

## Citizens in Uniform:

# The Bundeswehr's *Innere Führung* and the Cold War divide

By Steven Beardsley

## Introduction

Every professional military has a set of values. Few have anything like *Innere Führung*.<sup>1</sup> The leadership principle for Germany's federal armed forces, or *Bundeswehr*, was developed in the 1950s to create a new model for the German soldier and reset the relationship between superior and subordinate. Built on the ashes of the Nazi-era Wehrmacht, the new force was to represent a clear break from its predecessor: At a time of total warfare, the Bundeswehr was to strive toward peace. As totalitarian states built up massive forces, it was to remain grounded in democratic values and uphold the rights of the individual. And in an age of technological advances on the battlefield, soldiers in the Bundeswehr were to remain civic-minded "Citizens in Uniform" instead of professional warriors or technocrats of their own class.<sup>2</sup> *Innere Führung* dictated each of these principles, and each marked a clear departure from the German military's past.

In many ways, *Innere Führung*'s success is visible across the service today. Soldiers and officers are trained in the concept at every stage of their career. A circle of researchers around the service continues to study *Innere Führung* and its application to the modern Bundeswehr. Wolf Graf von Baudissin, widely considered the father of *Innere Führung*, is celebrated as a key figure of the Bundeswehr's founding, his name even gracing part of the Bundeswehr Command and Staff College in Hamburg. "If there was no *Innere Führung*, someone would have to invent it," German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen said in 2016 at the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Innere Führung* Center in Koblenz.<sup>3</sup>

The reality of *Innere Führung* in today's ranks is messier. Recent scandals show the extent to which modern challenges resemble those of the past, from the integration of female and gay troops into combat units to the discouragement of cruel and degrading training. The case of Franco A. — the 28-year-old first lieutenant who posed as an asylum-seeker while purportedly planning a terrorist attack<sup>4</sup> — has raised concern about whether the military remains a reflection of society or if it is "overrun with right-wing extremists."<sup>5</sup> Such narratives distract from the broader questions of identity facing the German military today, questions that *Innere Führung* was developed to answer. At great cost, the Bundeswehr has shifted from a Cold War military of roughly 600,000 men — half of them conscripted — to today's *Einsatzarmee*, or deployment-ready military, of roughly 178,000 soldiers, both men and women, all of them volunteers.<sup>6</sup> No longer waiting for a Cold War to become hot, they're deploying regularly to foreign lands, taking

---

<sup>1</sup> *Innere Führung* is the leadership principle of the German military, the Bundeswehr. It describes the model of the German soldier — a capable soldier, good citizen and free person — outlines his conduct with other soldiers and guides the relationship between subordinates and superiors. The official English translation for *Innere Führung* is "Leadership Development and Civic Education." The English translation of the Bundeswehr regulation for *Innere Führung* can be found under "ZDv 10/1 *Innere Führung*, Selbstverständnis und Führungskultur der Bundeswehr, engl.," published Jan. 2008 and accessed on July 28, 2017, at <http://bit.ly/2veiLaS>. The untranslated term, *Innere Führung*, will be used for this paper.

<sup>2</sup> As is common practice in German media, the term "soldier" is used in this paper to designate servicemembers across all branches of the Bundeswehr.

<sup>3</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, "Zentrum *Innere Führung* nicht verzichtbar für die Bundeswehr," June 30, 2016, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://tinyurl.com/15hc5el>.

<sup>4</sup> "Der Fall Franco A. — Was bislang bekannt ist" Tagesschau, May 10, 2017, accessed June 5, 2017, <http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/bundeswehr-skandal-was-bekannt-ist-101.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Volker Wagener, "The Bundeswehr's image problem—is it overrun with right-wing extremists?" Deutsche Welle, May 3, 2017, accessed May 8, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/the-bundeswehrs-image-problem-is-it-overrun-with-right-wing-extremists/a-38684538>.

<sup>6</sup> "Stärke: Militärisches Personal der Bundeswehr," last updated July 24, 2017, and accessed Aug. 5, 2017, at <http://bit.ly/2veiLaS>.

fire and in some cases being injured and killed. Meanwhile, the society they're serving has less stake in their activities. Facing little threat of war and no longer subject to conscription, most Germans can afford to overlook the actions of their military. Society's skepticism toward the military, a presence since postwar times, remains palpable in public and private life. As German President Hörst Köhler remarked in a 2005 speech, "friendly disinterest" toward the military remains the norm in German society.<sup>7</sup>

This paper is a small window into the origins of *Innere Führung* and its durability across the transition from Cold War army to deployment army. There have been past English-language works on the concept and its role within the German military, most of them far more comprehensive — and scholarly — than what the reader will find in these pages.<sup>8</sup> Most also predate the end of the Cold War, and I have yet to find any that address the current application of *Innere Führung*,<sup>9</sup> as well as the recent criticism of the concept by a group of young officers. Tellingly, even those who disagree with these criticisms agree they raise the necessary question of whether *Innere Führung* has been adapted to the modern Bundeswehr. This work doesn't presume to answer that question but humbly attempts to frame it.

## I. GRACE OF THE ZERO-POINT

### "Militarism is dead"

More than five years of war ended in the spring of 1945 with a Germany conquered, divided and struggling to secure basic needs, the understood legacy of the Nazi regime and the militarism of German society under it. "The institution in which state power was most meaningfully and impressively expressed is the army," future West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer told an audience at the University of Cologne in March 1946. "Militarism thus became the dominant factor in thought and emotion across society."<sup>10</sup> Germany's surrender seemingly ended that militarism, with the disbandment of the Wehrmacht and the emptying of military training areas and academies. The Nuremberg trials assigned responsibility for the war's greatest crimes to its high command, SS leadership and commanders of specific campaigns. The regular military not only escaped much of the blame but was even viewed sympathetically across German society. Veterans argued they had served honorably regardless of the regime, an outlook that even Adenauer affirmed in his Cologne speech when he distinguished "militarists" from the soldier who had "fulfilled his duty in respectable ways and done nothing more."<sup>11</sup> The absolution of the Wehrmacht was widely embraced by a society in which many had mobilized and served, and

---

<sup>7</sup> Hörst Köhler, "Rede von Bundespräsident Hörst Köhler bei der Kommandeurtagung der Bundeswehr in Bonn," October 10, 2005, accessed Aug. 20, 2017 at the Bundespräsident website:

[http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Horst-Koehler/Reden/2005/10/20051010\\_Rede.html](http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Horst-Koehler/Reden/2005/10/20051010_Rede.html).

<sup>8</sup> This paper was researched and written with support of the Robert Bosch Stiftung as part of the author's participation in the 2016-2017 Robert Bosch Foundation Fellowship.

<sup>9</sup> This should soon be remedied by the anticipated publication of a new book on *Innere Führung* from Donald Abenheim, an author whose previous work on the Bundeswehr and its relationship with the past — as well as his personal conversations and encouragement — were quite helpful to this author.

<sup>10</sup> Konrad Adenauer, "Rede in der Aula der Universität zu Köln," March 24, 1946, accessed May 11, 2017, at <https://www.konrad-adenauer.de/dokumente/reden/1946-03-24-uni-koeln>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

where even popular culture of the time reinforced the idea of the duty-bound soldier doing his best in a bad situation.<sup>12</sup>

The paradox between rejection of German militarism and sympathy for the soldier in whom it was manifested became relevant again as the North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950 sparked talks of a new German military force. The Western Allies wanted troops in the demilitarized West Germany and believed that a German contingent embedded in a pan-European command structure would limit any risks to rearmament. The Adenauer government saw its own advantages in the proposal, viewing the new force as leverage for its goal of Western integration and full sovereignty. The resulting urgency to form a new force risked overlooking the problem at its core, namely that many of the soldiers would be Wehrmacht veterans stamped by Wehrmacht experiences.

That the committee of experts tasked by Bonn to plan the new force was Wehrmacht veterans signaled the direction the new force could take. Fifteen former officers, all of them Nazi opponents or regime doubters during the war, gathered in secret at the Himmerod Abbey south of Bonn in October 1950 to outline the new force. The product of their four days of work is known today as the Himmerod Memo, a plan to equip and staff 12 armored divisions on Western Europe's eastern flank — and a testament to the tension between military capability and reform present from the Bundeswehr's beginning.<sup>13</sup> The majority of those in attendance believed Wehrmacht veterans would need “rehabilitation”<sup>14</sup> before they could be remobilized for a new force. Planners wanted Western Allies to end their “defamation” of Wehrmacht veterans, and they requested the allies and the new Bonn government to publicly restore their reputations.<sup>15</sup> Reformers at Himmerod meanwhile pushed for the inclusion of statements that clearly rejected Hitler's former military and would preclude the future force from becoming as insular and self-serving as German militaries in the past. In a section on the force's “inner structure,” the final Himmerod Memo stated the contingent must be “fundamentally new” and “without resemblance to the form of the old Wehrmacht.” It must “not become a state in a state,” and its soldiers must believe that democracy is the only option for the West German government and way of life.<sup>16</sup> Chief among the reformers was a 43-year-old former major named Wolf Graf von Baudissin.<sup>17</sup> A former staff officer for Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, Baudissin had spent most of the war in POW camps before settling down in the Dortmund area as a potter. He rejected the notion that a soldier bore no responsibility for his actions under orders, and he envisioned military reforms that codified the soldier's responsibility. The clash he and fellow reformers provoked at Himmerod was the earliest instance of what became a continuing debate between traditionalists and reformers within the Bundeswehr and German society. It was a conflict of many nuances and a

---

<sup>12</sup> Michael Schornstheimer, “‘Harmlose Idealisten und draufgängerische Soldaten’: Militär und Krieg in den illustriertenromanen der fünfziger Jahre,” in *Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944*, ed. Hannes Heer and Klau Naumann (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001), 634.

<sup>13</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, “Der Himmeroder Denkschrift,” in *Schriftenreihe Innere Führung: Von Himmerod bis Andernach* (Sankt Augustin: Schriften Reihe Innere Führung, 1985), 64-92.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 66

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-67

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 84-85.

<sup>17</sup> Other key reform voices included former Wehrmacht general staff officers Adolf Graf von Kielmansegg, responsible for the Adenauer government's early military reform ideas under Gerhard von Schwerin and the inclusion of reform as a major theme at Himmerod, and Ulrich de Maizièere, who would later become inspector general of the Bundeswehr.

single overarching question — Is a soldier a professional whose actions can be judged apart from their broader political consequences?

### **Baudissin**

Baudissin's participation at Himmerod didn't happen by chance. His recruitment by the Adenauer government was the work of a former comrade, Axel von dem Bussche, an officer well acquainted with his comrade's intellect and outlook during the war. Bussche had served with Baudissin as an officer in Infantry Regiment 9 in Potsdam, one of Germany's most storied military units due to its close ties to the former Prussian throne. By war's end, the unit was notorious for another reason — the circle of officers involved in the conspiracy against Hitler stemmed especially from its ranks. Baudissin would recall decades later the visit his former comrade paid him at his pottery studio in the fall of 1950 and the request he made:

His invitation caught me fully unprepared. Not only had I not heard of the secret consultations the Western Allies were having with the government, but, above all, I hadn't considered further service. When I immediately said 'No', Bussche pointed out that whether I liked it or not, I was responsible for the one who would serve in my place. He had grabbed me by the knot of my sword.<sup>18</sup>

Despite his reservations, Baudissin was poised to grapple with the reforms. Born in Trier in 1907 to a Prussian bureaucrat and educated in East Prussia near modern-day Gdansk, his life was stamped by the intersection of loyalty, intellect and ethical rigor. As a youth he pursued university educations in Berlin and Munich before commissioning as a Reichswehr officer in Potsdam. Despite his upbringing in a conservative Prussian home with “not very democratic” values,<sup>19</sup> Baudissin found the insular atmosphere of the military troubling. He recalled once leaving the officer's mess in objection to a toast made to the kaiser, “the Prussian king,” saying it went against his oath to Germany's new democratic constitution.<sup>20</sup> Baudissin was an early participant in the group of officers that later formed the resistance movement against the Nazi regime.<sup>21</sup> He had become personally familiar with Nazi efforts to subjugate the Wehrmacht's upper ranks, closely observing the deception in the Blomberg-Fritsch affair from 1938, a case that spurred him and others to openly reconsider their service.<sup>22</sup> Following service on Germany's western defensive front near France, Baudissin had just entered North Africa at Rommel's request when taken captive in Tobruk, Libya, following a reconnaissance flight. Moved gradually eastward between British prisoner-of-war camps, he ended up in captivity in Australia, where he would spend the bulk of his confinement.

---

<sup>18</sup> Wolf Graf von Baudissin, “Abschiedsvorlesung vom 18. Juni 1986 an der Universität der Bundeswehr in Hamburg (gekürzt)” in Wolf Graf von Baudissin and Dagmar Gräfin zu Dohna, “...als wären wir nie getrennt gewesen: Briefe 1941-1947 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 2001), 266.

<sup>19</sup> “Charles Schüddekopf im Gespräch mit Wolf Graf von Baudissin,” in Grundwert: Frieden in Politik — Strategie — Führung von Streitkräften, ed. Claus von Rosen (Berlin: Carola Hartmann Miles-Verlag, 2014), 468

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 469. Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated the throne in 1918, leading to the establishment of the constitutional Weimar Republic.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Baudissin recalled semi-regular meetings among skeptical officers in the Potsdam officer's casino.

<sup>22</sup> Army Commander-in-Chief General Werner von Fritsch was purged from the Wehrmacht in 1938 after the regime constructed accusations of a homosexual affair with an adjutant, an account subsequently discredited. In an account in ...als wären wir, 263-264, Baudissin recalls the young adjutant telling him he had been forced to accuse von Fritsch. Baudissin then recounts how he and comrade Henning von Tresckow approached Field Marshal Erwin von Witzleben with their reservations about continuing to serve.

Correspondence with his future wife, Dagmar Gräfin zu Dohna, offers a window into Baudissin's thoughts during the time. A sculptress living in Berlin, Dohna was closely connected to the city's underground art scene during the Nazi years, as well as its even more underground resistance to the regime. News was sparse for prisoners during captivity, and its piecemeal arrival could unsettle those who wanted a fuller reckoning, Baudissin wrote Dohna.<sup>23</sup> He felt intimately his removal from the actions of former comrades in the field, and he worried to Dohna that his confinement would leave him behind in a rapidly changing world. Yet Baudissin would come to embrace the distance with time, in particular as the war moved toward its end and his thoughts turned political. In 1946, near the end of his captivity, he would describe confinement as a "greenhouse" in which the outside world was visible to captives but captives remained invisible to the outside world. The result, he claimed, was a rare objectivity to the global events at hand.<sup>24</sup> The failed assassination attempt against Hitler on July 20, 1944, was one of those events, moving Baudissin personally and intellectually. Among those who lost their lives in the aftermath was Maj. Gen. Henning von Tresckow, one of the central conspirators and a comrade and correspondent of Baudissin. Tresckow committed suicide after the failed attempt. Field Marshal Erwin von Witzleben, a former superior to both Baudissin and Tresckow, was arrested, convicted in a show trial in Berlin and subsequently hanged. Carl-Hans Graf von Hardenberg, a Brandenburg landowner who became close friends with Baudissin and was also involved with the plotters, was arrested and sent to a concentration camp, which he ultimately survived.<sup>25</sup> Adam Trotz von Solz, a diplomat and friend of both Baudissin and Dohna was less fortunate — like Witzleben, he was hanged after being detained.<sup>26</sup>

Baudissin's reaction to the assassination attempt and its aftermath built with time. He was "tremendously moved"<sup>27</sup> and thought of the "terrible number of friends and comrades that I'll never see again," he wrote in separate letters to his father and an associate in 1944, a time when mail censors would have still been active.<sup>28</sup> It was "the last true Prussian act," he later wrote Dohna, in 1946.<sup>29</sup> Surrounded by fellow prisoners of war who viewed the assassination attempt as treason, Baudissin was forced to weigh his opposition to the regime against his personal obligation to uniform. When an acquaintance of Dohna's offered to use his connections to have Baudissin released, the captive officer, writing in English, respectfully declined:

Only when I was 'abroad' the crisis reached its climax and the tragic conflict between oath and considered duty arose. I was spared this situation, the most terrible for a Christian and an officer. I am, therefore, not able to state my possible decision, then, nor even turn it now to my personal advantage. Furtheron after the debacle, I am sure You will understand, I cannot take a trend against the government whose uniform I still wear in a way... Before my conscience and by moral of tradition I feel that I have to return in

---

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Baudissin to Dohna, Nov. 11, 1942, in Baudissin and Dohna, *...als wären wir*, 58-59.

<sup>24</sup> Wolf Graf von Baudissin, "Die Kriegsgefangene und die Entscheidung," in *Ost oder West: Gedanken zur deutsch-europäischen Schicksalsfrage*, copy seen in Baudissin-Dokumentationszentrum der Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr, April 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from Carl-Hans Graf von Hardenberg-Neuhardenberg to Baudissin, Aug. 8, 1946, *...als wären wir*, 241-242.

<sup>26</sup> Letter from Baudissin to Dohna, March 17, 1946, in Baudissin and Dohna *...als wären wir*, 104.

<sup>27</sup> Elfriede Knocke, Forward in Baudissin and Dohna *...als wären wir*, 30.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 104.

an absolutely clear way, be fair towards the past to go into the future without any compromising handicaps whatsoever.<sup>30</sup>

Baudissin's uncertainty would disappear with time and reassurance that he was on the right side of history. Only months after writing Dohna's acquaintance, he came across favorable foreign news articles on Nazi-resisters, including Tresckow, that "touched me greatly and clearly showed where I stood."<sup>31</sup>

If the lesson of the July 20 conspiracy was the soldier's obligation to act, Germany's capitulation and the totality of the war it had prosecuted also shaped Baudissin's thoughts. A former general staff officer who called himself an early doubter of Hitler's plans for "total war," Baudissin would still express shock at the scale and banality of the regime's crimes against humanity as they emerged in Nuremberg.<sup>32</sup> He was shaken by the "short-sightedness" of Hitler's willingness to set aside all ethical considerations in warfare, saying it would have set Germany up for failure even had it won the war. Pondering what he would later call the "question of German fate" in the postwar era, Baudissin, a self-described "Young Conservative,"<sup>33</sup> began to think about the need for new ways of thinking across German and European society — and mulling his role therein. He wrote to Dohna of the "urgency of the European situation, that can only be saved through looking forward with determination and no loss of time"<sup>34</sup> and looked to his father's generation, active in the time after World War I, for a model of rebuilding. He summarized his religious outlook in a long letter to Dohna, telling her that "our great task in the future" was a Christianity that recognized the value of the individual.<sup>35</sup> Baudissin briefly mulled joining the clergy.<sup>36</sup> With the war's end, he began to seek the answers himself. Peace as a social orientation emerged as a particular focus. Reading deep into newly available books at the time,<sup>37</sup> Baudissin came to see peace as a "positive" phenomenon, or something that had to be achieved and then maintained, as opposed to a negative phenomenon, or the mere absence of violence or conflict.<sup>38</sup> He believed that society not only had to develop the will for peace but must be willing to sacrifice part of its sovereignty to maintain it. "It is perhaps our German fate, to sacrifice our external unity and position as a great power on the altar of this European unity," he would later write.<sup>39</sup> Baudissin would later extend his ideas on peace to the armed forces, linking them to past German military reformers. Citing Prussian strategist Carl von Clausewitz, he argued that peace defined the modern soldier's role; deterrence was its modern expression within the armed forces, Baudissin believed.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 238-239.

<sup>31</sup> Letter from Baudissin to Dohna, Nr. 113 (undated), "...als wären wir," 151.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from Baudissin to Dohna, Oct. 1, 1946, in Baudissin and Dohna, "...als wären wir," 152-153.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Baudissin to Dohna, Feb. 10, 1946, in Baudissin and Dohna, "...als wären wir," 99-100.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from Baudissin to Dohna, Oct. 28, 1945, in Baudissin and Dohna, "...als wären wir," 92.

<sup>35</sup> Letter from Baudissin to Dohna, Oct. 19, 1946, in Baudissin and Dohna, "...als wären wir," 157.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Claus von Rosen, "Frieden nach Emil Brunner in Baudissins Werk," personal manuscript from author, dated June 23, 2004.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>39</sup> Wolf Graf von Baudissin, "Neuordnung der Welt und Europas: Nachträgliche Anmerkungen zur Denkschrift „Ost und West“, gebundenes MS, Tatura 1946/47, S. 70 a-d." in *Hamburger Beiträge zur Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik: Frieden in Baudissins Werk und Wirken*, (Hamburg: Heft 161, 2014), 23.

<sup>40</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, "Vom Kreige I," 16. Ed. (Bonn: 1952), 191, cited in Wolf Graf von Baudissin, "Soldatische Tradition und ihre Bedeutung in der Gegenwart, 1956, in *Grundwert: Frieden*, 179.

A year before his release, Baudissin organized his thoughts in a 103-page memo drafted over several months in 1946. “East or West: Thoughts on the question of German-European fate,” considers Germany’s alignment in the postwar world.<sup>41</sup> Reviewing the country’s historic connections with Russia and the Western Powers, the failure of National Socialism and the “new orientation” required by war’s end, Baudissin pulled together the themes that occupied him during captivity, among them the role of resistance in society and the concept of peace as a social orientation.<sup>42</sup> Ending with an affirmation of Germany’s place in a democratic West, “East or West” was a statement of Baudissin’s interest in his country’s future, its fate within an integrated Europe and the ethical framework that connects citizens to their government. Baudissin’s life would soon take on its own new orientation. Upon release in July 1947, the 40-year-old former officer immediately married Dohna and set up residence at an atelier in the garden house of Cappenberg Palace, between Munster and Dortmund. The pair pursued pottery together — “giant pots” were a specialty — and Baudissin involved himself with the Evangelical Church, an institution whose position was rising in postwar West Germany. Baudissin’s ideas<sup>43</sup> would find open ears in a budding civil society, where an earnest discussion over the emerging government and its orientation was taking place. They would eventually play a critical role in his formulation of *Innere Führung*.

### **Soldiers for Peace**

If Himmerod was a first step toward a future German military force, its secrecy underlined the difficult road ahead. The anti-military mood in Germany was marked by the scars of recent conflict as well as the division of Europe between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union, the division of Germany itself and the possibility of nuclear war. As Adenauer hitched West German sovereignty to rearmament, opposition rose across society. Many activists believed reunification was the greater priority for the new government, and one that would be threatened by rearming. Society’s fatigue of militarization further drove opposition, with the prospect of conscription sparking the “Without Me” (*Ohne mich*) movement. Activists took to the streets in mass demonstrations beginning in summer 1950, some of the first peace movements in postwar Germany.

Amid the public outcry, parliamentarians in Bonn worked closely with the nascent defense ministry, named Amt Blank for its director,<sup>44</sup> Christian Democrat parliamentarian Theodor Blank, to establish the new force. Among them now was Baudissin, whose work on the inner structure marked a continuation of what he began at Himmerod — as well as an end to the new start he and Dohna had envisioned at Cappenberg.<sup>45</sup> His work was to become a central aspect of the new military force. Hardly a concession to Western Allies, who were more interested in the rapid establishment of the new force, the reforms were an effort to create a military that could speak to

---

<sup>41</sup> Wolf Graf von Baudissin, in introduction to *Ost oder West*: Germany “must decide, whether it can be the Ostmark (the eastern edge) of a European-American bloc or the western province of Eurasia.”

<sup>42</sup> Claus von Rosen, “Frieden nach Emil Brunner.”

<sup>43</sup> Baudissin never published “East and West” after his release.

<sup>44</sup> The successor to the Homeland Service, or *Zentrale für Heimatdienst*, Amt Blank was created immediately after Himmerod and lasted until establishment of the defense ministry in 1955.

<sup>45</sup> Wolf Graf von Baudissin, “Aufgaben der Teilgebiete der Inneren Führung,” 1953, in *Grundwert: Frieden*, 82: Baudissin defined the term “inner structure” as “the collection of conditions and factors that form the relationship of the soldiers to one another and the soldiers to the community, that is, the conditions that make up the organization’s climate.” Or, as we might call it today, the command climate.

West Germany's changed reality.<sup>46</sup> The legal centerpiece of that reality was now the Basic Law, the new German constitution that elevated protection for the individual to the fundamental responsibility of the new government and prohibited the planning of a "war of aggression."<sup>47</sup> The first public glimpse of Baudissin's ideas came during a speech he delivered at the Evangelical Academy in Hermannsburg in 1951 as part of a conference on soldiers. Germany's loss in the war and the end of the Nazi regime had thrown many of the country's social values into question, Baudissin began, in particular the role and position of the soldier. But with catastrophe came the "grace of the zero-point" and an opportunity for a "new beginning."<sup>48</sup> Germany no longer wanted a military that was an instrument of war, nor could it afford one in an era of total war and nuclear conflict. Soldiers must be oriented toward the maintenance of peace instead of the desire for war, a shift in mindset for those who viewed warfare as a craft to be practiced and soldiering as a profession with its own measurements of success. Moreover, the requirements of West Germany's new democratic values were to be extended to its military, requiring a new perspective on the soldier-citizen relationship, Baudissin told the audience: "The conditions of total war and our democratic image of the state contradict a special position of the soldier and lead to the free armed citizen, who performs this service as part of his political responsibility,"<sup>49</sup> Baudissin said.

The idea of the citizen-soldier was hardly new to German military history.<sup>50</sup> Baudissin's construct placed an emphasis on its symmetry: Just as the citizen was to view himself as a potential soldier, so must the soldier see himself first and foremost as a citizen with responsibilities toward society. Functionally, that meant the right to vote, to organize politically (within limits) and to be subject to civilian courts. More broadly, soldiers, like citizens, would need to become politically aware and even politically active, as they would bear more responsibility for their actions. Success would in turn be measured by the broader political consequences of the military's actions than by narrower battlefield virtues of honor and glory. "The armed forces must therefore do everything to develop personal values, that is, to give the individual space for personal responsibility and initiative; they have to help the individual get beyond the fatal 'just-an-object' feeling,"<sup>51</sup> Baudissin told his audience. This new responsibility would in turn take some emphasis off the chain of command, a meaningful tradeoff for reformers, to whom blind obedience stood for everything wrong with the Nazi-era Wehrmacht and its veterans' claims that they had served honorably. For Baudissin and other reformers, the July 20 resistance movement was the embodiment of the new ideals, representing the moment in which soldiers exercised their responsibility against a corrupt regime.

Structural changes within the ranks were necessary to foster the soldier's personal responsibility, Baudissin continued. The new force would need to limit the reach of superiors, curb unnecessary formalities or traditions that emphasized obedience, and reinforce the independence of the judiciary. Commanders would have little sway over their soldiers during off-hours. "Service and

---

<sup>46</sup> Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 88.

<sup>47</sup> Article 26, paragraph (1) of the Basic Law of Germany, published May 1949 and accessed Aug. 12, 2017, at <https://www.btg-bestellservice.de/pdf/80201000.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup> Wolf Graf von Baudissin, "Diskussionsbeitrag bei der 'Soldatentagung' an der Evangelischen Akademie Hermannsburg," 1951, in *Grundwert: Frieden*, 43.

<sup>49</sup> Baudissin, "Diskussionsbeitrag bei der 'Soldatentagung' an der Evangelischen Akademie Hermannsburg," 45.

<sup>50</sup> The early 19<sup>th</sup> Century reforms of the Prussian military transformed it into a conscription-based army along the lines of the French army under Napoleon.

<sup>51</sup> Baudissin, "Diskussionsbeitrag bei der 'Soldatentagung'," 45.

free time must clearly be separated on the base,” Baudissin told the audience.<sup>52</sup> Saluting would be limited and unnecessarily cruel training curbed. Positive behavior would be rewarded as much as negative behavior punished. An ombudsman would stand between company commander and soldier in the matter of grievances and discipline. With their new responsibility, soldiers would be “Citizens in Service,” Baudissin explained a year later at the Evangelical Academy in Bad Boll.<sup>53</sup> The term of art would eventually become “Citizens in Uniform” (*Staatsbürger in Uniform*), the phrase future Bundeswehr soldiers would most readily connect to *Innere Führung*.

Baudissin’s ideas could be seen as radical in a German military where tradition, hardness and loyalty had been cast as the highest values. Yet Baudissin and reformers held that their ideas also carried connection to a German military history that emphasized themes of responsibility, peace and a formal inner structure.<sup>54</sup> Baudissin saw the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century military reforms by Prussian officers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau as the original template for his work with the new force.<sup>55</sup> The German military’s famed *Auftragstaktik*, through which military orders are delivered as broad intent instead of detailed instruction, offered a model for giving soldiers more responsibility.<sup>56</sup> The new reforms would attempt to provide a similar responsibility on an ethical and leadership level; rather than just being told how to serve, soldiers would be required to find and understand the reasons for their own service. The idea of breaking a soldier down into conformity and building him back up on ritual and convention was to be replaced by winning the soldier’s willing participation and civic enthusiasm.<sup>57</sup>

The nuts and bolts of applying both aspects of *Innere Führung* — the new relationship between superior and subordinate and the changed self-image of the German soldier — within the ranks would occupy Baudissin over the coming years. His work incorporated discussions and draft policy within Amt Blank, as well as feedback from the parliament, which had begun considering the inner structure as part of its oversight of the German contribution to the European Defense Community. Questions arose at each step. The oath sworn by new recruits spurred ongoing discussion between Baudissin and fellow reformers.<sup>58</sup> Maintaining the new discipline model in an integrated European military presented its own problems: The harsher French *discipline générale* had been proposed as an EDC-wide model, despite its antagonism with many of the reforms

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Wolf Graf von Baudissin, “Das Bild des zukünftigen Soldaten,” 1952, in *Grundwert: Frieden*, 59.

<sup>54</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 17.

<sup>55</sup> Prussian officers Gerhard Johann David von Scharnhorst (1755-1813) and August Neidhardt von Gneisenau (1760-1831) introduced a series of early 19<sup>th</sup> Century military reforms that transformed the military after its defeat by French forces in 1806.

<sup>56</sup> Wolf Graf von Baudissin, “Soldatische Tradition und ihre Bedeutung in der Gegenwart,” 1956, in *Grundwert: Frieden*, 186: An esteemed practice of the German military, *Auftragstaktik* dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and gives troops the responsibility to execute an order in the manner they see fit.

<sup>57</sup> Maybe best put in an essay by Zentrum *Innere Führung* director Jürgen Weigt, “Plädoyer für ein Gefühl — Leitbild, Vorbild, Zerrbild,” in *if — Zeitschrift für Innere Führung* 3/2015, 18: “‘Wenn ich meine Persönlichkeit aufgebe, gebe ich gleichzeitig den Sinn meiner Beziehung zur soldatischen Gemeinschaft auf.’”

<sup>58</sup> A point of disagreement as early as the Himmerod conference, the meaning of an oath in a force that would celebrate the resistance movement — a group seen by many as oathbreakers — fell into obvious question. According to proceeding notes, Baudissin suggested that soldiers sign a statement: “Im Bewusstsein meiner Verantwortung als Mensch und Staatsbürger gelobe ich, meine Pflichten redlich zu tun und treu zu erfüllen, den Befehlen meiner Vorgesetzten zu gehorchen und meine Heimat, mein Volk und die verbündete freiheitliche Welt mit meinem Leben zu verteidigen.” Parliamentary proceedings: Sixth session of the committee for consultation on the EDC-Contract, Sept. 12, 1952, in “Der Bundestagsausschuss für Verteidigung und seine Vorläufe, Ausschuss zur Mitberatung des EVG-Vertrages, July 1952-Dec. 1952,” p. 252, accessed on July 14, 2017 at [www.mgfa.de/pdf/Bdtgsauss\\_01.pdf](http://www.mgfa.de/pdf/Bdtgsauss_01.pdf).

being forwarded by Baudissin and his colleagues.<sup>59</sup> Baudissin also continued to consult civil society organizations including the evangelical academies and universities, which continued to blossom in the postwar years. A series of meetings in 1953 between Baudissin and a group of advisers at the Federal Finance School in Siegburg began to flesh out the difficulties of loosening the chain of command.<sup>60</sup>

At the beginning of 1953, Baudissin's office finally codified the new concept, with a formal definition and the new name of "Innere Führung." The memo remains the most straightforward definition of the principle, explaining the ideal soldier in three characteristics: Free person (*Freier Mensch*); fully capable soldier (*Vollwertiger Soldat*); and good citizen (*Guter Staatsbürger*).<sup>61</sup> As the prospects for the EDC dimmed and *Innere Führung* turned into a focal point of the parliament in the summer of 1953,<sup>62</sup> this construct would be invoked frequently in parliamentary committee meetings. Reactions to his work were generally positive,<sup>63</sup> yet arguments within Amt Blank over the concept's particular provisions, purpose or applicability would occasionally spill over into the public.<sup>64</sup>

Realization of parts of the reforms began with the 1956 amendments to the Basic Law, which established a military under parliamentary control. Passage of the soldier's law in the same year codified *Innere Führung*'s reforms to the command chain, granting specific rights to soldiers and spelling out the soldier's obligation to the German constitution. A central plank of *Innere Führung* exists in the two sentences of the latter's Article 6, the Civic Rights of the Soldier (*Staatsbürgerliche Rechte des Soldaten*): "The Soldier has the same civic rights as every other citizen. His rights will be limited in the framework of military service requirements through a legally established obligation."<sup>65</sup> The code elevated the soldier's responsibility to reject wrongful orders unless they were impossible to reject, and it limited a superior's reach outside of service. Subordinates, in turn, were only required to follow orders that were legal and accorded to the country's constitution. Political activity was forbidden in times of service but preserved in free time, even in the barracks, so long as it didn't affect camaraderie.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> Baudissin, "Das Bild des zukünftigen Soldaten," 71. Baudissin mentions the code's broad reach, touching on conduct, formalities and ceremony in public and in the garrison.

<sup>60</sup> Wolf Graf von Baudissin, "Das Bild des zukünftigen Soldaten, Einleitung zur Gutachtertagung in Siegburg am 28. und 29. April 1953," 1953, in *Grundwert: Frieden*, 71.

<sup>61</sup> Memo, "Entwurf: Regelung der 'Inneren Führung,'" copy viewed at Baudissin-Dokumentationszentrum der Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr, April 2017.

<sup>62</sup> Bruno Thoß, Introduction in "Der Bundestagsausschuss für Verteidigung und seine Vorläufe, Ausschuss für Fragen der europäischen Sicherheit, Jan. 1953 — July 1954," ed. Bruno Thoß, Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, (Potsdam, 2010), p. 19, accessed at [http://www.mgfa.de/pdf/Bdtgsauss\\_02.pdf](http://www.mgfa.de/pdf/Bdtgsauss_02.pdf) on June 8, 2017. According to Thoß, a third of all meetings during this time span focused on *Innere Führung*.

<sup>63</sup> Hans Ehlert, Forward in Thoß, "Der Bundestagsausschuss für Verteidigung und seine Vorläufe," vii-viii. A majority of the committee was behind the concept of *Innere Führung*.

<sup>64</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 108, notes the creation of an *Innere Führung* committee within the Amt, which touched on other departments besides Baudissin's. The meeting notes from June 10, 1953, in Thoß (2010) note that multiple departments were working simultaneously on Baudissin's concept, including those that worked with education, information and troop mentorship, p. 413.

<sup>65</sup> Gesetz über die Rechtsstellung der Soldaten, first published on March 19, 1956, accessed on July 26, 2017, at <http://bit.ly/2uB7Mpb>: "Der Soldat hat die gleichen staatsbürgerlichen Rechte wie jeder andere Staatsbürger. Seine Rechte werden im Rahmen der Erfordernisse des militärischen Dienstes durch seine gesetzlich begründeten Pflichten beschränkt."

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, Artikel 15 (Politische Betätigung), "Innerhalb der dienstlichen Unterkünfte und Anlagen findet während der Freizeit das Recht der freien Meinungsäußerung seine Schranken an den Grundregeln der Kameradschaft. Der Soldat hat sich so zu verhalten, dass die Gemeinsamkeit des Dienstes nicht ernstlich gestört wird. Der Soldat darf

The success of *Innere Führung*'s other aspect — a new self-image of the German soldier — depended on how well the ranks understood and bought into the concept. After formally establishing *Innere Führung* as the military's leadership principle in 1956, the Bundeswehr began setting up structures and publishing materials to help leaders grapple with the new ideas. It established a school for *Innere Führung* in the same year (today's *Innere Führung* Center) and published the pamphlets and guidelines that officers and soldiers would turn to with questions, including the *Handbook for Innere Führung*, published between 1957 and 1972, and smaller books of *Leitsätze*, or motivational phrases, for commanders. A magazine, "Information for the Troops" (today's *if* magazine), was started in 1956 to build the political awareness among troops required by Baudissin's concept. Two years later, the ministry of defense would create a civilian panel as a consulting body for developing and adjusting the principles of *Innere Führung*.<sup>67</sup> The parliament strengthened its own oversight of the command climate within the force through the 1957 creation of the Parliamentary Commissioner to the Armed Forces, or *Wehrbeauftragter*, an ombudsman who would report directly to parliament on the status of the Bundeswehr. Among the commissioner's tasks was oversight of the integration of *Innere Führung* within the force.<sup>68</sup> Each step represented a fruition of Baudissin's work. He wasn't alone in creating or maintaining *Innere Führung*, yet the concept bears his imprint. His personal experiences before and during the war years provided the motivation behind his work, in particular on themes of responsibility, resistance and the maintenance of peace. The reforms he and his colleagues pursued were of a broad scale, attempting to change ideas of military discipline and order, as well as the image of the soldier himself. Their arguments would soon be met by crosscurrents in a rearming Germany. One was the belief among traditionalists and veterans that *Innere Führung* was an abstract or naïve vision of war that weakened the chain of command and went too far in relaxing discipline.<sup>69</sup> Another segment of society believed the reforms didn't go far enough — that danger remained in the Bundeswehr's relationship to the Wehrmacht, its exclusivity and the potential for escalation in the Cold War standoff.

Baudissin's idea that *Innere Führung* arose from the "zero-point" of German military history would itself be challenged in the future. Having cut the Bundeswehr's connection to the Wehrmacht and then distancing it from the formalities and traditions that defined military service in the past, Baudissin and his fellow reformers had traded the Bundeswehr's identity for a more secure grounding in society. As the connection between soldier and society became more tenuous in the future, so would *Innere Führung*'s appeal.

### **Inner Strangulation**

With the creation of the Bundeswehr in 1955, *Innere Führung* ran into the difficult reality of a new force growing rapidly from a questionable foundation. Even with a screening process to select out problematic officers, the Bundeswehr risked being stamped by the tradition and

---

insbesondere nicht als Werber für eine politische Gruppe wirken, indem er Ansprachen hält, Schriften verteilt oder als Vertreter einer politischen Organisation arbeitet. Die gegenseitige Achtung darf nicht gefährdet werden."

<sup>67</sup> "Beirat für Fragen der *Innere Führung*," Bundeswehr website, last updated May 9, 2014, and accessed Aug. 6, 2017, at <http://bit.ly/2ui9FKc>. The consulting body is composed of representatives among politics, the church and labor unions, among other social segments.

<sup>68</sup> Gesetz über den Wehrbeauftragten des Deutschen Bundestages, published on June 26, 1957, and accessed on July 26, 2017, at <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/wehrbttg/WBeauftrG.pdf>.

<sup>69</sup> Some critics argued the concept stemmed from Baudissin's lack of experience in the most violent parts of the German campaign in World War II, in particular the Eastern Front.

experiences of the undemocratic Wehrmacht. The lack of manpower and resources — what would become perpetual problems for the Bundeswehr — made integration more difficult. *Innere Führung*, with its untraditional thoughts on identity and its ambivalence over tradition, could seem like an extravagance in such conditions, and one that didn't accord with incoming soldiers' view of their job.<sup>70</sup> Wags quickly dubbed the concept “Inner Strangulation” (*Innere Gewürge*).<sup>71</sup> As the ranks began to grow in the late 1950s, the issue of tradition emerged as a controversial theme and a test of Baudissin's vow that the force would represent a new start. Questions about the Bundeswehr's relationship with Wehrmacht veterans groups, unit lineages and insignia reared their heads as the barracks filled for the first time since the war. The Bundeswehr uniforms turned into a point of debate, with some critics saying they moved too far away from German military tradition.<sup>71</sup> Several scandals raised questions of whether the new force was actually an improvement from the past, among them the drowning of 15 conscripts during a river crossing exercise in Bavaria in 1957<sup>72</sup> and the abuse of recruits in a paratrooper training company in Baden-Württemberg in 1963.<sup>73</sup> One year later, the Parliamentary Commissioner of the Armed Forces, Hellmuth G. Heye, would tell a magazine that the Bundeswehr was developing into a self-contained state.<sup>74</sup>

Despite his invocations of a “zero-point” in German military history, Baudissin recognized from an early stage that tradition would need to be addressed within the reforms.<sup>75</sup> One of his earliest discussions on the topic was with civilian advisers at the Siegburg conference in 1953. In his opening remarks, Baudissin acknowledged that tradition could be an integration tool, but he worried that its substance was often overlooked for its form — that is, that tradition was too often celebrated for its own sake instead of the historical or spiritual lessons in which it was rooted.<sup>76</sup> Baudissin went further in a 1956 presentation on tradition before an audience of new Bundeswehr officers in Sonthofen.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps his most complete and direct statement on the topic, the speech was later used for the *Handbook for Innere Führung*. Taking the uniform debate as an illustration, Baudissin argued that traditions sometimes lost their original meaning over time and thus had to be measured against the needs of the present and future.<sup>78</sup> Decrying something as a departure from tradition made little sense if the substance of that tradition no longer accorded to present needs, he said. He concluded with a plea for soldiers to allow new traditions and conventions to develop. “We have the patience and certainty to allow symbols and modes of expression to grow,” Baudissin wrote. “It would betray an inner poverty, a lack of self confidence and a

---

<sup>70</sup> Interviews with Claus von Rosen, April 24-26, 2017.

<sup>71</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 103.

<sup>72</sup> “Iller-Catastrophe: Der Tod von Kempten,” in *Der Spiegel*, published June 12, 1957, and accessed on Aug. 1, 2017, at <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-41757689.html>: “In Wahrheit jedoch ist der absurde Tod der fünfzehn Jäger ohne Beispiel in der deutschen Heeresgeschichte. Ihrem präntiösen Anspruch, etwas ganz Neues bieten zu wollen, was in Deutschland auf militärischem Gebiet kein Vorbild hat, ist die Bundeswehr - ungewollt - an der Iller im Allgäu auf eine makaber dilettantische Weise gerecht geworden.”

<sup>73</sup> “Nagold: Tiefste Gangart,” in *Der Spiegel*, published Nov. 13, 1963, and accessed on Aug. 1, 2017, at <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-46172730.html>. The accusations included humiliating orders and instruction that extended late into the night.

<sup>74</sup> “Hellmuth Guido Alexander Heye,” in *Der Spiegel*, published on Nov. 11, 1964, and accessed Aug. 1, 2017 at <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-46176038.html>.

<sup>75</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 109-119.

<sup>76</sup> Baudissin, “Das Bild des zukünftigen Soldaten, Einleitung zur Gutachtertagung in Siegburg am 28. Und 29. April 1953,” 81.

<sup>77</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 151.

<sup>78</sup> Wolf Graf von Baudissin, “Soldatische Tradition und ihre Bedeutung in der Gegenwart, 173-190.

clueless cynicism were we to cling to old symbols and forms whose validity and expressiveness are no longer convincing instead of taking the risk of a new design.<sup>79</sup>

Yet where Baudissin sought patience, others saw a need to act more assertively on the issue of tradition.<sup>80</sup> The ministry of defense published a traditions decree in 1965, a document that formally addressed the valid and invalid sources of Bundeswehr tradition. The process behind the document was labored, involved significant hand wringing and was ultimately seen as imperfect.<sup>81</sup> Passages on the Nazi era and the July 20, 1944, resistance movement were controversial.

Baudissin's active involvement with *Innere Führung* waned in the years after its creation, and his star dimmed within the ministry as his ideas and his perceived haughtiness made him a divisive figure.<sup>82</sup> Commissioned as an officer in the new Bundeswehr in 1956, he served as a brigade commander in Göttingen before three consecutive assignments to combined headquarters or NATO billets in France. Baudissin retired from active duty at the end of 1967 and took a teaching position at the Bundeswehr University in Hamburg, one of two German universities for the armed services. He later took up the directorship of the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy in Hamburg in 1971. Baudissin's public identity as one of the Bundeswehr's greatest reformers had been cast, however, and he would remain both a father figure of the reform process and a voice of public criticism as it struggled in the future.

His successors would have their hands full by the late 1960s, as the social turmoil coursing through the West touched the German military. The rise of the liberal governing coalition that saw Willy Brandt's election to chancellor and the election of Gustav Heinemann, a former opponent of the German rearmament, to the presidency in 1969, signaled how times had changed. The Cold War had reached a relative ebb after the frenzy of the 1950s and early 1960s. A younger generation, familiar only with a democratic West Germany, was more skeptical of its elders' relationship with the past. The days of empathizing with the duty-bound soldier of the 1940s were coming to an end as many questioned the very necessity of military service, rattling traditionalists.

As society's stance toward the military hardened, conservative elements in the military showed more interest in undoing the reforms of the 1950s than in Baudissin's "new beginning."<sup>83</sup> Army inspector general Albert Schnez hoped to make an early impression on defense minister Helmut Schmidt when he released a "study" in the summer of 1969 highly critical of *Innere Führung* and the politicization of the military. Like other conservatives, Schnez wanted tradition to play a greater role in a soldier's training. He also wanted less civil control of the military and a diminished role for the Parliamentary Commissioner.<sup>84</sup> His paper found an eager audience in a group of staff officers with the 7<sup>th</sup> Division in Augustdorf, near the city of Unna. Under encouragement from their commander, an associate of Schnez, the group put their own criticisms to paper, which they demanded to give Schmidt before handing over to German newspapers.

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 190.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>81</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 184.

<sup>82</sup> Dagmar Gräfin zu Dohna, Letter to Odi Kasper, Oct. 1, 1971, in Baudissin and Dohna, *...als wären wir nie getrennt gewesen*, 249. See also Elfriede Knocke, Forward to *...als wären wir*, 21.

<sup>83</sup> Detlef Bald, "Restaurativer Traditionalismus," in *Hamburger Beiträge zur Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik: Was ist aus der Innere Führung geworden, zum hundertsten Geburtstag Wolf Graf von Baudissins*, 11-21.

<sup>84</sup> Hans-Joachim Reeb, "60 Jahre Innere Führung: Das Wesensmerkmal der Bundeswehr im Lauf der Geschichte," in *if* — *Zeitschrift für Innere Führung*, 4/2015: 27.

Their demands centered on discipline, or the perceived lack of it, and their belief that the democratization of the military was “not only inappropriate, but damaging.”<sup>85</sup>

The Schnez paper sparked a backlash. A group of officers from the Bundeswehr University in Hamburg released nine “working theses” in opposition to Schnez’s proposals in 1969. The declarations of the *Leutnant 70* called for, among other things, officers who “not only maintained but also created the peace.” Their appearance was something of a surprise for the retired Baudissin, who was unaccustomed to “being overtaken by the left,” as he remarked at the time. Baudissin responded at length to each of their theses.<sup>86</sup> The debate sparked by Schnez went all the way up to Schmidt, who expressed irritation with both sides. Baudissin, he told *Der Spiegel*, was “just as dangerous” as the authors of the Army study. “Both want to reform society, and that is not the task of the Bundeswehr.”<sup>87</sup>

Dealing with both cases — the staff officers from Unna and the *Leutnant 70* — fell to Bundeswehr Inspector General Ulrich de Maizière, a former member of Amt Blank and one-time head of the Innere Führung Center. Maizière’s views accorded more to Baudissin’s than traditionalists’, and the careful balance with which he handled both episodes while cementing Innere Führung’s place in the Bundeswehr later earned him credit as a father of Innere Führung.<sup>88</sup> Schmidt also proved key to upholding reformers’ work. The publication of the defense ministry’s 1970 White Book confirmed the role of Innere Führung in the German military, concluding that “The concept has proven itself.”<sup>89</sup> The era would also see the creation of a central Bundeswehr regulation for the concept, originally titled “Help for Innere Führung,” in 1972. The regulation, an updated version of which is still in effect today, holds the concept for a “fundamental principle” of the Bundeswehr and one that “ensures that the Bundeswehr remains in the center of society.”<sup>90</sup> The 1970s were hardly fertile ground for Innere Führung. Technological advances were transforming the soldier’s relationship with his work, ushering in a more technocratic era interested less in the subordinate-superior relationship than management theories aimed at efficiency.<sup>91</sup> The formal recognition of Innere Führung across the service pushed it out of the spotlight and threatened to relegate it to the background. Baudissin himself was concerned enough that in 1978 he penned a critique claiming Innere Führung was in a “reductions process.” The principle was directed overwhelmingly toward conscripts, associated mostly with the disciplinary process and generally irrelevant to a soldier’s career.<sup>92</sup> The result was an outlook within the corps that ran counter to Innere Führung’s philosophy. Units had become insular, the military more technocratic and regulation and obedience inflexible, Baudissin charged. “There’s both a lack of compulsion and a deficit of opportunity to seriously deal with the theory and practice of Innere Führung,” Baudissin wrote. “If the concept was rejected and made too

---

<sup>85</sup> Detlef Bald, “Restaurativer Traditionalismus,” 16.

<sup>86</sup> Wolf Graf von Baudissin, “Stellungnahme zu den neun Arbeitsthesen ‘Leutnant 1970,’” in *Grundwert: Frieden*, 405-410.

<sup>87</sup> “Vier Fronten,” *Der Spiegel*, Feb. 16, 1970, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-45202528.html>.

<sup>88</sup> “Einmaliger Vorgang,” *Der Spiegel*, March 29, 1971, accessed May 11, 2017, at <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-43279218.html>.

<sup>89</sup> “Weißbuch 1970 — zur Sicherheit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und zur Lage der Bundeswehr,” published May 14, 1970, and accessed July 31, 2017, at [dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btd/06/007/0600765.pdf](http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btd/06/007/0600765.pdf), 121.

<sup>90</sup> A2600/1 Zentral Dienstschrift, *Innere Führung, Selbstverständnis und Führungskultur*, published Jan. 28, 2008, accessed on June 12, 2017, at [www.kommando.streitkraefebasis.de](http://www.kommando.streitkraefebasis.de).

<sup>91</sup> Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 263.

<sup>92</sup> Wolf Graf von Baudissin, “Gedanken zur Innere Führung,” in *Grundwert: Frieden*, 465-468

emotional during the early years of the Bundeswehr, today it's been to a large extent abandoned as too routine."<sup>93</sup>

Social tensions surrounding the Bundeswehr would intensify again in the decade before the end of the Cold War, as the NATO decision to station nuclear missiles on German soil and the increasing Cold War rhetoric of the 1980s agitated public opinion at home. The charged atmosphere enflamed anti-war and anti-military sentiment across German society, emboldening the political left to again challenge the Bundeswehr's relationship with its past and demand further change. Progressives succeeded in having the traditions decree from 1965 recast in 1982. Instead of the original version's search for valid tradition in the German military's past, the new version emphasized a confrontation with the past and an embrace of the Bundeswehr's new traditions grounded in its democratic, peace-oriented founding.<sup>94</sup> Conservative elements within the Bundeswehr pushed back: Baudissin's erstwhile coworker at Amt Blank, the then-retired Heinz Karst, penned a 1982 memo to the incoming Helmut Kohl government approximating Schnez's concerns, including the objections to *Innere Führung*'s peace orientation and its insistence that the military reflect society's pluralism.<sup>95</sup>

Baudissin would express his disappointment with *Innere Führung*'s development at the end of his career. Opponents of his work had done more to water down the concept than supporters had done to help it flourish, he would suggest in a 1986 farewell address at the Bundeswehr University:

The history of *Innere Führung* in the Bundeswehr is a turbulent one. Although the Bundestag made the concept legally binding, opposition against anything new grew under the "Traditionalists" (I'm not the one who named them that). Every divergence from tradition ran into protest — against hand position, the new uniform, the limitations on the general salute and command authority... The emotional justification of the past appeared more important than the factual examination of the much more complicated new situation. Aside from personnel policies, the causes for these developments are the concept's hasty establishment and insufficient training of top leaders.<sup>96</sup>

Baudissin was remembered as one of the founders of the Bundeswehr upon his death in 1993. "His name will go down as one of the great reformers in German military history, as a successor of Scharnhorst und Gneisenau and in line with Ulrich de Maizière and Adolf Graf Kielmansegg,"<sup>97</sup> German weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* wrote at the time. Yet the fate of his creation, *Innere Führung*, would be left to his successors within the Bundeswehr, civil society and academia to debate and adapt, a process that would prove just as messy in the future as it was in the past.

---

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 467.

<sup>94</sup> "Richtlinien zum Traditionsverständnis und zur Traditionspflege in der Bundeswehr," 1982, accessed Aug. 15, 2017, at <http://bit.ly/2ui9FKc>.

<sup>95</sup> Detlef Bald, "Restaurativer Traditionalismus," 19.

<sup>96</sup> Baudissin, "Abschiedsvorlesung," 274-275

<sup>97</sup> Theo Sommer, "Soldat für den Frieden," *Die Zeit*, June 11, 1993, accessed Aug. 16, 2017, at <http://www.zeit.de/1993/24/soldat-fuer-den-frieden>.

## II. "THE WORLD HAS CHANGED AROUND US"

### Peace dividends

The end of the Cold War and the unification of Europe could appear in hindsight like a validation of Baudissin's ideas, if not the world he dreamed of in POW camp.<sup>98</sup> A democratic West Germany had faced off with a nuclear-armed totalitarian bloc and emerged victorious. Despite fielding hundreds of thousands of armed soldiers in a standoff on the border, West Germany had never come to blows with the East. Germany would reunify as a democratic nation, with East Germany's Nationale Volksarmee (NVA) folded into the Bundeswehr. Tired of conflict, both sides were eager to pursue peace after 45 years of near war.

The pacifist movement of recent decades left an imprint on mainstream society.<sup>99</sup> Succeeding generations of Germans had rejected the fundamental compromise of Adenauer-era policy, with its imperative of westward integration that looked beyond Wehrmacht veterans and former Nazi sympathizers instead of condemning them. The past was now viewed with less gray,<sup>100</sup> the Americans with less sympathy and nuclear weapons still with horror. Society's skepticism about Germany's place in the West ran counter to the direction of international politics, however. A unified Germany was firmly embedded in NATO and a more closely integrated Europe. An era of collective defense, in which allied countries vowed to protect one another, was transforming into an era of collective security, in which an outward-looking alliance focused on geopolitical threats that could cause regional destabilization. The 1989 Invasion of Panama and the first Persian Gulf War two years later displayed U.S. willingness to use the military for police-style operations across the globe. Germany, by comparison, moved more cautiously into the world of overseas operations, focusing initially on small humanitarian or logistical missions. The service participated in a mission to famine-struck Somalia in 1992, and it joined a UN-sanctioned medical and logistics mission in the country in 1993. The Bundeswehr's first overseas death came during a medical mission to Cambodia in 1993, during an attack by an unidentified gunman on a field hospital.<sup>101</sup>

The Balkan Wars, combined with the resolution of a debate over the constitutional grounds for deployment and questions over German responsibility in international interventions, led the country deeper into overseas involvement. The break-up of Yugoslavia after the demise of patron Soviet Union put conflict on Western Europe's doorstep. The Bundeswehr helped enforce the naval blockade of Yugoslavia in an effort to limit military shipments that could aid Yugoslav forces against breakaways Slovenia and Croatia. Beginning in 1992, it participated in AWACS flights to monitor a UN-mandated no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina. A 1994 decision by Germany's constitutional court confirmed such missions fell within the scope of the constitution,

---

<sup>98</sup> Hans-Georg Ehrhart, introduction to *Militär und Gesellschaft im Kontext Europäischer Sicherheit: Wie modern ist das Denken Graf Baudissins im 21. Jahrhundert?* (2001), 11: "Bereits 1946 räsonierte er in der britischen Kriegsgefangenschaft über Wertewandel, abendländische Kultur und die Notwendigkeit nationaler Souveränitätseinschränkung zu Gunsten eines — zunächst auf den Westen beschränkten — föderalen Europas."

<sup>99</sup> Interview with Karl-Heinz Kamp, director of the Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik, Dec. 19, 2016.

<sup>100</sup> Especially relevant was a 1995 exhibition by the Hamburg Institute for Social Research on the role of the regular Wehrmacht in a genocidal war on the Eastern Front. Titled "War of Extermination," or *Vernichtungskrieg*, the exhibition was controversial and unsettling to many still-living Wehrmacht veterans.

<sup>101</sup> "Armee in Einsatz," Bundeswehr website, May 2, 2015, accessed June 26, 2017 at <http://bit.ly/2tcuUf5>.

a validation of Germany's participation abroad that was celebrated by those who saw the country not just as a responsible ally but a nation with particular obligations given its history.<sup>102</sup> Such sentiments weren't restricted to conservative politicians. The ripple effect of the Balkan Wars in sectarian-divided Kosovo quickly entangled the pacifist Greens, then part of a coalition government with the Social Democrats.<sup>103</sup> The debate sparked a rupture within the party, yet the move to join the air campaign in March 1999 — the Bundeswehr's first participation in conflict — was immediately supported by a majority of Germans.<sup>104</sup> German ground troops would eventually be deployed to the nascent state, but for a strict peacekeeping role that continues today.<sup>105</sup> More than two years later, the German parliament would authorize another overseas operation for the Bundeswehr. Like Kosovo, Afghanistan was set in the framework of stabilization instead of conflict. It would go on to represent the Bundeswehr's greatest break with the past, redefining the service's culture and the identity of the modern German soldier.

### **The deployment generation**

On a November evening in 2014, a group of Bundeswehr officers and civilian military researchers gathered for a book presentation at the Bundeswehr University in Hamburg (renamed Helmut Schmidt University in 2003).<sup>106</sup> The book, *Army on the Move*, (*Armee im Aufbruch*), released by a small Berlin-based publishing house a month earlier, had close ties to the university — all sixteen contributors, as well as the two editors, were young Bundeswehr officers or officer candidates pursuing undergraduate degrees. Interested in exploring soldier identity in the Bundeswehr, they had written on subjects ranging from training and education to role models in German military history and the growing divide between soldier and society. During his introductory remarks, one of the book's editors, an army captain named Marcel Bohnert, observed that the young officers were part of a “deployment generation” that, in a break with the Bundeswehr's Cold War origin, had grown up knowing only a military that deployed overseas. Representing Bundeswehr brass at the event was a one-star general then serving as the deputy commander of the military's *Innere Führung* Center in Koblenz, Brig. Gen. Volker Barth. Barth warmly welcomed the book's publication, telling the gathering that its questions of identity and leadership had a bearing on military and society alike. “It's a convincing example of what we continuously need — the critical and the reflective,” he said. Bohnert came away from the event pleased. “We sold some books, and everybody was happy,” he recalled.<sup>107</sup> The warm reception grew cold the following February after a magazine widely read by German soldiers, *Loyal*, published an excerpt of one of the book's most combative essays. Written by a

---

<sup>102</sup> Roman Herzog, “Ansprach von Bundespräsident Roman Herzog anlässlich der Kommandeurtag der Bundeswehr,” Nov. 15, 1995, accessed June 26, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2u8IRYm>: “Precisely because Germans in recent history abused, and in fact suffered from, military power in such terrible ways, is our country in particular bound to participate in the restoration of the law in the framework of the international community.”

<sup>103</sup> As foreign minister, party leader Joschka Fischer supported German involvement in a NATO bombing campaign, arguing Germany had a special obligation to stop the genocide being committed by the Serbian government of Slobodan Milosevic against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

<sup>104</sup> Roland Heine, “Umfrage: Balkan Kriege nur zweitwichtiges Thema/Mehrheit für Bonner Kosovo-Politik,” *Berliner Zeitung*, April 5, 1999, accessed June 26, 2017, at <http://bit.ly/2taAdvd>.

<sup>105</sup> NATO: “Kosovo Force: Key Facts and Numbers,” last updated Feb. 2017 and accessed on Aug. 1, 2017, at [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_files2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2017\\_02/20170214\\_2017-02-KFOR\\_Placemat.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_files2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_02/20170214_2017-02-KFOR_Placemat.pdf). Germany had 530 troops assigned to the mission as of the Feb. 2017 mission status.

<sup>106</sup> YouTube Video, “Armee im Aufbruch (part 1/5) - Buchpräsentation Universität der Bundeswehr,” published July 9, 2015, and accessed July 28, 2017, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xU9Ga7sO6Q>.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Marcel Bohnert, Jan. 5, 2017.

24-year-old officer candidate named Jan-Philipp Birkhoff, the piece criticized German society as uncomfortable with the idea of sacrifice and argued mainstream values were incompatible with the military. Birkhoff encouraged soldiers to develop their own values around the professionalism of the soldier. Outraged reader letters poured into *Loyal* in response, and the book quickly turned into discussion fodder within the military, leading the mainstream German press to pick up on the debate. A reviewer for the center-right *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, one of Germany's largest newspapers, took issue with the book's perceived dismissiveness toward German society.<sup>108</sup> In a pair of panel discussions hosted by the Innere Führung Center and aired by German public radio, the Bundeswehr's top official for Innere Führung, center leader Maj. Gen. Jürgen Weigt, challenged Bohnert and Birkhoff's portrayals of soldier identity (Weigt was the direct superior to Barth, the general who had lauded the book's publication at its release party). During one panel, a commentator began his remarks by saying the book's essays suggested "Generation *Einsatz*" might better be called "Generation Yes-man."<sup>109</sup> "The narrative was a negative one," Bohnert would reflect more than a year later. "It was also a little bit shocking for me."

*Army on the Move* illustrates how divisive Innere Führung remains in a post-Cold War era filled with significant change for the Bundeswehr. Reunification was followed with the disappearance of an immediate nuclear threat, the reduction of the service's size and its shift toward limited overseas deployments. Manned by volunteers instead of conscripts, the force was then shaped by experiences that had never before occurred in Bundeswehr history, namely sustained combat and the consistent threat of serious injury and death. Germany's 2010 decision to suspend conscription was an acknowledgement of a change that had already taken place within the military: A professional force, shaped by war, no longer needed conscription to supplement its ranks. And yet the Bundeswehr's official image of the soldier as a non-professional, socially integrated "Citizen in Uniform" remained unaltered. "Bohnert stuck his finger in the right wound," said Claus von Rosen, the military historian who now oversees Baudissin's archives. "He's a young soldier, he has deployment experience and he's recognized it exactly."<sup>110</sup> Born to a mechanical engineer and state economist in the East German state of Mecklenburg-Pomerania, Bohnert had imagined a career as a soldier since childhood. That his opportunity arrived with a unified Bundeswehr in 1997 made little difference, by his own telling. After training as a mechanized infantry soldier on both sides of the former border, Bohnert was sent overseas for the first time in 1999, to Kosovo, an experience that left him with a positive impression of deployment. Despite warnings that the first German soldiers sent to the region since World War II might face pushback, Bohnert felt welcomed, finding that German soldiers were seen as the "good guys" in Kosovo. It was an impression that dovetailed with his own views of the military and its role, and it was reinforced by the interest and pride of family members and

---

<sup>108</sup> Gerald Wagner, "Keiner Weiß, wie der Landser tickt" *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Feb. 26, 2015, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/forschung-und-lehre/bundeswehrstudenten-rechnen-mit-der-oeffentlichkeit-ab-13445907.html>. Worth noting is that Wagner's review ultimately lauds the soldiers for publishing their opinions, even if he disagrees with their views. Wagner would even dial back his criticism in a later article (see note 149).

<sup>109</sup> *Deutschlandfunk Kultur*, "Staatsbürger oder Kämpfer in Uniform?" discussion held on June 9, 2015, audio published on YouTube, July 22, 2015, and accessed Aug. 1, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BB99B4LN-Ms>.

<sup>110</sup> von Rosen interviews, April 24-27, 2017.

friends back home.<sup>111</sup> Bohnert pursued an officer's commission shortly after his return. Later asked at officer school in Dresden why he had wanted to become an officer, he remembers answering that he wanted to help people.

His idealism would be tested a decade later in Afghanistan. Germany began sending soldiers to the landlocked Central Asian country in 2002 for what was seen as a stabilization mission following the American-led ouster of the Taliban regime. The Bundeswehr suffered sporadic losses in the following years, and by 2008 its troops were being regularly targeted and were forced to proactively patrol and secure the area. Back home, the increasing violence lay bare what the stabilization mission had become.<sup>112</sup> After an ambush that killed three German soldiers on Good Friday in 2010, then-German defense minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg acknowledged publicly that Germany was engaged in conflict, a symbolic step for a country where military conflict represented dangerous political ground. The mood back home soured as the mission turned deadly,<sup>113</sup> and the idea that German security was being defended "at the Hindu Kush"<sup>114</sup> was becoming less convincing than ever. One event in particular seemed to stamp German public opinion — the September 2009 bombing of a pair of fuel tanker trucks in Kunduz that killed scores of innocent civilians.<sup>115</sup> To opponents of the war, the faulty decision-making around the airstrike was symbolic of Germany's wrongheaded policy in Afghanistan; even supporters had to acknowledge the Bundeswehr's lack of preparation for its first conflict. For many soldiers on the front lines, the debate was more symbolic of society's disconnect from the dangers they faced daily.<sup>116</sup>

Bohnert soon experienced the disconnect for himself. Traveling to Kunduz in 2010 for a first look at the footprint his company would assume upon deployment, he found a Bundeswehr that wasn't just anticipating combat, but seemingly searching for it. Forced to react to the fire it was taking, soldiers had developed more assertive tactics. Platoons were actively patrolling, looking for and detonating roadside bombs and questioning villagers about militant networks. Absorbed in their counterinsurgency operations, they lived in a world of small outposts, patrols through unfriendly villages and a general distrust of locals. Combined with the mood back home, the daily operations led to a sense of isolation. A mission stripped of any political meaning took on other aims, from camaraderie to professional achievement and the embrace of warfare as a culture. The soldiers Bohnert saw in 2010 even seemed physically changed from their experiences, he noticed, with longer beards and bulked-up frames from weightlifting in their downtime. They were fierce, he thought, and resembled warriors more than "Citizens in Uniform." His company's six-month deployment in 2011 strengthened his initial impressions. Bohnert's company rarely came under fire but faced a grinding counterinsurgency campaign waged in village visits and searches for

---

<sup>111</sup> Interview with Marcel Bohnert, Jan. 5, 2017.

<sup>112</sup> Nicholas Kulish, "German Limits on War Face Afghan Reality," in *The New York Times*, Oct. 26, 2009, accessed July 24, 2017 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/27/world/27germany.html>.

<sup>113</sup> "Wird Deutschland am Hindukusch verteidigt?" in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, published May 26, 2010, and accessed Aug. 5, 2017, at <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/allensbach-umfrage-wird-deutschland-am-hindukusch-verteidigt-1985011/infografik-umfrage-zweifel-1989667.html>.

<sup>114</sup> "Die Sprüche des Peter Struck: 'Die kann mich mal,'" in *Spiegel Online*, published Dec. 19, 2012, and accessed Aug. 5, 2017, at <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/peter-struck-die-praegnantesten-zitate-a-873892.html>.

<sup>115</sup> "Kundus-Affäre: Eine Chronik," published March 15, 2015, in the *Süddeutsche-Zeitung* and accessed Aug. 1, 2017, at <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/luftangriff-in-afghanistan-kundus-ffaere-eine-chronik-1.2389156>.

<sup>116</sup> Uli Gack, "Bundeswehr unter Beschuss in Kunduz/Afghanistan," for ZDF, uploaded to YouTube on Nov. 12, 2011, accessed Aug. 1, 2017, at [https://youtu.be/BTiqlUR6\\_qY](https://youtu.be/BTiqlUR6_qY).

roadside bombs.<sup>117</sup> Unit feeling was high, even if tinted by frustrations over a resilient enemy and the lack of mission clarity.

Coming back home was more difficult compared to Kosovo, Bohnert found. Back in a world where the defining moment of his service barely registered, Bohnert sought to make sense of the disparity. He wasn't alone. Bundeswehr soldiers had begun talking publicly about their experiences.<sup>118</sup> Bohnert was more interested in talking about what their experiences meant to the soldier's position in society. In 2013, he contributed to *Soldatentum*, a collection of essays edited by a group of officers at the Bundeswehr University in Munich, who, like Bohnert, wanted to explore soldier identity in an age of deployment. One of the few non-academic contributions to the book, Bohnert's piece is an argument for how Afghanistan had fundamentally changed the Bundeswehr's image of itself. The mission split servicemembers into two groups, he writes — those who had deployed and those who hadn't. The former group represented the most modern expression of the Bundeswehr, a group that had served even at risk to self, compared to an older generation that had never served in combat. Most frustrating was that the older generation was still instructing the younger, he writes: "The generation of soldiers with deployment experience stands to gain only in part from the practical knowledge of higher leadership, something that threatens a kind of generational conflict. The diehards still stuck in the Cold War have trouble grasping the change from defense and conscription to a deployment force, just like they struggle to accept the fight for survival that has become a tactical reality."<sup>119</sup> Being a soldier is a profession for Bohnert, if one unlike all others. The military is *sui generis*,<sup>120</sup> or in a class of its own, he writes, due to the expectations it places upon soldiers, from bravery and self-sacrifice to death. The soldier who sees himself as little more than an employee in a large organization will fail to drum up the necessary hardness to survive threatening situations.

Sent to Helmut Schmidt University for his degree, Bohnert brought along his new passion for the soldier's self-image. Assigned as a group leader for younger students, he turned his weekly mentoring period into a discussion on the topic. His group, a collection of young officers and officer candidates with little experience in combat units, much less deployment overseas, embraced the topic.<sup>121</sup> The discussions could be intense, Birkhoff recalled,<sup>122</sup> and the group, which ranged in size from 12 soldiers to scores in the days after the book was published, often split into two sides of every issue, with discussion continuing well after the period ended. *Army on the Move* was intended to broaden the conversation and move it outside the university, according to Bohnert.<sup>123</sup> As was the case in his class, the arguments put forth are based largely on personal experience and observation. The most palpable feeling is the authors' impatience, not just to join their units but to know their men, to deploy and to affirm their identity as soldiers and

---

<sup>117</sup> Neil Shea, "Ready to fight: German soldiers' Afghan mission shifts from reconstruction and training to engaging enemy," *Stars and Stripes*, published Jan. 8, 2012, and accessed July 24, 2017 at <https://www.stripes.com/ready-to-fight-german-soldiers-afghan-mission-shifts-from-reconstruction-and-training-to-engaging-enemy-1.165410#.WXWw9P-GPZs>.

<sup>118</sup> A prime example includes Johannes Clair's *Vier Tage im November*.

<sup>119</sup> Marcel Bohnert, "Armee in zwei Welten," in *Soldatentum: Auf der Suche nach Identität und Berufung der Bundeswehr heute*, ed. Martin Böcker (Munich: Olzog Verlag GmbH, 2013) 75-90.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>121</sup> Of the book's 16 contributors — not all of whom were members of Bohnert's class — only three had overseas experience at the time of its publication.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Jan-Philipp Birkhoff, Feb. 21, 2017.

<sup>123</sup> Marcel Bohnert, "Armee im Aufbruch: Zum anhaltenden Diskurs um das Buch der 'Leutnante 2014'" in *Jahrbuch Innere Führung 2016* (Berlin: Carola Hartmann Miles-Verlag, 2016).

its worth in society. The contributors chafe against the formality of their educations in Hamburg, where campus resembles a civilian university and feels distant from the barracks.<sup>124</sup> Kai Skwara, a lieutenant from Wolfenbüttel, questions whether four years of schooling helps build the self-image of a soldier or hurts it by keeping students at a distance from real soldiers. He writes, “It is necessary to examine whether such a development is actually favored by staying at these institutions, or whether it is more a ‘place between the chairs’ for the attending officers and officer candidates, during which they technically belong to the armed forces, but in reality are alienated from them or even lose their basic identity.”<sup>125</sup>

One could argue the benefits of a general education free from the stigma and conformities officers will carry for the rest of their careers — the argument, essentially, of *Innere Führung*. The opposite case is made in *Army on the Move*. The university isn’t just a holding pen for future soldiers, its essays suggest, but a denial of the real proving grounds. Such detachment is misguided at a time of high-stakes deployment, their arguments imply, especially given the Bundeswehr’s lack of preparation in Afghanistan, and is another example of how the Cold War system no longer fits new realities. A similar thinking extends to *Army on the Move*’s consideration of virtues and traditions in the military, millstones that weighed so heavily on the necks of founders like Baudissin but whose absence seems self-apparently wrong-headed to another contributor, Lt. Florian Rotter:

There is a lack of fundamental and profound military education which goes beyond the mere commitment to liberal democratic principles. This isn’t about teaching but about the use of concrete and historical examples to encourage virtues to be lived. Virtues and tradition can’t be allowed to degenerate into the maintenance of mindless tradition, whose deeper meaning is already lost. We are not purely political soldiers; therefore, our concept of values must go beyond the state and the state’s values. It’s not enough to simply learn terms like courage, loyalty or honor. For understanding and internalization, it takes role models and traditions.<sup>126</sup>

Rotter’s argument for a thoughtful versus mindless tradition echoes Baudissin’s thoughts on the subject from 1956. Yet the young officer appears to suggest *Innere Führung* belongs to the group of traditions whose meaning has been lost with time.

Birkhoff’s essay takes the distance between soldier and society even further. An officer candidate raised in a middle-class background on the Dutch border, Birkhoff was heavily influenced by an early assignment with a combat battalion in Thuringia that had recently returned from Afghanistan.<sup>127</sup> Like Bohnert, Birkhoff saw in recent deployers a group of professionals untethered to the political background of their deployment but aggravated by a mainstream society that showed no concern for their mission. Titled “Leadership despite mission: On the role

---

<sup>124</sup> Most newly commissioned officers go in short time from their initial training to one of the Bundeswehr universities, a path that keeps them at a distance from branch and trade, as well as the enlisted men and non-commissioned officers they’ll later be required to lead. The university curriculum largely resembles a civilian school, as does much of the foot traffic on campus, where students aren’t required to wear uniforms.

<sup>125</sup> Kai Skwara, “Soldent oder Studat? Der Offizier in der Gesellschaft und der Einfluss des Studiums,” in *Armee im Aufbruch*, ed. Marcel Bohnert and Lukas J. Reitsetter (Berlin: Carola Hartmann Miles-Verlag, 2014) 140.

<sup>126</sup> Florian Rotter, “Wie dienen? Preußische Tugenden im 21. Jahrhundert,” in *Armee im Aufbruch*, 59.

<sup>127</sup> Birkhoff interview, Feb. 21, 2017.

of military leadership in the postheroic society,”<sup>128</sup> his essay holds that military commanders are faced with two contradictory missions that stem from society's misunderstanding of their role: Meeting strategic objectives while preventing loss of life at all costs. The latter requirement is political in nature and diverges from the understanding of soldiers that sacrifice is often a necessity of meeting strategic goals. “In a parallel society like the Bundeswehr with its own values and norms, the loss of comrade lives would be considered a terrible thing but never a fundamental danger to the mission. The same losses are seen on the civilian side as a symptom or signal of failure, however.”<sup>129</sup>

With loss of life, flagging confidence on the political side begins to affect troop morale, Birkhoff continues, threatening success on the military side. He argues the military must find its own ethos apart from society if it is to be effective at its task. Birkhoff finds this ethos in “professionalism,” the idea that soldiers should attach less value to the political consequences of their actions than “the quality of the actions themselves.”<sup>130</sup> Like Bohnert, Birkhoff sees the military as a *sui generis* trade whose actions have their own worth so long as governed by the primacy of politics. Simply put, soldiers should focus on soldiering, letting the politicians decide where to send them and why. Although both the political and military sides will hash out questions of strategy, operation and tactics, the values of bravery, loyalty and obedience, belong to the soldier alone, Birkhoff writes. He argues further that uniformity has more value in the military than a free agency that permits discussion and debate and potentially hinders a unit's ability to act. The military's reflection of society's pluralism is thus a problem for Birkhoff, moreover because society offers a spectrum of “defeatists, radicals, hedonists and arrogant self-promoters” who are “fully incompatible with a professional military leadership culture.”<sup>131</sup>

The words “*Innere Führung*” are largely absent in the essays of Birkhoff and others in *Army on the Move*, yet, like the *Loyal* readers, those familiar with the concept would see the principle as a focus of the work, if not the target of the book. Both Bohnert and Birkhoff knew that their interests had long been spoken for by Baudissin's principle, something they soon found to be true in research circles and even in public, where *Innere Führung* still retained its legacy of reform. Despite the two men's similarities to Baudissin — officers grappling with new principles based on changed circumstances in the German military — they were seen by many as attacking the Bundeswehr's legacy itself.

### **Innere Führung in an *Einsatzarmee***

Before his death in 1993, Baudissin remarked that overseas deployments were the next step in securing peace.<sup>132</sup> Left behind to understand how *Innere Führung* would relate to such deployments was a collection of social scientists and military historians in the organizations that had defined Baudissin's career, including the ministry of defense, the Bundeswehr University in Hamburg and the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy that Baudissin lead from 1971 to 1984.

---

<sup>128</sup> A concept popularized by Berlin political scientist Herfried Münkler, who argued that society had lost its willingness to sacrifice for its own values.

<sup>129</sup> Jan-Philipp Birkhoff, “Führung trotz Auftrag: Zur Rolle des militärischen Führers in der postheroischen Gesellschaft,” in *Armee im Aufbruch*, 109.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Theo Sommer, “Soldat für den Frieden”.

They would have much to consider as the military's post-Cold War stance evolved. A period that began with reunification and the brief creation of the largest German military since World War II quickly moved to one of downsizing. From a height of 600,000 soldiers, the Bundeswehr dropped to a mandatory 370,000 by 1994 before arriving at 250,000 in 2010. Its budget fell dramatically, as the need for massive manpower and equipment diminished with the reduced threat of interstate conflict. The new overseas deployments had their own set of requirements, however, and as the EU began considering a defense initiative in response to Kosovo, Germany was forced to think of its own reforms. Political realities would keep conscription in place for another decade, but the number of conscripts continued to fall as training needs evolved for a military whose defensive posture was giving way to forward deployments and specialized missions. From humanitarian responses to peacekeeping and eventually counterinsurgency, potential Bundeswehr operations required a new degree of complexity.

*Innere Führung* meanwhile remained largely in stasis, critics charged. Marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bundeswehr in 2005, a paper by the Commission on European Security and the Future of the Bundeswehr, part of the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy, slammed the state of Baudissin's concept. Echoing Baudissin's complaints in 1978, the commission claimed his concept had become background noise by the mid 2000s, making it little more than a perfunctory element of training.

Today, a half century later, one must recognize everything in all that the original claim is incomplete, could only be redeemed in part and in very essential parts even failed. The understanding of *Innere Führung* is often arbitrary in the Bundeswehr, at every level. In most cases it is reduced to a purely formal, interpersonal management and motivation technique. This is not enough for a developed democracy.<sup>133</sup>

The 2008 report by then-Parliamentary Commissioner to the Armed Forces (the *Wehrbeauftragter*) illustrated their concerns. Recalling soldier comments during a two-day conference on the theme of leadership, then-commissioner Reinhold Robbe depicted failures in both aspects of the Bundeswehr's application of *Innere Führung*, that is, its stance toward soldier identity and the relationship between superior and subordinate.

The participating soldiers moreover emphasized that the Bundeswehr was training more experts and fewer soldiers and comrades. Insecure leadership often played out in arrogance and exaggerated hardness. Because there's little acceptance of mistakes, precautionary thinking prevails.<sup>134</sup>

The rising toll on deployed soldiers did eventually lead to changes in the Bundeswehr's regulation on *Innere Führung*, including an acknowledgment that the soldier's responsibility included potentially killing someone.<sup>135</sup> Yet the broadly reductive view of *Innere Führung* and the

---

<sup>133</sup> Kommission Europäische Sicherheit und Zukunft der Bundeswehr, "50 Jahre Bundeswehr, 50 Jahre „Innere Führung“: Anlass zu Reflexion und Reform," published Oct. 2005 and accessed July 25, 2017, at <https://ifsh.de/das-ifsh/bundeswehr-kommission/positionspapier/>.

<sup>134</sup> Unterrichtung durch den Wehrbeauftragten Jahresbericht 2008, March 26, 2009, 20.

<sup>135</sup> ZdV 10/1, "Der militärische Dienst, insbesondere in Führungsverwendungen, stellt hohe Anforderungen an die Persönlichkeit. Soldatinnen und Soldaten finden in den Grundsätzen der Inneren Führung Sicherheit für ihr Handeln. Denn der militärische Auftrag erfordert in letzter Konsequenz, im Kampf zu töten und dabei das eigene Leben und das Leben von Kameraden einzusetzen."

soldier in general frustrated researchers as gaps in the Bundeswehr's preparation for Afghanistan became increasingly apparent. In a 2009 edition of the *Hamburger Beiträge*, a regular series by the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy, researchers pondered whether *Innere Führung* could survive the Bundeswehr's transformation into an *Einsatzarmee* without addressing the wider significance of the new missions to the soldier's identity. "Deployment training conveyed no ground principles to leadership — and perhaps for the soldier profession as a whole," one researcher wrote. "What has that lead to? Who is responsible?"<sup>136</sup>

The arrival of *Army on the Move* was greeted politely and even with praise among older officers, military historians and political scientists, the rocky reception of Birkhoff's essay aside. Like Barth, many welcomed the willingness of young officers to put their thoughts to paper.<sup>137</sup> They pointed to the need for open debate in the context of *Innere Führung*, a concept built around plurality of opinion and open discussion. In Bohnert, the Bundeswehr now had an officer with a deployment background who was eager to examine his experiences in the framework of *Innere Führung*. Bohnert moreover signaled that his interests weren't fleeting, participating in discussion panels and responding to critics of his book. He contributed further pieces on soldier identity to academic collections like the annual *Innere Führung Almanac* and explored related topics like the needs of Afghanistan veterans in German society.<sup>138</sup>

Yet praise for *Army on the Move* was often followed by criticism of its arguments. The idea of soldier identity rooted in a professional versus a "Citizen in Uniform" framework sounded an alarm for many scholars. Birkhoff's construct in particular, which held the soldier for an absolute professional and a political agnostic, stood in direct opposition to *Innere Führung*'s cornerstones of political engagement and civic connection. The backlash following *Loyal*'s excerpt from Birkhoff's essay was strong within the Bundeswehr. Although he did find some support, a typical reaction was that of Lt. Gen. Martin Schelleis, the three-star general then in charge of German Air Force operations. In a letter to *Loyal*, Schelleis criticized Birkhoff as "inexperienced in life and service," and dismissive of the primacy of politics, to the point that he sounded as if he were in favor of mercenary army.<sup>139</sup>

The primary response from the Bundeswehr came from the *Innere Führung* Center, through Weigt's public appearances, as well as articles in the center's in-house magazine, *if*. The issues that followed the *Loyal* excerpt of Birkhoff's addressed the book directly, while also examining its ideas on professionalism, education and experience on the battlefield. Weigt rejected Birkhoff's view of soldier identity in particular, calling it a "frontal assault" on Bundeswehr values.<sup>140</sup> His immediate rebuttal to the book was that soldiers required lived experience to understand and embody *Innere Führung*. Weigt's rebuttal grew more personal with time, as he appealed to soldiers to trust their leadership until they had the necessary experience to understand

---

<sup>136</sup> Detlef Bald, "Bedingt einsatzbereit: „Realistische Ausbildung“ der Bundeswehr oder mit der Wehrmacht in den Hindukusch," in *Hamburger Beiträge zur Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik: Bundeswehr im Krieg – wie kann die Innere Führung überleben?*, ed. Bald, et al. (Hamburg: 2009), 9.

<sup>137</sup> "Stimmen zu 'Armee im Aufbruch,'" in *Armee im Aufbruch*, i-ix: Ten pages of positive blurbs are found at the front of the book, most of them welcoming the thoughts of young officers.

<sup>138</sup> Marcel Bohnert, *Die Unsichtbare Veteranen, Kriegsheimkehrer in der deutschen Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Carola Hartmann Miles-Verlag, 2016).

<sup>139</sup> Martin Schelleis, "Offizier als Staatsbürger," Leserbrief in *Loyal*, Feb. 2015

<sup>140</sup> Jürgen Weigt, "Von wegen ausgedient: Innere Führung muss jeden tag neu vorgelebt werden," in *if — Zeitschrift für Innere Führung*, 2/2015, 4.

Innere Führung.<sup>141</sup> “Being a soldier demands experience above all,” he wrote. “Whoever lacks experience as a soldier will never understand the soldier.”<sup>142</sup>

Researchers and military historians were also critical of the book, if still welcoming of the discussion it sparked. At a panel event during the 2014 book launch, military historian Klaus Naumann argued that modern Bundeswehr operations had actually tethered officers more than ever to the political sphere, given the opaque goals of modern operations compared to the Cold War-era goal of self-defense.<sup>143</sup> Rosen, the Baudissin archivist at the Command and Staff College of the Bundeswehr in Hamburg, takes issue with the idea that *Innere Führung* is a concept of peace adrift during war. “Complete soldier” (*vollwertiger Soldat*) was one of the three legs of *Innere Führung* according to the definition put out in 1953, Rosen points out.<sup>144</sup> Baudissin also held that the only way to maintain peace was an effective deterrence, and that the only way to effective deterrence was to have soldiers fully prepared to go to war. *Innere Führung* was meant to give them the tools to stand ready at the line between peace and war without slipping over it unnecessarily, Rosen holds.

Mainstream coverage of the book fell to public radio and the pages of a few newspapers like the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. As with other scandals, some reaction to Bohnert's book fell along established political lines. Where left-leaning publications or organizations saw budding nationalism,<sup>145</sup> more conservative ones saw a call for recognition of the military within society.<sup>146</sup> The broadest criticism leveled at *Army on the Move* — made equally by Rosen, Naumann and reviews like that of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* — was that the lack of orientation of otherwise motivated young officers pointed to failures within the Bundeswehr.<sup>147</sup> Weigt, by comparison, has said questions raised in the book stem from the natural consequences of the Bundeswehr's transformation from a Cold War army.<sup>148</sup>

Bohnert traced reactions to *Army on the Move* with a 2016 essay in the *Innere Führung Almanac*. By his own assessment, what began with a promising introduction in November 2014 quickly turned to heated criticism, he noted, before evolving into a constructive conversation. Weigt's criticisms had softened, as had the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*'s.<sup>149</sup> Bohnert also found encouragement from politicians on both ends of the political spectrum.<sup>150</sup> Now a major, he is currently attending the Command and Staff College in Hamburg, the next step for promising mid-career officers in the Bundeswehr. Still active on the topic of *Innere Führung*, he is finishing a master's thesis on the concept and its application in Afghanistan. He has found support in part

---

<sup>141</sup> Jürgen Weigt, “Plädoyer für ein Gefühl: Innere Führung — Leitbild, Vorbild, Zerrbild,” 13-19.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>143</sup> Klaus Naumann, remarks at the book presentation for *Army on the Move*, “Armee im Aufbruch (part 1/5) - Buchpräsentation Universität der Bundeswehr.”

<sup>144</sup> von Rosen interviews, April 24-26, 2017. Rosen emphasizes *Innere Führung*'s influence extends to the tactical level.

<sup>145</sup> Peer Heinelt, “Mordsspektakel,” *Junge Welt*, June 13, 2015, accessed on July 4, 2017, at <https://www.jungewelt.de/artikel/266847.mordsspektakel.html>.

<sup>146</sup> David Ernes, “Rezension: Armee im Aufbruch, published in *Übergeordnetes Werk*, 462 (2015): 83-84. accessed July 4, 2017, at <https://www.hss.de/publikationen/rezension-armee-im-aufbruch-pub665/>.

<sup>147</sup> von Rosen interviews, April 24-26, 2017, and Klaus Naumann in “Sehnsucht nach den Kämpfer Typ,” March 6, 2015, accessed July 3, 2017, at <http://www.fr.de/kultur/bundeswehr-sehnsucht-nach-dem-kaempfer-typ-a-504213>. “Irritieren muss die Verantwortlichen der Inneren Führung, dass diese im Grunde hoch motivierten Soldaten keine Orientierung finden an den angebotenen Bildungsstoffen der Bundeswehr.”

<sup>148</sup> Jürgen Weigt, “Von wegen ausgedient.”

<sup>149</sup> Gerald Wagner, “Das Land kennt seine Soldaten nicht,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 16, 2017, accessed on July 4, 2017, at <http://plus.faz.net/evr-editions/2017-05-16/wNJ0Ei9qSLq85VwnO7mjEqY?GEPC=s1>.

<sup>150</sup> Bohnert, “Armee im Aufbruch: Zum anhaltenden Diskurs um das Buch der ‘Leutnante 2014,’” 249.

from Rosen, as well as encouragement from the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy.<sup>151</sup> Birkhoff, by contrast, is hoping to move on from the bruising response to his article to focus on his latest assignment.<sup>152</sup> Now a platoon leader, he is preparing to deploy to the Bundeswehr mission in Mali next year. Bohnert's book had other positive results. It encouraged researchers like Naumann to call for the Innere Führung Center to update its guidelines, as well as for the Ministry of Defense to release an updated whitebook.<sup>153</sup> Naumann would later release his own vision of an updated Innere Führung, which he called "Innere Führung 4.0."<sup>154</sup> The recent controversy over the Bundeswehr's relationship to the Wehrmacht has prompted another look at the issues raised in *Army on the Move*, above all the relationship between soldier and society. The accusations of hazing, sexual harassment and — in the Franco A. case — extremist views, took a toll on the Bundeswehr's public reputation.<sup>155</sup> Yet some observers also took umbrage at the claim by von der Leyen that the Bundeswehr had an "attitude problem... on various levels."<sup>156</sup> Even Bohnert publicly criticized von der Leyen for citing Innere Führung in response to the hazing and sexual harassment allegations.<sup>157</sup> Others began to assess German society's responsibility to the Bundeswehr amid its recent changes, with some seeing the suspension of conscription as a mistake.<sup>158</sup> In the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the same writer who had criticized *Army on the Move* two years earlier wrote that he now saw a nugget of truth in its authors' complaints. German society, he concluded, is one "that doesn't know its soldiers but judges them."<sup>159</sup>

### **Final thoughts**

For Baudissin and his supporters, integration was an ongoing process. The crimes of the Nazi era revealed how a military absorbed in itself and focused on conflict alone could be manipulated to dark purposes. Their solution was a radical one — they would "democratize" the military by taking power from the chain of command and giving it to the soldier, and they would forbid the military from cultivating an identity distinct from society. In their view, the soldier was less a professional with his own culture than a member of a democratic society with added responsibilities, a "Citizen in Uniform." Any other formulation, in the outlook of reformers, led to the kind of compromises that Wehrmacht veterans and their supporters had long sought, and initially received, during the post-war years, namely the expectation that their service would be honored despite its support for a criminal regime.

---

<sup>151</sup> In June 2017, Bohnert presented an early draft of his master's thesis to a closed session of the Commission on European Security and the Future of the Bundeswehr.

<sup>152</sup> Marco Seliger, "Ein 'nassforscher Leutnant,'" in *Loyal*, 6/2017, 22-27.

<sup>153</sup> Klaus Naumann, "Sehnsucht nach den Kämpfer Typ," "Nicht weniger als ein zeitgemäßes Bild des „Staatsbürgers in Uniform“ steht zur Debatte. Doch weiß kaum einer zu sagen, was Staatsbürgerlichkeit heute bedeutet könnte."

<sup>154</sup> Klaus Naumann, "Innere Führung 4.0" Gedanken zum Konzept des Staatsbürgers in Uniform, published in *if — Zeitschrift für Innere Führung* 60 (2017), 14-21, accessed July 4, 2017, at <http://bit.ly/2ukW7Kz>.

<sup>155</sup> "Umfrage — Vertrauen der Deutschen in Bundeswehr gesunken," in *Reuters*, published May 12, 2017, and accessed Aug. 3, 2017, at <http://de.reuters.com/article/deutschland-bundeswehr-umfrage-idDEKBN1880D3>.

<sup>156</sup> "Ministerin: Bundeswehr hat ein 'Haltungsproblem,'" in *Hannoversche Allgemeine*, May 1, 2017, accessed Aug. 25, 2017, at <http://www.haz.de/Nachrichten/Politik/Deutschland-Welt/Fall-des-Terrorverdachtigen-Soldaten-hat-die-Bundeswehr-ein-Haltungsproblem>.

<sup>157</sup> Marcel Bohnert, "Über Korpsgeist und Kampftruppen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 29, 2017, 8.

<sup>158</sup> "Die Bundeswehr ist kein Spiegel der Gesellschaft mehr: Michael Wolffsohn in Gespräch mit Manfred Götzke," *Deutschlandfunk*, April 30, 2017, accessible at [http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/rechtsextremismus-in-der-truppe-die-bundeswehr-ist-kein-694.de.html?dram:article\\_id=384978](http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/rechtsextremismus-in-der-truppe-die-bundeswehr-ist-kein-694.de.html?dram:article_id=384978).

<sup>159</sup> Gerald Wagner, "Das Land kennt seine Soldaten nicht."

The following decades tested Baudissin's belief that the Bundeswehr could spring from a "zero point" of German military history. On one side, generational change and an evolving understanding of the Wehrmacht's role in Nazi war crimes led to even louder demands for a break with the past. Yet *Innere Führung*, with its abstractions and its imperfect implementation throughout the Bundeswehr, struggled to fill the role of a positive identity.<sup>160</sup> For some soldiers in search of a self-image, the appeals to the democratic and progressive values of the constitution could be too vague when faced with the realities of deployment, the concept of "Citizens in Uniform" too unwieldy. Even Baudissin believed tradition played a role in the military, yet the two traditions decrees — a third is now in the works — come off as the products of bureaucratic processes.<sup>161</sup>

Bohnert, Birkhoff and the young authors in *Army on the Move* are only the latest to raise the issue of identity in the German military. That they do as representatives of the new *Einsatzarmee* disposition of the Bundeswehr adds special weight to their arguments, even if their relative inexperience prompts questions. When Bohnert and Birkhoff say the Bundeswehr's reality no longer corresponds to the conditions of its creation, they point convincingly to the soldier-society gap exposed by missions like Afghanistan — a mission in which the Bundeswehr for the first time risked life and limb for a society that seemed ambivalent at best about its struggles. The Bundeswehr's lack of preparation for conflict, taken together with its ongoing struggles to equip and maintain a formidable combat capability and the life-altering deployments in Afghanistan has put aspects of *Innere Führung* into doubt for some veterans. The appeals of officials like Jürgen Weigt, who thoughtfully ties understanding of *Innere Führung* to maturity and experience, struggle to overcome the fundamental divide now riven into the Bundeswehr between those who have deployed and those who haven't.

"[T]he world has changed around us," Birkhoff has said about transition from the Cold War mentality to that of young soldiers deploying regularly overseas.<sup>162</sup> There is some truth to his statement. Through technology, bureaucracy and the normalization of constant deployment, modern Western militaries have become distanced from the very human consequences of their actions, and they have indeed become more professional. Yet missions like Afghanistan and Mali show just how different the military is from a normal career. Soldiers of every nationality have returned from deployment feeling alienated from the society that sent them, precisely because of the murkiness of the political goals and the unsavory nature of both sides of the conflict. The blurred lines between good and bad, ethical and unethical create a special burden for soldiers who are asked to understand their missions politically and place them in context of the constitution's protection of human rights. Such complexity heightens the imperative for *Innere Führung*, researchers like Claus von Rosen argue persuasively. The concept's requirement for purposeful action and its reflection on the boundary between military action and non-action — essentially the border between deterrence and conflict — is more important than ever at a time when fighting often blends into civilian populations, where stabilization quickly turns into conflict and where

---

<sup>160</sup> Even the reservist magazine *Loyal* compared it less favorably to the U.S. Army Values, an ethical code that says less about the soldier's place in society than his conduct. "Army Values: Das Wertgerüst des US-Soldaten," in *Loyal*, 01/15, 22.

<sup>161</sup> "Von der Leyen will Kasernen umbenennen," in *Die Welt*, published May 14, 2017, and accessed Aug. 3, 2017, at <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article164544417/Von-der-Leyen-will-Kasernen-umbenennen.html>.

<sup>162</sup> Birkhoff interview, Feb. 21, 2017.

the coolness of distance can conceal the horror of killing. "One has to establish boundaries," Rosen said. "And that belongs to *Innere Führung*."

Yet German society also has a special responsibility to the Bundeswehr. Given the primacy of politics over its armed forces, it has the obligation to pursue military operations that aren't just lawful, but accord to the spirit of the constitution and have clear political goals and exits. *Innere Führung* has always spoken to society as much as soldiers, both as a reassurance that the Bundeswehr remains integrated in society and that the conscripted citizen has a place within the military. This obligation remains unchanged more than 60 years later, even without a Cold War and without conscription. If society and soldier are to remain closely bound, they must recognize their responsibilities to one another.