

Democracy, the armed forces and military deployment: the 'second social contract' is on the line

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PRIF-Report No. 108

Democracy, the Armed Forces and Military Deployment: The ‚Second Social Contract‘ is on the Line

Harald Müller/Marco Fey/Sabine Mannitz/Niklas Schörnig

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Summary

This report deals with the tensions that the 'second social contract' – the relations between society, government, and the armed forces – has increasingly been confronted with in the context of military deployment.

Since the times of John Locke, the idea of a social contract has served as the basis for democratic government. Modern democracies have additionally accepted a second, largely unwritten, social contract; one which regulates the unique relations between society, government and the armed forces, including the mutual obligations arising from them: Soldiers place the interests of the nation before their own, subordinate themselves to the control of political authority, and relinquish some of their essential basic rights; they are forced to make personal sacrifices or even to give their own lives for the fulfilment of their service. In return, soldiers must be able to rely on politics and society to treat them fairly, furnish them with needed equipment and supply them with necessary provisions. Above all else, soldiers should expect to be deployed only on missions whose chances for success remain within the boundaries of rational human judgment.

The 'second social contract' necessitates that soldiers of democratic nations serve as citizens in uniform rather than pawns on a chessboard. It is their right to be deployed only after utmost care and consideration has been granted the issue at hand and all concerns have been weighed. The standards for deployment justification cannot be anything other than high.

This report makes a contribution to the public debate on the changes in global security conditions since the end of the Cold War – which have been much discussed but not sufficiently analyzed. Though foreign military deployment has assumed a permanent position within current security agendas, the resulting implications of such developments have not been duly reflected upon in their entirety. Deployment decisions are, in practice, not given sufficient due diligence, which has brought about a risk of growing estrangement between society, government and the armed forces. The adhesive element that binds the military to society cannot merely consist of institutional democratic checks on the armed forces, but must also include processes of inter-societal trust-building and partnership. This also rests upon a civil society that takes an interest in the destinies of its soldiers.

Based on the empirical evidence, it can be observed that German military deployment in the Balkans in the 1990s and in Afghanistan starting in 2001 were not 'wars of necessity' or self-defence, rather 'wars of choice' – parliament and the government could have easily decided against either of the respective deployments. This development has made it all the more necessary to reach decisions with utmost care.

The newly initiated military structure reform of the German Bundeswehr has broadened the scope of German military intervention, in accommodation to NATO's New Strategic Concept. This policy has set the implementation of the values represented by the Alliance – also in the form of 'humanitarian intervention' – equal in status to the goal of

collective defence. However, a thorough scrutiny into the logic of such deployments has not been carried out on the basis of previous experience.

The complexity characterizing these new sorts of mission (peace keeping, peace building, humanitarian intervention), as well as the sheer increase in the number of deployments since the end of the Cold War have brought with them revised requirements for the profile of the soldiers. Members of the armed forces are now expected to possess the highest cognitive, intellectual and psychological abilities; they are required to be equally competent in peace keeping as they are in fighting wars. Democracies have responded to this altered deployment profile by progressively professionalizing their armed forces. This trend has ushered in new challenges for civil-military relations. They can be overcome, but demand careful handling, such as in the area of recruitment.

Democratic decision-makers have to be able to deal with the growing risks related to new forms of military deployment; on the one hand, they have to justify the 'wars of choice' to their citizens and must approach military deployments with a certain degree of scepticism – though not complete refusal – and react to personnel losses with even greater scepticism. On the other hand, the 'second social contract' as well as the conscience of decision-makers themselves call for response strategies. Policy-makers have found two solutions to this problem, one being military risk-minimization, and the other being psychological and rhetorical repression. But neither solution is sufficient, on account of the fact that the problems are either deferred or repressed rather than solved. In order to prevent estrangement between society, government and the armed forces, decisions on military deployment must be more thoroughly and carefully considered. The military option should truly be the measure of last resort and not simply presented as such through rhetoric. In a case of doubt, it may very well be advisable to say 'no' to a deployment, even in the face of criticism from one's allies.

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1. Introduction: democracy, the armed forces and military deployment: a problematic relationship¹

Since the time of John Locke, the foundation for democratic theory has been the 'social contract'. This relates to the agreement among the citizenry to install a government that is both dependent on the citizens' electoral decisions and representative of their interests. Elected representatives create laws that all citizens are subject to, with the overarching goal of creating societal peace by means of a constitution in accordance with the rule of law.

An unwritten 'second social contract' likewise exists in democratic states. This contract aims at the inward 'taming' of the military and additionally requires that the social community and its leaders recognize the fact that soldiers assume certain sacrifices according to the demands of their service, therefore requiring both the social community and its leaders to adhere to a special obligation of due diligence in regards to decisions affecting their soldiers. This 'second social contract' is thus of paramount importance for a healthy relationship between democratic society and the military.

A change in conditions brought about by the end of the Cold War has led to a readjustment of these mutual obligations: more has been demanded of the soldiers, as they have been required to fulfil higher performance standards and often accept increased service risks. The gains that should be evident on the other side of the equation – a subsequent performance increase on the part of policy-makers and society – should be nothing other than a more assiduous adherence to obligations of due diligence. However, as the current diagnosis illustrates, in light of readjustment in strategic goal-setting and new mission types, the equation has not been balanced. The fact that deployed soldiers often complain about insufficient equipment supplies is further proof that policy-makers are faced with an obligation to act.

Government policy now takes for granted that foreign troop deployments are a part of the military's daily agenda: NATO's New Strategic Concept, according to Article V of the Washington agreement, strengthens the coexistence of traditional Alliance defence and global missions that serve Alliance security, and, beyond that, further the goal of the implementation of NATO-defined values in the form of 'humanitarian intervention' – in extreme cases the prevention of genocide. Both aims often end up converging – such as in the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Afghanistan: NATO 'puts its foot down' where its security interests are either directly or indirectly affected, and, concurrently, it spreads the liberal-democratic values that characterize the constitutions of its member states.

¹ We would like to thank Carsten Rauch and Bruno Schoch for their helpful commentary and remarks.

The underlying concept behind the current restructuring of the German military – begun by the then Defence Minister zu Guttenberg and initially met with strong opposition before eventually being concluded – also accommodated the goals of this double mission from the beginning. In the future, the German military is meant to have the capacity to simultaneously maintain two contingents of soldiers of up to 5,000 personnel each in deployments abroad. This translates to an extension of the military's intervention capabilities, revealing the positions of the political parties in parliament (with the exception of *Die Linke* – the leftist party), which set out to adjust the role of the German military, away from mere national defence within the nation's borders and towards a concept of an 'army in deployment', far away from the homeland.

Self-defence and foreign assistance, in the mainstream discourses of liberal democracies, are understood to be either self-evident or high moral goals (Wheeler 2000). On the abstract and theoretical plane of military structural blueprints and strategic concepts, this idea presents itself well, making it difficult for anyone to take up a convincing counter-position. Problems do, however, emerge once one reads the fine print and the concept is actually applied: the tension-filled relations between democracies and wars as well as between democracies and their militaries come to a fore, representing two volatile and mutually-connected political and moral issues. It would be convenient to simply debate them within the realm of political ethics philosophy; in reality, however, these issues manifest themselves as concrete and pressing decision necessities, such as in January 2011 in relation to the decision to extend the deployment mandate of the German military in Afghanistan.

The first issue, 'democracy and war', brings up the question of when and to what ends democracies should be allowed to wage wars. Various deployments of the German military have managed to combine the moral goals of foreign aid and self-defence, but this has owed more to political rhetoric than to the realities of the situations themselves. The war in the Balkans was indeed burdening German society with a rising number of refugees. Nonetheless, this was not a *security* issue as such, especially when one considers the strength and stability of German society and the economy. The threat of escalation across Europe, ignited by the conflict in the Balkans, was likewise implausible – this was no longer the world as it was in 1914, and the most serious tensions with Russia resulting from the war first materialized after NATO intervention and were not inherent in the initial conflict itself. In a similar vein, it is also hardly reasonable to assume that Germany's national security is being defended in Afghanistan (see below).

These considerations show that the aforementioned troop deployments were not necessities in terms of self defence or defence of the Allies. They were carried out because the goals were deemed 'good' and the chances for success high. A decision against deployment could just as easily have been reached if careful consideration had led to a different assessment of the conditions. These examples thus represent instances of 'wars of choice' rather than 'wars of necessity' (Freedman 2005, 2006). The parliament and government enjoy a degree of liberty in decision-making in such 'wars of choice', which they can utilize in various ways. This does, however, require that standards of diligence are carefully followed for the sake of those who will go on to shoulder the burden of deploy-

ment decisions, namely the soldiers and the people affected in the deployment areas. This leads to the second political and moral issue: 'democracy and the armed forces'.

Democratic government, particularly Germany's, wishes for its 'citizens in uniform' to be both civilized and democratic creations. Democracies also wish for them to prove effective and strong in the fight for national security and the political 'good'. Soldiers are expected to be citizens, armed helpers, and professional fighters all in one. The fact that these requirements are riddled with tension, when not outright contradictory, is seldom articulated – certainly not in white papers, or other military structure papers or strategic concepts.

The primary purpose of this report is to deliver a contribution to the, up to now, non-existent debate on the tensions understood to exist within the 'second social contract' in the context of troop deployment decisions in 'wars of choice'. The basis of the reports rests, *firstly*, on the fact that German armed forces are subject to deployment primarily on account of a mandate from the United Nations, stipulating military involvement either in the interest of the international community (manifested in the United Nations), or when the survival of a people faced with genocide is in question or grave crimes against humanity have been uncovered. *Secondly*, the report assumes that these deployments are never limited to 'social work', but that soldiers are in every case faced with the possibility of combat involvement. *Thirdly*, the report seeks to map out the mission tasks in all their complexity, as well as risks associated with their completion. *Fourthly*, it aims to stress the obligations carried by society and political leadership in relation to their soldiers. And *fifthly*, the report assumes that a flourishing relationship between democracy and its soldiers is by no means a minor criterion for democracy, but rather a fundamental requirement: Should the situation go awry, the very survival of the democratic polity would be thrown into doubt. This would not necessarily translate to the (unlikely) possibility of a military coup within the democracy (though it has happened), but rather to the onset of an underlying alienation, which could undermine the loyalty of the soldiers and make populist political alternatives more attractive. Even the very beginnings of such a development must be resolutely combated.

The report first presents the 'Military Covenant' model that was developed in Great Britain. It applies – be it written or unwritten – to democratic society, government and the armed forces, and defines the institutional arrangements that guarantee the upholding of a democratic system. Following this, the changes evident in the global environment and among the contracts to which democratic armed forces have been bound since the end of the Cold War will be identified.

With this background, the report will then move on to discuss the military reforms being observed all across Europe, including their new sets of goals and the changes in conceptions of ideal democratic soldiers that have been a result. Following this, light will be shed on how democracies are handling moral problem they are being confronted with, which is also a problem of policy presentation to the public: namely, putting soldiers in danger despite the absence of irrefutable necessity. Both technical as well as psychological/rhetorical solutions have been utilized in the problem-solving process; however, due

to the increased demands set by the ‘second social contract’, these responses have proven insufficient. Though this report takes the German situation as its basis, the experiences of other democracies will also be addressed in order to ensure broader grounding for the findings and conclusions laid out here.²

2. Democracy and its armed forces: the ‘second social contract’

The idea of a ‘second social contract’ (here also referred to as ‘covenant’) between society, government and the armed forces has been in development in Great Britain for many years. The covenant dates back in spirit to 1593 when Elisabeth I issued a statute that provided taxes on parishes for the treatment of wounded soldiers. In April 2000, the British army, with the approval of the government, published the *Military Covenant* in order to counter the growing gap between British society and its armed forces.

During the course of British involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq, the *Covenant* has proven itself quite popular: media, opposition, former defence leaders, charities and academia refer to the government and society’s obligation to act with diligence and care – as set out in the *Covenant* – when criticizing the negative aspects of military involvement – such as the considerable overextension of the armed forces, equipment shortages and the lack of (medical) care.³ The new government coalition of conservatives and liberals has promised to renew and formalize the *Covenant*, aiming to better facilitate the fulfilment of society’s obligations to its own military (MoD 2010: 29).

The *Covenant* rests on the ‘unbreakable bond’ of common identity, loyalty and responsibility, which sustained the army for centuries. This is a very fitting description of the relationship between society, democratic government and military. Soldiers take a special position in this relationship being that they forego some of their basic rights through their choice of career and must be prepared to sacrifice their lives for the common good when the elected political leaders deem it necessary. Additionally, they are required to refrain

2 This report draws upon the results of three large research projects conducted by PRIF within its program “Antinomies of Democratic Peace”. “Kriege von Demokratien nach 1990” (Wars by Democracies after 1990, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) investigated the decision-making processes in seven Western democracies in favour or against participation in military operations. “Democracies and the ‘Revolution of Military Affairs’” studied the integration of new technologies within the armed forces of six democracies and one non-democracy. “The Image of the Democratic Soldier” (sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation) examined the shift in the conception of the soldier in twelve democracies, including six younger democratic systems in Eastern Europe. We also draw upon the results of the large-n study “Parliamentary Control of Military Missions in Western Democracies”, a DSF-sponsored project. These projects, aimed at fundamental research, each attempted to comprehend the occurrences in our own country, utilizing empirical comparison with other countries.

3 See, for example, Forster 2006, 2011; Harding/Borland 2007; Judd et al. 2007; Rayment 2007; Military Covenant Commission 2008; Tipping 2008.

from using their own violence potential for political aims and to place the interests of state and society before their own. It is for this reason that the 'second social contract' requires society to act in turn and accordingly recognize and value the military profession as a part of the democratic system. It also requires political leadership to demonstrate a high degree of care for the soldiers, imploring leaders to refrain from imprudent or arbitrary deployment of the military for reasons of political opportunism. Interestingly, Carl von Clausewitz (Clausewitz 1969, third book, fourth chapter) groups the three actors of the 'triad' – government, military, and people – together accordingly, stating that their harmonious co-existence constitutes the defensive strength of a nation, while disharmony and conflict between them brings about defeat. For the relationship between a democracy and its military, the commitment to this (mostly unwritten) contract is an essential precondition in order to maintain of support, or at least toleration, of military deployment from the citizens.

For democracies, soldiers are not simply disposable elements of the state apparatus. As the reformers of the German armed forces in the 1950s clearly stated, soldiers are 'citizens in uniform', a status that is also implicit in most other democracies – and in comparison to past ages, this is a significant advance for civilization. Soldiers now have the right to expect that all considerations be thought through and weighed out when the decision falls on whether to expose them to physical and mortal dangers and, furthermore, place them in mentally and physically demanding situations in which they must choose between killing or being killed in a split second. Citizens of democracies are not pacifists by default; they hold the deployment of the armed forces as correct or even unavoidable in certain circumstances. With this comes the demand for convincing justification.

Considering this, the citizenries of Western democracies react notably stronger to losses on their side, particularly when the war at hand is neither in self-defence – a 'war of necessity' – nor when, in their view, national interests are not clearly being served. In other words, the more a conflict is viewed as a 'war of choice' and the more public opinion believes non-involvement to be the preferable alternative, the more sensitized the public becomes to losses. Apart for the type of involvement, another essential question is the extent to which the mission goals originally set out by political leadership are being met over the course of time. Losses become an especially potent issue when the original mission goals begin to overshoot their previously-defined time-frames or when no advances are apparent (Larson 1996; Gelpi et al. 2006). Casualties are given greater value the greater the feeling of their futility. In the West, the public eye has been practicing an ever more critical assessment of *why* their own soldiers are risking their lives. Accordingly, the willingness to accept casualties is especially low in cases of abstract wars for world order or humanitarian intervention. Initially, it would be feasible to assume that a readiness to accept losses for causes such as genocide prevention is present within a population. If, however, enemy parties cannot be kept separated and further massacres cannot be enduringly avoided after the initial intervention, public consent can, even after a handful of additional losses, quickly disintegrate. For political decision-makers, there always exists the danger that losses will lead public opinion to turn in regards to military involvement thus placing the government under pressure. This is supported by the fact that the degree of political unity on the topic of troop withdrawal is taken by the populace as an indicator

for the political significance of a mission. Troop deployments that enjoy cross-party support must, based on this line of reasoning, be in the nation's interest and are thus judged accordingly. Experience has also shown that additional personnel losses can lead to the break up of cross-party consensus, especially when the added factor of increasingly unclear goals is added. In such a situation, the government will find it extremely difficult to justify further losses and it could be confronted with the danger of the 'victim trap': For the sake of avoiding further losses, progressively more limits are placed on soldiers until, eventually, they are hardly even allowed to leave their encampments. Since the soldiers are no longer able to act, the mission goal becomes increasingly unattainable, leading tolerance for losses to further decrease, and so on and so forth.

Up to this point, we have only spoken about losses on one side of the front. On account of global mass media, the West has been forced to reconcile military demands with its own moral standards when waging wars. This manifests itself in increased public concern for civilian victims – often trivialized as collateral damage. Recent studies show that Western states place altogether more value on protecting civilian populations than do non-democratic states. Despite this, current studies also indicate that supporters of military deployments – and presumably Western societies on the whole – still adhere to a clear hierarchy of norms, which places the protection of one's own soldiers above that of foreign civilians (Geis et al. 2010; Shaw 2005). The best-known example of this was during the war in Kosovo, as NATO pilots were ordered not to fly below a certain altitude in order to protect themselves from Serbian air defences. An accepted consequence was the decreased accuracy of the attacks and a corresponding increase in the likelihood of civilian casualties. The American military now proclaims the protection of its soldiers to be a mission goal in and of itself, equal in standing to the actual mission goals themselves. To put it emphatically: Only once the protection of one's own troops has been guaranteed, can other goals – such as the prevention of genocide – be addressed. The public's contribution to the 'second social contract' is fulfilled, almost instinctively, through its stance on the minimization of risks facing its soldiers and, in certain cases, through the rejection of non-convincing military deployments. With this, the discussion can return to the relationship between democratic rule and the armed forces.

3. Democratic checks on the military and deployment decisions

In order to ensure a healthy relationship between a democracy and its military, two criteria must be fulfilled: The institution comprising the armed forces, along with its capacity for inner-societal utilization of force, must, firstly, be tamed as well as be frictionlessly and dependably integrated into the democratic system – the military apparatus may not be allowed to exist as a 'state within a state'. Secondly, being that this situation is rather tenuous, precautions must also be taken in order to ensure that future military deploy-

ment is executed prudently and responsibly. Otherwise, the democracy runs the risk of estranging the state (or society) from its armed forces.

Democracies – including Germany's – have not let the contents of their 'second social contracts' simply remain unwritten agreements. Rather, they have initiated two sorts of institutional measures – one in constitutional form and one in the form of basic laws – that are meant to ensure that both contractual parties adhere to their mutual obligations. One of these includes the provisions that regulate civil control over the armed forces. The other deals with procedural provisions that address the decision making process of deployment, especially when for purposes other than national defence.

3.1 Democratic checks on the military

One particular characteristic of the inner relationship between a democracy and its military, from a structural point-of-view, is the requirement of civil checks on military power: security and military decisions fall under the scope of legitimated democratic leadership. This is the basic principle of democratic government (Schmidt 2000: 450f), anchored in the constitutions as well as political practice of established democracies – e.g. as found in the Basic Law of Germany (*Grundgesetz*) and in its Soldier Law (*Soldatengesetz*). This is likewise an essential principle for states undergoing the democratization process. Analogous institutional reforms were undertaken during the wave of democratization that followed in the wake of the collapse of Communism beginning in 1989/1990. Moreover, democratic integration and checks on the armed forces require more than just institutional structures. The qualitative feature of democratic states is the principle, based on a trust in society, that the *volonté générale* and the military are integrated in a deliberative process of negotiation. The path such a process traverses and its ultimate results are closely intertwined with the history of a nation, its political culture, its institutional order and further factors relating to its concrete democratic development. This can be seen in the varying – and changing – beliefs on whether general compulsory military service, the militia or the professional armed forces create a military force that corresponds to the state's form of government.

An assessment of the broad range of military reforms shows that neither armies formed by compulsory military service nor ones composed of voluntary personnel can claim to be (more) democratic options *per se*. The relationship between society and the armed forces in various states, as well as their respective everyday realities, are much more decisive in this assessment, indicating whether or not integration has been successful or if the armed forces function as, or are turning into, a democratically-damaging agent. The issue related to the 'second social contract' therefore does not find its solution in any particular military structure (see Mannitz 2012).

On account of the existence of various types of civil-military relationships in the democracies of today, one is led to the conclusion that the search for broadly applicable criteria for the creation of a military structure appropriate to democracies is futile. Issues of adaptation and other dilemmas facing young democracies require one to also take the

context of change into account (Schiff 2009). Purely institutional analyses ignore the historical and cultural prerequisites for the formation of successful civil-military relationships. Furthermore, a functioning institutional arrangement remains dependent on a process of deliberative democracy; a critical public eye, the media and non-governmental organizations are also imperative alongside institutional control mechanisms. This does not, however, imply that a *lack* of inclusive debate automatically brings about the estrangement of the military from the foundations of a democratic society. In order to curtail the violence potential of the armed forces as well as military adventurism on the side of political leadership, a form of democratic checks is needed, one that operates beyond the purely operative level of institutional mechanisms and embraces the processes of inner-societal trust-building and the formation of partnerships.

The dire need for an all-encompassing concept of democratic checks on the armed forces – one also accepted by the latter within democratic society – is especially apparent in post-socialist states. This is by no means limited to young democracies, and even Germany has to deal with this issue. The general disinterest of civil society in regards to military matters is existent in post-socialist democracies and, based on our findings, also in older ones (Mannitz 2012). An ironic conclusion surfaces in relation to the fundamental need for democratic checks on the military: Rather than playing the role of the beast that needs to be kept in check by means of an institutional cage, it is the military itself that has the greatest interest in the maintenance of a system of democratic control. This is, in all likelihood, the only way to ensure that reckless, poorly-consulted, high-risk, overly-costly and unnecessary operations are avoided. However, as we have observed in several Western democracies since 1990, the realities of democratic checks have not been in accordance with their ideals: shortened decision processes; lacking degrees of transparency; claimed, but unproven claims to ‘all other options being exhausted’; ‘obligations to the Alliance’; deception; stubborn political elites that deploy troops either despite opposing public opinion polls or behind the backs of their disinterested constituencies – all of these examples point to the opposite of democratic decision-making process ideals. Just as we request it of our democratic soldiers, so too do the soldiers wish that we operate democratically. It would be to the disadvantage of all should the populace and political elite not respect this wish.

3.2 Democratic checks on deployment decisions

The decision of whether or not to deploy a country’s soldiers – be it for reasons of defence or other assignments – is one of the weightiest decisions that a democratic government has to make. It is for good reason that the majority of democratic states have put constitutional regulations in place in order to restrict the liberties granted the executive in this decision making process. Of note here is that such restrictions are found to be far lower in older democracies with imperial pasts. Both the French president and the British prime minister exercise practically limitless authority over the deployment of their armed forces, their parliaments merely left with indirect control over the budget. Similarly, the president of the United States is granted unilateral power to deploy troops for a limited period

of time (60 days) before Congress is allowed to issue a veto. Considering America's ability to achieve fast operational victories against the conventional unions of most of its opponents, this freedom of discretion is very far-reaching. Countries like Germany can be found at the other end of the spectrum, where the laws delegate power solely to the parliament in matters of military deployments outside of the country's borders, likewise placing parliamentary hurdles in the way of declarations of self-defence. Most of the younger, second and third wave democracies in Europe tend to operate closer to the German side of the spectrum than to the British and French (Wagner 2010; Peters/Wagner 2010).

This sort of constitutional limit is the most crucial in hindering executive capriciousness in matters of troop deployment. Admittedly, an unwritten convention has increasingly been observed in which governments that are not bound to the consent of their parliaments are finding it prudent to seek the concurrence of their legislatures nonetheless. This owes to the fact that *democratic* governments are placed under high pressure for justification when sending their soldiers into battle (Geis et al. 2010). Despite the absence of constitutional necessity, President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair gathered votes from their respective legislatures (with positive results) prior to the war in Iraq in 2003. Furthermore, democratic governments are under pressure to develop comprehensive public justification narratives; appeals to national honour, glory or imperial expansion no longer suffice. These times are over: as one conservative strategy expert from America put it, we live in a post-heroic age (Luttwak 1996). The citizens of democracies are not moved by the idea of giving up their lives any longer, even for the glory of the fatherland, nor do they expect it of their fellow citizens in uniform. Decisions to go to war are met with pronounced critical public scrutiny, admittedly more so in some democracies than in others. It is in part for this reason that the war balance sheet among democracies varies so greatly, ranging from 'very often' to 'never' (Müller 2004: 495f; Human Security Centre 2005: 26). Decisive for this variation is, among other factors, a country's traditions, which translate into particular cultures of national security policies (Geis et al. 2010).

The increasing internationalization of military operations has the tendency to level these differences: Obligations to act are created – or simply claimed –, easing the burden on executive leadership and permitting them, with appeals to international obligations or even for the sake of 'sustaining of the Alliance', to be less exacting when weighing the pros and cons. When the deployment obligations of a country's armed forces are extended beyond the borders of national or Alliance defence to include the goal of universal common good – such as with the idea of 'responsibility to protect', which has ultimately been accepted by the United Nations (Brock 2007) –, conceptions of the soldier are, in turn, fundamentally altered. From this currently observable trend up to the ever-increasing fusion of civil and military roles comprising a soldier's range of tasks, proponents justify foreign military involvement of supposed 'non-military' operations with appeals to the ethical standards of a civilized world community. They attempt to establish legitimacy for the numerous unconventional military operations since the end of the Cold War – from peacekeeping to 'humanitarian intervention' –, on the basis of arguments that would generally be respected by democratic governments. This includes the prevention of genocide, the protection of human rights against bloody tyrants, or the assistance of people in need. However, the task profiles of soldiers – as well as the relations between society and the

military – are greatly affected when armed forces are required to accept an increasing number such assignments based on international mandates. This shift in mission types is not by definition a disadvantage, yet it demands that democratic societies remain attentive and develop clear criteria for the missions that they support (Schoch et al. 2007), as well as for those that they do not.

Closer observation demonstrates that regulations binding a military to a democracy – as well as to the norms of the latter – are considerably more airtight than those obligating policy-makers to responsible handling of deployment decisions involving their armed forces. It is believed that this can happen in no other way. The binding of the armed forces to constitutional processes is permanent and remains independent of any special circumstances. Deployment decisions are, in contrast, always dependent on the situation at hand and must therefore be granted margin for discretion, which cannot be regulated a priori in all times and situations. The fulfilment of due diligence in regards to the armed forces is, in such cases, a factor of the quality of decision preparations.

4. The new challenges and changes facing democratic soldier profiles

4.1 The transformation of the international system and new tasks for the armed forces

The bipolar structure of the Cold War supported the binary and polarized way of thinking that had traditionally characterized military mentality. Once this conflict came to an end, the comfortable simplicity of this model ceased to exist: the enemies, missions, goals, strategies and doctrines, which had remained largely unquestioned for half a century, were suddenly obsolete. The world became complicated, even for the Western Allies, proven by their progressive divergence in options regarding very basic issues: Should NATO's primary task continue be Allied territorial defence, or should the maintenance of global order be made the new focus? Should Russia be considered a potential threat or a potential partner? Could nuclear deterrence's social bonding effect within the Alliance be replaced by means of missile defence systems or conventional deterrence, or is the issue simply obsolete (Dembinski/Müller 2010)? The agreements defining the Alliance increasingly began to represent compromises rather than clear guidelines.

Hardly anyone would contest that security policy considerations have demanded revision and expansion in response to the increasing degree of interdependence that has resulted from globalization and transnationalization. Two of the repercussions have been the rise of trans-border terrorist network activities as well as indirect effects of state collapses or violent conflicts abroad on our lifestyles, consumption and production habits at home. Notwithstanding, there is plenty of reason to doubt that the broadening of military deployment areas is, in most cases, the appropriate response to this process. New threats

are certainly no longer inter-state by nature, and the defence of Western values can now be interpreted as an indirect form of state defence: the continued legitimacy and functioning of democratic states rely on the maintenance of these values. Yet the democracies that have opted to extend the conception of security in their defence doctrines following the end of the Cold War are now faced with the problem of defining the criteria for legitimate troop deployment. This diffusion of threats within a rather borderless understanding of 'expanded security' has made it difficult for soldiers to grasp what their profession parameters actually are, given the circumstances.

The new assignments include, along with national defence, armed conflicts resulting from new policy goals at home, which have a definitive humanitarian character. Also present are 'security missions' – falling within the framework of 'expanded security' – that are rather freely defined and do not always abide by the dictates of accepted common sense. Soldiers are sent great distances to their deployment locales in order to establish and maintain freedom for others, some, or even many, of who are much less desirous of freedom than Western political decision-makers seem to assume. Rectification of misjudgement occurs either seldom, late or never. The "Progress Report" ("Forschungsbericht") issued by the German military in December of 2010 regarding the war in Afghanistan is, however, a notable step in right direction.

For the deployed soldiers, the majority of these 'out of area' assignments include operations that are highly risky, even falling under the category of 'freedom enforcement', as they exist in a grey area between war and peace. Who one's enemy actually is often remains unclear and the borders between 'civilian' and 'combatant' are regularly blurred as well.

Stemming from this grey area problem is the issue of added stress, found to have become far greater than the 'normal' burdens of conventional wars. The war on terror stands at the far end of the military assignment spectrum, defined as confrontation with a merciless enemy, who does not heed legal or moral limits. Deployments of this sort have begun to increasingly resemble conflicts with highly armed nation state enemies: outright combat situations against large enemy units are becoming ever more common. For assignments in the middle of the assignment spectrum, soldiers have to be prepared to confront enemy 'freedom destroyers', while at the same time protecting civilians. At the 'soft' end of the spectrum, soldiers are given civil tasks, such as providing for the basic needs of the civilians. Most assignments cover the entire spectrum, and specific tasks are, depending on the situation, prone to shift from one end of the pole to the other in a matter of seconds. Clear boundaries remain elusive, and, as a consequence, soldiers are constantly expected to perform along the entire assignment spectrum. Soldiers are required to exhibit the highest levels of cognitive, intellectual and psychological competence: complete flexibility; precise and accurate situational assessment capacity under time pressure ("Is the approaching motor driver a civilian client or a terrorist?"); professional confidence in order to instil trust in the civilians and, at the same time, fear in the opponents; and a high willingness to accept risk: shooting first, asking questions later is not permitted, regardless if the situation calls for just such an action.

The vague definitions of security found in defence doctrines present members of the armed forces with unclear deployment risks. The probability of a large war along a clearly

defined territorial front has disappeared. The new forms of military involvement are now characterized by immense complexity, bringing with them wholly new challenges for soldiers, as well as the entire military institution. Consequently, nearly all democracies have implemented military restructuring based on three criteria: size-reduction, professionalization, and technological modernization. Despite significant opposition within Germany's two largest parties, restructuring reached the German military by 2010: The armed forces have to reorient themselves in accordance with the new challenges, and conscription has been repealed in favour of a volunteer structure.

4.2 The transformation of the armed forces

Developments in information and weapon technologies (see below) require high degrees of technical competence, skills which conscripts cannot attain during basic training (Janowitz 1971: xi; Moskos 2000: 15; Coté 2004). What's more, the diverse challenges of security politics – arising from the internationalization of military forces – imply a need for professional troops with the corresponding training. Apart from considerations such as specialization and improved training quality, the ebb of territorial defence demands has been the leading factor behind restructuring towards professionalized armed forces.

Today, military operations conducted by democratic states are multi-national enterprises, demanding highly qualified armed forces with experience in both inter-military and civil-military cooperation (Coté 2004; Haltiner/Klein 2004; Soeters/Manigart 2009). Above all, this calls for training in both military and non-military areas, weapon specialization and manoeuvre experience. Such standards can only be fulfilled by either soldiers with extended service times or soldiers who are voluntary and/or professional soldiers. Owing to these high qualification standards, the cost-benefit ratio has shifted in favour of smaller professional armies supported more and more by civil subcontractors (Moskos 2000: 15f; Boëne/Callaghan/Dandeker 2004: 406). Factors that were once a hindrance to intervention by democratic societies – namely the rational judgment of the citizens, the interest in efficient use of resources, and sensitivity in regards to potential casualties of one's own soldiers – take on new relevance with the introduction of voluntary professional forces: It's more sensible, economically, to maintain a small(er) number of well-trained professional soldiers, who can be counted on to accept missions, rather than conscripts. Nevertheless, the high costs of individual training could also increase the reservations about deploying professional soldiers. Furthermore, societies can only recruit a sufficient number of volunteers with the necessary training background for leadership roles as long as the armed forces have not been consigned with (an overabundance) of risky deployments on account of political irresponsibility in the past.

In order to get an idea of the specific requirements democracies have placed on the profiles of their soldiers following military restructuring, we analyzed white papers and training guidelines, and conducted interviews with officers and soldiers at their training centres – all within the 'The Image of the Democratic Soldier' research project (Mannitz 2012). This data indicates that the soldier profiles created by European democracies in the 21st century amount to a highly specialized combination of diverse virtues. Subordination

to democratic checks and withdrawal from political involvement can be seen as the soldierly 'citizen virtues', reflecting the goal of institutional safeguards of civil checks on the military. General virtues, which could also be ascribed to civilians, include honesty, integrity, diligence and dedication. The social virtues defining the profile are empathy, devotion, solidarity and a sense of responsibility. Here we can see, in contradiction to old clichés (Hentschel 2010: 44), that the contemporary soldier profile has drifted away from the traditional idea of a 'macho hero'. The general professional virtues such as flexibility, discretion and 'professionalism' are identical to ones a civil employer would value. The genuine soldierly virtues include self-sacrifice, discipline, obedience, courage, a fighting spirit and comradeship.

These findings clearly show that the trend towards diversified sorts of extraterritorial intervention and crisis intervention has resulted in soldiers from democratic countries being required to fulfil a broader range of tasks, ranging from ones that were formerly relegated to civil humanitarian relief organizations all the way up to the execution of so-called pre-emptive wars. They are expected to be equally capable in matters of peace keeping as they are in battle. This increasingly complex conception of the soldier has altered the inner-democratic relationship between civilians and the military, has had an influence on soldier qualification profiles, and has created challenges in finding suitable personnel (Coker 2002; Seiffert 2005; Mannitz 2006, 2007 and 2011).

Officers are expected to lead by example as well as be able to sympathize with their subordinates and treat them as individuals. They should be able to aptly explain complex situations so that their soldiers can fully grasp their given assignments. Furthermore, officers have to be capable of independently making decisions and executing mission type tactics, a requirement that – as a result of the new deployment scenarios – has clearly also been carried over to the armed forces, even though they were never acclimated with mission type tactics. Officers are supposed to possess management skills and be highly skilled in situational analysis. Strict military virtues are fused with the qualities of professional civil managers as well as talented social workers in the officer corps; this too no longer corresponds to the 'macho-hero' image of the past. In short, these idealized conceptions of soldiers and officers call for a high degree of cognitive aptitude and character strength, demands that reflect the ever more complex deployment environment awaiting the armed forces. Training regiments and assignment concepts have had to adjust to the new environmental conditions at a break-neck pace. This leads us to a critical question: Are society and government overburdening the mental, psychological and social capacities of the men and women to whom they delegate these extremely difficult assignments? In other words, judged on the basis of what is humanly possible for the individual, is not nearly every military mission being transformed into a 'mission impossible'?

The institution of the armed forces has been forced to react to this professional upheaval accordingly – the result of new international challenges and politicians' revised interpretations – and, additionally, to cope with significant socio-cultural changes. Transformations that took place in the daily social realm during the last generation have reached the relatively secluded, but not completely insulated, social apparatus of the military. Traditional military logic was oriented along binary categories such as friend and

foe, peace and war, political and military, domestic and foreign, civil and military, superior and subordinate, and male and female. Such binary thought structures can, of course, be refreshing in their simplicity, and can be psychologically comforting for a person whose profession presents him or her with the risks of injury and death. The most prominent examples of erosions in this binary orientation today include ethnic and cultural diversity within the armed forces, the introduction of women in uniform, and – having now also reached the US – the right for homosexuals to be forthcoming about their sexual preferences. The two latter examples in particular constitute a challenge to male soldiers' traditionally masculine orientation, in which a certain degree of machismo was ever present. They have countered with broad questions relating to psychological stability. Moreover, they call attention to the fact that sexual tolerance and gender mainstreaming do not have long traditions within democratic societies but are, by and large, developments of the post-1968 liberal protest era. The military – formerly the most explicitly masculine domain in society – has thus been faced with especially heavy adjustment pressure in a very short period of time. This aspect should not be disregarded when attempting to realistically assess the demands placed on personnel serving in the armed forces.

4.3 Consequences of the transformation on military-democracy relations

The transformation of armed forces, being witnessed in democracies the world over, has been a consequence of the growing requisite for professionalization, the direct result of highly technological and social qualification requirements, increasingly complex missions and reduced personnel numbers. This poses a significant challenge to military institutions, which were used to dealing with continuous flows of recruits who possessed the necessary mixture of talent and skill. Due to the changed circumstances, special attention must be given to the 'selection list': It is to be avoided that poorly trained, violent and extreme right-wing conservative young people account for a significant portion of the armed forces. Furthermore, the abolition of mandatory military service runs the risk of expanding the gap between democratic society and the armed forces, a trend that has, however, been progressing for some time now as the recruitment rate of able-bodied conscripts has sunken. In countries where the new military structure based on volunteers has been completed, public appreciation of the armed forces has generally not been negatively affected.

As political and military tasks have become increasingly intertwined with one another as a result of unconventional military deployment scenarios, professional military elites have begun to take an active role in the creation of policy concepts. The fact that this trend is suppressing the primacy of civil normative power in everyday practice in democracies may go on to have grave consequences. The debate among experts over civil-military relations in democracies no longer considers this trend simply as an undesired development in principle, but rather understands it as an expression of professional differentiation: Professional soldiers step in as competent advisors in matters of defence policy, often positioning themselves as defenders of democratic values and ideals. The impact assessment of this is, however, likewise ambivalent. Peter Feaver was correct in highlighting the face-off between "civilian hawks and military doves" in the US (Feaver

1995: 129f.), claiming that inadequate authority granted political decision-makers is one central problem in current civil-military power relations. This supports the theory that political leaders of democratic states, given certain circumstances, have greater incentives and fewer scruples when it comes to waging wars than members of the armed forces. And yet, there is also evidence to the contrary, showing that members of the armed forces demonstrate a greater willingness to actually *use* available instruments of violence than their civilian counterparts (Sechser 2004). Todd Sechser's study comes to the conclusion that it is the institutional checks and *practiced* mechanisms of democratic control themselves that curb a democratic state's tendency to intervene and also urge military leaders to maintain reserved positions. Such limits can cease to exist if the opportunity for public participation and attention to and/or interest in the public exercise of its check functions disappears in favour of a security policy of 'expertocracy' (Sechser 2004: 770f).

The internationalization of security politics and the growing consequences on democratic sovereignty and transparency of military operation decisions resulting from this internationalization could have similar effects (see Wagner 2010). Military missions under multi-national direction will, in all likelihood, gain in importance in the context of growing cooperation efforts, be it within NATO or the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Even though democratic checks on the collective forces of violence are institutionally entrenched in each member nation, the exercise of these checks within democratic alliances is being jeopardized: Military operation decisions are made without the participation of national populaces while parliaments fall back on the irrefutable argument of the national 'alliance capability'. Parliaments are thus relegated to serving a mere rubber-stamping function for decisions that are negotiated by executives on the supranational level (Wolf 2000).

A lack of transparency in and accountability for policy decisions complicate effective democratic checks just as much as unclear security policy guidelines do: "How [do] we know when national survival is at stake in the absence of direct territorial attack?" (Forster 2006: 8f) The increased efforts at transnational integration in the areas of security and defence policies also add another dimension to the problem: How should legitimacy, responsibility and checks be organized if future soldiers, from their perspective, are to operate less for the sake of their national sovereign and more so as bearers and defenders of order for a transnational (European or world-) society? Increasing internationalization requires that conflicts are diligently monitored in order to make sure that the focus of military operations run by democratic countries continues to be on the civilizing of conflicts. It must be made certain that armed forces are not degraded to mere foreign policy instruments. Without consensus between society and the military on democratic principles and societal goals as well as mutual agreement that both sides share responsibility for the defence of the former two, the relationship between them is bound to become unstable. In such a case, the assumption that democracies exhibit a high degree of responsibility in relation to their use of military resources would become little more than a pious wish.

5. Policy answers to heightened deployment risks

Democratic decision-makers are well aware of the heightened deployment risks related to new forms of military involvement and what these mean for the armed forces. The public in democratic states is 'casualty sensitive', meaning that they react to the losses of their own soldiers, especially in 'wars of choice', by withdrawing their consent; one can also rest assured that politicians understand rising numbers of fallen soldiers as a moral dilemma. They are therefore faced with a problem: They are forced to keep the public 'in line' and, at the same time, deal with their own burden of conscience. It can be observed that politics has developed two coping strategies for this: technical responses to the named risks on the one hand, and psychological and rhetorical repression on the other.

5.1 Attempts at military risk minimization

In the last twenty years, the armed forces have been confronted with rapid developments in military technologies, termed the 'Revolution in Military Affairs' (RMA). In so many words, the RMA refers to the replacement of soldiers with technology. The efficiency, range and accuracy of weapons, as well as the growing, IT-supported economics of weapon deployment, have allowed for operations to be carried out with considerably less combat personnel and often far away from the battlefield (Müller/Schörnig 2001).

The RMA offers a vital solution to the appeasement of relations between society, politics and deployed armed forces. It can be interpreted as the core element of military policy strategy aimed at diverting or minimizing as many risks as possible away from one's own soldiers, thereby addressing the discontent within society over fallen troops and also fortifying the 'second social contract' in the age of 'wars of choice'. Risk diversion, or rather 'risk-transfer wars' – so titled by Shaw (2005) – can assume various forms. In essence, it is conceivable to have dangerous combat operations performed by third parties. These third parties could, for instance, be composed of local groups who also stand in opposition to those in power. The Northern Alliance in Afghanistan serves as such an example: They receive air support from American special units but take on all the risks of ground operations themselves. Another option for diverting risk away from regular troops is the contracting of private security services – private companies that provide the 'temp' services of normal army personnel with military backgrounds, and, depending on the situation, even engage in combat situations in the stead of national troops (Singer 2003).⁴

Both of the latter options do have considerable disadvantages – such as inadequate dependability or legal problems arising from civilian soldiers participating in armed conflict. For this reason, the RMA alternative tends to be preferred by the Western states, utilizing

4. Studies have shown that in the USA, for example, the public hardly takes notice of casualties involving private security firms. Cf. Schooner 2008.

technology rather than outside troops in order to distance one's own troops from the battlefield (e.g. through the use of precise rockets and cruise missiles), to reduce their visibility – and thereby their vulnerability – (e.g. with stealth bombers), or even to exchange them completely for technology, for instance with drones or robots. It is especially crucial that modern RMA armies network themselves more thoroughly, in order for all units to be connected into a dense information network and, in so doing, be able to receive a multitude of intelligence in real time. This measure ensures a significant information advance over the enemy, entailing a marked increase in protection and virtually denying the enemy the possibility of staging an ambush or surprise attack.

If an RMA army makes full use of its technological superiority on all aforementioned levels, then even relatively highly rated opponents no longer present a real danger to the army's troops – provided the enemy possesses weapons that are no more advanced than last-generation ones used by adversaries in Iraq or Yugoslavia. Whereas 148 American soldiers lost their lives during the Gulf War in 1991, only 138 perished up to the capture of Baghdad in 2003, despite the fact that the latter war was considerably more dangerous on account of its extensive ground operations. During the war in Kosovo, which was exclusively an air offensive, not even one allied soldier died as the result of enemy action.⁵ RMA armies bring with them the promise of 'wars without bloodshed' – for one's own soldiers (Mandel 2004).

As made evident by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the promises of the RMA are only applicable in very specific situations and scenarios. Though the West is now able to conduct traditional wars with very few casualties, this is not the case for 'small wars' fought against insurgents. Modern war jets and GPS-guided precision bombs have limited efficacy when opponents utilize guerrilla warfare and terror tactics. The greatest dangers facing Allied troops in Afghanistan and Iraq are now the improvised bombings and booby traps along roadways. The Western Allies have lost substantially more troops in the post-war periods than they did during the military conquests of the respective countries themselves. Concurrently, political decision-makers and military planners are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that harsh operations and the acceptance of civilian casualties drive more volunteers to the insurgency cause.

Nonetheless, Western democracies continue to rely on technological solutions: It would seem, for instance, that the increased utilization of remote-controlled battle drones – armed, unmanned aircraft – has offered politicians an escape out of the quandary of constantly rising Allied, as well as foreign, casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq. The deployment of unmanned systems, firstly, reduces one's own losses, as allied soldiers are kept far away from the battlefield, and, secondly, human rights organizations confirm that the utilization of battle drones also results in relatively few civilian casualties – as long as low-powered explosives are employed and fixed flight routes are maintained during operation (Human Rights Watch 2008: 2).

5 As mentioned above, success was attained at the price of imprecise attacks and a resultantly higher probability of civilian casualties.

The RMA in general along with increased use of unmanned systems and battle drones have become the key instruments of warfare, and are writing the newest chapter in the history of humanity's dream of waging nearly bloodless wars with guaranteed victory. This hope is, however, not all that new. Many of the past's technological advancements initially created and fostered high-flung expectations, only to eventually end in bitter disappointment, as subsequent wars were even bloodier than before and occasionally ended in defeat (Brodie/Brodie 1973). Even though one ought to know better, three distinct factors are presently converging in Western democracies, prompting a particular impulse towards high-tech armament: Western democracies command the technological capacities of their high-tech industries, they have a desire to achieve bloodless victories, and they are driven by the urge to do good in the world – to enforce what is right, to depose tyrants, to protect the oppressed, and to bring governmental and societal order to places where chaos reigns. The combination of these three elements – of good intentions and considerate means – is an especially dangerous illusion. In his time, Carl von Clausewitz recognized that innovations and technological advancement may alter the execution of wars, but they do not alter their essential character:

“The necessity of fighting very soon led men to special inventions to turn the advantage in it in their own favour; in consequence of that the mode of fighting has undergone great alterations; but in whatever way it is conducted its conception remains unaltered, and fighting is that which constitutes war.” (Clausewitz 1873, second book, first chapter)

Wars remain what they are: violent clashes of two opposing political wills that do not want to succumb to the other. The experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan prove that superior technologies cannot alone create order or bring determined insurgents to surrender; technologies merely assist in the effort, at best. The proverbial ‘boots on the ground’ are required in order to accomplish these goals: infantry deployment on the surface, where the high risks facing soldiers and the populace in need of protection cannot be avoided. Armies, which have either fully integrated the RMA or are on their way to doing so, could encounter adjustment issues if delegated assignments with a ‘pedestrian’ character, especially in built up or rugged areas. In contrast, armed forces that are technologically behind are confronted with the problem of inter-operability during mutual deployments with RMA-equipped partners. They are prone to develop a ‘technological inferiority complex’ when comparing themselves to their ‘advanced’ fellow combatants. Such sentiment could transform itself into a feeling of resentment towards their own political leadership, who denied them access to comparable equipment. Evidence of such tendencies has been found in the case studies we conducted (Mannitz 2012).

A glance at the fiscal side of things also reveals problems: Armies transitioning to RMA have to deal with considerable dilemmas in budget-making: They are forced to choose between real-world assignments, which fall into the category of ‘peace-building’ or ‘stable peace-keeping’ and predominantly involve infantry deployment, and the high-tech pipe dreams stimulated by their encounters with better-equipped comrades. Consequentially, governments and their parliaments are hardly in a position to shoulder both assignment-related and inter-operability-related requirements of their armed forces, as essential needs must also be satisfied in the civil sector.

States that attempt to copy the RMA, or at least parts of it, may have it easier. Many conflicts of recent years have shown that opponents cannot be kept from undergoing technological advancement forever. Israel has had to learn this the hard way through various drone attacks by Hamas, and the rapid race to catch-up in the area armament upgrades by Chinese engineers is another striking example of this fact. Imitators often find it easier to arm themselves in particular niches of modern weapon systems. They can copy functioning and proven technologies, thereby saving themselves the burden of the complex and cost-intensive process of trial and error that is an integral part of military research and development. From this perspective, one may venture to predict that, in the long-term, Western states may one day be faced with the financial troubles described above, leaving room for challengers to technologically surpass them.

Western societies and their political decision-makers do well if they resolutely hold to the view that military violence is the option of last resort, also resisting the temptation of the lauded 'bloodless' weapon systems, and avoiding engagement in new arms races. Finally, the easily gained initial victory does not by any means signify a 'mission accomplished'; one all too often finds oneself stuck in conflicts from which there are no clean ways out, while potential challengers catch up technologically.

5.2 Repression and avoidance rhetoric

If the RMA represents an attempt by democratic governments to address the 'second social contract' problem by technological means, another attempt includes the employment of psychological mechanisms, avoidance strategies and rhetorical efforts in order to increase the acceptability of military involvement to both soldiers and the public. The technological attempt is utilized in the US and Great Britain, whereas the latter has found support most notably in German discourse, manifesting itself in three distinct strategies.

The first of these strategies – one in a series of readily observable deployment methods – aims at participating in missions with other military contingents, albeit in such a way as to ostensibly keep one's own soldiers out of harm's way. In Cambodia, German troops served in a medical corps; in East Timor, they flew transport helicopters; in Somalia, they remained in Mogadishu, 400 km away from the battlefield; in Lebanon, only the navy was deployed; and in Afghanistan, German troops were responsible for the, supposedly, more peaceful northern part of the country, defending their comfortable position at all costs when army high command requested greater flexibility from them in order to support army units in other regions when requiring reinforcement in specific zones. All of these examples highlight a recurring pattern: an attempt to demonstrate solidarity with the Allied partners and respond to their calls for help, yet, at the same time, promote the idea at home (and probably even be convinced of it oneself) that any assistance would preclude the possibility of considerable risk to the German troops involved. By this means, policy-makers attempt to reasonably satisfy the demands of both parties in the 'second social contract', namely the populace and the armed forces. But this approach is untenable: As the saying goes: "You can't have your cake and eat it too."

The second strategy involves declaring military involvement as a ‘matter of national defence’. Former Defence Minister Peter Struck took this approach when he made the claim that the German nation was being “defended at the Hindu Kush.” This statement was false from the very beginning, and, as reports by the German intelligence services later proved, the terror threat at home ended up actually increasing rather than disappearing as a result. He may very well have been correct, but certainly not by appealing to national defence. The initial motive was to show solidarity with the US, whose forces were coming under attack from al-Qaeda and its supporters in the Afghani Taliban. This goal was, however, eventually overshadowed by the goal of establishing democracy in Afghanistan. Though not necessarily relevant to the initial aim,⁶ it was soon regarded as the primary goal nonetheless. As a result, even though the Struck Doctrine may have been a motivating factor for German soldiers at first, it was immediately met with scepticism from the public. Such scepticism was inevitably bound to grow even further, since a matter of national defence should have led people to the realization that the German military had been sent into a combat situation. But precisely this realization stood in contradiction to the third strategy (directly corresponding to the avoidance strategy of alleged danger-free deployment situations), namely denying the characterization of military deployment as *war* involvement and defining the role of the armed forces as helpers, not combatants, instead.

Following the tradition of foreign deployments of the German military, involvement in Afghanistan was also *not* defined as war. German troops were sent to a purportedly safe and low-risk area. This position, according to the promise, would help in maintaining the illusion that German troops are indeed not involved in a war, but rather in humanitarian peace-keeping. For the sake of sustaining the denial of actual war involvement, this narrative has, over the years, gained in breadth, producing ever more venturesome and creative wording such as “not war, but a resolute stabilizing operation in which combat situations repeatedly arise”. As a result, growing difficulties have surfaced. Images showing the aftermath of an air strike near Kunduz in the fall of 2009 disproved the narrative of war denial – the ‘not a war’ narrative was destroyed once and for all. There were too many dead bodies lying on the ground, the victims of a military deployment that could now be called nothing other than a ‘war’, at least according to rational common understanding. It was only following this incident that the then German Defence Minister, zu Guttenberg, attempted to grant the images a realistic framework, which he then gradually asserted. This went on to confirm public suspicion that the actual risks confronting troops – as well as third parties such as Afghani civilians – was in fact far greater than official discourse had led one to believe, causing a rise in the already perceptible pressure to come up with a concrete plan for withdrawal.

6 See also the “Progress Report” (“Fortschrittsbericht”) issued by the German federal government (Bundesregierung 2010).

5.3 Democratic society and armed forces: a growing gap?

How have the personally affected, namely the soldiers, reacted to this mixture of enormously complex demands, transformation stress and political coping measures? Our findings point to a remarkable imbalance, cutting across all examined countries, between the high regard society gives its armed forces on the one hand, and soldiers' self-perception of this regard on the other, which they view to be exclusionary and insufficient. There also exists a curious contradiction in soldiers' attitudes towards new assignments (the 'wars of choice'): Many members of the armed forces agree, in principle, that such assignments are generally sensible. Nonetheless, though they do not of course refuse deployment, soldiers often express doubt in regards to the *concrete* missions themselves, in which they are put to the test. Concomitantly, they expect politicians to rigidly defend the missions in the face of growing public scepticism. This suggests a rather grave psychological and cognitive dilemma.

Growing scepticism towards this sort of military involvement has indeed developed among the Western public, threatening to bring with it a growing gap between the people, political leadership and the military, despite the fact that general public esteem for the latter of the three remains strong. This leads one to ponder the following: Carl von Clausewitz identified this cleavage as one of the determining factors of defeat, and the American experience in Vietnam supports this theory (Summers 1982). So what does this imply for NATO deployments of today?

The complaints by soldiers interviewed in our research were nearly unanimous in respect to crucial aspects of their deployments (lacking equipment, duration of deployment, insufficient attention to their concerns on the part of politicians, and so on). Ill-conceived missions are all the more dramatic for the soldiers involved, as, in addition to the mortal dangers, the fact that many of these assignments operate in a grey zone brings with it the added risk of legal prosecution with serious repercussions for a soldier's future career and civilian life. The tension between the three partners – public, politics and armed forces – is in danger of intensifying.

Demands placed on soldiers tend to have an absolute character. In contrast, political willingness to supply troops with the (actual or supposed) necessary means is relative (Bundestag 2010). This is even understandable to a degree, considering the similarly pressing financial needs from the civil sector at home. Nevertheless, considering the high risks that members of the armed forces are expected to confront, this is not an acceptable course of action with regards to the unwritten 'second social contract'.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

'Wars of choice' increase the complexity of mental and operative demands on soldiers. On account of the ever present risks, these wars amplify the already considerable deployment stress, at a time when transformations in military structure, technology and organizational culture are burdening the 'citizens in uniform' as it is. Furthermore, they lead to a shift in the relationship between soldiers, politicians and society. These deployments neither serve the defence nor the greatness of the nation (though this could well be an ulterior motive for some politicians), as did many military operations in some nations' imperial pasts. They are either justified through a stretched, and therefore debatable, understanding of national security or they are said to serve the reestablishment of order, either regional or global, or moral aims, both of which require lengthy and invariably contested justification. All such deployments are contingent in nature: There may be good reasons for them, but there may also be good reasons against them.

It is the right of those who agree to allow themselves to be sent into armed conflicts, thereby exposing themselves to mortal and physical danger, to demand that decisions regarding their deployment be made with utmost possible diligence and care. This requires a thorough clarification of the following points:

- A profound reason for deployment exists: national security is in grave danger; global stability is seriously on the line; the situation requiring intervention is progressing towards genocide or extremely dire and prolonged human rights violations – not merely typical cases of heavy guerrilla warfare.
- There are either no alternatives or no reasonable ones. The alternative of 'keeping out of it' is also reasonable, as long as the expected consequences of non-involvement are significantly less negative than those arising from involvement.
- Intervention has a high chance of success. Even in the worst of scenarios, in which emotions cry for action, intervention is senseless if the issue is irresolvable.
- When these three concerns are weighed against the potential risks facing involved soldiers, intervention must still appear reasonable.

Unfortunately, democratic governments often do not weigh the options related to these demands with due care: Decisions by democratically elected governments to deploy their troops are at times based on less than minimal knowledge of the situation on the ground. However, such knowledge is indispensable for the rational weighing of the aforementioned four points. The decision on the war in Iraq was reached without decision-makers being aware of the fact that it was the Shiite clerics, Sunni chieftains and remnants of the Ba'ath Party, and not the Iraqis in exile, who actually constituted the country's power base. Decision-makers sent troops to Afghanistan, apparently being convinced of the idea that the implementation of a modern centralized government would provide a solution for a traditionally anti-centralist country, without considering the enormous political significance of the clans, valley communities or local tribes. Politicians made use of gross exaggerations – such as a comparison of the atrocities in Kosovo with those in Auschwitz

(Schröder 2006: 110-1; Fischer 2007: 184-5) – or reached decisions on the basis of ‘group think’.⁷ The American and British governments falsified and lied about information from their intelligence services. Soldiers are well aware of the fact that politicians avoid using the term ‘war’ in order to make deployments more palatable to their populace, or even to more comfortably be able to wile away in their own self-delusion – but the soldiers know better. This term-avoidance has the side-effect of sustained minimization of popular interest in troop combat deployment – unless troop casualties or ‘collateral damage’ should make the headlines.

There is an essential piece of evidence annulling the constantly claimed assertion that military operations are unavoidable: If the armed forces are sent into a violent conflict lacking sufficient manpower and issued unsuitable equipment, it can be deduced that the decision-makers who called for involvement have, in fact, granted no significance to national security or defence. Troops are sent into the field, only to be hastily withdrawn after suffering heavy losses, such as was the case in Lebanon in 1983 and again in Somalia in 1993, seeming to suggest that deployment either lasted too long or was never necessary in the first place. They are shipped off to Congo in order to allay post-colonial French concerns – troubled that the Anglophone world in central Africa might be gaining too much in influence – by means of EU solidarity. They remain to monitor the successful election win of one warlord over another, leaving the country in the same violent state of chaos as when they arrived. There quite plainly exists a preference by politics and society to wage wars on the side, allowing for involvement only as long as daily life continues on unaffected at home (excluding the bothersome expense): The stress of war is wholly ‘outsourced’ to the armed forces. This of course implies that the situation is not as serious as the deployment discourse would lead one to believe.⁸

When assessing the actual deployment missions, doubt arises as to the existence of necessary due diligence, and, additionally, on account of the limited success of the fundamental assignment – the establishment of modern forms of governance in collapsed states or following violent conflicts in far-away countries – also raises eyebrows. External interference in the inner relations of other societies and regions is an undertaking fraught with risk and folly, in which the goals set and the goals reached more often than not diverge from one another. Even the most peaceful forms of assistance remain incursions in complex networks of social relationships, power structures and communication flows. As a general rule, the intervener – whether acting economically, communicatively, or by use of police or military forces – has an inadequate understanding of the relations in which he is intervening in order to be able to make a reliable prognosis of the intervention’s chances for success (Bliesemann de Guevara/Kühn 2010). The much-proclaimed concept

6 ‘Groupthink’ is defined as a socio-psychological process in which a group of otherwise competent persons makes bad or unrealistic decisions on account of the fact that each individual has readjusted their own opinion to that of the group’s, assumed, opinion. This can lead to a situation in which the group takes action or reaches compromises that would have been rejected by any individual member under normal circumstances (Janis 1972).

8 Should suspicions prove true that postal mail to and from soldiers stationed in Afghanistan was systematically opened, this would be another serious breach of the ‘second social contract’.

of 'local ownership' can also be interpreted ironically: The local actors end up doing what *they* want with the provided resources and activities stemming from the intervener; the new German 'Progress Report' on Afghanistan provides illuminating insights into this fact. External intentions are frequently not in accordance with local wills – of the relevant minorities or, in some cases, majorities. (Bliesemann de Guevara/Kühn 2010).

Interventions come across as less damaging, and therefore more promising, the more carefully they are carried out. Soft interventions conform better to the old motto by Karl Popper to "do no harm" than do heavy interventions.⁹ This imperative would result in far more diligent and considered scrutiny of policy, both prior to and during any interventions in conflicts, by whatever means, than was the observable case in the past. This would also comply precisely to the directives of the 'second social contract' in relation to the obligation to due diligence owed the populace of a country being intervened in.

In order to avoid the danger of alienation between society, politics and the armed forces, parliaments and governments must approach the decision process on military deployments with much more consideration, thoroughness and care than they have in the past; a handful of good reasons and vague chances for success are far from sufficient. Reasons for involvement must be grounded on thorough, in-depth assessment of the conditions in the field, as well as a critical analysis of the prospects for success. These must then be weighed against the interests of those whom politics has imposed the high personal risks involved in the military mission on. It is far more advisable to occasionally say 'no' to military involvement than to send one's soldiers into a 'mission impossible', even if this induces criticism from allied partners or the European Union, and even if, on the surface, the deployment seems attractive to politicians. Status considerations, prestige, liberal-ideological zealotry, alliance pressure, political opportunism or vanity are all poor reasons for violating the 'second social contract'.

9 Extreme situations that make military intervention unavoidable do occur. Nevertheless, the question remains open as to whether any of the military deployments by Western states in the past twenty years have fulfilled this criterion. One case in which the international community answered this question, in hindsight, with a 'yes' was the case of Rwanda, and there, the intervention was never carried out.

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