Conflict Veterans

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Discourses and Living Contexts of an Emerging Social Group

Edited by

Michael Daxner, Marion Näser-Lather
and Silvia-Lucretia Nicola

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INTRODUCTION

MICHAEL DAXNER, MARION NÄSER-LATHER AND SILVIA-LUCRETIA NICOLA

Veterans—a social group with societal impact

In many books or films, veterans play a central role. Returnees from war and combat are depicted as heroes, cowards, triumphant or broken personalities. Their families may be more than happy being reunited with their fathers, mothers, husbands or children; or they are helpless in their inability to communicate with their alienated returned members. Often, all this is not framed by a generally accepted concept of *veterans*. Even the term is not common in some societies, while it is used in everyday communication in others.

Whether a person is perceived as a veteran depends on many aspects of a certain culture or a part of it. The personal and intimate access to the personality of a veteran is often detached from a sociological view on the group of veterans; such group may be a common and established element of a society, like in the United States, or it may be marginalised or neglected.

Language is revealing some unexpected variations inherent to the use of the term "veteran": one person may be a party veteran, a vintage car is called a veteran in Germany, and frequently the usage of the term is not limited to its military context. In all cases, the term veteran contains a notion of time. Etymology has it that "*vetus*" is the word for "old" or "ancient", and veterans have been the Roman returnees from war.

While veterans are an issue in inconspicuous cases of cultural expressions, they become important, when it comes to social policy—who is paying their insurance or their rehabilitation therapy?—or culture politics—are veterans the legitimate interpreters of the wars and battles they have survived?

Such questions are challenging science and politics likewise. With large and growing numbers of returnees, frictions and irritations between veterans and other groups and strata in society increase. Whether armed forces are accepted or rejected by various groups may change due to a

growing number of veterans. Larger numbers of veterans alter the supply and demand ratio of private security companies and, subsequently, affect national armed forces and the politicians' stance towards privatisation of security.

The study of veterans concerns several academic fields. For example, not only illnesses such as trauma and PTSD but also group dynamics are of interest to psychology; the specifics of the perception of veterans, their habitus and the relationship between veterans and armed forces are relevant topics for anthropologists and sociologists, as well as negotiation processes regarding the place of veterans in society. We can add more fields of scholarly interest in veterans, both in the humanities and the life sciences.

Gender, sexuality, mind and body frictions, political convictions of veterans, shifts in religious and ideological views, and much more, indicate a need for interdisciplinary approaches and the quest for systematic research. This field of academic occupation must, of course, also include investigations of the diverse veteran discourses and the inter-discourses, where this subject/object of research will be situated. The seemingly simple aspect of PTSD is a good example of the necessary trans-disciplinary approach.

This is a book written by scientists. However, it is also directed to the wide public who can discover new aspects linked to individual veterans and their organised appearance in society.

Veterans as a research topic

Since the earliest times, war has been a driving force for rapid changes, coining, altering, and even ending lives. These changes leave marks on all levels from the macro-level of aggregate actors such as states, international organisation or non-state actors, to the meso-level of social groups of different sizes with their distinguishable life-contexts, and finally to the micro-level of individual destinies. The forces unleashed by such events are therefore not only impacting armies, historical perceptions about winners and losers but especially about the involved individuals, whether rightful combatants, civilians or bystanders. Wars are temporary occurrences. Eventually, they will be transformed into other kinds of interaction. Also, for the soldiers as individuals, the physical involvement in war situations will be over one day. The experiences of soldiers during deployment, however, cast a long-lasting shadow.

This volume sheds light on the specific time span *after* the termination of war or fighting; for some persons, war continues after the cessation of fights and violence. Soldiers returning from deployment are called

deployment returnees or *veterans*. This overly simplified framing of our object of analysis constitutes at the same time the smallest denominator when addressing the topic. As our readers might expect and will discover on the following pages, dealing with deployment returnees opens a wide range of definitions, approaches, perspectives and new questions worthy of a follow-up research.

The life contexts of veterans vary within the social group of returnees, and so do the discourses on this group. We are trying to contextualise the discourses. In most cases, we concentrate on veterans that have been serving in national armed forces of their country. Thus, both domestic and supra-national linkages must be considered.

This volume describes and compares perspectives from different countries such as Denmark, Serbia, Russia, U.S. and Germany. A special emphasis will be laid on Germany given the novelty that this country is producing veterans for the first time since the end of the Second World War.

Missions abroad of many armed forces worldwide, and recently of the Bundeswehr (the German armed forces) lead to the emergence of veterans who are expected to be integrated into professional and private life again. The contemporary returnees form a group significantly different from their predecessors (e.g. veterans from the Second World War) regarding their experiences (e.g. asymmetrical war situations), their social composition (gender, religion, ethnicity), and regarding cultural factors and discourses. Despite these diverse contexts and dispositives, comparable institutional problems and subjective challenges suggest that a common reflection of historical as well as current situations of returnees might be necessary as well as highly productive.

The focus of the present volume was coined by the international conference “Deployment Returnees. Discourses and life worlds of an emerging social group”. It was staged at the Centre for Conflict Studies of the University of Marburg, Germany, 7 - 9 July, 2016. This Congress has been the first contemporary academic gathering on veterans in Germany. We continue our pioneering work, by keeping alive the awareness for the topic. The resonance of the conference encouraged the editors to seek contributions that will make clear, how relevant the topic is; and how important it is for the formation of a new social class in Germany. There is a host of different contexts, i.e. academic, military, political and cultural. The conference was international and interdisciplinary. The volume we are presenting tries to balance diverse aspects of the topic, but has, as a matter of fact, a strong section on Germany. For our country, veterans are novel.

Deployment returnees—specifics of a social group

From a sociological point of view, veterans are members of society whose experiences differ widely from that of the majority and who have developed accordant modes of perception and action as well as specific needs. In contrast to other groups, veterans not only experience extreme situations, violence, and death but also, one of their core tasks is the exertion of force. Thus, the discourses on veterans reflect, in their respective countries, and inside or outside the armed forces, different traditions, ascriptions and meanings regarding the concepts of the nation, war, gender, and the exertion of violence. If a specific role is defining soldiers (their job is to kill, their job is to defend their country, their job is to represent the glory of their fatherland etc.), are these specifics also to be attributed to veterans? This question cannot be unequivocally answered by yes or no. This ambiguity will be shown throughout the following chapters by particularly describing the interconnection and variety of positions and arguments raised regarding this question.

Veterans stabilise their social group through a slowly adjusting set of traditions, rituals and by attracting legal, social, and cultural privileges. The societal modes of recognition, inclusion or marginalisation, hiding or openly present etc. refer to a group that—at least in Germany—is less known by the public. Also, an accepted or contested definition is subject to negotiations and discursive strategies. Veterans, as members of this group, are not alone in this process. Sociologically, veterans are a mix of groups of first and second order, i.e. they share a common past or experience, and they share widely the same interests (Coser and Merton 1983, 89).

There are a few factors that deserve special attention when discussing veterans. It goes without saying that gender and sexual orientation play at least the same role that they play in active military contexts. Of overarching concern is the body, which comes into the open only in individual forms (suffering, recollection of torture, regret about killing or wounding other human beings, being mutilated etc.). The human bodies of veteran collectives are rarely mentioned or thematised. We hold that it is the body that makes us aware of demarcation lines between death and survival, between a hero and a disabled individual, between a role model and a designated outsider. From here, we can easily go further to the role of veterans in the arts, foremost literature and sculptures. Recently, a discussion about culture of memory and the role of discourses on veterans has increasingly gained in importance, for example, the role of veteran monuments in public places. The culture of memory has also played a major role in most countries over long periods of time. Philosophical questions,

such as the vicinity to dying, death and remembrance of the dead, become practical at once, when they concern veterans' families, ethical issues of appreciation or repulsion of veteran policies and the moral discourse on war and peace: are the veterans the natural successors of the subjects of warfare, violence or resistance? Or must they be perceived as another, a new species within societal order?

The life contexts of veterans

The life contexts of veterans vary widely. We are using the term to describe their diverse aspects. Both veterans and their social environment are challenged by new interpretations of politics, culture, history, narratives, traditions, rituals. The life contexts represent spheres of unquestioned habitual behaviour and informal institutions as well as fluid social spaces characterised by continuous construction and negotiation processes through performative speech acts and interaction practices of the actors themselves. The situation of veterans depends on the societal environment into which the veteran returns; much depends also on the mode in which such return occurs, meaning a mutual acceptance or repulsion by the nearer and wider environment into which the veteran returns. The social coordinates of the veteran, such as gender, social status, peer groups, family etc., are highly important. The circumstances of return must also be observed to locate the societal position of the individual veteran and of possible collectives of returnees. Is the veteran returning to his military unit at home, ready or not for being deployed another time? Will the veteran become a peer or trainer for another generation of soldiers who shall be sent out of area in the future? Will the veteran leave the armed forces after his or her return? Is this a farewell for good or simply caused by the end of a contract? Will there be an engagement in the army reserve forces? Will the veteran join private security, and for what reasons? What kind of first steps into the civilian sphere will be "normal"[1] or necessary for a veteran? These questions provoke research as well as answers from politics and the veterans themselves.

Within the Bundeswehr, having completed a mission has become a rite of passage and a proof of being a real professional soldier (Näser-Lather 2011, 339; see also Tomforde 2009). The contributions of Näser-Lather,

[1] Parting from Jürgen Link's (1997) theory of normalism, two definitions of the "normal" can be distinguished: protonormalism, which presupposes certain fixed norms and orients the definition of what is normal thereon, and flexible normalism, which defines the "normal" based on the statistical average value of given facts. Regarding the question what appears as normal to them, veterans may follow either of those definitions implicitly dependent on their attitudes.

Daxner, and Schultheiss and Baumgärtner also address the questions of how veterans are regarded by their comrades who have not been on a mission. Do they see themselves as an elite within a military sector or even the entire society? And are they seen as such by their comrades? Paying special attention to the term "hero" and its entry into discourses by the soldiers themselves, by the Bundeswehr as an institution, and by civil society, the contributions also ask whether the military hero exists within the discourse in the contemporary German society. These topics draw our attention to both the German "Sonderweg" (*particular way*) and its dwindling significance.

Our volume also sheds light on the question whether there is a specific "habitus" of the veteran (Bourdieu 1982). There has not been paid sufficient attention to this issue in the political and military discourse. It is the specific social capitals, and furthermore the cultural capitals that count (Bourdieu 1983; Bourdieu 2001, 25; Putnam 2000; King 2005), while economic capital does not play such a role. But the variations of social capitals in rapidly changing warfare bring veterans to a crucial rift among themselves: who is a veteran, a true one? How do the contemporary veteran cultures relate to traditions of veterans, for example in Germany the traditions of post-First World War veterans and the veteran cult of National Socialism (Daxner and Mann 2016)?

Also, the interior group culture of soldiers differs between services, and also units: the expected conduct and behaviour, traditions and folklore of a paratrooper unit are different from those within a unit specialised in intercultural communications and media work like Psychological Operations (Näser-Lather 2011, 162-168; see also the project on the integration of women in the Bundeswehr by Apelt and Dittmer 2007). Whether these aspects have an impact on emerging veteran cultures is a question for future research.

Different national cultures and their experiences inscribed in collective memory are, as we assume, another determining factor for the composition of veteran cultures as well as for the narratives about veterans. Gerhard Kümmel has analysed the attitude of different populations regarding their armed forces. He shows that in the U.S. and in some European countries, the attitude towards the armed forces is far more favourable than in Germany. For example, the opinion that the armed forces are a normal part of the society is more common in the USA than in Germany (Germany: 58 percent; USA: 82 percent), which also applies to feelings of gratitude (Germany: 30 percent; UK: 80 percent, USA: 87 percent) or pride (Germany: 42 percent; UK 64 percent, USA 87 percent) towards the armed forces or the view that they are needed, which in Germany only 56 percent share, in contrast to 74 percent in the UK and 85 percent in the USA (Kümmel 2010, 172f.).

Evidence for the impact of different historical experiences for the discourses on and the perception of veterans is shown by the contributions of Michael Galbas, Eva Baumgärtner and Philipp Schultheiss, Michael Daxner, and Marion Näser-Lather in this volume.

The transition from the military service into civilian life for those who have returned from war, conflicts and peacekeeping missions is not a simple process of accommodation. The expectation is that there is a seamless integration into society and that former armed services personnel should "pick up where they left off". At the same time, society is facing the social and cultural difficulties that stem from serving in areas of conflict. In turn, society must put in place support mechanisms to be able to deal with members of society whose experiences differ widely from that of the majority and who have developed accordingly other modes of perception and activities as well as specific needs. The chapters of Birgitte Sørensen, Tim Kucharzewski, and Maria Vivod deal with this issue.

Veterans live in contexts that are beyond the norm of their civilian counterparts. The development of mission routines and a certain assimilation with or repulsion of different cultures has caused an imprint on a specific veteran culture, which has an impact on the integration into civil society and on the behaviour of the society towards veterans. Veterans have experienced a foreign or alien civilisation, in most cases connected with sensations of shock stemming from the confrontation with destroyed countries, poverty, and suffering (Ahrends and Werner 2010, Näser-Lather 2016). This is what we would call the mainstream context of veteran return. However, there are returnees from deployment who seem not to have been affected by their life in a foreign country under intervention or war. It would be too simple ascribing the first experience to those who were engaged in combat or risky activities, while the second group returns from a life inside safe barracks or camps, without any contact with dangerous counterparts. Certainly, both groups exist. But the experiences of neither justify a simple clustering. Many co-factors form the variance in habitus of veterans. We observe a gap in grounded research on these variables that form the veteran habitus, at least in Germany. This was one of the main motives to organise the returnees-conference in Marburg, Germany. It will be very interesting to learn whether the national veteran habitus is more dependent on the structure and organisation of the army or a part thereof, or on the degree of being accepted or rejected by the wider or nearer social environment upon return from deployment. The question to what extent a national habitus overarches the individual variance of habitus in specific circumstances must remain open. Since the theory of habitus is explicitly antagonistic towards single experiences, this is a relevant question for further research. Habitus

changes much slower than the experiences and their dynamics (see Bourdieu 1980). The hysteresis[2] effect with veterans may indeed represent a breach with the soldier's habitus; that is to say that some experiences during deployment develop their effect on habitus only later, when there is a certain stability and continuity in a veteran's life. This assumption has yet to be investigated, and it needs the collaboration with psychologists and therapists; it is likely that such changes in the habitus do not come and go without mental or physical troubles.

It is also likely that the habitus of veterans and the lifestyle and routines of their families, friends, peers and wider social networks are interdependent. The narrations from deployment are essential to the stabilising of the habitus as a veteran. This does affect both emotional and cognitive elements of behaviour, collectively and within a certain variance with individuals. Veterans and their social environment also reflect their previous lives as soldiers. During the period(s) of deployment, families and friends adopt certain ways of organising their relationship with veterans and among themselves on behalf of returnees. It does not abruptly appear when the veteran arrives at home. This link with the preceding period of being a soldier is also a bridge to another field of research that should be further explored.

Also, the experiences of the soldiers are not compatible with the daily life in Germany, and soldiers often have difficulties to communicate with their family and friends about them. During deployment, the daily lives of the soldiers abroad and their families at home are both far from daily routine under normal circumstances. In a mission, a soldier's habitus is being reinforced through the experiences of commanding or being ordered, of thinking in ways of problem-solving under duress and danger, but also under the spell of justifying what is difficult to justify. Back home, soldiers tend to apply this extraordinary behaviour to the relationship in their families, an attempt which is doomed to fail, because the families have established their routines during the absence of the soldiers. Moreover, some soldiers miss the thrill of the mission and feel insufficiently challenged by the daily life at home (Näser-Lather 2011, 348; see also Ahrends and Werner 2010, 31f.).

According to Zimmermann et al., the most frequent diagnosis after returning from Afghanistan is PTSD, adaptation disorders (relationship

[2] *Hysteresis* is a central term in Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* and *field.* Hysteresis is the effect of habitus and field as mutually generating and generated (Hardy 2008). Hysteresis means that dispositions of habitus remain constant over long periods of time, even when the environment of the actor (i.e. the veteran) or the field that is responsible for the habitus have changed (Czech 2009).

problems, conflicts with comrades), acute stress reactions, depressive and fear disorders and somatoform disorders (Zimmermann et al. 2012,144f). The paper of Tim Kucharzewski deals with some of these problems. Most of them are annotated negatively. But, of course, there are some effects from being a soldier or being deployed that are perceived positively in retrospect.

According to a study by Seiffert and Heß, more than half of the respondents tell of positive effects of their missions: 68 percent mention that their self-confidence has risen, 56 percent value their lives more, and 41 percent think that they are more resilient. About two-thirds report that the reintegration into the daily life in Germany has been fast (Seiffert and Heß 2014, 5-8). Self-descriptions of veterans suggest that many perceive themselves as being more able, more mature and having a higher self-esteem than before (Ahrends and Werner 2010, 48), and living more intensively (Krahmann 2010, 202). Thus, empowerment seems to be one of the positive results of having been on a mission, strengthening soldier's personalities and leading to a higher resilience.

These were some pieces of a rather complex puzzle that makes up for the life contexts of veterans. But there is also another side of the medal, the assignment of veterans to the world of military as opposed to the civilian sphere. This is no longer maintained as rigidly as in the past, but certain distinctions belong to the military sphere only. We are not going to unfold this problem further than necessary for clarifying the context of veterans. But the imaginations of and the fantasies about soldiers, heroes, and the world of fighting, victory and defeat give strong impulses to all related discourses and shape discursive strategies. The formal institutions that frame military and soldiers are still a barrier between the armed forces—in Germany conceptualised by the leadership principles of the Bundeswehr as "citizens in uniform"—and the citizens. This is reflected in the veterans' perception of their environment and in their self-perception. And it makes a lot of differences for recognition and appreciation of soldiers and veterans beyond the moral contexts of combat and the ethical justification of warfare. All this is reflected in discourses where veterans play an active part.

Veterans in different countries

There are many countries with a distinguished policy on veterans and returnees from wars and combat. There are veteran administrations, even ministries for veterans; there is a broad and diversified discourse on ancient warriors; they are those who tell and retell the stories from previous glorious battles and undeserved defeats, of heroism and treachery. Veterans

are a constant in the national discourse on war and peace; they are important actors in producing and modifying the cultural memory of a society. Their sovereignty of interpretation is strong, and often a highly effective impact factor for decision-making about new wars and interventions. The dark side of this ideal-typical light shed on veterans is that the public often forgets returnees from wars; they are not well taken care of if they suffer from the mental and physical damage fighting has done to them; often, they become socially deranged, their families break apart, their ability to communicate is narrowed. Even in societies where there is a high awareness for the needs of veterans, and where their service for their country is appreciated, such problems arise. For example, in the USA, according to a long-term study (2001-2014) by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the risk for suicide was 22 percent higher among Veterans when compared to U.S. non-Veteran adults (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs 2016). These peculiarities make veterans an interesting and very particular social group, not only an object of study and research.

Among the best-investigated veterans rank those of countries like the United States of America or the United Kingdom, which did not have to rely on compulsory military service to select and deploy their professional military personnel during out of area missions for more than half a century. The academic discourse in these two particular cases is also coupled with societal awareness and active policy through—in the American case—a ministry: the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and—in the British case—a governmental agency in the subordination of the defence ministry: Veterans UK.

In Germany, on the other hand, there is not even an officially recognised definition of this newly emerging social group, let alone a coherent and comprehensive implemented policy. Even the establishment of veteran associations is still in its infancy as of now. However, this has not always been the case. Throughout the 19th century and up until 1914, there has been a vivid scene for different war and veteran clubs, societies and associations, which advocated for the rights of war returnees (Kirn 2007, Vogel 2001). This tradition was continued in West-Germany also after the First World War, but has been initially forbidden during the period following the second one. In spite of this, smaller, local clubs were formed across the country. Their number is estimated to have risen to 2,000 until the 1970s (Veteranenverband 2017). Nevertheless, public awareness, as well as a remembrance of and recognition for veterans has faded away in West-Germany throughout the 1970s and 1980s. This has been most certainly influenced by both the Peace Movement and the fact that no

German soldier had been deployed outside of the borders of his or her country until the dawn of the 1990s.

While the ancient history of German veterans has been terminated by the defeat in the Second World War in 1945, the new tradition of creating veterans did not begin with the rearmament and the establishment of the national armed forces, the Bundeswehr, in 1955. In fact, the re-emergence of veterans happened only decades later, when in 1990, the Bundeswehr began to take part in missions abroad, followed by a restructuration and reorientation process transforming the Bundeswehr, which beforehand was centred around the defence of Germany, to a flexible army with deployments as one of its central fields of action. In this context, the fall of the Iron Curtain and the reunification of Germany in 1990 has been of undeniable relevance internationally and for our topic. The reason for staging a conference, the first of its kind indeed, in Marburg in July 2016 was to answer some of the questions stemming from the very particular position of Germany in the wider context of veterans, veteran policies and veteran studies. When we prepared for the conference, we realised that we did not even have a common definition of veterans that would be acknowledged across academic disciplines and political factions. To give a striking example: has the army of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) produced veterans? Can we compare the army of the Federal Republic (FRG), the Bundeswehr, to the NVA, the Nationale Volksarmee, in East Germany, and thus, can we compare their veterans? What happens after unification in 1989, when there was only one army left; an army that was soon to become engaged in out of area deployments and would, thus, begin to produce veterans?

While German soldiers have been deployed on international peacekeeping or peace-enforcing missions for almost three decades now, the awareness of these facts seems to remain low among both German society and politicians. About the political level, the lack of both short-term and long-term solutions or strategies might be explained from two perspectives. On the one hand, there has been a need of breaking with the burdened and troublesome part of the German role played in the two World Wars and building a “new” military in demarcation to the traditions of the Wehrmacht. To this process of building up a modern military from scratch was added a new need, influenced by current global security challenges: transforming the comparatively novel Bundeswehr from a conscription army into professional armed forces, which have deployed out of area until today up to 300,000 soldiers by parliamentary mandate. These soldiers have returned to a society which largely fails to acknowledge their existence.

By now, more than 300,000 veterans build a steadily growing new social group in a society that must still learn how Germany has changed after the end of the Cold War. Afghanistan, with many dead and wounded German soldiers, is the real beginning of a new chapter in German veteran's history.

We assume that the emergence of the new social group of veterans in Germany will distinguish them from those in other countries with different traditions of war and peace discourses, and with a perpetual production of returnees from wars for diverse grounds, *inter alia* colonial and expeditionary traditions and routines.

"The veteran"—a contested term

Who shall be called a veteran? As Daxner and Mann point out, the use of the term "veteran" depends pretty much on the discursive tactics of those who are using the term (Daxner and Mann 2016). The definitions are by no means at the deliberation of singular power groups or distinguished actors, e.g. a ministry of defence or a veterans' organisation. This may be true for all societies with veterans. However, there are differences, often on subtle levels.

In a survey among soldiers of the Bundeswehr, 57 percent of respondents stated that all former soldiers should be called veterans, while 20 percent wanted this designation only for those soldiers who have participated in a mission (Bulmahn 2012, 39-41), i.e. who were "deployed".

The question of who shall be called a veteran in Germany is also not inviting an answer from an authority or a formal institution. The public discourse strategies are competing, and acceptable definitions are still out of reach. They will be shaped by many arguments that we shall analyse in the articles of this book dealing with the German case.

The question remains open. The self-image of veterans is not really investigated in Germany; a few studies have just started without solid results[3].Will the social group consist of soldiers who have been on a mission at least once, can veterans then be also soldiers who are still active and on duty? Does private security produce veterans? How much exposure to fighting is necessary in order to become a veteran? These questions are of general interest for all countries, and they will be answered differently. The

[3] Heike Bühring, a psychologist at the Bundeswehr Academy, is currently conducting representative interviews with officers regarding their experiences in the field. Her doctoral dissertation—Returnees from Deployment (working title)—is likely to be completed in 2018.

German answers will take more attention in this book for obvious reasons. It is not every day that a new social group is emerging.

We understand that these fights over definitions resemble a bit the old battle of "nominalism" against the "realism" of definitions that have gained recognition with most of the people. This is the case in many of the nations with a long tradition of veteran policies and cultures.

While soldiers returning from war do not represent a new phenomenon, but rather one as old as war itself, German society seems to have been caught off guard by the fact that the country is producing once again a social group that fits the term, whether you call them veterans or not.

A first timid step conducted by the political leadership of thematising this growing issue has been made in a speech in September of 2011 by the Minister of Defence, Thomas de Maizière, who said in parliament that he acknowledges the veterans of the Bundeswehr, and made a stark statement: "It belongs to the reality of deployment that there are veterans in Germany in recent years. These are veterans of the Bundeswehr. I admit to this term today". The last word, today, indicates that the minister has changed his mind on the issue (Veteranenverband 2017).

In a discussion paper from 2012, de Maizière addresses the necessity of defining German veterans, as well as the stringent need of having a conclusive, reliable, long-term veterans policy. The discussion paper portrays two possible definitions: a Scandinavian one, defining a veteran as a soldier, who has been deployed outside of the borders of his or her country, and an Anglo-American one, defining the term veteran very broadly, as every former member of the armed forces honourably discharged[4]. However, some countries using the latter model also recognise international deployment, through the specification of a *combat veteran*. This implies that out of area deployment includes "combat", and other military missions, such as monitoring or surveillance. The term combat is not innocent at all, e.g., when considering the drone-dilemmas. In January 2013, German Federal Minister of Defence de Maizière defined, during a military ceremony, a veteran to be "someone, who has been honourably discharged from the active service of the Bundeswehr and has taken part in at least one deployment for humanitarian, peace-keeping or peace-making measures" (quoted from Wiegold 2013).

[4] A chronology of the debate is presented by the veteran organisation "Bund Deutscher Einsatzveteranen" (http://veteranenverband.de/chronologie-der-aussagen-wesentlicher-akteure-im-themenfeld-veteranenpolitik/ Last Accessed January 2, 2018.) Federal Minister of Defence, Thomas de Maizière, presented this definition on 16 January 2013.

Since these noticeable moments, however, this meaningful and necessary debate has come to a halt. At least on the official, i.e. political level. The discourse is being currently nurtured by the established German veteran associations (see also Baumgärtner and Schultheiss, Chapter Three in this volume). The Bund DeutscherEinsatzVeteranen e.V. has published a veteran concept in July 2017, containing diverse but coherent theses that the association could agree upon (Veteranenverband 2017).

This action has fuelled the discussion among active and former soldiers and among the different associations lobbying for *their* veterans but has been widely ignored by policy makers. It has not had any effect outside the circles of experts or affected parties. Such concepts, quasi-introducing a new social group, need resonance by the public; in this respect, active soldiers and veterans likewise have their difficulties in Germany. Besides the problem of definition, veterans are becoming increasingly visible through documentaries, journal articles and quite a few reports and memoirs from the field. There is a new genre emerging (see also Daxner in Chapter 5 in this volume). Veterans have begun to struggle for the sovereignty of interpretation regarding the discourses on their place in society. They will participate in the future in discourses on interventions, homeland, war and peace (Daxner and Mann 2014, 5).

The German exceptional position might be a transitory one, as the country undergoes a rapid "normalisation" through its engagement in many more military missions out of area.

The contributions in this volume

At the end of the returnees-conference in Marburg, many participants asked for documentation of the results. It was clear from the beginning that the book should also be read outside German national borders. That is one of the reasons why the contributions are in English, as was the conference language. Future research should have an easier access to stock-taking on a subject that is regarded as serious, but not of much interest to both the scientific community and the public. It goes without saying that we do not share this indifference. Vehemently, we try to create awareness about a problem that will certainly grow, and not only in our country but worldwide. The problem will be mainly a confrontation on several frontiers of societal cohesion, i.e. insecurity, social policy, cultural dynamics etc. It will be controversial, that is for sure. The German post-war history has been too ambiguous and unclear as to manage a transition into an age of higher importance of the nation on a global level. Thus, the reflection of matters of war and peace gain new structures and dimensions. They will also provoke

a refaced discourse on military and security matters, and veterans accordingly.

There is a wide and diverse of scientific and popular literature about veterans, sometimes, by veterans. It would be pretentious to present an overview on the variance in references and texts. One of the fascinating aspects is that veterans become thematic in some national literature, in particular in the USA. Prominent writers and authors of more trivial books make veterans the explicit or indirect key persons in their plots. After the Second World War, this was true for Germany also but dried out in the course of decreasing interest in this war and its aftermath. The new German army, the Bundeswehr, of course did not produce any veterans by the time of its founding, and accounts to the past were hidden by taboos and very special sensitivities. Some of our contributions on the German case will pay attention to this. The newly emerging debate about traditions and correctness in accounting to the past add to this aspect. In these articles, the available scientific references should be mentioned in a rather complete listing.

Most existing publications on veterans worldwide focus on trauma and other medical aspects and negative mental experiences (e.g., Wadsworth et al. 2016, Ruzek 2011, Werner 2010, Barris 2009, Bieber 2007); the majority of the publications address the situation of U.S.-veterans (exceptions are McMullin 2013, and Duclos 2012, with papers on veterans in post-war-countries). In contrast, the present volume also addresses the mindsets and competences of veterans and their possibilities after returning from mission experiences; this book sheds light on the specific cultures of returnees with their own rituals, habitus, structures and codices in different European Countries and the U.S. Drawing on the comparative perspective of current cases and on approaches involving sociology, anthropology and peace and conflict studies.

As we have shown, Germany provides a special case, and this is reflected in many contributions. However, there are many commonalities among all other veteran groups worldwide, and only a few characteristics belong to the German “Sonderweg” (particular way) only.

The volume is divided into three sections. The first deals with the lives of soldiers after return and their experiences “at home”. Tim Kucharzewski compares in the first chapter “Off War. PTSD Treatment in the U.S. and German Armed Forces” the forms of therapy of the US-army and the Bundeswehr dealing with PTSD. Kucharzewski describes the long road from recognising PTSD as a problem towards developing treatment from psychotherapy to bodywork and VR-based methods.

Birgitte Refslund Sørensen addresses in the second chapter "From Warforce to Workforce. Danish veterans' Career Changes" the strategies of veterans to cope with the discontinuity of life contexts after leaving the Danish Forces, reflected in the choice of jobs and their working practices. Sørensen describes the reactions of employers with a wide range of prejudices, from discrimination to a privileged treatment of veterans. She shows, furthermore, how, in some cases, competences gained during deployment help former soldiers not only to become experts in security and organisational issues, but even to make processes and relationships work better due to their capacities and certain approaches.

The second part of the volume sheds light on the social and juridical aspects of the recognition of veterans by governmental and societal institutions and the positioning of veterans through the formation of advocacy groups and associations. Eva Baumgärtner and Philipp Schultheiss deal in the third chapter "They Have Returned and are here to Stay. New Veteran Organisations in Germany and their Struggle for Recognition" with the new veteran associations in Germany. Based on Axel Honneth's (2014) theory of reciprocal recognition as the basis of the social fabric of society, Baumgärtner and Schultheiss, interpret the lines of argument and activities of the veteran associations as a struggle for visibility and awareness. The lack of these two elements, hindered by the collective memory of the Second World War, had previously tended to marginalise the German veterans.

In the fourth chapter "Getting even with the State: Serbian War Veterans Suing a Country Officially Never at War", Maria Vivod addresses the case of Serbian veterans who had fought during the breakup of the former Yugoslavia from 1991 to 1999. Vivod analyses the background for the veterans' lack of official status and support—they having been originally framed as losers of the war. This interpretation is relating to Serbian narratives about nationalism and values, such as honour. Nevertheless, Vivod describes the interconnectedness of the national and international levels, as the veterans register partial successes during their fight for recognition by founding veteran associations, organising strikes and bringing their case before the European Court of Human Rights.

Michael Daxner analyses in the fifth chapter the beginnings of the processes of perceiving and recognising veterans in Germany as they form a newly emerging social group. In his article "Competing with the Dead Hero. The German Particular Way" he further describes the cultural and ideological subtexts forming the recent discourse on veterans in Germany. The coordinates and habitus of this new group is being contrasted with

other segments of society, especially in their distinct accounts to the German past.

The third focus of the volume is the analysis of different societal and medial conceptualisations and narratives concerning deployment returnees. In the sixth chapter, "Impeded heroes. On the (self-)perception of German Veterans", Marion Näser-Lather asks whether today's returnees from missions are regarded as heroes by the German society and the Bundeswehr and whether German veterans use the concept of heroism for describing themselves or their comrades. Näser-Lather shows the historical discontinuities as well as the current ambivalences and contradictions of the concept "military hero" connected with pacifist, patriotic and (post-)heroic discourses (see for example Münkler 2007) and the norms of the Bundeswehr.

Michael Galbas analyses in the seventh chapter, "'We are Heroes': The Homogenising Glorification of the Memories on the Soviet–Afghan War in Present Russia", how the narratives regarding the returnees from the war in Afghanistan have changed over time. Drawing on Aleida Assmann's (2006) concept of collective memory, Galbas concludes, furthermore, that there are three different patterns of narratives being employed by veterans to cope with their experiences during the Afghan War: heroism, victimhood, and justification. Important comparative parallels can be drawn between Galbas contribution and Näser-Lather's and Daxner's chapters.

Tatiana Prorokova's eighth chapter "'I Don't Belong Here Anymore': Homeland as an Uncomfortable Space for War Veterans in Irwin Winkler's Home of the Brave" sheds light on the pop cultural conceptualisation of war and veterans. The movie "Home of the brave" not only offers an example of a critical re-evaluation of the warrior-as-hero-image promoted by the US-American cinema, but also underscores the hardships that soldiers have to face once they are back home. As Prorokova carves out, home is no longer the familiar safe place of previous time. Home rather presents itself, after deployment, as a place of struggles confronting the life-worlds of the past.

To sum up, the different contributions show the framing of veterans and the reactions of the public towards them. There is a broad variance in the conceptualisation of historical events through collective memory, in discourses on war and military force, traditions and cultural values. Veterans' concepts of the state and the nation become visible. The German case tends to stand out for several reasons. But on the other hand, there is, as our volume shows, much that all veterans have in common, such as a specific habitus and experiences separating them from the rest of society.

The emergent group of veterans deserves and is continuing to deserve academic and societal attention.

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PART I:

EXPERIENCES

CHAPTER ONE

OFF WAR: THE U.S. AND GERMAN ARMED FORCES AND PTSD TREATMENT

TIM KUCHARZEWSKI

Introduction

War is a topic that has spilled almost as much ink as it has blood. Countless words have been written on this phenomenon before and after Clausewitz wrote his influential magnum opus *On War*. Less has been written about what happens beyond war, when the war is over and/or soldiers return home; what happens Off War. For a long time soldiers have been mostly left to fend for themselves once their war was over, their personal Troy and Odyssey behind them, home again. Until just a few decades ago, militaries offered mainly disregard for the trauma sustained by their veterans' infernal experience.

Indeed, “War is hell”. (Sherman 1974, iv.) This old adage, coined by William T. Sherman in the context of the American Civil War, might be a generic catchphrase but it still rings true throughout history. War, organised murder, must always feel like Dante's “suffering city” to its participants, be they soldiers, civilians, bystanders, victims or perpetrators (with the notable exception of the likes of Ernst Jünger, Winston Churchill and the most recent generation of “deployment junkies” who go beyond considering war as a necessary evil and find that the experience grants some kind of sublime fulfilment, as “a force that gives us meaning” (Hedges 2003)). From this hell veterans often bring their personal, psychological demons with them, when they return home.

Leaving the ground of theological metaphor, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) (American Psychiatric Association 2013) applies the more scientific name post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to these “demons”. Depending on the definition, symptoms of this psychological illness range from night sweats to flashbacks, from obsessive

compulsive disorder to drug addiction, severe depression and everything in between. Tragically, some of the affected people consider suicide the only available way out.

Commendably, many armed forces around the world are aware of the problem and try to offer ways to curtail and maybe even cure PTSD, often by using experimental ways of therapy. Of course, there is no "silver bullet", no guaranteed way to remedy the disorder. The American military, often a driving force of innovation in revolutions in military affairs, attempts to address the issue by using advanced technology. Virtual reality and what can be referred to as video game technology play an essential role in the confrontational therapy used by U.S. Forces. The German military, on the other hand, is often a conservative institution. While militaries in general (including the U.S. military, except for its often ground-breaking technological leaps) are often resistant to any change, even judged against its peers, the Bundeswehr is not famous for its progressive or cutting edge digital high-tech ideas and solutions. Alternative innovations and additions to more traditional ways of PTSD related therapy include animal therapy or sports in this case.

This article offers an overview of the methods used by the German and U.S. armed forces or the respective civilian medical counterparts to address PTSD, focusing mainly on the difference between the approaches. Based on personal interviews with civil and military medical/psychological practitioners, active and former soldiers, and academics working in relevant fields, open source documents, scientific publications, newspaper articles, etc. the various forms of treatment will be outlined and analysed. The comparative approach embeds the two cases in their respective national context and offers new perspectives. Comparing the different medical and military policies of these two countries regarding to PTSD treatment will offer an insight which will be more than just the sum of its parts.

Enough similarities can be cited to justify a reasonable basis for comparison: e.g., the NATO membership of both countries, veterans returning from the same theatre of war (namely Afghanistan), a similar level of economic development, democratic institutions. On the other hand, the cultural and traditional differences between the two cases, especially in the realms of war and the military, ensure a significant, meaningful value emanating from a comparison. A "culture of military restraint", rooted in the negative historical memory of militarism and dictatorship in Germany stands contrasted against a long history of international military interventions and a narrative of several "just wars" ended in victory on the U.S. side (a narrative that often ignores the non-victorious wars after 1945, which have taken place in the rice paddies of Korea and Vietnam or the

mountains of Afghanistan). Advantages and disadvantages of the respective national assumptions and forms of therapy will be discussed and a potential synergy of the most promising elements might present itself to the reader, resulting from the findings. This case selection contrasts a very technologically progressive with a fundamentally conservative example in order to cover as broad a spectrum as possible.

PTSD—being one of the most dramatic and severe psychological and even societal challenges resulting from war—and its possible cure are beyond doubt an essential aspect within the discourse regarding veterans. Judging by the scope of publications about PTSD, the topic generated intensive academic and even popular attention in the wake of the recent wars with U.S. and/or NATO engagement. Some publications, like *Winning the War Within. PTSD and the Long Road Home* (MacKinnon 2010), boast with the term PTSD on their covers and in their titles but have little to offer on the concept in terms of content. On the other hand, there are also several well-researched and authoritative texts and voices that have enhanced the discourse on this important issue, ranging from former soldiers, who are themselves afflicted by the problem (Sedlatzek-Müller 2012), over journalists (some with experience in combat zones, like Sebastian Junger) (Junger 2016) to medical doctors and psychologists (Paulson and Krippner 2007). An integral part of the publishing sector in the U.S. has been dedicated to the memoirs of veterans, embedded journalists, and soldiers for a long time. In Germany this market has only emerged in recent years but already produced a considerable number of publications by (former) members of the Bundeswehr, deployed abroad. Johannes Clair, Heike Groos, Thomas Rathsack, Achim Wohlgetan are some of the names that can be cited here, and the list continues to expand. More often than not these authors address topics like posttraumatic stress and the after effects of the psychological strain of conflict and combat. Last but not least, in the tradition of Michael Herr or Tim O'Brien (for the Vietnam War) and Robert Graves or Erich Maria Remarque (for the First World War), a lot of the (PTSD-related) reporting of the most recent wars is cloaked under the cover of semi-fictionalized accounts. The National Book Award winning short story collection *Redeployment* by Phil Klay (2014) can be cited as one acclaimed and successful example here. Dirk Kurbjuweit's (2011) *Kriegsbraut* is a German variation of this.

Of shell shock and combat fatigue: History of terminology

War is an ancient scourge of mankind and its existence can be traced back to prehistoric hunter-gatherers. 10,000-year-old evidence proves that war has