

# Which Past for the Soldier?

## Military History, Historical Education, and the Ethics of Democracy in Germany Today

Jörg Echternkamp

**Abstract.** The construction of tradition in the military depends on the meaning given to certain aspects of the past in the light of the present. West Germany's history of tradition-building since 1955 is a case in point. After the end of Nazism, the new democratic armed forces, the Bundeswehr, was supposed to distance itself from the Wehrmacht by emphasizing the "civil" role of soldiers. Communicating historical knowledge became part of their democratic education rather than a guideline for military performance. Institutions such as the Center for Military History and the Museum of Military History, travel exhibitions, as well as popular scientific journals have contributed to an understanding of what is worthy of tradition – in particular the Prussian reforms, the plot of 20 July 1944, and the history of the Bundeswehr itself. Such references to the past – so the argument goes – help soldiers in combat to better grasp the ethical framework of military operations, provide orientation, and support their identity. Whether and how traditions should be adjusted according to changing military conditions remains controversial.

Any reference to the past gives evidence of the present. Starting from this assumption, I will reflect on the German concept of linking military history to historical education and the construction of tradition in the military. This has not only been an academic issue, but also a very salient political problem. The importance of historical knowledge in the German armed forces is reflected by the public debate that led, in March 2018, to new guidelines by the Minister of Defence. Its starting point was a startling scandal.

“We can tolerate many things, but not political extremism, right-wing or religiously motivated extremism,” Minister Ursula von der Leyen told the media in May 2017.<sup>1</sup> She was reacting to the strange case of a 28-year-old army lieutenant who led what prosecutors called a “double life”, pretending to be a Syrian refugee. He was arrested on suspicion of planning a gun attack which he meant to blame on his alter ego – a fictitious Damascus fruit seller. The scandal widened after media reported the suspect had expressed far-right views in his 2014 master thesis, but that no disciplinary action was taken against him. As a result of this scandal, all barracks buildings were searched for objects, images, symbols referring to Hitler’s German Army, the *Wehrmacht*.<sup>2</sup> German soldiers are supposed to cherish tradition, but the military instrument of Nazi dictatorship is not part of this. This leads to the central question in the context of this conference: “Which Past for the Soldier?”. The subtitle deliberately points up three aspects: “Military history, historical education, and the ethics of democracy”. I will argue that these three elements have been – and will be – inextricably linked when it comes to the use of the past in the German Armed Forces.

## Discontinuity and “Innere Führung”

In Germany, military history is primarily marked by discontinuity. The coexistence of two German armies opposing each other until the breakdown of East Germany in 1989–1990 is a more recent case in point. Not surprisingly, West German soldiers generally do not value its former communist counterpart.<sup>3</sup> The history of the National People’s Army (NVA)

---

<sup>1</sup> Verteidigungsministerium zum Fall Franco A.: “Bundeswehr hat ein Haltungsproblem,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, 30.04.2017.

<sup>2</sup> For the chronology of the case see the wikipedia article “Terror Ermittlungen gegen Bundeswehr Soldaten 2017,” [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrorermittlungen\\_gegen\\_Bundeswehrsoldaten\\_2017](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrorermittlungen_gegen_Bundeswehrsoldaten_2017), accessed 1.12.2018.

<sup>3</sup> Nina Leonhard, “Armee der Einheit’: Zur Integration von NVA-Soldaten in die Bundeswehr,” – *Handbuch Militär und Sozialwissenschaft*, ed. Sven B. Gareis and Paul Klein, 2. Aufl. (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006), 61–71; *Ibid.*, *Integration und Gedächtnis. NVA-Offiziere im vereinigten Deutschland* (Konstanz: UVK-Verlag, 2016).

that goes back 35 years is not a part of today's military tradition.<sup>4</sup> Things become much trickier, however, when it comes to the pre-1945 past. Ever since rearmament in the mid-1950s, references to the years when German soldiers were actually fighting has been problematic because of the history of the Nazi regime and its armed forces, the Wehrmacht.<sup>5</sup> The West German armed forces (*Bundeswehr*), established in 1955–1956 in a democratic state, could and should not simply be considered a remake of Hitler's army. Paradoxically, the Wehrmacht was not the forerunner of its follower. After all, "demilitarizing" the Germans had been a major goal of the Allies' occupation policy in the immediate post-war period. Using military force without issue has ceased to be a given. This can be seen in the mass protests against rearmament in the 1950s as well as in the opposition to foreign missions among the majority of Germans in the last decades.

Certainly, the new "democratic" army had to be legitimized by a new culture of leadership. This principle has been called *Innere Führung*.<sup>6</sup> It tries to harmonize the values of democracy and the requirements of a military organization in order to motivate the soldiers and by doing so strengthen its efficiency. "Internal leadership" – as opposed to formal, external leadership – links all military values explicitly to the values and

---

<sup>4</sup> Rüdiger Wenzke, *Nationale Volksarmee. Die Geschichte* (München: Bucher, 2014); *Ibid.*, *Ulbrichts Soldaten. Die Nationale Volksarmee 1956 bis 1971*. Militärgeschichte der DDR 22 (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> For a synthesis of research on Wehrmacht see Jürgen Förster, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat. Eine strukturgeschichtliche Analyse* (München: Oldenbourg, 2007); Wolfram Wette, *Die Wehrmacht. Feindbilder, Vernichtungskrieg, Legenden* (Frankfurt am Main: C. H. Beck, 2005). On the debate see Christian Hartmann, Johannes Hürter, Ulrike Jureit, eds., *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht: Bilanz einer Debatte* (München: Beck, 2005). On the role of German veterans see Jörg Echternkamp, *Soldaten im Nachkrieg. Historische Deutungskonflikte und westdeutsche Demokratisierung 1945–1955*. Beiträge zur Militärgeschichte 76 (München: DeGruyter/Oldenbourg, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Frank Nägler, *Der gewollte Soldat und sein Wandel. Personelle Rüstung und Innere Führung in den Aufbaujahren der Bundeswehr 1956 bis 1964/65*. Sicherheitspolitik und Streitkräfte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 9 (München: DeGruyter/Oldenbourg, 2011); Georg Meyer, "Zur Inneren Entwicklung der Bundeswehr bis 1960/61," – *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik 1945–1956*, Bd. 3: Die Nato-Option, ed. Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (München: Oldenbourg, 1993), 851–1162. See Zentrale Dienstvorschrift A-2600/1 "Innere Führung. Selbstverständnis und Führungskultur", 6.11.2017, [www.bmvg.de](http://www.bmvg.de), accessed 14.01.2020.

norms of the German Constitution, particularly to liberty, democracy, and the rule of law. Therefore, in 1956, a school for advanced training was founded, since 1981 named “Centre for Innere Führung”.<sup>7</sup> At the core of this culture is the role model of the “citizen in uniform” (*Staatsbürger in Uniform*). The concept is based on the idea of an army in the midst of civil society. It is based on the ideal of officers who get politically involved – not on behalf of one single party (as had been the case in the GDR), but in support of a system of political pluralism.<sup>8</sup> The concept assumes that soldiers are able to decide themselves, by the dictates of their conscience, whether or not an order is in accordance with the Constitution. There is no absolute obedience in the German Army.

However, well into the 1970s this new culture of leadership met with resistance from parts of the Bundeswehr due to the prevalence of so-called traditionalists who were affected by the culture of the Wehrmacht. It was not until the mid-1960s that the concept of Innere Führung was debated inside the Army as well as by the German public. While the traditionalists argued that being a soldier is a profession *sui generis* and grounded in “eternal” military values such as comradeship, reformers insisted on the ideal of a Bundeswehr based on the values of democracy and pluralism. In recent years, against the new backdrop of missions abroad, critics have called for a role model for military professionals that is presumably closer to combat reality. The advocates of Innere Führung, however, underline the fact that finally the concept has been successfully tested. A key component of this concept, however, is historical education.

---

<sup>7</sup> Hans-Joachim Reeb and Peter Többecke, *Lexikon Innere Führung* (Regensburg: Walhalla, 4. Aufl., 2014); Hans-Joachim Reeb, “60 Jahre Innere Führung: das Wesensmerkmal der Bundeswehr im Lauf der Geschichte,” *Zeitschrift für die Innere Führung: if* 59 (2015), Heft 4: 23–30.

<sup>8</sup> See from a comparative perspective Jörg Echternkamp, “Der politische Offizier als normativer Typus. Zum Verhältnis von Politik und Militär im ‘Dritten Reich’, in der DDR und der Bundesrepublik,” *Tel Aviv Yearbook for German History* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2016), 221–250.

## The role of historical education

If a soldier's conscience is so important, it is equally important to train the soldier in a way that his value system reflects the ethics of democracy.<sup>9</sup> This has been the fundamental goal of historical and political education in the Federal Republic.<sup>10</sup> One needs historical knowledge if one wants to behave as a citizen. One needs to understand how the values of the legal system have developed and where they originated historically. Also, soldiers have to learn about the past in order to recognize which historical events, persons and institutions would be suitable or unsuitable for their "tradition". The main idea is based on the distinction between education and training, between *Bildung* and *Ausbildung*. Debating the past provides a more general education (*Bildung*) than precise guidelines for military behaviour. Historical education conveys knowledge on the cause and effect of former developments. It explains the development of political, cultural, and military problems of the present. The intention of historical education in this context is a military one. It is historical knowledge that enables the soldiers to critically discuss their tradition, their job as soldiers, as well as their self-image as "citizens in uniform". What is more, knowing about the past, especially the Nazi past and the war of annihilation, helps the soldier to identify with the free and democratic order of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Thus, studying and teaching military history in the Bundeswehr is not merely a useful pursuit during time not taken up by military training. History is essential for the self-understanding of the Army. To be more precise, the adequate understanding of history is essential. Keeping in mind the personal continuity – former Wehrmacht soldiers serving in the West German Army well into the 1970s – it is evident that what

---

<sup>9</sup> Klaus Ebeling, *Militär und Ethik: Moral- und militärkritische Reflexionen zum Selbstverständnis der Bundeswehr*, Beiträge zur Friedensethik 41 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> For the history of political education see Gerrit Mambour, *Zwischen Politik und Pädagogik – Eine politische Geschichte der politischen Bildung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Schwalbach/Ts., 2007). The current understanding of political education in the German Armed Forces is reflected by the Bundeswehr's Zentrale Dienstvorschrift A-2620/1 (Regulation) "Politische Bildung in der Bundeswehr", [www.bmvg.de](http://www.bmvg.de), accessed 5.11.2018.

was clear in theory did not always work out in practice. Time and again, the military cherished their brave and loyal comrades who presumably did a good job in World War II. So, why not, for instance, name barracks after famous Wehrmacht generals? The Ministry of Defence tried to counter those tendencies and respond to voices of public protest that grew louder in the 1980s and the 1990s. Two “tradition decrees”, issued by the Ministers of Defence in 1965 and 1982 respectively, were meant to make sure that any reference to the past in the barracks – from lecture halls and monuments to the naming of buildings – was in line with the political values.<sup>11</sup> Since the mid-1990s, the German Army has reviewed the naming and abandoned various names. The former Dietl-Kaserne of the mountain infantry in the Bavarian town of Füssen is a case in point. Those barracks had been given the name of Wehrmacht Colonel General Eduard Dietl, whom Adolf Hitler himself had called a “true friend”. Due to Dietl’s role during the Nazi regime and against the backdrop of a critical public debate,<sup>12</sup> Minister of Defence Volker Rühle decided in 1995 to rename the barracks “Allgäu-Kaserne,” the new name referring to the Bavarian region of Allgäu.

## Communicating historical knowledge

Who is in charge of historical education? Where does historical knowledge come from? How is it communicated to the soldiers? The Centre for Innere Führung, the key institution of political-historical education has already been mentioned. In a narrower sense, it is the Bundeswehr Center for Military History and Social Sciences (ZMSBw) at Potsdam that has

---

<sup>11</sup> See Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross. The search for tradition in the West German armed forces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. the article “Des Führers General. Darf eine Kaserne den Namen des Wehrmacht-Offiziers und Hitler-Freundes Dietl tragen?“, *Der Spiegel*, 24.05.1993, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13681952.html>, accessed 20.12.2018. Hans-Hubertus Mack, “Vorbilder? Die Diskussion um die Namensgeber für Bundeswehr-Kasernen,” *Militärsgeschichte Zeitschrift für historische Bildung* 4 (2014): 18–21; Loretana de Libero, *Tradition in Zeiten der Transformation. Zum Traditionsverständnis der Bundeswehr im frühen 21. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006).

been in charge in two ways. On the one hand, it is in this institute, founded in the late 1950s under the name *Das Militärgeschichtliche Forschungsamt* (MGFA), that historians do research in military history.<sup>13</sup> The researchers are supposed to be part of the academic community to guarantee the scientific respectability of their work. On the other hand, the Center's department of historical education makes use of their colleagues' books and articles, prepares the results didactically, and makes them available to the army. Various forms of communication have developed over the last decades. To begin with, at each school of officers and non-commissioned officers (for the army, air force, navy), there are teachers of military history. Secondly, almost every unit has at its disposal a collection of objects referring to military history, a collection in line with the rules set by the ZMSBw. Thirdly, travelling exhibitions illustrate and interpret important chapters of German military history. Since the 1980s the Center for Military History has organized travelling exhibitions, most notably an exhibition on resistance within the armed forces against Hitler.<sup>14</sup> It ran parallel for a while with the travelling exhibition "War of Annihilation. The Crimes of the Wehrmacht" (*Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht*) produced by the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, initiating a fierce debate on the role of the Wehrmacht. A more recent example is the poster exhibition on the sometimes controversial relationship between military and society in both East and West Germany, presenting the two opposing German armies, their social and political roles, as well as their transformation into one army (*Armee der Einheit*) in the 1990s.

Fourthly, military history is on display in the German Army's museums. The most recent one to be established, some say the most spec-

---

<sup>13</sup> For the history of the institutionalization of military history in West Germany see Martin Rink, *50 Jahre Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt. Eine Chronik*, ed. Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Berlin: be.bra verlag 2007); Jörg Echternkamp, „Auftrag: Forschung. Die Bundeswehr, das Verteidigungsministerium und die Aufarbeitung der NS-Vergangenheit im Systemkonflikt“, in: *Zeitgeschichte-online*, Juni 2015, <https://zeitgeschichte-online.de/thema/auftrag-forschung>, 3.11.2018; Dietl und kein Ende, in: *Diez Zeit*, 3.11.1995, [https://www.zeit.de/1995/45/Dietl\\_und\\_kein\\_Ende\\_Er\\_war\\_Nationalsozialist\\_der](https://www.zeit.de/1995/45/Dietl_und_kein_Ende_Er_war_Nationalsozialist_der), accessed 3.11.2018.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Thomas Vogel, ed., *Aufstand des Gewissens – Militärischer Widerstand gegen Hitler und das NS-Regime 1933–1945* (Hamburg: Mittler, 5. Aufl. 2000). A more recent example is the exhibition on military and society "Militär und Gesellschaft in Deutschland since 1945".

tacular of German museums, is run by the Army – the Military History Museum (*Militärhistorisches Museum*, MHM) at Dresden. It is not a display of weapons and military power, as some visitors might have hoped. Rather, it confronts the museum-goers with the violent past, especially of the two world wars. It also collects objects from more recent military missions, such as a “Wolf” Jeep damaged in 2004 by an attack in Afghanistan wounding three Bundeswehr soldiers. A branch of the MHM, the air force museum at Berlin-Gatow, is under construction. The MHM is an example of how social and cultural approaches of historiography can form museological concepts. Historical knowledge is also – and this is the fifth point – spread by print media, e.g. the quarterly magazine *Militär-geschichte. Zeitschrift für historische Bildung* (Military History. Journal for historical education), edited by the Potsdam Centre. Also, there are brochures on topics considered particularly relevant, such as the attack on Hitler 20 July 1944. The journal as well as the brochures are also available online. Finally, the Bundeswehr is capitalizing on the so-called new media. The Centre for Innere Führung is currently working on an online platform which provides all kinds of information on military history, including a selection of people and events of the past that could become officially part of a military unit’s “tradition”.

Teaching, collections, travelling exhibitions, museums, print and digital media: these are the different ways to impart historical knowledge that is considered necessary for the soldier to be a “citizen in uniform”. This brings us back to the more analytical question of “Which past for the soldier?”

## **A political minefield: “military tradition”**

It is now clear that the Nazi regime and its military cannot lay the historical groundwork for the German Army. But what are the aspects of the past that soldiers can and should refer to in a positive way? Since its establishment in the mid-1950s, the West German army has referred most of all to three lines of tradition: the Prussian reforms of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the resistance by civilians and officers against Hitler during the



Third Reich, as well as its own past, the history of the Bundeswehr itself. Let me outline these three answers to the question “Which past for the soldier?”

First of all, the so-called Prussian Reforms had changed the military system in the German countries in a radical way. Defeated by Napoleon’s army in 1806, generals and top-ranking officials such as Gerhard von Scharnhorst, August Neidhardt von Gneisenau and Hermann von Boyen reorganized Prussia’s government, administration, and military based on Enlightenment ideas and in line with reforms in other European nations. Most notably from a military perspective, they adopted the concept of conscription. Every citizen who enjoys his rights, the argument went, should be ready to defend those rights. Citizens were turned into soldiers: this idea matches the key concept of today’s Innere Führung. Small wonder that the reformers are regarded as the forerunners of conscription.<sup>15</sup> Thus, it was on Scharnhorst’s 200<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary that the first Bundeswehr soldiers were sworn in. The Iron Cross, a decoration endowed at the time, has been the symbol of the West German Armed Forces ever since (including, however, the years 1933–1945). Reference to the past is always ambivalent, because it is not the past but its interpretation that counts. The Prussian Reform era is a case in point. Not only West Germany, but also communist East Germany made use of this national tradition, naming, for instance, the highest military decoration after Scharnhorst. The idea was similar: to turning the military into a national army as opposed to an instrument of capitalist oppression.

Secondly, the second answer to the central question “Which past for the soldier?” has referred to military resistance against National Socialism, most of all the 20 July plot. On 20 July 1944, Claus von Stauffenberg and other conspirators attempted to assassinate Hitler inside his headquarters in East Prussia. The apparent aim of the assassination attempt was to wrest political control of Germany and its armed forces from the Nazi Party, to make peace with the western Allies as soon as possible, and to spare the German people further violence. However, the underly-

---

<sup>15</sup> For an early interpretation cf. Hans-Joachim Harder and Norbert Wiggershaus, *Tradition und Reform in den Aufbaujahren der Bundeswehr* (Herford: Mittler, 1985).

ing desire of many of the high-ranking Wehrmacht officers involved was to show the world that not all Germans were Nazis. In other words, the resistance fighters represent what has been called “the other Germany”. In terms of tradition building, this intention counts more than the failed attack. Most of all, the plot is the prime historical example of soldiers placing a higher value on their conscience than on the principle of unconditional obedience. As mentioned above, this idea has been fundamental to the West German Army’s self-conception.

There is a third answer that has become more relevant over the years. The West German Army is supposed to turn to its “own” past for tradition building. At first glance this seems to be easy. Contrary to pre-1945 military history, there is no contradiction between the positive tradition of the Army and the political system it served. But of course, not every aspect of its own history is exemplary. Again, it is important to decide which events, developments, and people lend themselves to be cherished as “good” German tradition. This focus on Bundeswehr military history is inextricably linked to the problem of how to commemorate the death of fallen soldiers. Monuments and places that were used to remember those “comrades” who died during the Second (and First) World War were also used with regard to those who gave their lives for the army of a democratic state. After controversial public and academic debates,<sup>16</sup> the Bundeswehr erected its own monument, the “Ehrenmal” in Berlin, in 2009. Its inscription reads: “To the Dead of Our Bundeswehr – for Peace, Justice, and Freedom (*Den Toten unserer Bundeswehr für Frieden, Recht und Freiheit*). Contrary to conventional forms of commemoration, the transience and individuality of life are underlined by alternating video projections of the more than 3,200 names. Thus, when it comes to commemoration, the past of the democratic Bundeswehr has been separated by form and content from the times of dictatorship and the Wehrmacht.

---

<sup>16</sup> Manfred Hettling and Jörg Echternkamp, *Bedingt Erinnerungsbereit. Soldatengedenken in der Berliner Republik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008).

## Which past for the soldier? New guidelines for the future of the past

Most recently, the *post*-1945/1955 past has become the central point of reference for tradition in the German Army. Due to the public debate caused by the scandals in 2017, the Minister of Defence has issued new guidelines.<sup>17</sup> This third “decree of tradition” in West German history is the result of four workshops where soldiers of all ranks, veterans, historians, sociologists, political scientists and a broader audience discussed basically every aspect of the problem. For many participants, it was clear that the army needed historical examples for orientation. Less clear, however, was historical orientation itself. Again, the question was “Which past for the soldier?”

The new guidelines underline three principles that will be relevant for the future. First, the function of tradition and historical education is its impact on the present – identity, legitimacy, efficiency are the keywords. Secondly, every reference to the past is indissolubly connected to the values of the Constitution (as opposed to the values of the time and to so-called time-less values). In short, bravery is not enough unless it helped the cause of freedom and democracy. Thirdly, the guidelines substantiate those elements of the Bundeswehr’s past that are suitable for tradition building. Let me give some examples: the German Army’s contribution to international crisis management, their involvement in international missions as seen as a proof of value; the merits of around 8 million conscripts (until 2011); the “founding fathers” Wolf Graf von Baudissin, Ulrich de Maizière und Johann Adolf Graf von Kielmansegg (despite their career in the Wehrmacht); the integration into multinational structures from the very beginning; the role in the NATO strategy of forward defence during the Cold War; emergency relief in areas of humanitarian catastrophe; the successful integration of former East German soldiers into the West German Army after 1989–1990. Commemorating the 2,500 Bundeswehr

---

<sup>17</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung: “Die Tradition der Bundeswehr. Richtlinien zum Traditionsverständnis und zur Traditionspflege,” 2018 <https://www.bmvg.de/resource/blob/23234/6a93123be919584d48e16c45a5d52c10/20180328-die-tradition-der-bundeswehr-data.pdf>, accessed 3.01.2019.

members who died while on duty up to 1989–1990 will also be a part of dealing with the past. Finally, there is the concept of leadership itself and its ideal of the “citizen in uniform”. It is striking that these elements are not restricted to the soldiers. They also include civilian employees of the armed forces. This is an interpretation along the lines of the Berlin “Ehrenmal” where commemoration includes soldiers and civilians alike – contrary to traditional monuments.

## Conclusion

As the German case neatly shows, the past can and should be a soldier’s guide for the present – this dovetails with the theme of the Yearbook. It can be a guide in three regards. First of all, in democratic states, military “tradition” (i.e. the repertory of mostly exemplary elements of the past) is inextricably linked to the ethical principles and political values stipulated in the Constitution. Democratic societies want their soldiers to take heed of human rights. Historical knowledge is a crucial tool for a better understanding of the ethical framework of military operations. Secondly, soldiers in combat have to be able to react not just instinctively but also on the grounds of rational reflection. This holds all the more true in the German case of mission-type tactics (*Auftragstaktik*) empowering subordinates at all levels. The past gives no clear-cut instructions to be carried out. However, it does provide orientation in a military context where soldiers need guidance from lasting historical models to adapt their behaviour to quickly changing situations in various cultural contexts and in a time where the security architecture has become scattered.

Third, knowledge of military history supports the soldier’s identity, helping to legitimize the military operation and therefore providing the necessary morale. Thus, the importance of military history in military pedagogy can hardly be overestimated. This is the leitmotif of the current debate in Germany. The crucial question, however, remains: “Which past for the German soldier?” For instance, combat experience in out-of-area missions since the late 1990s have raised the question of whether or not one should refer to the experience of Wehrmacht soldiers. In the light of

growing tensions in Eastern Europe, referring to the past of World War II might seem all the more obvious – but should one take Hitler’s soldiers as role models for the German army today?

Methodologically speaking, to compare *internationally* the importance of history in military education is the logical consequence of the multinational character of current and future missions. The German example could also make a valuable contribution to the discussion of what I would call historical knowledge transfer in soldiers’ education – broadening the military profession’s perspective by pointing to European dimensions of military history.<sup>18</sup>

## Bibliography

- Abenheim, Donald. *Reforging the Iron Cross. The search for tradition in the West German armed forces*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Ebeling, Klaus. *Militär und Ethik: Moral- und militärkritische Reflexionen zum Selbstverständnis der Bundeswehr*, Beiträge zur Friedensethik 41. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2006.
- Echternkamp, Jörg. “Auftrag: Forschung. Die Bundeswehr, das Verteidigungsministerium und die Aufarbeitung der NS-Vergangenheit im Systemkonflikt,” *Zeitgeschichte-online*, Juni 2015, <https://zeitgeschichte-online.de/thema/auftrag-forschung>, 3.11.2018.
- Echternkamp, Jörg. “Der politische Offizier als normativer Typus. Zum Verhältnis von Politik und Militär im ‘Dritten Reich’, in der DDR und der Bundesrepublik,” *Tel Aviv Yearbook for German History* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2016): 221–250.
- Echternkamp, Jörg. *Soldaten im Nachkrieg. Historische Deutungskonflikte und westdeutsche Demokratisierung 1945–1955*, Beiträge zur Militärgeschichte 76. München: DeGruyter/Oldenbourg, 2014.
- Echternkamp, Jörg, Hans-Hubertus Mack, eds. *Geschichte ohne Grenzen? Europäische Dimensionen der Militärgeschichte vom 19. Jahrhundert bis heute*. Munich: De Gruyter/ Oldenbourg, 2017.

---

<sup>18</sup> Jörg Echternkamp and Hans-Hubertus Mack, eds., *Geschichte ohne Grenzen? Europäische Dimensionen der Militärgeschichte vom 19. Jahrhundert bis heute* (Munich: De Gruyter/Oldenbourg, 2017).

- Förster, Jürgen. *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat. Eine strukturgeschichtliche Analyse*. München: Oldenbourg, 2007.
- Harder, Hans-Joachim and Norbert Wiggershaus. *Tradition und Reform in den Aufbaujahren der Bundeswehr*. Herford: Mittler, 1985.
- Hartmann, Christian, Johannes Hürter, Ulrike Jureit, eds. *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht: Bilanz einer Debatte*. München: Beck, 2005.
- Hettling, Manfred and Jörg Echternkamp. *Bedingt erinnerungsbereit. Soldatengedenken in der Berliner Republik*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2008.
- Leonhard, Nina. “‘Armee der Einheit’: Zur Integration von NVA-Soldaten in die Bundeswehr,” – *Handbuch Militär und Sozialwissenschaft*, 2. Aufl., ed. Sven B. Gareis and Paul Klein, 61–71. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006.
- Leonhard, Nina. *Integration und Gedächtnis. NVA-Offiziere im vereinigten Deutschland*. Konstanz: UVK-Verlag, 2016.
- Libero, Loretana de. *Tradition in Zeiten der Transformation. Zum Traditionsverständnis der Bundeswehr im frühen 21. Jahrhundert*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006.
- Mack, Hans-Hubertus. “Vorbilder? Die Diskussion um die Namensgeber für Bundeswehr-Kasernen,” *Militärgeschichte Zeitschrift für historische Bildung*, Nr. 4 (2014): 18–21.
- Mambour, Gerrit. *Zwischen Politik und Pädagogik – Eine politische Geschichte der politischen Bildung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Schwalbach/Ts., 2007.
- Meyer, Georg. “Zur Inneren Entwicklung der Bundeswehr bis 1960/61,” – *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik 1945–1956*, Bd. 3: Die Nato-Option, ed. Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, 851–1162. München: Oldenbourg, 1993.
- Nägler, Frank. *Der gewollte Soldat und sein Wandel. Personelle Rüstung und Innere Führung in den Aufbaujahren der Bundeswehr 1956 bis 1964/65, Sicherheitspolitik und Streitkräfte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 9. München: DeGruyter/Oldenbourg, 2011.
- Reeb, Hans-Joachim and Peter Többicke. *Lexikon Innere Führung*. Regensburg: Walhalla, 4. Aufl., 2014.
- Reeb, Hans-Joachim. “60 Jahre Innere Führung: das Wesensmerkmal der Bundeswehr im Lauf der Geschichte,” *Zeitschrift für die Innere Führung: if* 59, Heft 4 (2015): 23–30.

- Rink, Martin. *50 Jahre Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt. Eine Chronik*. Hrsg. vom Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt. Berlin: be.bra verlag, 2007.
- Vogel, Thomas, ed. *Aufstand des Gewissens – Militärischer Widerstand gegen Hitler und das NS-Regime 1933–1945*. Hamburg: Mittler, 5. Aufl. 2000.
- Wenzke, Rüdiger. *Nationale Volksarmee. Die Geschichte*. München: Bucher, 2014.
- Wenzke, Rüdiger. *Ulbrichts Soldaten. Die Nationale Volksarmee 1956 bis 1971*. Militärgeschichte der DDR 22, Berlin: Ch. Links, 2013.
- Wette, Wolfram. *Die Wehrmacht. Feindbilder, Vernichtungskrieg, Legenden*, Frankfurt am Main: C. H. Beck, 2005.