup> Adenauer recognized U.S. interests and aligned his political efforts to achieve FRG strategic goals that would satisfy the United States. The FRG agreed to place the Bundeswehr within NATO to serve a military role, but “the terms of membership were not...entirely equal.”<sup>160</sup> Germany’s NATO membership granted influence in Western security policies and collective security against the Soviet military threat.<sup>161</sup> To satisfy its future NATO allies, Germany agreed to limit the size of the Bundeswehr, but domestic politics were initially dissatisfied with the manner in which the NATO structure seemed to control only Germany’s military forces.<sup>162</sup>

NATO membership required Germany to accept foreign control of its manpower, the continued presence of foreign troops, and subordinate roles for its forces. On 23 October 1954, the United States, Britain, France, and FRG signed the Convention on the Presence of Foreign Force in the Federal Republic of Germany. The FRG agreed to permit all foreign forces currently stationed in Germany to remain.<sup>163</sup> With one sentence the FRG transformed Allied forces from an occupation role to one of allied collective security. Though the FRG granted the continued presence of foreign forces, it did gain political strength by requiring any increase of forces to require FRG consent.<sup>164</sup> The FRG was granted membership to NATO on 5 May 1955. The indefinite presence of foreign allied forces satisfied the allied requirement to contain Germany while maintaining control.

Adenauer capitalized on NATO’s military requirements for the defense of Europe but membership to NATO was not entirely equal. The FRG accepted that the Bundeswehr would not possess a General Staff but be subordinate to foreign military leadership. The Adenauer government successfully appeased its new NATO allies and the FRG was

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<sup>159</sup> White House, *A Report to the President Pursuant to the President’s Directive of January 31, 1950*, chap. I.

<sup>160</sup> Large, *Germans to the Front*, 205.

<sup>161</sup> Large, 223.

<sup>162</sup> Large, 224.

<sup>163</sup> *Convention on the Presence of Foreign Forces in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Bonn, Germany: Federal Republic of Germany, 1954), art. 1, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/248488/1f1256295c3c7d96af7c9908d889c775/vertragstextoriginal-data.pdf>.

<sup>164</sup> *Convention on the Presence of Foreign Forces in the Federal Republic of Germany*, art. 1 (2).

permitted to rebuild a military on its own terms albeit under NATO strategic control and with the congressional limitations discussed previously.<sup>165</sup> The alliance solution was a NATO command structure under one NATO Supreme Commander.<sup>166</sup> The initial buildup of forces in West Germany was promised to be swift despite previous efforts of demilitarization following the end of the war. The Bundeswehr was slow to build up its forces much to the surprise and displeasure of its allies.<sup>167</sup> The result was a numerically inferior NATO force compared to the Warsaw Pact until the mid-1960s.<sup>168</sup> Despite its slow progress, the Bundeswehr provided forces under NATO and cemented its lasting role as an army in and for an alliance.

### C. CONCLUSION

The success of the FRG and the Bundeswehr depended on its ability to overcome cultural barriers to form a new army and arm the same citizens who swore to never again take up arms. The FRG revitalized the citizen-in-uniform concept by emphasizing the dual role each soldier would serve in democracy. The creation of the *Innere Führung* ethos ensured that soldiers would first be citizens guided by morals that would prevent any leader, from using them in a manner contrary to democratic principles. The constraints and limitations written by political leaders, founded in the Basic Law, ensured that the Bundeswehr would defend the new democracy and be committed to peace. The Bundeswehr was also formed as an army within NATO to serve a critical role in defense of Western Europe. Germany permitted its new allies to remain stationed in Germany indefinitely and accepted a subservient role under NATO leadership, a position that eventually earned the trust of its allies and set the foundation for future peace in Europe.

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<sup>165</sup> Large, *Germans to the Front*, 224.

<sup>166</sup> Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, 1994, 44.

<sup>167</sup> Dieter Krüger, Volker Bausch, and D. R. Dorondo, eds., *Fulda Gap: Battlefield of the Cold War Alliances* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2018), 271.

<sup>168</sup> Krüger, Bausch, and Dorondo, 271.



### III. GERMANY AND THE BUNDESWEHR AFTER UNIFICATION

Following the unification of Germany in 1990, the new state formed without bloodshed and without a victorious army as the author or architect of the change. The two Germanys—one in the west and one in the east in Cold-War terms—coexisted for more than forty years, each with their own political and cultural ideologies and, thus, armed forces prepared to defend their way of life. After all, as Frederick Zilian claims, “militaries tend to reflect the societies they defend.”<sup>169</sup> Four decades of Communist oppression and Soviet-style military leadership created the *Nationale Volksarmee*—National People’s Army (NVA), an armed force of the Soviet type.<sup>170</sup> The Bundeswehr remained fundamentally unchanged since 1955, and though it was trained to defend against Soviet aggression, especially from East Germany, its “legitimacy,” as Dermot Bradley posits, “[did] not arise from being against something but rather from what it stands for.”<sup>171</sup>

This chapter addresses concerns regarding the evolving “German Question” and fears of German intentions that have consistently resurfaced since the end of the second world war. With the end of the Cold War and the advent of a larger unified Germany, the challenge for German leaders after 1991 was how to maintain its army in a democracy while incorporating its former NVA enemy without undermining its capabilities, democratic ideologies, or commitment to peace. This chapter first demonstrates the Bundeswehr’s commitment to maintaining its role as an army in a democracy by its approach to three major obstacles: integrating a former enemy into its ranks, maintaining superior military training standards, and avoiding the perception of an occupation of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). It overcame all three by applying the same methods that brought the Bundeswehr success in its formative years: execution of a

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<sup>169</sup> Frederick Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation: The Takeover of the National People’s (East German) Army by the Bundeswehr*, Praeger Studies in Diplomacy and Strategic Thought (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), 19.

<sup>170</sup> William E. Odom, “Soviet Military Doctrine,” *Foreign Affairs* 67, no. 2 (1988): 114–18, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20043776>.

<sup>171</sup> Dermot Bradley, “The Bundeswehr and German Reunification, 1955–91,” *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 3, no. 4 (1992): 65–66, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30001797>.

comprehensive screening and selection process, thorough education and training programs, and the continuation of universal conscription. The Bundeswehr did not just replace one ideology for another; it displayed commitment to maintaining itself as an army in a democracy, grounded in principle and ethos.

While critics at home and abroad worried about a resurgence in German nationalism, calls for Germany's participation in military missions outside NATO territories began shortly after its unification. This chapter also shows how the Bundeswehr brought well-practiced measures to bear on this new situation. For Germany to remain a committed partner to NATO, it required an expanded role within the alliance. The Basic Law, which served as the foundation of Germany's stability since 1949, required interpretation to permit the Bundeswehr to adapt to a greater role in NATO to meet the demands of the new security environment.<sup>172</sup> Germany solidified its legitimacy as a reliable ally by overcoming the restraints of the Basic Law in its Federal Constitutional Court and steadily increased its commitment to NATO beyond its borders.

#### **A. ARMY OF UNITY 1990–1993**

The Bundeswehr faced the critical task of incorporating its former enemy into its ranks without destroying its role as an army in a democracy. Just as the rearmament decision shocked post-war culture in Germany, the integration of the two armies was, according to Zillian, “a case without precedent in modern history.”<sup>173</sup> Some feared that a reunified Germany and its military would spark resurgent nationalism and irritantism, and threaten its European neighbors.<sup>174</sup> Nevertheless, beginning on the day of unification—3 October 1990—the Bundeswehr overcame cultural and political barriers and dedicated the

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<sup>172</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, “Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany,” art. 87a (1); Kenneth S. Kilimnik, “Germany’s Army After Reunification: The Merging of the Nationale Volksarmee Into the Bundeswehr, 1990–1994,” *Military Law Review* 146, no. Summer 1994 (1994): 127, [https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/llmlp/58062115\\_276875\\_1/58062115\\_276875\\_1.pdf](https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/llmlp/58062115_276875_1/58062115_276875_1.pdf).

<sup>173</sup> Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, xi.

<sup>174</sup> Weissbrod, “Nationalism in Reunified Germany,” 222–23.

following two years to creating an army of unity—one committed to maintaining peace in Europe.<sup>175</sup>

The takeover began not with surrender, but a proclamation. The Unification Treaty declared, “soldiers of the former National People’s Army are soldiers of the Bundeswehr as of the effective date of accession of the Bundeswehr.”<sup>176</sup> On 3 October 1990, soldiers of the former NVA became Bundeswehr soldiers overnight.<sup>177</sup> Abenheim argues that with one simple statement, a complex and challenging situation began with the integration of soldiers from both Germanys.<sup>178</sup> Before the fall of the Berlin wall, the Bundeswehr focused on improving its capabilities, increasing training and effectiveness of its conscripts, and expanding training exercises with U.S. forces in West Germany.<sup>179</sup> The decision to combine the two armies was anything but simple and caught the Bundeswehr, along with most Germans from both states, by surprise.<sup>180</sup> Zilian argues that the Bundeswehr “was quite surprised and essentially unprepared” for the events that unfolded.<sup>181</sup> The takeover of the NVA, especially the granting of immediate Bundeswehr rank and responsibility for a finite but significant number of personnel, required the same selection and education procedures used when forming the Bundeswehr with Wehrmacht veterans, especially the willingness to accept the past and commit to defending democracy.

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<sup>175</sup> It is unclear when the term ‘army of unity’ originated. Federal Ministry of Defence, *White Paper 1994: White Paper on the Security of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Situation and Future of the Bundeswehr* (Berlin: Federal Ministry of Defence, 1994), para. 114, <https://www.resdal.org/Archivo/d0000066.htm>; Forces News, “After The Berlin Wall: Making Germany’s Armed Forces (Bundeswehr 1991 Documentary),” YouTube video, January 5, 2018. 20:35. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nq7R1i6yYqc>.

<sup>176</sup> Bundestag, *Treaty between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic on the Establishment of German Unity*, in *Bulletin of the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government*, No. 104 (Bonn, Germany, 1990), 177, <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/einigvtr/EinigVtr.pdf>.

<sup>177</sup> Bundestag, 177.

<sup>178</sup> Donald Abenheim, “German Soldier and German Unity: Political Foundations of the German Armed Forces” (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, January 1991), 1, D 208.14.2, FedDocs, <https://hdl.handle.net/10945/28735>.

<sup>179</sup> Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 47–49.

<sup>180</sup> Jörg Schönbohm, *Two Armies and One Fatherland: The End of the Nationale Volksarmee* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1996), 205.

<sup>181</sup> Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 50; See also Schönbohm, *Two Armies and One Fatherland*, 205.

For the Bundeswehr to remain an army in a democracy, it could not allow the integration of soldiers that were incapable of meeting its high standards or committing to Germany's democratic ideology. The Bundeswehr faced potential disruption to its democratic foundation and capabilities by incorporating NVA soldiers who did not possess the commitment to conform or the ability to meet its military standards. The Bundeswehr dedicated the following years selecting those who were best suited for continued service as citizens-in-uniform.<sup>182</sup> By the end of 1993, the Bundeswehr reaffirmed its fundamental commitment to serve as an army in a democracy throughout the takeover.

### 1. Selection and Evaluation Process

Integration of the two armies was especially difficult due to the heavy influence of competing social and political cultures in the NVA. For more than three decades the Bundeswehr successfully performed as an army in a democracy, integrated with society buttressed by the revitalization of the citizen-in-uniform concept, and guided by the *Innere Führung* ethos. In contrast, the NVA was an instrument of the Communist Party as indicated by approximately 10,000 political officers who were used to supervise every aspect of the NVA.<sup>183</sup> The incorporation of the NVA into the Bundeswehr can be equated to two completely different states' armies becoming one, similar to challenges Zilian identified in the period following the U.S. Civil War.<sup>184</sup> According to Corum, integrating the two armies "was an exceptionally tough task as the influence of a generation and a half of Communist rule had deeply affected the culture and psyche of the East Germans, particularly the military personnel who had been servants of the state."<sup>185</sup> In 1955, the

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<sup>182</sup> It is significant to note that following Unification Day, there was not a grand parade of Bundeswehr soldiers entering either East Germany or Berlin as conquerors; the message to former East Germans and especially the NVA was one of equality and partnership. See Abenheim, "German Soldier and German Unity: Political Foundations of the German Armed Forces," 3.

<sup>183</sup> James S Corum, "Taking an Army from Dictatorship to Democracy: Lessons Learned by the Bundeswehr in Absorbing the East German Army," *Estonian War History Yearbook* 4, no. 1 (2014): 22, <http://publications.tlu.ee/index.php/eymh/article/viewFile/480/363>; Kilimnik, "Germany's Army After Reunification," 121.

<sup>184</sup> Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 11–12.

<sup>185</sup> Corum, "Taking an Army from Dictatorship to Democracy: Lessons Learned by the Bundeswehr in Absorbing the East German Army," 35–36.

Bundeswehr balanced traditions of the Wehrmacht with the Bundeswehr and only brought forth that which was determined to be valid German heritage.<sup>186</sup> To create an army of unity in 1990, it was necessary to erase the memory and traditions of the NVA, which was forged in, and improved upon, Soviet military doctrine.<sup>187</sup>

First, the Bundeswehr required an understanding of who the NVA soldiers were and how deeply rooted the communist and Soviet military ideologies were to determine which NVA soldiers were capable of continued service in the Bundeswehr. To understand the NVA soldiers, the Bundeswehr conducted anonymous polls and interviews. Corum claims that when the NVA forces were evaluated, “The Bundeswehr quickly discovered that it faced a far larger cultural divide than it had anticipated.”<sup>188</sup> Questionnaires were developed to determine communist party allegiance, identify personal and family ties with communist party members, and whether soldiers had ever been Stasi (Secret Police) informers.<sup>189</sup> All questionnaires were compared to Stasi and Communist Party records by the Bundeswehr Personnel Office and the Bundeswehr Counterintelligence Corps.<sup>190</sup> Approximately 20 percent of applicants were released after it was found they concealed their level of cooperation with the Stasi.<sup>191</sup> Interviews and questionnaires supported the screening and evaluation process to avoid inclusion of soldiers who remained committed to ideologies that would undermine the foundation of the Bundeswehr as an army in a democracy.

The Bundeswehr made earnest efforts to promote a singular army image. Speed was essential in accomplishing this task so that on the day of unification, as State Secretary Karl-Heinz Carl envisioned, the “NVA would vanish.”<sup>192</sup> All GDR and NVA markings on

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<sup>186</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 292.

<sup>187</sup> General John M. Shalikashvili, in Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, vi.

<sup>188</sup> Corum, “Taking an Army from Dictatorship to Democracy: Lessons Learned by the Bundeswehr in Absorbing the East German Army,” 18.

<sup>189</sup> Corum, 26.

<sup>190</sup> Corum, 26; Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 111.

<sup>191</sup> Kilimnik, “Germany’s Army After Reunification,” 135–36.

<sup>192</sup> Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 122.

buildings and equipment were removed and replaced with those of the Bundeswehr by 2 October 1990.<sup>193</sup> In consolation, however, to record its history, all NVA flags, unit colors, and command documents were removed and ordered to be sent to the historical archives at the Dresden Military History Museum by 20 October.<sup>194</sup> All NVA uniforms were prohibited and replaced by Bundeswehr uniforms immediately;<sup>195</sup> NVA uniform badges and qualification markings were permitted but only after submitting an application and receiving additional training (e.g., parachutist or marksmanship badges).<sup>196</sup> Incorporating the NVA contained similar heritage challenges that the Bundeswehr faced at its origin in 1955. The Bundeswehr previously compromised to allow Nazi awards like the Iron Cross to be worn if modified,<sup>197</sup> but decided preservation of the Bundeswehr required NVA soldiers to be forbidden from wearing or displaying any GDR, NVA, or Warsaw Pact medals.<sup>198</sup> Paramount to creating a unified army was safeguarding Bundeswehr traditions and ideologies while simultaneously erasing those of the NVA or shipping artifacts to the archives.<sup>199</sup> The Bundeswehr upheld its commitment to remaining an army in a democracy, this time without compromise, by preventing the transfer of NVA traditions similar to the methods used in dealing with the former Wehrmacht.<sup>200</sup>

The Bundeswehr avoided the perception of being an occupation force by presenting former NVA soldiers with an opportunity to continue their service or return to their homes as civilians. Officers and NCOs had three options: request release from service, do nothing and likely face dismissal, or apply to be a *Soldat auf Zeit-2* (soldier for time, or volunteer).<sup>201</sup> Many NVA soldiers capitalized on the option to be released voluntarily,

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<sup>193</sup> Zilian, 123.

<sup>194</sup> Zilian, 123.

<sup>195</sup> Zilian, 106.

<sup>196</sup> Zilian, 123.

<sup>197</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 103.

<sup>198</sup> Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 123.

<sup>199</sup> Zilian, 97, 122.

<sup>200</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 136–47; Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 16–18.

<sup>201</sup> Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 104.

including three-fifths of the officers and NCOs, and departed peacefully.<sup>202</sup> For those who remained, 11,700 officers, 12,300 NCOs and 1,000 enlisted men requested a probationary contract with the Bundeswehr.<sup>203</sup> After investigations by the Bundeswehr Personnel Office and Counterintelligence Corps, provisional contracts were awarded to only 6,000 officers, 11,200 NCOs, and 800 enlisted soldiers.<sup>204</sup> Probationary soldiers required education and evaluation by the new Territorial Command East (TCE) to be eligible for career contracts. Maintaining the image of unity was undoubtedly challenged by the fact that soldiers required two years of continuous evaluation and investigation. By the end of the probationary period, only 10 percent were awarded Bundeswehr career contracts and commissions.<sup>205</sup> The result was a united Bundeswehr and the absence of an armed insurgency in East Germany.

The Bundeswehr created the TCE, a joint command, to absorb former NVA soldiers and units during the two-year period. Because the takeover of the NVA was a simultaneous effort, the Bundeswehr required a new command structure to oversee the transition and training of former NVA units. Zillian claims that to enable effective Bundeswehr leadership, in addition to the concerns regarding tradition, “two-thirds of the NVA units were completely disbanded in the first three months,” and no NVA unit was left entirely intact.<sup>206</sup> The TCE filled command and staff billets with 821 officers and NCOs from the West.<sup>207</sup> These leaders arrived in the East, not as conquerors, but as one NVA officer claimed, “as comrades.”<sup>208</sup> Most former NVA soldiers interviewed by Zillian agreed that the Bundeswehr leadership and the evaluation periods provided equal opportunities for

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<sup>202</sup> Corum, “Taking an Army from Dictatorship to Democracy: Lessons Learned by the Bundeswehr in Absorbing the East German Army,” 28.

<sup>203</sup> Numbers vary by source. See Corum, 28; Zillian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 105.

<sup>204</sup> Corum, “Taking an Army from Dictatorship to Democracy: Lessons Learned by the Bundeswehr in Absorbing the East German Army,” 28.

<sup>205</sup> Zillian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 96.

<sup>206</sup> Zillian, 123.

<sup>207</sup> Corum, “Taking an Army from Dictatorship to Democracy: Lessons Learned by the Bundeswehr in Absorbing the East German Army,” 23.

<sup>208</sup> Zillian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 125.

every applicant including fair treatment throughout the process.<sup>209</sup> The Bundeswehr, especially soldiers in leadership positions in the TCE, fostered a command climate capable of creating an army of unity and avoided an occupation force image.

To create an army of unity, the Bundeswehr could not be held solely responsible for selecting the final applicants. If selections were at the sole discretion of the Bundeswehr, it could have encouraged those who were not selected to rebel, producing an internal threat in Germany. To avoid a potential threat and ensure fairness and objectivity the FRG established an independent, civilian-led committee comprised of mostly retired civil servants, Bundeswehr veterans, academics, and politicians.<sup>210</sup> Committee members were carefully selected by the Defense Minister and the Bundestag Military Committee.<sup>211</sup> Corum argues that the committee provided the fair treatment that an army in a democracy requires.<sup>212</sup> Together the Independent Committee and the Bundeswehr “weeded out those who simply could not adapt to a democratic system or those who lacked the education and basic skills to become effective career officers and NCOs.”<sup>213</sup> Selection standards were strict, but fair; unanimous approval was required from all five subcommittees for an applicant to receive a career position. Corum claims the final decisions were determined by “applicant credibility and trustworthiness, the ability of the applicant to adapt to a democratic armed force, proper NCO and officer competence,” and most importantly “the ability to understand the past and overcome it.”<sup>214</sup> The latter was fundamental to creating an army of unity but also a requirement for all German soldiers given their shared history in Europe. The process, according to Corum, “provides a useful model for the armed forces of a democratic state to take over the armed forces of a totalitarian dictatorship and retrain those personnel in the culture of democracy.”<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Zilian, 124–25.

<sup>210</sup> Corum, “Taking an Army from Dictatorship to Democracy: Lessons Learned by the Bundeswehr in Absorbing the East German Army,” 34–35.

<sup>211</sup> Corum, 35.

<sup>212</sup> Corum, 35.

<sup>213</sup> Corum, 36.

<sup>214</sup> Corum, 35.

<sup>215</sup> Corum, 35.



Rejected applicants were provided opportunities to succeed outside the military. Even for those that were not accepted into the Bundeswehr, the mission of creating a dual-role fully developed citizen discussed previously applied. Unemployment benefits and education assistance was provided to former NVA soldiers of all ranks who opted out of or did not earn a Bundeswehr career position.<sup>216</sup> These programs, provided by the FRG, ensured that it did not create a separate class of exiles in unified Germany, but integrated them into their new democratic society.<sup>217</sup> This process, to include encouraging West Germany companies to hire former NVA soldiers, upheld the political and cultural reputation of the Bundeswehr and supported the integration of all Germans.<sup>218</sup> Feedback from NVA soldiers who were interviewed by Zillian was not always positive, but the Bundeswehr and the FRG ensured those not selected for service were not abandoned to the streets to threaten domestic security or portray a weakened resolve to maintaining a strong and capable military force.<sup>219</sup>

## **2. Education and Training**

The Bundeswehr faced significant disparities in NVA military training standards and the education of the officer and NCO corps, which if not properly addressed would undermine the foundations of the Bundeswehr. Bundeswehr instructors were required to train the new soldiers on even the most fundamental tenets of leadership (e.g., initiative). The cause of the problem had been the inferior military education institutions of the NVA, which were incompatible with Bundeswehr standards. Bundeswehr officers had received higher level education at military universities since 1973.<sup>220</sup> Creation of Bundeswehr Universities overcame political and cultural opposition, especially the fear that the universities “would isolate soldiers from society and undo the efforts to create a citizen’s

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<sup>216</sup> Corum, 32.

<sup>217</sup> Corum, 32; Zillian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 95.

<sup>218</sup> Corum, “Taking an Army from Dictatorship to Democracy: Lessons Learned by the Bundeswehr in Absorbing the East German Army,” 32.

<sup>219</sup> Zillian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 107.

<sup>220</sup> Wayne C. Thompson and Marc D. Peltier, “The Education of Military Officers in the Federal Republic of Germany,” *Armed Forces & Society* 16, no. 4 (1990): 587, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45305198>.

army.”<sup>221</sup> Bundeswehr officer graduates were found to be motivated, committed, and capable of thinking critically, which improved recruiting and the performance of the officer corps.<sup>222</sup> In contrast NVA military education focused largely on communist politics and party obedience. Most NVA officers “received a purely military education and [were] expected to serve the whole term of a 30-year career as officer on active duty.”<sup>223</sup> One of the most challenging decisions for the Bundeswehr was how the training time should be split between military training and political instruction.

The Bundeswehr determined that political education and military training were equally important to creating citizens-in-uniform that would strengthen the combined armies and the state it defended. Both armies shared a German heritage but the differences in culture and the politics that controlled them were incompatible. To integrate the two armies meant also integrating the individuals into West German society. To ensure the highest quality training programs, only the best and most qualified Bundeswehr officers and NCOs ran education courses.<sup>224</sup> The Bundeswehr implemented education programs that emphasized *Innere Führung* and democratic principles. The Bundeswehr made considerable efforts to emphasize the importance of *Innere Führung* and the citizen-in-uniform role for its army in a democracy.<sup>225</sup> Probationary status commanders and officers received extensive training at the Center for *Innere Führung*, the Command and General Staff College, and the Army Officer School.<sup>226</sup> The training was essential for the former NVA, but it is important to note that this training was a standard practice for all soldiers in the Bundeswehr. The Bundeswehr maintained its commitment to the ethos and its practice for more than forty years. All NVA, especially the officers and NCOs, required this

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<sup>221</sup> Thompson and Peltier, 594.

<sup>222</sup> Thompson and Peltier, 602.

<sup>223</sup> Corum, “Taking an Army from Dictatorship to Democracy: Lessons Learned by the Bundeswehr in Absorbing the East German Army,” 20.

<sup>224</sup> Corum, 29.

<sup>225</sup> Abenheim, “German Soldier and German Unity: Political Foundations of the German Armed Forces,” 4.

<sup>226</sup> Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 138.

fundamental education to ensure soldiers served honorably in the Bundeswehr but also integrated into Germany's democratic society.

Democratic principles and legal rights for citizens-in-uniform were consistently at the heart of the education program.<sup>227</sup> Corum argues that fundamental to the process was teaching former NVA soldiers “how to properly serve as military leaders of a free and democratic state.”<sup>228</sup> *Innere Führung* leadership principles were not only taught but demonstrated by all West German members of the TCE command. In the former NVA, “relations between enlisted soldiers and officers were strictly regulated and anything but absolute obedience was punished.”<sup>229</sup> Because East German senior commander's relationships with their NVA units were always formal, General Jörg Schönbohm, TCE Commander, deliberately addressed this cultural obstacle throughout the integration and application process.<sup>230</sup> He personally visited East German units regularly and built trust with soldiers of all ranks.<sup>231</sup> In his memoir, Schönbohm claims that the result of the evaluation period was the creation of soldiers who were distinguishable “only by their dialects.”<sup>232</sup> Through his example, along with all TCE Bundeswehr staff, former NVA soldiers discovered how to regard seniors and subordinates alike and break through the cultural barriers that previously existed. Former NVA soldiers were given equal opportunities to succeed and treated fairly and respectfully.<sup>233</sup> The Bundeswehr's success in the takeover and maintenance of internal stability produced far reaching effects on the changing international order in Europe.<sup>234</sup> *Innere Führung* was so successful in serving as a guiding principle of leadership and education that it was reportedly used as a model for

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<sup>227</sup> Zilian, 140.

<sup>228</sup> Corum, “Taking an Army from Dictatorship to Democracy: Lessons Learned by the Bundeswehr in Absorbing the East German Army,” 36.

<sup>229</sup> Corum, 20.

<sup>230</sup> Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 140.

<sup>231</sup> Corum, “Taking an Army from Dictatorship to Democracy: Lessons Learned by the Bundeswehr in Absorbing the East German Army,” 32–33.

<sup>232</sup> Schönbohm, *Two Armies and One Fatherland*, 206.

<sup>233</sup> Corum, “Taking an Army from Dictatorship to Democracy: Lessons Learned by the Bundeswehr in Absorbing the East German Army,” 32; Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 124–25.

<sup>234</sup> Kilimnik, “Germany's Army After Reunification,” 144.

Eastern Europe to integrate emerging democracies with their armed forces and preserve stability.<sup>235</sup>

Significant military training standard gaps were identified early in the education and training process. NVA officers previously performed leadership roles that were expected of NCOs in the Bundeswehr.<sup>236</sup> As a result, some were required to accept NCO positions in the Bundeswehr to remain in service.<sup>237</sup> Between 1991 and 1993, West German officers noted that the “East German officers and NCOs...understood history, politics, law, social concepts, etc., almost completely through the eyes of the properly educated communist.”<sup>238</sup> This was especially true for the NVA Air Force officers since their ability to defect required that pilots were vetted, not on physical and mental ability to pilot aircraft as it was in the Bundeswehr, but on their loyalty to communist party politics.<sup>239</sup> In the initial stages of the education programs, former NVA Officers were concerned with finding material that was approved by the government or what the correct answers were so they could memorize them and regurgitate rather than comprehending the concepts.<sup>240</sup> Most gaps were found to be due to the lack of critical thinking skills or their reluctance to demonstrate their ability to question and think for themselves.

*Auftragstaktik* (i.e., mission type orders) was a foreign concept for the former NVA. The top-heavy Soviet leadership model was a significant challenge for the probationary soldiers to overcome. Technical and military skills were good with a few exceptions in basic military disciplines (e.g., playing with firearms on guard duty and understanding escalation of force procedures),<sup>241</sup> what was missing most was the ability to think for

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<sup>235</sup> Federal Ministry of Defence, *White Paper 1994*, para. 706.

<sup>236</sup> Corum, “Taking an Army from Dictatorship to Democracy: Lessons Learned by the Bundeswehr in Absorbing the East German Army,” 19–20.

<sup>237</sup> Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 105.

<sup>238</sup> Corum, “Taking an Army from Dictatorship to Democracy: Lessons Learned by the Bundeswehr in Absorbing the East German Army,” 19.

<sup>239</sup> Corum, 19.

<sup>240</sup> Corum, 29–30.

<sup>241</sup> Corum, 34.

themselves.<sup>242</sup> NVA soldiers were accustomed to receiving precise instructions that were required to be carried out without question and without having to determine the way orders should be accomplished.<sup>243</sup> Bundeswehr orders are accompanied with background context (i.e. “the why”) to ensure understanding, but this was a new concept for the NVA.<sup>244</sup> By explaining orders in context, the Bundeswehr encouraged critical thinking and demonstrated proper execution in practice.

### **3. Universal Conscription and Integration**

Universal Conscription continued throughout Germany after unification and the Bundeswehr utilized conscripts and training locations to not only integrate the armies, but German society. Conscription served a fundamental role in the integration of the Bundeswehr and unified Germany by avoiding the destruction of the link with society.<sup>245</sup> Because of infrastructure deficiencies, conscripts from the East were initially trained in Western Germany.<sup>246</sup> This not only exposed the draftees to the Bundeswehr but also to West German society and culture, which many had learned only through Communist propaganda. The trainees were then assigned to units in the East, undoubtedly bringing with them a better understanding of the West German culture that would “begin the socialization process.”<sup>247</sup> By 1991, recruits from the West began integration with East units.<sup>248</sup> The Bundeswehr utilized conscription and selective placement of conscripts to further support the new Unified Germany.<sup>249</sup>

Training integration extended equally to the officer corps. The infrastructure challenges experienced at the basic training locations in the East did not apply to the army

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<sup>242</sup> Corum, 30.

<sup>243</sup> Corum, 30.

<sup>244</sup> Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 125.

<sup>245</sup> Kilimnik, “Germany’s Army After Reunification,” 146.

<sup>246</sup> Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, 146.

<sup>247</sup> Zilian, 146.

<sup>248</sup> Zilian, 146.

<sup>249</sup> Federal Ministry of Defence, *White Paper 1994*, para. 134.

officer's training academy in Dresden. The Bundeswehr capitalized on this opportunity and relocated its academy from Hanover.<sup>250</sup> By training officers from the East and West in Dresden, Schönbohm was able to extend unity into the officer corps.

In addition to conscription, units in the East and West created partnerships that further dissolved differences within the Bundeswehr.<sup>251</sup> The units were established in a program called *Couleurverhältnisse* (literally, color relations), to establish enduring relationships and foster a climate of togetherness. These units provided their partners with personnel, equipment, and even additional training.<sup>252</sup> Schönbohm claimed the success of these partnerships was fundamental to continued readiness throughout the transition period.<sup>253</sup>

## **B. A NEW ROLE FOR THE BUNDESWEHR IN NATO**

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union after the end of the Cold War, the Bundeswehr's purpose and its role in NATO came into question. No longer was the enemy patrolling along the Iron Curtain wearing Soviet and NVA uniforms. Wolfgang Schlör argues that absent a Soviet threat, "the very existence of the German military [was] in question."<sup>254</sup> Timothy Sayle claims the United States feared that "without Germany in NATO...the alliance would fall apart."<sup>255</sup> For 40 years, the solution to calm fears of German resurgence was NATO, while concurrently, the critical element of NATO's strength in Europe was Germany.<sup>256</sup> Previously, the Bundeswehr's role in NATO centered on deterrence and territorial defense against aggression from the East.<sup>257</sup> Since the FRG no longer feared a large-scale invasion, the Bundeswehr was required to reevaluate its

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<sup>250</sup> Schönbohm, *Two Armies and One Fatherland*, 207.

<sup>251</sup> A full list of partner units can be found in Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, tbl. 5.1, 5.2.

<sup>252</sup> Zilian, 90.

<sup>253</sup> Zilian, 91.

<sup>254</sup> Wolfgang F. Schlör, *German Security Policy: An Examination of the Trends in German Security Policy in a New European and Global Context*, Adelphi Papers 277 (London: Brassey's, 1993), 18.

<sup>255</sup> Sayle, *Enduring Alliance*, 227.

<sup>256</sup> Sayle, 224.

<sup>257</sup> Federal Ministry of Defence, *White Paper 1994*, para. 505.

purpose and recognize the necessity to adapt its capabilities to support Germany's security policy and "a broad, varied and graduated spectrum of tasks."<sup>258</sup> The changing international security environment in the 1990s increased demands for Germany to participate in crisis management operations and reassess what constituted a threat to its national security as well as what role the Bundeswehr should fulfill.<sup>259</sup> Defense Minister Volker Rühe quickly recognized that the Bundeswehr could not support a new role "until the constitution [was] clarified accordingly," and though plans were formulated for the new security environment, they could "not be implemented until such clarification [took] place."<sup>260</sup> To reassure NATO allies of Germany's commitment, the Bundeswehr overcame domestic opposition to adapt to a new role in NATO, one that required the Bundeswehr to deploy beyond alliance borders. To achieve this, the Federal Constitutional Court had to reinterpret the Basic Law. This section addresses the obstacles Germany faced to reaffirm its commitment as a reliable member of the expanding NATO alliance in the years following unification.

Germany's commitment to NATO was challenged almost immediately following its unification and the complex task of integrating the NVA. NATO's first alliance operations occurred in Turkey shortly after Iraq invaded Kuwait.<sup>261</sup> Chancellor Kohl recognized the need for Germany to do more to support international security and support allies. He informed his parliament that "there can be no safe little corner in world politics for us Germans...we have to face up to our responsibility, whether we like it or not."<sup>262</sup> Germany initially demonstrated support financially by sending more than \$9 billion to the allied coalition, including \$170 million in humanitarian aid and \$650 million in military

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<sup>258</sup> Federal Ministry of Defence, para. 506.

<sup>259</sup> Kerry Anne Longhurst, *Germany and the Use of Force*, Issues in German Politics (Manchester, UK; New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2004), 54–55, <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/35050/341339.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>260</sup> Federal Ministry of Defence, *White Paper 1994*, para. 516.

<sup>261</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO's Balancing Act* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2014), 40.

<sup>262</sup> Helmut Kohl quoted in Stephen Kinzer, "War in the Gulf: Germany; Germans Are Told of Gulf-War Role," *The New York Times*, January 31, 1991, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/31/world/war-in-the-gulf-germany-germans-are-told-of-gulf-war-role.html>.

equipment to Israel.<sup>263</sup> In the end, Germany overcame considerable domestic opposition and deployed fighter aircraft to Turkey to defend its ally while remaining inside the NATO area.<sup>264</sup>

In 1991, Germany chose to abstain from combat operations in Kuwait and Iraq based on the current interpretation of the Basic Law.<sup>265</sup> Anja Dalgaard-Nielson argues that Germany's decision not to deploy with the coalition "provoked embarrassing international criticism, convincing leading conservative politicians that Germany's international influence and standing as a partner was indeed at stake."<sup>266</sup> Others claimed the hesitation to deploy the Bundeswehr in support of the coalition undermined its credibility.<sup>267</sup> The Christian Democratic Union/ Christian-Socialist Union government concluded in 1991 that the Bundeswehr's role needed to expand within the context of the United Nations and NATO, but Longhurst argues that "such thinking was...ahead of its time."<sup>268</sup> How, then, could Germany support its NATO allies and fulfill its role as an army in an alliance? The answer was already presented in Germany's Basic Law. Article 24(2), as discussed in Chapter II, provided "consent to limitations upon its sovereign powers," and provided a legal basis for the Bundeswehr to deploy outside NATO territories if it was determined to be a requirement to "secure a lasting peace in Europe and among the nations of the world."<sup>269</sup>

Germany, led by the Christian Democratic Union / Christian-Social Union party, tested opposition parties and their resolve as the Bundeswehr gradually assumed larger

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<sup>263</sup> Kinzer.

<sup>264</sup> Joseph P. Englehart, "Desert Shield and Desert Storm: A Chronology and Troop List for the 1990–1991 Persian Gulf Crisis," Special Report (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute U.S. Army War College, 25 1991), 44, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA234743.pdf>; Longhurst, *Germany and the Use of Force*, 57–58.

<sup>265</sup> Longhurst, *Germany and the Use of Force*, 57.

<sup>266</sup> Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Gulf War: The German Resistance," *Survival* 45, no. 1 (March 1, 2003): 102–3, <https://doi.org/10.1093/survival/45.1.99>.

<sup>267</sup> Dermot Bradley, "The Bundeswehr and German Reunification, 1955–91," *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 3, no. 4 (1992): 65, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30001797>; Yost, *NATO's Balancing Act*, 40.

<sup>268</sup> Longhurst, *Germany and the Use of Force*, 56.

<sup>269</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, "Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany," art. 24 (2).



roles outside NATO boundaries in support of international peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. First, a small Bundeswehr peacekeeping contingent successfully deployed to Cambodia in 1992 with opposition approval.<sup>270</sup> In May 1993, a larger Bundeswehr humanitarian mission was sanctioned under Article 87a of the Basic Law in Somalia.<sup>271</sup> From 1992 to 1993, the Bundeswehr contributed to NATO operations in Serbia-Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina, but without fulfilling a combat role. When the Bundeswehr participated in these military operations, opposition parties reached their limit of compromise and support and began a contentious political debate.<sup>272</sup> Opposition parties were open to the possibility of increasing the Bundeswehr's role in non-combat missions abroad, but opinions were reversed after the abovementioned deployments.<sup>273</sup> Opposition parties filed formal complaints in 1993 and 1994 with the Federal Constitutional Court claiming the deployments in Yugoslavia violated the Basic Law, which clearly states that the Bundeswehr is limited to a role of defense.<sup>274</sup> The Federal Constitutional Court determined that in keeping with Article 24(2), the Bundeswehr could participate in United Nations-sanctioned NATO missions outside NATO territory to prevent conflict and manage crises with Bundestag approval.<sup>275</sup>

### C. CONCLUSION

From 1990 to 1993, the Bundeswehr overcame a potential threat to its stability and threats to Germany's internal security by successfully integrating the NVA into its ranks and, by doing so, maintained a force capable of defending Germany against an external adversary. The Bundeswehr overcame three significant obstacles in the NVA takeover.

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<sup>270</sup> Longhurst, *Germany and the Use of Force*, 59.

<sup>271</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, "Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany," art. 87a (2); Longhurst, *Germany and the Use of Force*, 60.

<sup>272</sup> Longhurst, *Germany and the Use of Force*, 62–63.

<sup>273</sup> Longhurst, 62–63.

<sup>274</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, "Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany," art. 87a (1); Longhurst, *Germany and the Use of Force*, 64–65; Kilimnik, "Germany's Army After Reunification," 127–29.

<sup>275</sup> "Statement by the Press Office of the Federal Constitutional Court," The Federal Constitutional Court, July 12, 1994, <https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/EN/1994/bvg94-029.html>; Kilimnik, "Germany's Army After Reunification," 128.

First, it prevented soldiers from joining who were committed to the former GDR's competing cultural and political ideologies and integrated those who remained. Proper screening and equitable integration were accomplished by permitting soldiers to resign and providing a fair evaluation period before making final determinations.

Second, it addressed significant disparities in military training standards, especially in the officer and NCO corps, to teach what was expected of soldiers serving in an army in a democracy. The Bundeswehr utilized its education programs to embed democratic principles and *Innere Führung* into newly integrated soldiers in the classroom and by example. Former NVA soldiers were encouraged by their new Bundeswehr leaders to think critically and to build upon their technical abilities with extensive training opportunities.

Third, the Bundeswehr avoided portraying the image of being an occupation force to East Germans. It prevented the creation of an internal threat by providing NVA soldiers with equal opportunities to serve while simultaneously providing transition training for those who resigned or failed selection. For those not selected, programs were created to assist with the transition to civilian life, which pacified the potential domestic threat posed by the creation of a class of exiled soldiers abandoned by their government. Analysis indicates three methods of success for the concurrent integration of the two armies and societies: a comprehensive screening and selection process, thorough education and training programs, and continuing universal conscription. The success of the NVA-Bundeswehr integration extended beyond domestic threats and secured Germany's commitment to its NATO partners and Europe.

## IV. CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to identify the major political, cultural, and strategic obstacles to creating and maintaining an army in a democracy while simultaneously fulfilling a fundamental role for NATO. Specifically, it examined two critical historical periods: the decade following World War II and the years following German reunification at the end of the Cold War. While these two periods entailed profound change, the present analysis finds rather more value in the continuities. For one, the Bundeswehr is a stable element within Germany's democratic society and remains committed to preventing the repeat of past mistakes through the practice of its ethos—*Innere Führung*—and its ability to adapt while remaining an army in a democracy. For another, the Bundeswehr also remains an army in alliance, most crucially in NATO. This analysis reveals Germany's historical success in response to internal and external threats and suggests its ability to apply similar methods in the future.

### A. SUMMARY AND SYNTHESIS

Germany's post-World War II history demonstrates its ability to overcome political, cultural, and strategic obstacles to creating an army in a democracy and serving as an army in an alliance. First, Germany overcame political obstacles by amending the Basic Law to permit rearmament and the creation of an army. Central to overcoming opposition to the amendment was Germany's commitment to protecting every German citizen and achieving the balance between a strong military and democracy concurrently. Chancellor Adenauer delayed the official creation of the Bundeswehr while politicians agreed upon two critical elements of democratic controls: soldiers must integrate into the new democracy, and the army would be constitutionally limited to defensive purposes.

Additionally, Germany overcame cultural obstacles to creating soldiers who could defend Germany and be integrated into the democracy. Creating a new army was more complicated than just training soldiers. The new army required citizens-in-uniform who were fundamentally integrated into the democracy and shared the same rights as German citizens while at the same time adhering to an ethos that empowered them to overcome

Germany's militant past. The Bundeswehr's ranks were first filled with seasoned veterans of the Wehrmacht after thorough screening and evaluation to guarantee those selected were dedicated to overcoming the past and committed to Germany's democratic future. Former Wehrmacht soldiers and conscripts became citizens-in-uniform who observed *Innere Führung's* democratic principles. *Innere Führung* guided soldier's morals, taught the necessity of maintaining civilian control over the military, and forbid blind obedience that led to so many mistakes during the Nazi era. Bundeswehr citizens-in-uniform achieved the integration necessary for maintaining an army in a democracy while fulfilling the critical role of defense for Germany within the new NATO alliance and securing sovereignty for the Federal Republic.

Finally, to overcome strategic obstacles and become an army in alliance, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) accepted three conditions for NATO membership. The FRG consented to limitations of its sovereign powers by allowing foreign control of its manpower, it agreed that former occupation forces would remain in as allies Germany indefinitely, and all Bundeswehr commanders would be subordinate to a supreme allied NATO commander. By accepting these conditions, the FRG gained acceptance by the West and increased influence in Western collective security policies. Overcoming these three obstacles demonstrated Germany's commitment to maintaining peace and its dedication to international security within the construct of NATO.

Germany's historical record following the end of the Cold War and during its reunification demonstrated its commitment to maintaining an army in a democracy and its dedication to NATO. Following reunification, the methods used to create the Bundeswehr and secure Germany's position in the alliance overcame three similar obstacles. First, Germany overcame political obstacles that threatened its army in a democracy by creating an army of unity with former NVA soldiers. The Communist Party in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) thoroughly indoctrinated NVA soldiers to accept their role as instruments of the state. The FRG proclaimed on Unification Day that all former NVA soldiers were soldiers of the Bundeswehr and avoided portraying the image of an occupation force in East Germany. The Bundeswehr screened former NVA soldiers with similar methods when it included Wehrmacht veterans by preventing soldiers from

continuing to serve who were incapable or unwilling to overcome the past and commit to serving in an army in a democracy. The FRG removed former senior officers and political officers while also allowing any NVA soldier to voluntarily resign and return home peacefully. The Bundeswehr prevented a potential internal threat further by providing soldiers equal opportunities to serve in the Bundeswehr for those who applied for career service while also creating transition training for soldiers who failed selection after the evaluation period.

Second, the Bundeswehr overcame cultural obstacles through education and training programs founded on the principles of *Innere Führung* and by continuing to utilize universal conscription. The Bundeswehr provided former NVA soldiers with military training to improve their technical abilities to maintain military capabilities. Still, more importantly, they were educated and guided by the democratic principles of *Innere Führung* and mentored by engaged Bundeswehr leadership. Bundeswehr leaders instructed and demonstrated by their examples the fundamentals necessary to become citizens-in-uniform to the former NVA communist soldiers. Universal conscription further overcame the cultural obstacles by exposing East Germans to West German culture while in basic training and later by stationing soldiers from both former countries to bases all over Germany. Thorough selection methods, education, and conscription were vital components to overcoming cultural obstacles to create an army of unity.

Third, the FRG overcame strategic obstacles and concerns regarding its commitment to NATO following the reunification period by permitting the continued presence of allied forces in Germany and by adapting the Bundeswehr's role in the expanded NATO alliance. For decades the Bundeswehr had served a critical role in the defense of West Europe against the Soviet Union. Without a clear threat, the FRG faced the challenge of adapting to the changing security environment. After marginally supporting its NATO allies during the liberation of Kuwait, the FRG received criticism and increased its military participation in missions beyond Germany's borders for the first time since the end of World War II. To demonstrate Germany's commitment to remaining a trusted ally, the Constitutional Court determined the Basic Law allowed an increased role within the construct of NATO if the United Nations sanctioned missions and the Bundestag

approved. By overcoming these obstacles, Germany demonstrated its resolve to remain an integral part of NATO during a tumultuous unification period and its commitment to overcoming domestic opposition to achieve a new role for the Bundeswehr in the expanded NATO alliance.

## **B. FINDINGS**

The case study analysis in this research validates the first assumption from Chapter I. The first assumption was that cooptation of internal opposition was critical to overcoming political and cultural obstacles to creating and maintaining an army in a democracy. After World War II, Germany overcame internal opposition by using universal conscription and requiring its citizens to serve so soon after its defeat. Germany revolutionized the citizen-in-uniform concept and provided a democratically founded ethos for soldiers to form an army in a democracy while providing alternatives to armed service for conscientious objectors. Following reunification in 1990, Germany relied upon the same methods that had proven successful for its army in a democracy. The Bundeswehr successfully integrated former NVA soldiers by providing opportunities to return as civilians peacefully to society or to adopt *Innere Führung* and demonstrate their commitment to its democratic principles and create an army of unity. Universal conscription continued to provide the integration method for the Bundeswehr and further support the integration of East and West German cultures.

The case study analysis in this research confirms the second assumption from Chapter I. The second assumption was that Germany's membership and contribution to the NATO alliance, central to continued European security, was and remained the solution to the evolving "German Question." In 1955, NATO was the solution for concerns regarding Germany's potential to return to the militant nationalism of its past. Germany limited the Bundeswehr's role to defense of the West while accepting a transfer of sovereignty within a system of collective security to guarantee European stability. The FRG remained a committed member of NATO by demonstrating its ability to adapt to changes in the international security environment without threatening its allies and European neighbors following the end of the Cold War. Germany's post-Cold War historical record shows that

adaptations supported continued stability in Europe through the Bundeswehr's increased role in international crises abroad even while the nation faced the monumental challenge of integrating its government, society, and armed forces.

### C. AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This project began after alarming claims were made regarding Germany's poor state of military readiness by its political and military leaders.<sup>276</sup> Additional questions regarding Germany's commitment to maintaining its role in NATO have compounded since the alliance expanded to include countries with a history of Nazi occupation during World War II.<sup>277</sup> However, Germany proved its dedication by consistently deploying the Bundeswehr in support of sanctioned NATO missions and strengthening relationships with former enemies, like Poland, in the past 30 years.<sup>278</sup> Despite Germany's budgetary constraints and continuous military reforms,<sup>279</sup> the Bundeswehr has continued to support security missions around the world.<sup>280</sup> Since 2022, Russia has demonstrated the willingness to wage war, leading to the deaths of thousands of Ukrainians. If anything can be gleaned from the past seven decades, we can expect Germany will face obstacles it has overcome successfully in the past—to foster political and cultural support to expand military capabilities with appropriate restraint and to adapt the Bundeswehr to maintain

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<sup>276</sup> Kai Luetsch, "The German Parliamentary Commissioner Of The Federal Armed Forces: From Constitutional Watchdog Of The Innere Führung To Conventional Military Lobbyist" (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2019), 62–65, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/62800>; General Alfons Mais's claim that the Bundeswehr is bare, with limited options: Alfons Mais, LinkedIn, February 24, 2022, <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6902486582067044353/>; and Nette Nöstlinger, "'I Am Pissed off!' German Army Official Bemoans 'Bare' Forces as Russia Invades Ukraine," POLITICO, February 24, 2022, <https://www.politico.eu/article/i-am-pissed-off-chief-of-the-german-army-alfons-mais-states/>.

<sup>277</sup> "Member Countries," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, April 5, 2023, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52044.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm).

<sup>278</sup> "30 Years of the Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness," The Federal President, accessed April 3, 2023, <https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/EN/Frank-Walter-Steinmeier/Reden/2021/210617-GER-POL-Neighbourliness.html>.

<sup>279</sup> Seyda, "The German Military Turnaround," 33–36.

<sup>280</sup> Federal Ministry of Defence, "Aktuelle Einsätze der Bundeswehr," accessed August 20, 2022, <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/einsaetze-bundeswehr>; Abenheim and Halladay, "Germany: An Army in a Democracy," 2–3.

support to NATO while once again preparing for its defense. Future research will benefit from an analysis of Germany's response to the return of Russian aggression in Europe.

Future threats to Europe will be met by an all-volunteer German armed force. Bundeswehr soldiers are committed to maintaining an army in a democracy through their honorable service, but manpower gaps exist within the ranks of the Bundeswehr.<sup>281</sup> Threats to Germany must be met by a committed and appropriately sized German force. Given its past success, I propose a return to universal conscription. Conscription, and the training that creates German citizens-in-uniform, will provide the necessary manpower to meet any threat and continue the integration of dual-role citizens in Germany. Future research will benefit from an evaluation of the future viability of the all-volunteer Bundeswehr in the European security environment.

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<sup>281</sup> "German Military Facing Recruitment Gap, Says Commissioner," Deutsche Welle, April 2, 2023, <https://www.dw.com/en/german-military-facing-recruitment-gap-says-commissioner/a-65206735>.



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