VIRTUOUS PRAETORIANS: MILITARY CULTURE AND THE DEFENSE PRESS
IN GERMANY AND TURKEY, 1929-1939

DISSERTATION

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The aim of this dissertation is to take a comparative and transnational approach to the formation of the military officer mentality and worldviews in interwar Europe by taking Germany and Turkey as case studies. It focuses on the years roughly from the Great Depression to the outbreak of the Second World War. The characteristics of military culture are examined through the publications of the defense press.

Germany and Turkey were allies in the First World War and shared a similar fate as losers of that war. Both went through rapid territorial and political change; both positioned themselves as the opposite of the winning powers, Britain and France. Yet they had different attitudes toward the international system that was formed following the war: Germany was a revisionist power, whereas Turkey was an example of interwar countries that rejected irredentism. While they had different political systems (Weimar Republic until 1933, followed by Nazi dictatorship in Germany; single-party state until 1946 in Turkey), the impact of total war and the technological and socioeconomic changes of the post-1918 era engendered similar responses in the officer corps of these countries toward politics, international relations, and technological development. These responses led to three major themes: fear of defenselessness in the age of total war; the role of the military in nation-building; and the urge to discover and fight the “internal enemies” of the nation. A picture of self-conscious uncertainty emerged in the interwar
military press, which betrayed signs of old institutions trying to adapt to a new world and fighting hard not to accept the changes. The German and Turkish officer cadres of the interwar era made the transition to the tactics and strategy of total war in the twentieth century, but most of their views on parliaments, democracy, and republicanism remained hostile and anchored in a previous era. These attitudes have influenced civil-military relations in both countries and had further implications for the future development of democratization.
Dedicated to my mother and the memory of my aunt
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Soldiers learn from the past war and prepare for the future war. Generals usually find themselves fighting the last war. This condition was never more true than the predicament of the generation of military officers who were active in the years following the First World War. The revolutionary character of that conflict, its technological innovations, its unsurpassed lethality, and the constraints it placed upon the economic and industrial infrastructure of a country transformed how field commanders and staff officers thought about war. This study examines the impact of those changes in the worldviews and mentality of the officer corps in Germany and Turkey as seen through their writings in their respective country’s defense press. Under the conditions of the post-1918 “new world order” and the increased requirements of national defense and preparation, the opinions and analyses of military officers offer a source to observe both the attitude of the officer corps toward the state and the aims and plans it had for the nation in case of future conflict. My comparative study surveys and interprets these developments in Germany and Turkey in the decade before the Second World War, and, through the experience of these two countries, aims to investigate the transnational characteristics of military culture and civil-military relations.
in interwar Europe.

Why this comparison? Other comparative studies have focused on parallel developments in Germany and other countries, some of which are obvious, for example, between Germany and Italy.\(^1\) Another useful comparison, especially for the illustration of the cooperation with the regime by the different segments of the society, is between Germany and the Soviet Union.\(^2\) The case for a comparison between Germany and Turkey in the interwar era, however, is based on the experience of a shared past and a parallel position in the international arena.

Germany and Turkey were both on the losing side of the First World War. The militaries of the two countries, especially the officer corps, had a tradition of cooperation going back to the late Ottoman era. The experience of the war on several theaters of which they campaigned together led them to form a mentality of common suffering. Both saw themselves as opponents and victims of the idea of Europe that emerged out of the peace settlements of 1919-1920 that were imposed on the losing countries, even though Turkey often represented itself as a non-revisionist country throughout the interwar era. Both had new regimes born out of the upheaval caused by the war and revolution. Their officers came from a background of monarchical loyalty and found themselves trying to adjust to the requirements of a different political system. Politically and ideologically they positioned themselves to the opposite of the political system of the victorious powers, especially the political liberalism of Britain and France. Along these

\(^1\) MacGregor Knox, *Common Destiny: Dictatorship, Foreign Policy, and War in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

lines, commentators from the German army were impressed by Turkey’s independent stance in the 1920s, and their Turkish counterparts reported admiringly on Germany’s military revival in the 1930s.

There were also differences between the two countries. First, in the early part of the period of this comparison, political systems of the two were very different. Germany in the Weimar era was a parliamentary democracy which, despite recurring threats of political violence and upheaval in its early years, engendered a lively and vocal press and established an environment of constitutional liberties. Turkey, on the other hand, was a single-party state from its founding in 1923 until 1946, where individual rights and press freedom could be curtailed at the mercy of the regime. Turkey’s situation created a different press culture, in which publishers, editors, and authors had to be circumspect in their criticism of the state, whereas in Germany, until the Nazi period, the press, including the defense journals, had a much wider legal margin of operation.

The second major difference was that the technological expertise and industrial infrastructure of Germany were ready for the adoption of military innovations and tactics, even if they were forbidden by the Versailles Treaty. German military officers had the know-how and the industrial base but not the trust in their government to undertake these changes to secure the military future of the country during the Weimar Republic. Conversely, in Turkey the military officers had no reason to feel alienated from the regime, because they identified with it. The founder and the first president of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and many of his close associates were former members of the officer corps, and officers saw themselves as a part of the ruling elite.
However, Turkey of the interwar era was an economically struggling, impoverished, and isolated country that had little means to keep up with the industrial requirements of warfare in the age of total war.

Despite these differences, the analyses and opinions presented in the defense press of both countries provide telling similarities in thinking and planning—in areas that went beyond traditional subjects of military science—which form the basis of this study. The radicalization caused by the war and regime change, the awareness that “the world” had changed since 1914, and the fear of encirclement and insufficient defense preparation in the face of growing international hostility created similar patterns and themes for the defense press of both countries, which makes up the core of my comparative study.

The history of relations between the two countries in the modern period went back to the late Ottoman Empire. Since the Berlin Congress of 1878, there had been a sizeable German influence in the areas of trade, construction, and defense. This relationship intensified in the years leading up to the First World War, especially in the area of military cooperation and the training of Turkish staff officers. For a generation of officers who were active from the last decade of the nineteenth century and onward, the influence of German officers who served in Turkey, such as Colmar von der Goltz, was crucial on their formation and intellectual opinions. The memories of this close relationship continued in the Republican era even as some Turkish officers blamed German interference in their affairs for the defeat of the Empire and were critical of that

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3 For a history of this relationship see Ilber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Alman Nüfuzu* 3rd ed. (İstanbul: İletişim, 1998).

4 This is explored in Handan Nezir Akmese, *The Birth of Modern Turkey: The Ottoman Military and the March to World War I* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005).
influence. Despite such misgivings, Turkey could not ignore the past connection with Germany, and the relations continued in the interwar era. In the 1930s, this continuing connection had an impact on the younger generation of officers, who admired the way Germany rejected the Versailles system and began to rearm itself. Without mentioning Hitler or his policies, Turkish officers were able to look at Germany from an angle of national rejuvenation and martial strength, themes that resounded with most of the Turkish defense establishment. From the German officers’ point of view, Turkey was a former ally that managed to overturn the conditions placed on it by Britain and France and that founded an independent republic from the remains of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, due to its geographic location, Turkey was of interest to German officers for both Southeastern European and Middle Eastern strategic planning. These connections helped to keep alive the interest in the two countries about each other.

The organization of this work follows chronology mainly because of the changing nature of the civil-military relations due to regime change in Germany. The periodization from 1929 to 1939 begins with the Weimar crisis and the era of the Great Depression. By 1929, Republican Turkey completed its first major wave of reforms and obtained a measure of normalization. A combination of responses to political, diplomatic, and economic challenges in the defense press allows a basis of comparison between the two cases and contributes to the choice of the decade before the outbreak of the Second World War as the chronological limits of this study. Therefore, each chapter will focus

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on a period of two years within this decade, presenting a comparative approach in three
temporal cuts: at the turn of the 1930s; in 1933-1934, when both countries were entering
into a new period; and in 1938-1939, when crucial decisions were being planned by both
countries and their respective military establishments.

The historiography of German civil-military relations and military culture in the
period of 1914-1945 has been influenced by the conditions of twentieth-century political
ideologies and the Cold War. The earliest commentators focused on the political naiveté
and incompetence of German generals in their cooption by the regime, while others
attacked the generals as being morally responsible for the collapse of the Weimar
Republic. Still others looked at the problem of German civil-military relations from the
view of continuities within the Prussian context. However, there was also an attempt to
rescue the legacy of the higher levels of the officer corps (especially of Hans von Seeckt)
in the early phase of the Reichswehr and to assign some of the blame for the uneasy
relationship between the army and the Weimar state to the civilian leadership. This
view came increasingly under attack in the early 1960s.

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7 Here I follow the outline that William Carr offered in his Introduction to Klaus-Jürgen Müller, The Army, Politics, and Society in Germany, 1933-1945: Studies in the Army’s Relation to Nazism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 1-12.


11 Leading this attack was Francis L. Carsten, Reichswehr und Politik, 1918-1933 (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch. 1965).
As research on the structures of Nazi state and government developed in the 1960s, this view had to be revised and the role of the military in domestic politics reexamined.\textsuperscript{12} Several works appeared by the end of the decade that examined the close relationship between military and the state and highlighted the willingness on the part of the military elite to adopt the ideals of the regime.\textsuperscript{13} By the end of the 1970s and early 1980s, the connection between rearmament, industrial aims, and strategy became more emphasized, as interest in the interaction of social, political, and ideological factors increased.\textsuperscript{14} The impact of the First World War, especially its transformation of the officer corps from an “estate” with special privileges in the society to a service-providing technical sector, on the social position of the military led to an increased involvement of the officer corps with public affairs.\textsuperscript{15} The emphasis on this connection makes it possible to look at the responses of the German officer corps to domestic and international challenges and their focus on the industrial, social, and cultural answers to these problems. According to this view, the legacy of the totalizing experience of the First World War and the necessities of defense planning under the restrictions of Versailles led to plans of national mobilization in preparation for future conflict, with all the social and political pressures entailed. But the initiatives by the military establishment for this type

\textsuperscript{12} Carr, “Introduction,” 5-6.

\textsuperscript{13} See for example, Klaus-Jürgen Müller, Das Heer und Hitler. Armee und nationalsozialistisches Regime 1933-1940 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1969) and Manfred Messerschmidt, Die Wehrmacht im NS Staat. Zeit der Indoktrination (Hamburg: Decker, 1969).

\textsuperscript{14} For example, Michael Geyer, Aufrüstung oder Sicherheit. Die Reichswehr und die Krise der Machtpolitik 1924-1936 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1980) and Müller, Army.

of mobilization could not be undertaken without the cooperation of civilian social structures.\textsuperscript{16} The readiness to rearm and to adapt to the necessities of mobilization for a military conflict along the lines of Total War was already in place in the Weimar Republic.\textsuperscript{17} As the Republic’s political situation worsened in the period of 1931-1933, the military elite of Germany made a decision, based on what they saw as vital for the needs of defense: in return for achieving the right to rearm, they allowed Hitler and the Nazis to dominate the political arena.\textsuperscript{18} The price of this decision would become clear gradually during the period of 1934-1938, when Hitler and the Nazi leadership, with the willing help of some high ranking generals, neutralized attempts by the military leadership to parry intervention by the party. This chain of developments abruptly led to the abolition of the post of the defense minister and the subjugation of the military high command directly to Hitler in 1938.\textsuperscript{19}

For the Turkish case, the discussion of the civil-military relations has always been colored by the impact of the four military interventions in the history of the Republic. Therefore, the discussion is often based on contemporary actions and themes, with the history of the early Republican military culture often seen as secondary. One important factor in this emphasis is the limitations on access to archival sources on the


\textsuperscript{19} Müller, “The Army and the Third Reich: An Essay in Historical Interpretation,” in Müller, \textit{Army}, 16-53.
military in the Republican era. Despite this problem, there have been attempts in English to outline the development of civil-military relations since the late eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{20} The fundamental role that the army played in the nationalist struggle and the founding of the Republic, as well as the sense of identification with the state among the officer cadres, were some of the themes that researchers examined as early as the 1950s.\textsuperscript{21} Later studies that paid attention to the single-party era focused on the role of the military as the “guardian” of the Kemalist principles.\textsuperscript{22}

Beginning with the 1990s, a series of studies that focused on the role of the military as a coercive force over politics and society began to appear. These works highlighted the connection between the ruling ideology in the country and the ways in which the armed forces manipulated or shaped the political discourse in the society. They also underlined the nature of civil-military relations in the country, especially the way in which the military functioned as a party or a source of influence over political culture. The military financial investments or its socio-economic clout were also among the areas that they investigated.\textsuperscript{23} Insights into the function and reception of the armed forces raised further questions about the origins of military culture in the early Republic from which some of the core themes of this study also arise. The role and impact of military

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\textsuperscript{20} William Hale, \textit{Turkish Politics and the Military} (London: Routledge, 1994).
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\textsuperscript{21} See, for example, the pioneering article by Dankwart Rustow, “The Army and the Founding of the Turkish Republic,” \textit{World Politics} 11 (July 1959): 513-552.
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culture in the 1930s as well as its comparison to the German situation in the same period may explain some of the characteristics of later developments in the field.

The main type of source used in this work, along with the more traditional archival sources and personal papers, are the military journals from the period; hence, the phrase “defense press” in the title. Because many important German military sources were destroyed in the war and most Turkish sources pertaining to the early Republican military are inaccessible, these journals provide an excellent opportunity to look at how military officers presented themselves, their ideas, and their opinions. Then, as now, the defense press was a venue through which those who wanted to become the elite of the military expressed their ideas, and those who wanted to emulate them learned about those ideas. Even in today’s modern militaries, junior officers find out about new ideas and trendy viewpoints from such sources, while those who aspire to flag rank stake their claim in the same journals. To analyze the editorials and articles in the defense press allows us to ascertain what issues and topics were deemed urgent at the time and what was the official attitude about them in the military. Moreover, they form a platform that brought retired and serving officers together, and the experience of former officers was priceless. This platform was all the more important during the Weimar era, when officially there were no staff officers due to the restrictions of the Versailles Treaty. In addition, these journals often reserved space for articles by civilian specialists or bureaucrats whose opinions added another dimension to the subjects discussed in the journals.
The two main journals included in this study are the *Militär-Wochenblatt* (MW) and *Deutsche Wehr* (DW). Both appeared weekly. The former was more of an official organ, although it had the word “independent” on its masthead. The editorials often used a careful tone while occasionally giving the authors free rein with their expressions. The latter transformed into a more radical outlet by the early 1930s, assuming a militantly nationalist and antidemocratic tone. On the Turkish side, the study uses the only military journal of the period, *Askeri Mecmua* (AsMe), which appeared monthly. Both the German and Turkish journals dedicated space to technical and strategic issues; but more importantly, they discussed (more so in the German defense press) diplomatic and political topics, while also paying attention to social and economic issues. As such, they provided a suitable venue for members of the military establishment to air their opinions on their profession and beyond.

The attitude of the military about politics and diplomacy in the interwar era cannot be separated from the discussion on the nature and uses of technology, and with that, modernity. For the German case, the connection between modernity and authoritarianism, creating an alternative or “reactionary modernism,” has been a popular topic. The emphasis on technology discourse in the “era of dictators” of the first half of

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24 There has been very little emphasis on these sources. One major exception is Markus Pöhlmann’s work. See his “Von Versailles nach Armageddon: Totalisierungserfahrung und Kriegserwartung in deutschen Militärischriften,” in Stig Förster (ed.), *An der Schwelle zum Totalen Krieg. Die militärische Debatte über den Krieg der Zukunft 1919-1939* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002); and also, Markus Pöhlmann, *Kriegsgeschichte und Geschichtspolitik: Der Erste Weltkrieg. Die amtliche deutsche Militärgeschichtsschreibung 1914-1956* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002). Pöhlmann focuses more on the official military historiography of the First World War, whereas my work takes a comparative approach and focuses solely in the interwar era.

the twentieth century has widened that discussion and added a comparative dimension. The ambivalent relationship of the officer corps to technology and the struggle to keep up with it or to survive in the post-World War I era without it recur as themes in the defense press and illuminate the military thinking of the period.

Recent scholarship on this topic has brought a more nuanced approach. One major claim has been that Weimar era modernists were more technologically oriented than the Nazis. “Soldierly nationalists” such as Ernst Jünger had accepted the necessity of adopting technology in order to achieve national aims. But while Jünger and others had insisted on total technological systems, most Nazi theorists claimed that gifted individuals lacking technology could persevere under the right ideology. Accordingly, “the effort to integrate the modern face of warfare into ‘the wonderful dream’ of August 1914 forced [Jünger] in the end to love total war.” This attitude about the nature of technology was common among the officer contributors to the German defense press and marked a departure from an older, more aristocratic stance regarding the role of innovation and technological change. The tension between these two attitudes could be seen in the Turkish defense press as well; the lack of adequate technology in the face of approaching international conflict led Turkish commentators to highlight non-material, psychological factors in military planning. In the German case, the frustration at the

26 A result of this approach is Wolfgang Emmerich and Carl Wege (eds.), Der Technikdiskurs in der Hitler-Stalin Ära (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1995).


limits placed on the country’s military capabilities at Versailles encouraged a more aggressive approach to the adoption of technological innovation, and “technology symbolized the spirit of national resistance.”

Based on these attitudes and developments, the study of these sources uncovers three major themes: fear of defenselessness against foreign enemies in the era of total war, frequent emphasis on the role of the officer corps as an institution in nation building and of the military as “the school of the nation,” and an urge to discover and fight interior enemies to the unity of the nation. A picture of self-conscious uncertainty emerges in the interwar military press, which betrays signs of old institutions trying to adapt to a new world and fighting hard not to accept the changes. The German and Turkish officer cadres of the interwar era make the transition to the tactics and strategy of total war in the twentieth century, but most of their views on parliaments, democracy, and republicanism remain hostile and anchored in a previous era. In the German case, this hostility to republicanism is based on the connection between the dissolution of the war effort in November 1918 and the emergence of the new republic. In the Turkish case, on the other hand, the officer corps takes on the role of the protector of the new nation-state and its republic, but that state is a single-party system that subverts the meaning of the term republic.

The results of this study also highlight certain present-day implications. Since the 1990s, the role of the military in Germany and Turkey has been discussed increasingly in the news. Currently, the question of extending the German military’s mandate in

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29 Bernhard Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany, 1890-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 279.
Afghanistan and Kosovo creates concerns about the constitutionality of such a decision and revitalizes the debate about the image of the military, especially of the officer, in German society. Along the same lines, the disagreements between member nations over the Turkish candidacy for membership in the EU re-opens the discussions on the role of the military and its officer corps within the Turkish state. This project raises timely questions about the historical background of current social and political developments. Furthermore, it offers a look into the transformation process that European institutions such as militaries and their civilian counterparts had to go through in response to international and domestic challenges. Germany and Turkey are two examples of such transformation in twentieth-century Europe. Investigating the history of the interaction between civilians and the military will help comprehend the complex undercurrents of these issues today.
CHAPTER 2

FACING THE 1930s

Confusion, shock, and despair—these reactions, wrapped in a shroud of sadness and disbelief, mark the comments by German officers who recall the end of World War One and the early years of Weimar Republic. Their remembrances were recorded after Germany’s defeat in World War Two, whose results left no room for ambivalent reactions. Written in an attempt to justify their past actions or to detach themselves from the Nazi regime, German generals’ memoirs betray an inability or unwillingness to comprehend concepts such as democracy or popular sovereignty. Thus, for example, a “fifth generation general” grumbles about the fall of the monarchy: “One man might step down, but the idea should have been saved.”\(^1\) A former field marshal conjures up the demurring mentality of the Weimar era soldier: “What symbol of his loyalty or duty should [the soldier] choose?”\(^2\) Another field marshal offers the ultimate evasion of responsibility and claims that regardless the shape it took (without mentioning Weimar Republic or the Nazi era specifically), he considers “the form of state basically

\(^1\) Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv (BA-MA) Nachlass Joachim von Stülpnagel, N5/27, 12.

as the expression of people’s will.”³ But their colleagues in the late 1920s were not so evasive or hesitant. They mocked the institutions of the republic and attacked portions of the society which they deemed malevolent. A survey of contemporary military journals, in which they showcased their opinions, reveals that three themes emerged during this period concerning the position of the military in the society: fear of defenselessness against exterior enemies in the era of total war, frequent emphasis on the relationship between the state and the military and its role as “the school of the nation,” and an urge to discover and fight interior enemies to the unity of the nation. This chapter will outline these themes and examine the military’s responses to them.

The arguments of the contributors can be divided into two kinds. The first includes factual arguments over domestic politics in the republic and international problems such as the revision of the Versailles Treaty. German military authors of the period contributed to political debates, especially on defense and budget related issues, and agitated for changes in the post-World War One European order and the role of the League of Nations.⁴ Frustration with what these serving or retired officers thought to be weakness on the part of the parliamentary political system flavored the majority of their commentaries, but their rage was also directed at foreign powers and neighbors that were supposed to undermine Germany and endanger its future.

³ BA-MA Nachlass Maximilian von Weichs, N19/11, 1.

⁴ For the aspirations built around the League and the eventual move from an idealist to a realist attitude among many Europeans in the interwar era see, Jonathan Haslam, No Virtue Like Necessity: Realist Thought in International Relations since Machiavelli (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 185-6.
The second argument is more abstract. These revolved around notions of “honor and dishonor” among nations and states and fantasies for the rebirth of a powerful German state. While these topics were also a part of the discussions regarding international relations or domestic politics, the abstract arguments focused on solutions that favored authoritarian aims and the search for a leader figure. The tension in German society and the shaky hold of the republic on political control resonate throughout such commentaries. The journals provide a rare insight into the minds of the military elite at the end of the 1920s.

The period between the negotiations around the Young Plan in 1929 and the emergence of the “Harzburg Front” on the Right and the “Iron Front” on the Left in 1931 marked the beginning of the steep decline of Weimar Republic. The year 1928 had been an auspicious one with the signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact that promised peace on the international front and the formation of a Grand Coalition led by the Left after elections in May. By the summer of 1929, however, disagreements over the future of Versailles reparations unhinged the uneasy politics of compromise that propped up the Weimar Republic. The fragile balance was destabilized in October with the death of one of the Republic’s most astute politicians, Gustav Stresemann. The most memorable event of that year was the New York stock market crash on 24 October. In 1930, the first Brüning cabinet introduced rule by presidential decrees with Hindenburg’s authorization. That same year the Allies completed the evacuations of Rhineland and Saar. Hitler made his biggest theatrical stand since the Beer Hall Putsch of November 1923 at the trial of the three Reichswehr officers in Leipzig in September 1930, capping the show with his
protestation of loyalty (*Legalitätseid*) to the republic. Earlier in that month, his party gained in the elections, and violent clashes occurred between the supporters of KPD and NSDAP. The real watershed was in 1931 when the effects of the world economic crisis reached Germany. That spring France blocked the attempted customs union between Germany and Austria. In May the crash of the Austrian *Kreditanstalt* triggered a banking crisis in Germany and marked the beginning of financial collapse in the region. By the end of the year, almost six million Germans were unemployed.

The first major theme covered by the military press in these two years of turmoil was the potential threat of invasion and future war. The contributors to German military journals repeatedly addressed the fear of a future invasion. The articles were usually accompanied by maps that highlighted Germany’s vulnerability showing numbers of battalions or fighter planes of neighboring countries. Germany and its former allies in World War I had reduced their militaries according to the treaties imposed on them in 1919, and questions of border integrity, international security, and disarmament were a constant worry for the German military establishment. Germany’s situation was a growing concern to the editors of military journals who routinely asked “who needs security?” in their lead articles.  

An editorial from January 1929 focused on Germany’s inability to defend itself. Its tone expressed regret about Germany’s political incapacity to organize a feasible defense policy. As the country tried to sidestep the stipulations of the Versailles Treaty through such secret operations as the military cooperation with the Soviet Union (The

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Black Reichswehr), the charges of secret rearmament in the foreign and domestic press increased. The anonymous author raged over the charges of secret rearmament leveled at Germany, which he saw as French propaganda or fantasy. The real sentiment, which reflected the trauma of defeat in the war, surfaced at the end of the article: “We live, like all small states, in the mercy (jealousy) of Powers.”

The tenth anniversary of the signing of the Versailles Treaty provided a chance to bemoan Germany’s defenseless position and brought about a flurry of denunciations and protests. In a front-page article, Alfred von Wegerer blasted the treaty and its War Guilt Clause. The article was accompanied by a drawing of a defiant German eagle, chained and fighting a vicious snake under the caption, “Ten Years of Versailles Treaty.” The editors appealed to the German youth to think always about this situation and break these chains that “dishonor the Volk and the State and hinder [Germany’s] recovery.”

Wegerer offered a brief history of the formation of the War Guilt Clause. The American administration, especially President Wilson, appeared in a favorable light as opposed to the “intriguing and conniving” British and French, especially Georges Clemenceau, who

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7 “Deutschlands militärpolitische Lage,” MW, 4 January 1929, 987.

8 Ibid., 988.

9 Alfred von Wegerer, “Versailler Vertrag und Kriegsschuldfrage,” *Deutsche Wehr* (DW), 26 June 1929, cover page. Wegerer was steady campaigner against Versailles and especially its War Guilt clause. He published on this topic in DW earlier: “Unser Kampfziel in der Kriegsschuldfrage,” DW, 11 May 1929, 337-40. His book on the same topic was also reviewed in DW: “Die Wiederlegung der Versailler Kriegsschuldthese,” DW, 4 May 1929, 327-8.

10 Ibid.
was the head villain of Wegerer’s article. Wegerer claimed that many dissident voices had been raised in the preceding decade against the “injustice” of the treaty, and quite a few were from Germany’s former enemies. He gave several examples of comments and opinions by French and British academics and activists who wrote about the treaty’s problems. While he reassured his readers that much has been done against the treaty in the previous ten years, the final goal, the revision, or perhaps the abolition, of the treaty could only be achieved by further struggle in “objectivity and impartiality.”

This obsession with revision was not limited to military journals; different levels of the civilian and military bureaucracy strove to overturn Versailles, especially the section that created the Polish Corridor and the borders to the east. The general belief in the military service commands and Reichswehr Ministry was that the treaty “placed Germany in a strategically intolerable position.”

Maps picturing Germany’s defenselessness were always popular with the military press in the 1920s, but by 1930 newer versions began to appear. The repeated “Who needs security?” warnings were now alongside charts of “threatening” foreign railroad construction. Older complaints also emerged regarding unfair treatment internationally

11 Ibid, 479.


and loss of valuable colonies.\textsuperscript{14} Concern over international relations and disarmament was ever present and captured the columnists’ attention.\textsuperscript{15}

Commentators also stressed the imbalance between Germany and western Allies that, according to German observers, made a mockery of disarmament. The situation was similar to the east, where France’s allies Poland and Czechoslovakia were seen as parts of a fence keeping Germany contained. Military journals played an active role in keeping up interest in these issues. Such worried reportage also appeared in neighboring countries, but the German variety, often raised in the local newspapers and later reported in national and professional journals, increased the tension considerably. The image presented to the readers was of “Poland at the gates.”\textsuperscript{16} The mentality of right-wing criticism of the Republic thrived on creation of “enemy portraits.” The nationalistic propaganda, as in many other countries during the inter-war era, fostered the image of a world where enemies of the nation stood ready for the final attack. The descriptions of the enemy, indeed the very existence of armed neighboring states, were used to cement the nation together and steel it for self-preservation. Military commentators relied on this image of the enemy to “integrate and empower” the will of the nation.\textsuperscript{17} The same notion of the enemy lurking on the other side of the border became a handy tool in the

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\textsuperscript{14} “Verlust unserer Kolonien,” MW, 25 May 1930.


\textsuperscript{16} “Polonia ante portas. Wer braucht Sicherheit?” MW, 25 December 1930. This was a culmination of a series of reports in 1930 that aimed to create public opinion against Poland and support for the German minority in the country.

\textsuperscript{17} For the role played by the conceptualization of the enemy, especially in the post-Cold War era, see Ulrich Beck’s article, “Der feindlose Staat,” Die Zeit, 23 October 1992, 65-66.
hands of Weimar’s critics and figured centrally in their paranoid campaign to keep a vigil against adversaries everywhere.

The disarmament issue created other challenges for European neighbors. Disagreements between France and Britain added to the general displeasure toward the Versailles settlement and increasing desire for revision on the part of Germany and its former allies. As one contributor noted, only when Germany regained its sovereignty as the most populous nation in Europe could these problems around the disarmament question be solved.18 By 1930, the tensions around old questions would become more visible with more drastic outcomes for Germany and Europe.

Calls for a stronger military were supported by alarming reviews of the strategic situation in Europe. France was the primary threat because its policies aimed to surround Germany by forming alliances in Eastern Europe. Added to this threat was the increasing worry about Italy’s involvement in Central Europe, even though its disagreements with France over the Mediterranean and North Africa provided a relief for the Germans. The big mystery of the European map was the Soviet Union; its aims were unclear, yet its military-industrial complex intrigued German observers.19 Germany’s apparent weakness on this map easily brought about memories of past glory, especially as the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the Second Reich approached. The current rulers of Germany and their parties compared unfavorably to Bismarck’s endlessly vaunted

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superior statecraft and integrity. Historic anniversaries became useful tools in the hands of monarchists and anti-republicans of both military and civilian varieties.

The comparison of contemporary weakness with past glory was even more glaring when contributors concentrated on the issue of Germany’s “bleeding borders.” The fight to regain the lost territories to the east, especially the struggle against Polish domination in areas such as Upper Silesia, appeared in epic proportions in military journals. The issue of the future of the German population in such areas allowed commentators to attack both the Versailles system and German’s new neighbors in the east. Fear of invasion and the humiliation of a “corridored” Germany were never far from the thoughts of such commentators, who strove to convince their readers about the injustice and absurdity of Germany’s borders. Important military figures such as General von Seeckt presented Germany’s task as a fight on domestic and international fronts. By the 1930s, the revision of Versailles Treaty and its provisions regarding Germany’s borders was a rallying cry that military media found easy to manipulate.

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22 See, for example, Chronos (pseudonym), “Korridorfrage endlich gelöst!,” MW, 25 March 1931, front page, or “Ein neuer Korridor,” MW, 25 April 1931, front page.

23 In his retirement, General von Seeckt was adamant in this task and toured the country with the purpose of giving speeches on this topic. See Maj. (Ret.) von Graevenitz’s review of one of von Seeckt’s speeches in Freiburg in “Deutschland muss leben,” DW, 15 May 1931, front page. Von Graevenitz added that even if the administration of the town was missing in the auditorium, the heavy presence of the student body made up for it. This was a sign of increasing nationalist agitation among the ranks of university students by the early 1930s.
The second major theme of the military commentators were the state-military relations. The uneasy accommodation between the officer corps and the new parliamentary democracy found its way into the memoirs of high-ranking officers. Their writings typically suggested regret or condescension toward the Republic. Frequently, the regime was depicted as “all too weak to lead the people once more to greatness.” Some officers were ready to settle for a type of constitutional monarchy, a regime that they hoped would bring back power to the state and unite the people. Others distanced themselves completely from the politics of the regime. Accordingly, the military should be above parties and non-political (überparteilich). But such an attitude was a way of disconnecting themselves from the political wishes of the population in general. The officers were connected with the old regime, the monarchy, through their upbringing and to the vaunted military past of the empire through participation in World War One. The republic and its politicians—especially those on the left—reminded the officers of the defeat and strengthened the connection between the existing regime and the trauma of defeat.

For career officers trained under the monarchy and steeled in the conservatism of a bygone era, the link between state and military was beyond politics, something organic and above the noisy push-and-pull of daily political procedure. The republican s of loyalty to a constitution and a powerful parliament had a hollow ring in comparison to that supposed organic link. This conservative understanding of the connection between the state and its different institutions, which most officers shared, had its roots in the


25 Such comments are common in the writings of Seeckt, Manstein, and Stülpnagel among others.
early nineteenth-century romantic influences on German thought. The anti-enlightenment concept of the state (and the nation in it) as a living body politic had also contributed to this conservative outlook. In the Weimar Republic, the conservative reaction to the new regime crystallized into what Fritz Stern calls “illiberalism as a state of mind.” From this position, it was easy to imagine an authoritarian utopia under a strong leader to save Germany from its predicament instead of supporting what seemed to be weak and unloved Republic.

If the political system allowed abstract criticisms by the Weimar military community, the more concrete worries regarding civil-military relations had their basis partly on the emergence of the concept of total war. The experience of the last war, with its massive armies unleashing terrible new weapons, had created the specter of a future war in which no portion of society would be safe. Such an eventuality necessitated preparation of the total nation and its war effort. Weimar military observers found the new regime lacking in that ability and longed for an alternative system that would initiate the rearming of the country as well as the thorough preparation of society physically and psychologically for a future conflict. In addition to the changing nature of war, military officers became technical service providers instead of members of an elite estate. The

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future war would require technically expert individuals ready for the rigors of total, mechanized warfare.29

Contributors to the military journals echoed most of these concerns. The Versailles settlement impacted the major issues of this period. The rejection of the Versailles system cut through class lines and aroused outrage and nationalist sentiment in all levels of society. By the end of 1920s, any point of view that supported a policy of understanding and cooperation with the Western Allies toward the overcoming of the effects of World War I had no chance of fair hearing in the German public space.30 Under the Brüning administration, the extension of a Locarno-like process to the East or binding of Germany’s foreign policy to the West by further treaties and plans would become anathema to the German foreign policy establishment.31 Bureaucrats and diplomats who moved into key foreign policy positions in this period were convinced opponents of Stresemann’s policy.32 Weimar era military journals reflect these sentiments in editorials and articles. In an editorial from 1929, a retired General von Wetzell looked at the previous year. The chief enemy was the Versailles system, but German politicians, especially those on the left, received their share of the blame.

Despite the defeat in 1918, the overall image of the military was that it performed its

31 Gottfried Niedhart, Die Aussenpolitik der Weimarer Republik (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999), 34-35.
32 Klaus Hildebrand, Das vergangene Reich. Deutsche Außenpolitik von Bismarck bis Hitler 1871-1945 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1995), 520.
duties with loyalty and competence in an unfavorable and ungrateful environment of the republic. But the military leadership was most hopeful for the youth and a new society of the future. A clear differentiation appeared in this editorial between citizens who are able to fight (wehrhaft) and pacifists. Disregarding the bitterness with which many former soldiers remembered the decisions of the German high command during the war, the author seemed convinced that wehrhaft citizens eventually would thank the military.\textsuperscript{33} Both the divisive political environment in Germany and the “pacifistic spirit” originated in the Weimar party system; such spirit was “nourished by the party-political system” in an environment of “party-political intolerance, ignorance of the factual, and political illusion.”\textsuperscript{34} Such disappointment with the political system echoed the shrill criticism of Weimar’s right-wing intellectuals and eroded subsequently the legitimacy of democracy.\textsuperscript{35}

Criticism of the Versailles system aligned with an insistence on Germany’s right to reinstitute conscription. The discussion of the merits of conscript armies over professional ones went further than their functional uses and extended to national morale and preparedness for military conflict. Some authors argued that there was a clear connection between comprehending that defense of one’s borders lies in one’s hands and indoctrination through general conscription.\textsuperscript{36} Nations that relied on conscription did not


\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 2.


\textsuperscript{36} “Berufsbein und Volksheer im Zukunftskriege,” DW, 5 January 1929, 3.
have to resort to professional “mercenary” armies. But there was another interwar debate on the virtues of professional armies about which the journals were mostly silent: what to do with the “democratization” that comes with mass armies? The memories of the breakdown of the military in 1918 and the subsequent aborted revolution were fresh in the minds of many officers. However, most chose to bury these objections between the lines of their technical commentaries.

A major purveyor of such attitudes on the staff of the Militär-Wochenblatt was General Horst von Metzsch. In a series of front-page articles in 1929, he attacked both the civilian rulers of the country and its potential enemies on the international stage. His pieces were representative statements of aristocratic and conservative, anti-republican views of self-deluded former officers. One article used the memory of the war dead to launch a virulent rant on the Versailles system and the republican politicians and leftist intellectuals of Weimar Germany, spouting the clichés of the “nobility of war” and the “silent heroism of the fallen.” It accused anyone who did not reject this system as a “misleading, unappeasable enemy of the Fatherland” who “sinned” no less against the living as he did against the dead.” Von Metzsch ignored the popular image of the war as a catastrophe where even the victors did not “win” and claimed that “while the disrespectful defenders of the current situation make a lowly joke out of the sacrifice of


38 Hew Strachan, “War and Society in the 1920s and 1930s,” in Chickering and Förster (eds.), Total War, 35-54.

39 Horst von Metzsch (1874-1946), decorated with the “Pour le Mérite” in World War I, later became briefly the director of the Army Archive under the Nazis.
the war dead, history would judge differently. It would write that two million died so that sixty million could live.” But, von Metzsch mused, “as for the question whether the survivors were worthy of such a sacrifice, the page of German history that might answer is still blank.”40 One cannot help but wonder who would eventually write on the page that von Metzsch conjured. All too often, his contributions to the journal contained vestiges of violent nationalism, irredentism, cult of the dead, and a romantic myth of regeneration that were proto-fascist and anti-rationalist trademarks of those who were discontented with the Republic. His verdict on the Republic was a common one in an era when to be nationalistic was widely understood to require being, even when working within a democracy, “against democracy, against the party system, against the so-called November Revolution, and . . . the Treaty of Versailles and the humiliation of Germany.”41

In an editorial, von Metzsch argued that the League of Nations was a tool in the hands of the victorious nations of Great Britain and France. The real enemy, however, was France, because it aimed to arm Germany’s eastern neighbors and orient them against Germany.42 This hostility towards France and everything it represented was a common theme among many rightwing critics of the Republic.43 Enlightenment values,

41 Fritz Stern, Dreams and Delusions: The Drama of German History (New York: Knopf, 1987), 159.
rationalism, and popular democracy could be traced back to France which, according to
many German observers, concealed its aggressive aims behind a veil of hypocrisy.

Despite his recurrent outbursts against France, von Metzsch reserved his sharpest
criticism for German politicians, mainly the Social Democrats. The Left’s “purely
utilitarian state wisdom fails to develop ethical patriotism and commits generations of
German children to ‘financial slavery.’” Unable to miss the smallest opportunity to
sound grimly wise, he concluded with a quote from Oswald Spengler, “we are prepared
in our youth for all possibilities, except the seriousness of our situation.” Mirroring the
style of nationalist intellectuals of the era, contemporary military authors such as von
Metzsch substituted rhetoric and aesthetic flourish for political wisdom.

While he loathed most Weimar politicians, von Metzsch rhapsodized about great
German statesmen of the nineteenth century, especially Otto von Bismarck. He
emphasized that Bismarck fell in the end because of unpatriotic social and economic
theories injected into German society by un-German socialists. Reviewing Bismarck’s
heritage, von Metzsch insisted that although “one may talk so much about the curse of
[Bismarck’s] anti-socialist laws, the curse of Marxist teachings has been greater for
Germany.” The German worker was a poor creature who had become an uprooted and
hopeless victim of socialist agitators. Remembering the days when the last vestiges of
the empire crumbled away in late 1918, he lamented that “people’s pride [in Germany]

44 Von Metzsch, “Memento,” 1451. For another example of such an attack, see von Metzsch, “Volk ohne

45 Craig, Germany, 494.

melted like snow under the democratic springtide." Such attitudes about the birth of the first German republic highlight the many difficulties that faced the country’s civilian rulers when trying to instill even the most perfunctory support among its elite.

The annual anniversary of Versailles allowed commentators to reflect upon the position of the army in the new state. While the defeat and the Treaty of Versailles made the deplorable new condition of the military a reality, politicians and hostile civilians contributed to the military’s difficulties. In an editorial, “Never Again such a Decade,” von Metzsch lamented the uneasy relationship between the army and the state and hoped that such a difficult period as the previous decade would never be repeated. He concluded by wishing that the State not forget that for generations the great German military leaders provided “far better prophets, more selfless friends, and more visionary pedagogues for the German people than the demagogues . . . of the masses. If not, the future of Germany [is] gambled away.”

Such mistrust of civilian rule brought about further discussions of the role of the military in the political system. A prominent subtheme was the issue of direct civilian control and responsibility to the cabinet. An unsigned editorial considered the possibility of supervising the defense minister through a parliamentary state secretary and argued that it would be disastrous and mean the politicization of the military. Such supervision would signal an unfounded mistrust toward the military. Instead, the nation should learn to lean on the military, which would only happen if the military were led in a “party-less”

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47 Ibid., 1491.

48 Horst von Metzsch, “Nie wieder ein solches Jahrzent!,” MW, 4 July 1929,
or “above-parties” manner and when it would attract people, not repel them.\footnote{Wehrmacht und politische System,} The issue of civilian control was more of a bureaucratic concern rather than a purely civil-military one. Throughout the period, the ministries of defense and foreign affairs eschewed parliamentary supervision of policies which they determined to be crucial for national security. Instead, they preferred to function through interdepartmental committees.\footnote{Post, Jr., Weimar Foreign Policy, 6-7.}
The reaction to attempted intrusions into this practice found echoes on the pages of German military journals and increased suspicions against the Republic where ties between the military and the nation seemed fragile.

Securing a direct connection with the whole nation was a difficult task with such a small army.\footnote{For the “distance” between the Weimar officer corps and the society and the attempts to instill military virtues among the youth see, Ute Frevert, Die kasernierte Nation. Militärdienst und Zivilgesellschaft in Deutschland (Munich: Beck, 2001), 307-14.} Many serving officers considered the connection between the people and the military in a literal way. In an anonymous report to the Deutsche Wehr, an officer complained that in many regions and provinces, especially those near the demilitarized zones, it was impossible to see anyone in uniform, so much so that children ran away upon seeing German soldiers. The author wished that the military were more visible and allowed to take a more active part in the citizens’ lives so that his soldiers would not be received as “exotic animals.”\footnote{“Soldat und Bürger,” DW, 18 September 1929, 766.} He advocated greater propaganda espousing military values to educate all people as a whole. In reply to that report, another contributor warned about the negative meaning of the word propaganda and cautioned against

\footnote{Post, Jr., Weimar Foreign Policy, 6-7.}
alienating the populace. The real advertisement about the military would come through hard and patient work to improve the economic conditions of the country and other aspects of the state.\footnote{Reichswehrpropaganda und Wehrgedanke,} An anonymous officer commented on the unwillingness by many officers to engage the population and urged them to learn about the local population. He insisted that, despite the change in regime, “proletarianization” of a large segment of the population, and pacifist attitudes, the relationship between soldier and people had not changed much. Misunderstandings about the military could only be repaired through face-to-face contact with the civilian population.\footnote{Ritte durchs Land,} Despite chronic displeasure with the civilian structure of the state by former members of the military, the official hierarchy of Weimar Republic’s military establishment emphasized a good working relationship between officers and the civilians, as Defense Minister Wilhelm Groener affirmed to younger officers.\footnote{See his Christmas speech given at the Infantry School and published in MW: Wilhelm Groener, “Frei im Geist, fest im Charakter,” MW, 4 January 1930, 961-4.} While he urged them to pick models among older military figures,\footnote{Earlier, he had edited a volume on leadership which was reviewed favorably in the military press: Führertum. 25 Lebensbilder von Feldherren aller Zeiten (Berlin: Mittler, 1929).} he underscored the important connection between the state and its military arm as well as the soldier’s obligation to serve this idea of the state “with loyalty and conscientiousness.”\footnote{Groener, “Geist und Charakter,” 963.} Groener included the duties of the military with regard to interior disturbances. Although this part of the German military’s duties was already outlined in 1919, it nevertheless brought about the
suspicion that the military still expected threats from certain segments of the new society and state. Accordingly, “authority from above and obedience from below” was the answer for this potential threat if the army had hoped to serve the state properly.\footnote{Ibid., 963-4.}

General concerns over the loyalties of the young officer and his civic training were evident in such speeches by the military elite.

The military press included numerous examples of such concerns, containing both a training-based and a psychological dimension. Authors commented on the difficulties facing such a small institution to reach “spiritual unity” with the nation and be a “factor in its life.” But the goal would have to be the building up of the military as an example to the whole nation, above all to its youth.\footnote{Kurt Hess, “Um den jungen Offizier,” DW, 18 January 1930, 57.} The link between this goal and current situation was discipline, as Groener noted. Many examples of this emphasis are evinced in the military press of the period. In one, the author insisted on the vitality of discipline and lamented the dissolution of such an order during November 1918.\footnote{Haruspex (pseudonym), “Disziplin,” MW, 25 January 1930, 1086-7.} But, he encouraged at the end, “if the German nation finds its way back to that discipline,” it could perhaps finally manage to get itself out of the current situation.\footnote{Ibid., 1087.}

In the early issues from 1930, the worries from previous years persisted. While the technical and curricular activities of the army reached the standards allowable within Versailles restrictions, writers continued to warn about the domestic situation and anti-

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\footnote{Ibid., 963-4.}

\footnote{Kurt Hess, “Um den jungen Offizier,” DW, 18 January 1930, 57.}

\footnote{Haruspex (pseudonym), “Disziplin,” MW, 25 January 1930, 1086-7.}

\footnote{Ibid., 1087.}
military sentiment. In such times, as one author pointed out, radical movements abound and “the dissatisfied and the agitators gather themselves around confused ideas.” Only the military had the cool and calm state of mind to serve the state in full. Those who had access to the influence mechanisms over the members of the military continued to keep it poised against domestic unrest.

To highlight these perceived dangers, both journals reserved columns for book reviews, especially those that focused on Germany’s strategic situations and its political future. One area of interest was the connection between state policy and foreign policy. Such reviews allowed comment both on the restrictions imposed on Germany by its former enemies and the inability of the current system to bring Germany out of its predicament. The ability to attack both of those issues provided the reviewers with a chance to justify their worldview. One reviewer aired his resentment that in most countries such issues are part of state policy, whereas in Germany, due to the restrictions imposed upon it in the previous decade, they must remain in the realm of philosophy or theory. The reviewer suggested that in this age of war of cultures, “a nation not ready to offer its [people’s] lives is already dead.” He quoted the author that a state that accepted the pacifist ideas was like an animal that gives up resistance. Another

63 Ibid, 965.
64 See the review of retired colonel Constantin von Hierl’s work by another retired colonel, Bode, in “Grundlagen staatlicher Wehrpolitik,” MW, 25 January 1930, 1090-1.
65 Ibid., 1090.
66 Ibid., 1091.
reviewer highlighted the historical role of war and quoted the author who claimed that “only blood turns the wheels of world history.”\textsuperscript{67} Military knowledge based on technical expertise mixes with remnants of social Darwinist trappings to underline the urgency of the situation. Such ideas were by no means limited to the military; prominent legal scholars and jurists expounded on the theme of the “moral-idealistic” conception of international relations as an idea “that should be thought about, but cannot be realized.”\textsuperscript{68}

The fears of these commentators must have been exacerbated by the facts that there was increased communist presence on the streets due to the economic crisis, and the \textit{Reichswehr} Ministry was issuing warnings about attempted infiltrations of military units through communist propaganda.\textsuperscript{69}

Contributors to the military press protected the image presented to the general public about the military, even when it came from official circles. The publication of an officially sanctioned edited volume about the origins of German officer corps, for instance, caused some stir among retired officers.\textsuperscript{70} The charge of not understanding officer behavior and language or being receptive to terminology originating from left-liberal circles made up most of these misgivings. What one reviewer called leftist language could be seen by others as objective attitude, but the obsession with self-image

\textsuperscript{67} DW, 12 February 1930, 123.

\textsuperscript{68} Ulrich Herbert, \textit{Best. Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft 1903-1989} (Bonn: Dietz Verlag, 1996), 96-7. Werner Best was one of several famous legal experts who supported the Nazi movement, took up a prominent position in it until its very end, and never showed any sign of regret afterwards.

\textsuperscript{69} “Reichswehr und Kommunisten,” MW, 2 February 1930, 1210-1.

\textsuperscript{70} See the retired General Frhr. Krafft von Dellseningen’s review of Karl Demeter’s \textit{Das deutsche Offizierkorps in seinen historisch-soziologischen Grundlagen} (Berlin: Hobbing, 1929), MW, 18 March 1930, 1363-6.
and the belief that democratic or radical circles would never give the officers their due or really understand them influenced the attitude of such reviews.\footnote{The same book was reviewed much more favorably in DW, 19 February 1930, 149-50.}

The increasing influence of radical political movements over the youth, the military’s primary source base, caused further concern for careful observers. Threats from both communism and rising national socialism created uncertainties about the quality and reliability of potential officer candidates, even if the “nationalism” part of national socialism was garnering sizeable support from some military circles. Some commentators were aware that the pool of potential recruits and official candidates was as good as the rest of the youth, but the youth also required patience and understanding by older generations.\footnote{Col. Wolfgang Muff, “Bewegung der Jugend im Offizierkorps,” MW, 11 June 1930, 1801-5.} These authors noted that whereas the older, pre-war generation of youth was often conservative, it did not have the problems and issues of the present generation, which was thoroughly politicized. They divided over the question of how much politicization was good.

While the traditional sources of officer recruitment in the Weimar Republic provided soundly nationalistic and dependable offspring, one author admits that in many other sectors of the society, especially socialist and communist, these qualities cannot be expected.\footnote{Ibid., 1803.} But the nationalist portion can also be radicalized; it can be drawn to National Socialism, a false gold, according to this author. This danger must be explained to the nationalist youth, and they should be pulled back to the idea of the state from this
“poisonous ideology which does not cherish the state but attacks it.” “National Socialism is exactly like its counterpart, communism.”\textsuperscript{74} As a solution, the older generation of officers needs to reach out to the youth with patience and underline the idea that only an above-party military organization can serve the state loyalty.\textsuperscript{75} By 1930, the future of the officer corps in the face of radical politics was already problematic for those who could analyze the changes. It is not clear how many among the serving or retired members of the officer corps greeted such changes as a way out of Weimar impasse.

The threat of radical influences was beginning to be perceived by military observers so much that there were calls to institute civic, and even political, training for soldiers and officers. While the need to keep the army above politics was still a primary concern, to control the kind of political input entering the barracks was becoming a primary concern. As one author commented, the officers did not know where the recruits received their political ideas prior to joining up.\textsuperscript{76} The concepts of “Soldier and the State” and “Soldier and the People” could not be left empty. They needed to become the inner property of soldiers. As for officers, they were already too busy with technical training but had to create the time for political and civic training on their own. The author recommended that company commanders devote weekly slots for such training.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, 1804.

\textsuperscript{75} Muff (1880-1947) must have changed his opinion about the Nazis later. He was in charge of the commission that reviewed the former Austrian officers to be allowed into the \textit{Wehrmacht}, and later reached the rank of \textit{General der Infanterie}.


\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 211.
The education of the officer would have to include a wide range from constitutional law to political theory and information on specific parties. By the 1930s, changing conditions were beginning to prompt military commentators to adapt to their political environment.

The coming of 1931 signaled an important anniversary for the founding of the new army in 1921. Between 1919 and 1921, a transitional army had fulfilled the duties of a military force in the country. It took until the beginning of 1921 to organize and establish Weimar’s new military. The tenth anniversary allowed the military press to remind people about the trauma of the defeat and “humiliation” of Germany as well as stir up further indignation against Versailles.78 To underline the vehemence of domestic threats to the nation, commentators pointed out the role of Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Committees in particular, and the Left in general, in the dissolution of German military effort in 1918.79 Max Weber’s accusation leveled at the critics of the Republic during its very early days—that the tendency then had been to discredit the peace, not the war, in the search for those who were “guilty” for ending the war—seemed to have become a norm a decade later.80 By the end of the 1920s, opponents were able to discredit the Republic by pointing to its hectic beginning and by drawing connections between Germany’s supposed interior and exterior enemies. The military press of Weimar Republic played a prominent role in giving credibility to this alternative history.

79 “Zehn Jahre Reichsheer,” MW, 4 January 1931, cover page.
An insider to the events of the Weimar Republic’s early days remembered how by 1920 the observation units of the Inter-Allied Commission covered the country from the capital to the provinces like “the net of a poisonous spider.”\textsuperscript{81} The main message was that so far the military had performed its duties under most difficult conditions, attacked from both inside and outside. The aim was to achieve the revision of the Versailles Treaty as soon as possible and to change Germany’s situation to make it once more “free and independent.” For these a strong military was needed, and its core was the current army.\textsuperscript{82} The old image of the military dating back to the glory days of the Wilhelminian Empire was revived in the pages of military journals. This image united the roles of the instrument of national integration, exemplar of national virtues, and guarantor of the nation’s future.\textsuperscript{83} The goal was to recreate that environment and reposition the military in its place of honor to dislodge Germany from its present predicament.

The role of the military in politics and its relationship with the state led to diverging interpretations by different officers, even if the divergence still remained within a traditionally conservative approach. Some commentators warned their readers about the dangers of any political engagement by the military, fending off potential critics by posing questions about the possible political action by the military during the heady days of 1848.\textsuperscript{84} This explanation of “politicization” of the military betrays the mentality of the

\textsuperscript{81} See the former Reichswehrminister Geßler’s article, “Zehn Jahre Reichsheer. Zum 1. Januar 1931,” DW, 3 January 1931, 2.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 3.


\textsuperscript{84} “Politisierung der Wehrmacht,” MW, 4 July 1931, front page.
older generation of the officer corps that identified “political” action as something coming only from a “leftist” oriented position. They disregarded, or were oblivious to, the possibility that sometimes taking no action, or supporting the monarchy as was the case in 1848, is also a thoroughly “ politicized” action.

Other commentators took a more involved position and pushed for a “radicalization” of the military, which implied an involvement toward changing Germany’s situation with regard to the Versailles settlement. While taking an ostensibly republican attitude about supporting the state as it existed, such opinions never managed to hide the desire for a “better” system in the future.\textsuperscript{85} This kind of radicalization would eventually allow a compromise with the Nazi movement.

The third major theme of the period was domestic preparation and the political/psychological status of the populace. This bond through the role of the military is evinced in the common theme of military journals in these years, the struggle against dissident intellectuals and pacifism.\textsuperscript{86} Commemorating important anniversaries from the world war and remembering the fallen soldiers became suitable ways for comparing the sacrifice of those who fought in the war with the supposed damage that was caused by the pacifists in Weimar Germany. Such commentaries usually took the form of a call to Germany’s youth to rise up to the level of the previous generation. Wolfgang von Otterndorf reminded his readers that it is only Germany’s post-Versailles weakness that

\textsuperscript{85} Von Metsch, “Wehrpolitischer Radikalismus,” DW, 29 May 1931.

pushed it “to lead a peaceful policy.” To leave this the “Field of Dishonor,” Germans would have to “declare [their] support for war and its honor once again.”

Another observer reported on the proceedings of the Frankfurt Pacifists Congress. He derided the whole effort, suggesting that it would be just as laughable if a group of soldiers and sailors held a conference on modern medicine. The call for abolishing war altogether, he suggested, is an outlandish suggestion. Instead, European states should try to protect their people as best as they could in the face of chemical warfare. He concluded that the countries responsible for endangering civilian populations in Europe such as England and France should set up such a conference which he would have gladly supported. This concern with international pacifism echoed in the official documents of the defense circles throughout the early 1930s. Minister Groener himself targeted the pacifists for prosecution and followed the development of court cases with great interest. His insistence that German pacifists, especially the German Peace Society (*Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft*), had foreign (read: French) financial support led him to put pressure on Brüning to strengthen the laws against pacifists and journalists who supposedly attacked the role of the military in Weimar Germany.

Domestic politics monopolized the pages of German military journals. The rise in political violence, exemplified in the events such as the “Bloody May” of 1929 in which

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88 Captain (Ret.) Dr. Gnamm, “Der Frankfurter Pazifistenkongress über die modernen Kriegsmethoden,” DW, 19 January 1929, 53.

89 Ibid., 54.

90 See the letter from Groener to Brüning, BA-MA RW 1, vol. 23, September 1931, 1-4.
thirty people died and more than two hundred were wounded, increased the calls for law and order.\textsuperscript{91} While on the surface most commentators emphasized the importance of rule of order, they were not hopeful that the current system would provide it.\textsuperscript{92} Their criticism often took an anti-republican tone, and they did not shrink from supporting summary justice for supposedly treacherous figures.\textsuperscript{93} For some, dislike of Weimar’s civilian leadership led to a longing for the “authority” of Wilhelm II, who was seen as another “prisoner of war,” captive in his Dutch exile.\textsuperscript{94}

One cause for such contempt for the intellectuals was the increasingly popular war novel genre. The Weimar literary scene was full of wartime-experience novels which described in grisly detail the life in the trenches and senseless slaughter, leading one historian to name the phenomenon as the “War Boom.”\textsuperscript{95} The most successful author of this genre was Erich Maria Remarque’s \textit{All Quiet on the Western Front} (1929). The military commentators’ hatred for Remarque and other such authors became obsessive as

\textsuperscript{91} On the “Bloody May” see, Andreas Wirsching, \textit{Die Weimarer Republik. Politik und Gesellschaft} (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2000), 33. On May Day 1929, the barracked Berlin Schutzpolizei responded with overwhelming force to a banned KPD meeting. The following violence lasted until May 3\textsuperscript{rd} and created great animosity among the working class of Berlin and leftwing intellectuals against the SPD-led Prussian administration and especially the Berlin police.

\textsuperscript{92} The classis work on anti-democratic sentiments during this period is Kurt Sontheimer, \textit{Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik. Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933} (Munich: Nympehnburer Verlag, 1962).

\textsuperscript{93} For example, in a report on the trials of rightist vigilantes who were responsible for many killings between 1921 and 1923 (\textit{Feme-mörder}), the author suggested that a retrial would have to be organized, because of the “limitless emergency in which the Reich found itself during that period.” MW, “Verschiedenes,” 11 February 1929, 1227. On the \textit{Feme-mörder}, see Bernhard Sauer, \textit{Schwarze Reichswehr und Fememorde: Eine Milieustudie zum Rechtsradikalismus in der Weimarer Republik} (Berlin: Metropol, 2005).


\textsuperscript{95} Modris Eksteins, \textit{Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age} (New York, Anchor, 1989), 275.
is evident in the shrill right-wing press of the day.⁹⁶ Remarque and other similar writers compared particularly unfavorably with authors such as Ernst Jünger whose *Storms of Steel* (1920) glorified the war as an internal experience.⁹⁷ Von Metzsch tackled the issue of war related literature in several articles. Writers such as Remarque would not be remembered in the future, he argued, because their writings did not represent the “truth.” It was gutter literature, which without exception came out of the “left-wing, social democratic, pacifist, shrill, ‘other,’ republican Germany.”⁹⁸ Despite excellent sales and translations, Remarque’s work was nothing but a “distortion,” which was “damaging in its generalizations” of wartime experience.⁹⁹

The issue of who represented the reality of wartime experience was a recurrent theme in these journals.¹⁰⁰ Commentators tried to come to terms with the increasingly popular genre of war literature and its effects on future generations.¹⁰¹ One unsigned

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⁹⁶ For the attacks on Remarque see, Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 285-290. The film version of Remarque’s novel was greeted with protests by the Nazis in December 1930 and was eventually banned. Martin Broszat, *Hitler and the Collapse of Weimar Germany*, trans. V. R. Berghahn (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1987), 32-36.


editorial from the summer of 1929 noted the possible deleterious effects of such novels that could weaken German youth’s willingness to serve in the military, which would endanger the nation’s ability to defend itself. The authenticity of the pacifists’ concerns was directly in question as the author argued that “those who see these symptoms of ‘disease’ in the soul of a nation in contemporary ideological pacifism and detect the hysterical cries of service evaders in the slogan ‘no more war’ should have the consolation that those who survived the war will have it more in their hearts than the pacifists.”¹⁰² Accepting that literary representations of war tended to highlight tragedies and cruelties, the author observed that those depressing images would be internalized by the public as true representations of war. The example offered was Otto Dix’s paintings, which the author grudgingly called impressive, yet one-sided; but the author suggested that if a “real artist” portrayed war in a heroic manner, then liberal critics remained silent, presumably because of their bias toward pacifists.¹⁰³

The issue that must have irritated the author emerged only toward the end of the piece. Most such novels were written from the view of sensitive, educated, young enlisted men, who had no special love for their officers and were often conscripted.¹⁰⁴ For the editorial board of journals such as the Militär-Wochenblatt, in such novels the worldview of socialists and pacifists prevailed and clashed with the pre-war picture of militaristic and imperial Germany. In the editors’ view, no part of the society should be

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¹⁰³ Ibid., 1956.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 1958.
allowed to tarnish the confident self-image of the military, all the more so since the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.\textsuperscript{105} What these critics (and the Right in Weimar in general) refused to realize was that war-experience novels and pacifist art was not a German phenomenon; there was a strong current of anti-militarist artistic trend all over Western Europe as a result of the shock of World War I. This trend was shared by many in France and Britain, at the same time a parallel movement glorified wartime exploits and ridiculed bourgeois democracy. The reception of Ernst Jünger’s work evinced this fascination with violent nationalism.\textsuperscript{106} German nationalists were in no mood to comprehend the comparative nature of pacifist feelings; their aim was to return Germany to an era of unquestioning military and national loyalty.\textsuperscript{107}

The worries about the increasing force of pacifism created a sense of urgency among those who wanted to warn even the military authorities themselves. A reviewer of the introduction to the new guidelines for training published by the military was not impressed by the paper’s tone and language, while supporting such efforts in general. In quoting Minister Groener directly, the author reminded his readers that as the first servant

\textsuperscript{105} Perceived attacks against the military in the press and literature were a frequent concern in these journals. They often supported, as did the Reichswehr Ministry, harsher punishments against such attacks. See, for example, Oberheeresanwalt Frey, “Mehr Schutz dem alten Heere,” MW, 25 February 1929, 1299-1300, and the newspaper comment, “Strafantrag gegen die Reichswehrverleumder,” MW, 18 September 1929, 433.


\textsuperscript{107} Laqueur, \textit{Weimar}, 80-81.
of the state, “the military was the boulder on which the state rests” and the type of pacifism “that questions the notion of homeland defense was a deadly danger.”

The struggle against pacifism was a concern for the editorial boards of these journals, because the pacifists hit at the core of military life. The officer corps’ world since the Versailles Treaty seemed fragile enough without having to defend against the charges of those who defied even their legitimacy for existence. The frequency of editorials and book reviews that dealt with pacifism is a good indication of the urgency of this topic for the German military press.

Years later, when asked to testify at Nuremberg, one former German field marshal admitted that he “saw nothing unusual in basing the fate of a people and a nation on power politics.” For many Weimar-era German officers, both retired and serving, risky and violent options seemed the only way out of Germany’s predicament. Some found the Republic a colorless and boring substitute for the Empire. Others, such as von Metzsch, considered it nothing less than an abomination. Especially the early years of Weimar Republic were fraught with political violence. While the officers’ protestations about this political problem were frequently couched in a rational and professional language, their suggestions or solutions remained recklessly emotional. As


with many Germans in the interwar era, they were willing to substitute culture for politics, even if that meant to sacrifice democracy to authority. For the officer corps this clash of romantic and enlightened values in the era of total war was over the German soul.

Many of the concerns of the Germans officers in the interwar era were shared by Turkish officers as well. The fragile international situation, the impact of the changes on the European map, and the issues of rearmament found their place in Turkish military writings and in the popular dailies that commented on military topics. But one major difference existed between Turkey and Germany: the new nation-state in Turkey owed its emergence to the military, and the officer corps identified itself thoroughly with the regime. The founder of the republic and the leader of the nationalist resistance to the Allied invasion of 1919-1922, Mustafa Kemal Pasha (who took the surname Atatürk, father Turk, in 1934), was a successful World War One commander. In addition, there was little room for free speech in the newly-formed one-party state. Consequently, there was no open criticism of the state-military relations in Turkey. However, the anxiety of total war and the way to prepare the nation for it physically and psychologically featured prominently in the military press.

In Turkey, the 1920s were spent establishing stability and the foundations of a new secular regime. The second stage of reforms, which began with the adoption of the Latin alphabet in November 1928, aimed to influence the areas of language and culture and establish the ideological guidelines of the regime. As the effects of the Great

\[112\] A fascinating analysis of the role of culture in German history is found in Wolf Lepenies, *The Seduction of Culture in German History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
Depression began to be felt, the economic policies of the ruling party, CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, Republican People’s Party), turned towards “statism,” a policy of the state taking responsibility for economic and industrial areas where private initiative was not enough. This policy would later become one of the major tenets of Kemalist ideology. An abortive uprising by Kurds in Ağrı province in the east during the summer of 1930 proved how tenuous the hold of the new state was over certain areas of the country. The major event of these two years, however, was the attempt to establish a loyal opposition party. The SCF (Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası, Free Republican Party) survived barely three months, August to November 1930. The support shown to the new formation alarmed the ruling party, and President Mustafa Kemal had to withdraw his protection of it. This attempt was the second one since the foundation of the republic to allow limited opposition; there was an earlier aborted attempt to set up an opposition party in 1924. No further attempts of political pluralism were made until 1946. At the CHP party congress of 1931, the regime was officially called a single-party state.

On the issue of the defense of borders, first of the three major themes that were common with German officers, Turkey’s foreign relations required emphasis on protecting the status quo, not revisionism. The hard-won independence needed to be defended. Carefully playing between the states that wanted revision and those that avoided it, Turkey managed to become a valuable partner in the region and established crucial ties with former enemies such as Soviet Russia, despite deep Turkish mistrust and hatred of communism. The era of rapprochement between Turkey and Greece

alleviated worries over attack from Thrace or the Straits, but concerns over Italian interests in the Mediterranean continued.\textsuperscript{114} Until the mid-1930s, Turkey maintained a policy of “emphasizing regional cooperation” but also tried to develop independent strategies.\textsuperscript{115} As the effects of the economic crisis wore off and new threats began to emerge by the late 1930s, Turkey decided to look for alliances in the West.

The thaw with Greece found plenty of coverage in the press. The anniversary of the founding of the Republic, 29 October, shared its coverage in the media with the visit of the Greek premier to the celebrations. While the talks between the prime ministers took place in Ankara, the press combined the anniversary of the national day with that of improved relations with Greece, with one headline stating, “Greeks-Turks, Brother Nations.”\textsuperscript{116} The military was a part of these arrangements; it was placed in the center of most of the daily coverage of the parades and speeches.

On the issue of state-military relations, the concerns of the officers focused more on the need to modernize the army and fend off any threats from the outside or insurgencies from within. However, the image of the military had to be identified with the regime itself, and that required its own methods of propaganda. This type of propaganda found outlet in both the military’s only professional journal, \textit{Askeri Mecmua}

\textsuperscript{114} Mustafa Türkeş, “The Balkan Pact and its Immediate Implications for the Balkan States, 1930-34,” \textit{Middle Eastern Studies} 30, no. 1 (1994): 130-31. The security of the Straits was a common worry, because of their demilitarized status. The Gallipoli campaign of 1915-16 was fresh in the minds of many Turkish officers who both emphasized the vital importance of the Straits and reminded the readers about the stance of the Turkish soldiers there during WW I. For example, Maj. Osman, “Defense of Open Coasts,” \textit{Askeri Mecmua} (AsMe) 77, July 1930, 274-97.


\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Cumhuriyet}, October 29, 1930.
(AsMe) and the newspapers. The state controlled the press through various means, and the possibilities for dissent were almost non-existent. But there is no reason to think that the press focused on the military unwillingly. The military and its officer corps were foundations of the regime and enjoyed great prestige in the single-party era, despite chronic shortages of weapons and materiel. Many editors relished giving the military plenty of headlines, especially during annual national celebrations: 30 August (the anniversary of the Grand Offensive against the Greeks in 1922) and 29 October (the anniversary of the establishment of the republic in 1923).

To bolster the image of the military as the true savior of the nation, newspapers often resorted to flowery language. One example was from the anniversary of the major offensive against the Greeks in the War of Independence on 30 August 1922. Describing the battle in a front-page article, the editors drew a picture of almost Manichean struggle between good and evil, “not two nations fighting.” The article referred to apocalyptic language with angels and devils as well as the genius in charge of those angels, Mustafa Kemal Pasha. The anti-imperialistic nature of the conflict and its importance for other victims of western imperialism were not forgotten. The readers were reminded that if not for that “glorious day, the republic, which is the hope of all the East (‘a sun of civilization’) would not be here today.”

Journalists often portrayed the local population in adulation of the troops, reporting that they called soldiers “our saviors.” This situation was a strong contrast to the attitude of the civilians in Germany; there were no “exotic animals in uniform” here. Another columnist, writing under a pseudonym on

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117 Cumhuriyet, August 30, 1929.

118 Cumhuriyet, September 2, 1929.
the next year’s celebrations insisted that “there is still no painter who could adequately describe, paint, or picture our bronze faced heroes.” Official speeches reported by the paper on that day referred to the unity of the military with the state.

The image of the military went beyond the usual areas of defense and border protection in the coverage of the media. As a representative of the modernizing nation-state, the military was an example for all other areas of development. One example was the building of a new railroad line, which went through the territory of the Grand Assault against the Greeks in 1922. Columnists were quick to draw comparisons between the country’s industrial growth and its military presence. The Prime Minister was quoted as claiming that with such a new and fast rail connection, in a future fight “the amount of blood [spilled] will be halved.” And the accompanying illustration featured the charging cavalrymen of 1922 together with the speeding train. Similar images, this time connected to aviation, were used the following year. Technology, industry, and modernization were the tools that connected the military to the state and reflected the images of the developing nation to its citizens. Images of invincibility and progress would have to make up for economic hardship and uncertainties about the future.

The civic and economic role devised for the military was repeated in the military journals. Due to its position as an exemplary institution in the new state, the military

119 Cumhuriyet, August 30, 1930.

120 Cumhuriyet, August 31, 1930.

121 Cumhuriyet, August 31, 1931. It is interesting to note that powerful editors, such as Yunus Nadi of the Cumhuriyet, were able to lightly criticize the administration. In this case, it was the fact that the troops had to cover a long distance on foot to arrive at the location in question. The lack of funds was clear even in this little fiasco, even if Nadi softened his criticism by adding that the lesson was that a nation (or its army) can accomplish any Herculean task under war conditions.
leadership saw fit to criticize the abuses by other sections of the society. These areas were not only in industry or economy but could be as unusual as forestry and landscape. One military commentator complained in his article about the dry and barren nature of parts of Anatolia. Planting trees became a virtue and civic duty for a patriotic citizen: “He who loves his land should plant more trees.”\textsuperscript{122} The author also ventured into the mythical past of the Turks, entering the realm of fantasy and blaming the darkness of the skin of many of his compatriots on the landscape. Accordingly, Turks were once a light-skinned people, who worshipped trees. But they soon forgot this characteristic, because the ancient Turks were not a real nation in the sense of the modern one. They soon forgot about their trees, and their skin was “blackened” under the scorching sun of Anatolia.\textsuperscript{123} No myth was too far fetched for the officials of the new nation-state, especially when it reiterated the supposed ties with the more “modern” West.

The celebrations in 1930 were shadowed by the disturbances due to the attempts to establish a “loyal opposition.” There was coverage of the rivalry between CHP and SCF but without a direct reflection on the military.\textsuperscript{124} The insurgency in the East, however, was absent in any discussion of the military. The events in early summer of 1930 reached the general public only after they were leaked out by foreign

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\item \textsuperscript{122} Maj. H. Rahmi, “Bir memleketin ağaçlandırılması” (“The forestation of a country”), AsMe, 75, January 1930, 146.
\item \textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 142.
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correspondents who had access to the news from the Iranian border.\textsuperscript{125} Regardless of the position of the military, the new nation-state could not afford images of weakness.

As for the “psychological” preparation of the nation for a future military conflict or for the possibility of challenge from anti-militarist circles, the third major theme of concern in the German case, the officers believed that any potential threat against the regime would come from a possible Kurdish or Islamist uprising, as it repeatedly happened between 1925 and 1938. Therefore, their interest was more focused on steeling the nation for a possible future war and extolling the virtues of the simple Turkish soldier in the age of total warfare.\textsuperscript{126} Due to the complex relationship between Mustafa Kemal as president and leader of the nationalist struggle and the rest of the high-ranking officers who identified with the regime and were loyal to it, there could be no question of open criticism of the foreign and defense policies of the state. Moreover, unlike the German example, there was no direct challenge to the military from pacifists or communists. The real challenge was to worry over the “social health” of the nation.

The concepts such as the “spiritual force” of any given arm of the military or its techniques were oft mentioned themes in Turkish circles. A possible reason behind this emphasis was the certainty regarding industrial and armament-based inferiority. As heirs to the army that defeated the post-World War I system (as most high ranking officers were veterans of the War of Independence), the need to prove that the military could withstand another such attack was acute. Knowing that warfare had changed greatly

\textsuperscript{125} For a brief description of the rebellion see, Mete Tunçay, \textit{Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Tek-Parti Yönetimi’nin Kurulması (1923-1931)}, 3$^{rd}$ ed. (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1999), 242-45.

\textsuperscript{126} Journalists also contributed to this journal either as authors or translators, especially on these topics. For example, René Quinton, “Kahraman” (“Hero”), trans. Ahmet Cevat, AsMe 80, April 1931, 303-4.
since the end of WW I, these officers tried to push for maximum industrialization and modernization as well as highlight the qualities of Turkish soldiers, which would keep up the morale of the nation. Discussions of technical matters often led to an emphasis on spiritual effects.\textsuperscript{127}

Most Turkish readers of this journal must have been surprised to read many of the translated articles in it, mostly from German and French authors, that focused on the psychological factors behind warfare. As opposed to the realities of single-party era Turkey, such articles from European parliamentary democracies warned about the dangers of pacifism. However, such articles were of interest for members of the officer corps who wanted to raise the possibility of soldiers with negative qualities, while highlighting the references to the positive qualities of good soldiers.\textsuperscript{128}

Nevertheless, Turkish officers were also fascinated by the nationalist and xenophobic tone of these foreign writings and contributed their own versions. One Lt. Col. Hûseyin Rahmi, for example, raised issues of physical and social “degeneration” among the youth and warned about the presence of “non-nationalist sections” of the society.\textsuperscript{129} The typical conservative interwar notions of social health and organic descriptions of the nation as a body politic found their way into Turkish venues through

\textsuperscript{127} See for example, Maj. Nazmi, “Zamanımız süvarisinin kıymeti azalmış mıdır?” (“Does the contemporary cavalry have less value?”), AsMe 76, April 1930, 156-62.

\textsuperscript{128} For example, Dr. Leon Wauthy, “Vakti seferde askerin haleti ruhiyesi” (“The Soldier’s Psychological Condition during Campaign”) trans. Capt. Isfendiyar, AsMe 76, April, 1930, 175-82. This was continued in AsMe 77, July 1930, 338-42 and in AsMe 78, October 1930, 433-36. The dangers of pacifism and the need to combat internationalism were some of the key themes in these articles. Capt. Isfendiyar continued translations from Wauthy on the same theme in AsMe 79, January 1931, 133-40.

concerned members of the officer corps. By 1931, both economic and political worries made such themes timely topics of discussion.

The conditions at the turn of the 1930s influenced the officer corps of Germany and Turkey in different ways but kept them concerned over similar issues. While Weimar Germany represented the cutting edge of modernity for some observers, there were elements within it whose traditional values clashed with modernity.\textsuperscript{130} Faced with a fear of weakness against external enemies and a loathing of newer forms of politics that were inherently against their tradition and worldview, the members of the German military press exacerbated the crisis of the First German Republic at the beginning of the 1930s and became another representation of Germany’s difficult transition to modernity.\textsuperscript{131} With the increasing radicalization in politics and the reemergence street violence, even the avant-garde, creative cultural scene of Weimar Germany began to censor itself, leading one scholar to suggest that the republic had reached its end by late 1931.\textsuperscript{132} As the effects of the world economic crisis reached Germany, and the Nazi party succeeded in mobilizing large segments of the society, the military establishment chose to agree with a dangerous option that promised to solve both of its problems, while creating new ones that would ultimately undermine its autonomy and justification.

\textsuperscript{130} David C. Durst, \textit{Weimar Modernism: Philosophy, Politics, and Culture in Germany 1918-1933} (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004), xxxiv-xxxv.


\textsuperscript{132} Peter Jelavich, \textit{Berlin Alexanderplatz: Radio, Film, and the Death of Weimar Culture} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), ix.
The Turkish officer corps, on the other hand, found its new nation-state in a potentially lethal international arena after the early period of consolidation. Struggling with the trauma of the loss of empire and the difficulty of the task of modernization in a single-party state without a clear ideology, its commentators tried to adapt to the new environment by underlining their strengths and trying to hide their weaknesses. The sharpening of the ideological stance and the increase in external pressures in the mid-1930s would push them onto the path of the next international conflict, which they aimed to avoid at all cost.
CHAPTER 3

THE END OF CONTINGENCY MANAGEMENT: GERMANY, 1932-33

“Germany Goes Berserk” is the title of the section dealing with the Nazi era in a famous American textbook.¹ This image must have been quite common as the “seizure of power” by the national socialists startled and confused many contemporaries. But the year leading up to January 1933 was already rife with tension, anarchy, and slow disintegration of Germany’s first republic. Political strife, economic emergency, and bureaucratic mismanagement all contributed to Weimar’s last and most difficult year. This chapter will focus on the role played by the military journals in the delegitimization of the republic in this period.

By early 1932, with both domestic and international crises looming, the chances of democratic forces overcoming republic’ enemies were slim. Vicious attacks by the Nazis and the communists left no room in the political arena for compromise. The result was an end to contingency management:² the failure of the mainstream parties and the civil-military bureaucracy to come up with solutions to sideline the radical parties. This

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² The term is from Peter Fritzsche, “Did Weimar Fail?,” The Journal of Modern History 68 (1996), 656.
failure led to the conservatives’ last gamble, which brought Hitler to power. The editors and authors of *Militär-Wochenblatt* and *Deutsche Wehr* followed these developments closely and commented profusely on what they perceived to be the weakness of the democratic parliamentary system. Their invectives against the Weimar Republic echoed the insults hurled at it by radical street politicians of the Right. During the course of 1932-33, the journals’ critique of the republic hardened and at times, especially in *Deutsche Wehr*, became almost a carbon copy of Nazi leaflets. Such an attitude by the circles close to the country’s military establishment made the job of the officials of the *Reichswehr* loyal to the Republic, including the minister Groener, more difficult.

Groener’s 1932 New Year’s Address reflected the growing desperation of the military establishment in the face of the Republic’s crisis and carried the message that “Germany’s fate lies in our hands.” He warned against chasing after illusions and looking for foreign help for delivering the nation from its problems. This was also a plea against the quest for “patent remedies.” His emphasis on these points underlined the military’s overall worries regarding the perceived futility of international organizations on the one hand and the radicalization of the society on the other. Just as the League of Nations and international conferences were not going to assuage Germany’s legal and financial difficulties, so was the search for “romantic illusions” for radical solutions such as a potential Nazi takeover of the republic. Groener’s only rhetorical weapon was an appeal to the citizens’ probable sense of respect for the authority of the state based on the...

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3 Groener, “Das Schicksal Deutschlands liegt in unserer Hand,” MW, 4 January 1932, 889-92. The same text was also printed in DW, 1 January 1932, 3.

4 Ibid., 889.
constitution. This authority was an “absolute concept of the state that stood far above the wishes and goals of [political] parties.” Such an appeal must have sounded hollow to many citizens of the republic who expected direct and concrete solutions to its problems, not idealistic exhortations to follow a constitution that seemed too weak for hard times. These rhetorical flourishes were palliatives by and for bureaucrats and officers; they offered no competition for the messianic allure of radical politics. The inability to proffer anything more than stock phrases about the authority of the state was a sign of weakness that both the national socialists and the communists exploited in time of crisis.

The year leading up to Hitler’s appointment as chancellor was the most eventful period of Weimar Republic. In January, Brüning declared that after the Hoover Moratorium, Germany was no longer able to pay reparations. With almost six million unemployed on the streets, the outside world needed no further proof of Germany’s economic turmoil. As the German government prepared for the Geneva talks on disarmament, which began on February 2, 1932, the socio-economic situation at home was at its worst since the hyperinflation of 1923.

Domestic tensions became evident in the two significant political events: presidential and local elections of April 1932. Military journals canvassed openly on the side of Hindenburg in the run-up to the election and emphasized his “above-parties”

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5 Ibid.

überparteilich) position. Hindenburg managed to stave off challenges by Hitler and Thälmann (KPD), and returned for another seven-year term. If the reelection of the octogenarian symbol of old Germany was a pyrrhic victory for the republic, the local elections of the same month signaled the beginning of the end for the party that embodied its spirit. The SPD lost the majority in the Prussian parliament, its strongest holding, for the first time since 1925. In these elections, which took place in four states and the city of Hamburg, the NSDAP became the strongest faction, except in Bavaria, where the strongest was the BVP (Bavarian People’s Party).

The rise of the Nazi party in electoral politics went hand-in-hand with its visibility in street clashes. As street violence reached troubling levels, Brüning sought and received permission to ban the SA from the streets. There had been a general ban on political uniforms in demonstrations and the use of paramilitary insignia since December 1931. The paramilitary wing of the KPD, Roter Frontkämpferbund (RFB), had been officially banned since 1929, although it was still active clandestinely. The ban on the SA, which lasted until mid-June of 1932, exacerbated the differences between various factions within the government and the bureaucracy regarding the methods to combat anarchy. While the defense minister Groener supported the ban vigorously, his erstwhile confident and the eminence grise at the Reichswehr ministry, General Kurt von Schleicher, used the situation to slowly undermine Groener and move him towards dismissal. Groener, who had brought a sense of stability to civil-military relations in a

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7 See for example, “Reichspräsidentenwahl und Wehrmacht,” DW, 12 February 1932, 115-116.

8 On the problems with the ban and the ambiguities it created see, Pamela E. Swett, Neighbors and Enemies: The Culture of Radicalism in Berlin, 1929-1933 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 290.
turbulent period, moved into retirement by mid-May. By the end of May, Brüning had lost Hindenburg’s confidence and his cabinet resigned on May 30, 1932. Its successor was the so-called the “cabinet of barons,” led by Franz von Papen, with Schleicher as the new defense minister. This cabinet aimed at slowly undoing the remaining democratic vestiges of the republic with a vague hope of circumventing its problems. Brüning’s cabinet had started the process with presidential decrees, Papen’s would finish it.

The new cabinet’s first political action, following the dissolution of the parliament on June 4, was to plan the takeover of Otto Braun’s Prussian government that was the only remaining elected body that openly supported the republic. The action against the Prussian government, the so-called Preußenschlag of July 20, had all the markings of a coup. Papen’s federal government dismissed the local government and placed key figures under custody. The road to full collapse of the republic was now open. This act followed by another victory for the Nazis. In the federal elections of July 31, the NSDAP won 37% of the vote, and parliamentary politics in Weimar Republic reached its nadir when Hermann Göring stepped up to the role of Reichstag president. One positive development of July was the Lausanne conference. Reviewing the results of the Hoover Moratorium, the Allies declared an end to German reparations for World War I. By all accounts, this seeming victory came too late to stabilize the democratic factions in the Weimar Republic.

An account of the last five months leading up to the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor reads like a litany of slow dissolution of democratic forces and avalanching anarchy. By August, multiple street fights between the Nazis and the communists left
scores dead. The government established special courts to try political criminals and declared political murder a capital crime. The first sentences based on this law were commuted to life sentences; at this stage, the execution of the sentences would probably only have helped to create new martyrs.

Von Papen’s cabinet collapsed following the November 6 elections in which the Nazis suffered a slight set-back. Hindenburg refused to give Hitler a chance to form a government, but the possibility of a government led by Hitler was slowly becoming the wish of many on the Right. In the ensuing crisis, Schleicher emerged as the next candidate trusted by Hindenburg. It was Schleicher’s policy to create a wedge between the various factions of the Nazi party to weaken it. This policy led nowhere and prepared Schleicher’s tragic end in 1934.

In December 1932, the Five Power Declaration in Geneva established Germany’s equality. Just like the Lausanne Conference, this declaration came too late to create a public opinion favorable to the republic. In a last bid of disapproval, Hindenburg rejected Göring’s move to become the new Prussian premier. By the end of January 1933, Hindenburg was ready to sacrifice Schleicher. The latter had been asking for presidential support which he sought to deny Brüning six months earlier. As the field was cleared any other credible contenders, Hitler became the last Chancellor of the Weimar Republic on January 30, 1933.

German military journals followed all these developments very closely. The events of 1932 did nothing to endear the republic to them; the articles and editorials in the journals attacked the position of the government in almost every possible field, especially
in international relations. The main diplomatic concern of the year was the Geneva talks on disarmament; the journals ridiculed and attacked relentlessly the proceedings of the conference. For German military commentators, as well as the public general, the quest for equality in the size and the armaments of the military became an obsession. The conference provided the chance to highlight the perceived injustices of the Versailles Treaty in the areas of defense and to draws attention to various republican administrations’ inability to alter the status quo vis-à-vis German’s adversaries. For the duration of 1932, the conference remained the target of German military commentators, propped up by the two never-disappearing specters of French and Polish threat. Commentators capitalized on these three themes which, they claimed, sat in their area of expertise and were convenient weapons for their aims.

The “unholy trinity” of Germany’s enemies, in the opinion of military commentators, consisted of the post-Versailles international system (represented by the League of Nations), France, and Poland. Perhaps it is easier to imagine these commentators’ opinion of the international system as a huge boulder that sat on the long-suffering back of the German nation, supported by the two smaller rocks of Poland and France. Each of these three actors had a different role to play, according to this view, but the goal was the same: subjugation of the German people. Instead of attacking the international order directly, however, most German military criticism of the situation in Europe and the perceived attitudes toward Germany took the form of challenges against France and Poland. Military commentators pictured these two countries, especially in the

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shadow of 1932 Geneva Conference on Disarmament, as adversaries through which anti-German paranoia was carried in post-World War I Europe.

This type of reasoning helped deflect the onus of international cooperation to France, a theme which military commentators often used. The targeting of France was also the signal that the Locarno era was over. Even if the diplomats wanted to continue a cautious policy in the west, many members of the military establishment stressed the necessity of revision on both the east and the west. The responsibility for the success or failure of the idea of European disarmament and the fate of the conference depended on France, one commentator insisted.\(^\text{10}\) Reports on France’s superiority in military numbers adorned the cover of military journals, so did charts and drawings that emphasized the “superfluous” nature of France’s protests regarding any strategic threat from Germany.\(^\text{11}\) In the hands of the more radical columnists, French accusations became “fairy tales” worth only of ridicule.\(^\text{12}\) These accusations on the eve of the conference signaled to some German columnists France’s unwillingness to cooperate and to others represented something “pathological” in the French psyche towards Germany.\(^\text{13}\) One anonymous columnist regarded the worries raised on the pages of French military press about

\(^{10}\) Anonymous, “Das Schicksal der Abrüstungskonferenz liegt in Frankreichs Hand,” MW, 4 September 1932, 273-6.

\(^{11}\) For an example see, “Frankreichs bedrohte Sicherheit?,” MW, 11 February 1932, 1065-8. This piece has a chart that pits a puny German infantryman against a well-defended, gigantic French soldier. An accompanying side section titled, “Frankreichs Angriffe auf Mitteleuropa, 1610-1919,” lists all the French military campaigns since the 17th century in the hope of highlighting the perceived aggression of France.

\(^{12}\) “Alte und neue französische Märchen über deutsche Geheimrüstungen,” DW, 29 January 1932, cover page.

\(^{13}\) Brandt, “Ist Frankreichs Sicherheit durch die deutsche Zivilluftfahrt bedroht?,” DW, 12 February 1932, 116-8.
Germany as “Sunday agitation speeches” and the allies of France in Central Europe as “Helot nations.”\textsuperscript{14} The image of France in these more radical circles, especially in the editorials of Deutsche Wehr, was of a state that scorned the ideals of the disarmament conference.\textsuperscript{15}

For many German observers, the problem of security was closely tied to the issue of population and military preparedness. Influencing the outcome of the Geneva Conference would have to begin by convincing the public with hard, numerical evidence. One such evidence, argued German officers, was that only every two hundredth German was militarily available in contrast to every second Frenchman.\textsuperscript{16} If anybody wanted to talk about disarmament, they would have to first accept the inequality of Germany’s defenses. In the opinion of the German military commentators, the revision of the Versailles Treaty should be the necessary outcome of the conference. The fascination with population counts reflected the general interest in eugenics around Europe at the time; a healthy and militarily available population would prepare the nation for future success. This obsession often led to worried comments in the journals that repeatedly compared Germany’s population level with that of France. The result was often depressing for the commentators who predicted a gloomy future on the population front.\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{15} “Frankreich verstärkt seine Wehrmacht. Der Hohn auf die Abrüstungskonferenz,” DW, 8 April 1932, 261-2.

\textsuperscript{16} “Um Gleichberechtigung und Sicherheit,” MW, 11 September 1932, 313-7.

\textsuperscript{17} Carl Mühlmann, “Frankreich und das Problem der Volksmehrung,” DW, 9 November 1932, 620. Mühlmann ends his piece with the words “Vestigia terrrent.”
For those commentators who were more “philosophically” inclined, the question of the rivalry between France and Germany was one that would be decisive for Europe’s future, not just for the two nations. But these commentators also agreed with their more virulent colleagues that as long as Germany’s defense situation was not revised there could be no understanding with France. For them, France was the country that needed a “moral disarmament” more than any other nation in the world.\textsuperscript{18} At times, this moral stance created some “clever” arguments by military commentators, as one reminded France of its heritage of “liberty, equality, fraternity” and quoted Lamartine, while stating that Germany’s aim for the conference was the “liberation from its chains and the return of its rank among the Great Powers.”\textsuperscript{19} Confusion, hysteria, and bitter anger colored almost all of such editorials and columns about the conference and the possibility of revision in the international arena. This tense and hostile attitude dispelled any sign of trust in the ability of the League of Nations to solve this problem; as far as the German military establishment was concerned, the disarmament controversy, the Franco-German dispute over it, and an eventual withdrawal from the conference would signal the demise of the League.\textsuperscript{20}

The animosity toward Poland, on the other hand, was a part of Germany’s general unease with the newly-created states of Eastern and Central Europe. German views of the East in the interwar era bore the influence of the pre-war years, laden with an

\textsuperscript{18} XYZ, “Verständigung mit Frankreich?,” MW, 25 May 1932, 1537-40.

\textsuperscript{19} “Frankreichs Rechtsauffassung auf Deutschland angewendet,” MW, 25 July 1932, 120.

\textsuperscript{20} Anonymous, “Frankreich lehnt die deutsche Gleichberechtigung ab,” MW, 27 September 1932, 379-82.
emotional attachment to what was seen as an area of German cultural eminence and conquest.\textsuperscript{21} In the eyes of many Germans, both military and civilian, German communities surviving in a broad arc reaching from Transylvania to the Baltic were under the threat of extinction by their new rulers. Throughout the last year of the Weimar Republic, much was made in the press about these threats, reports of which found their way frequently to the editorials of the military journals. With its problematic approach to minorities and Polonization policies, Poland was the prime target of such accusations.\textsuperscript{22} Often these reports had their origins in the civilian press, most commonly in the \textit{Berliner Börsen-Zeitung} and \textit{Schlesische Zeitung}. The tensions over Geneva exacerbated the nature of these reports and heightened the sensibility of the military press to ethnic strife.

The core of the German allegations was the language problem. German commentators believed that anti-German actions in Eastern Europe and the fight over language rights went hand in hand.\textsuperscript{23} The style and language of such reports, often in the “Miscellaneous” section of the journals, created an overall effect of the German nation under siege in the newly-founded countries and pointed toward patterns of persecution.\textsuperscript{24} With the help of local newspapers such as the \textit{Schlesische Zeitung}, the journals followed

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{23} See for example, MW’s reports on pro-Polish demonstrations in Danzig and attempts against German language use in Latvia, 4 March 1932, 1192-3.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} For the continued theme of language persecution in Poland and Czechoslovakia see for example, MW, 11 March 1932, 1227.
\end{itemize}
up on legislation in the neighboring countries and its impact on the German minorities in the region.\textsuperscript{25}

A further problem with Poland was the issue of border security, especially in East Prussia. The relations between the two countries over this issue worsened in the spring of 1932.\textsuperscript{26} The obsession with the eastern borders, especially with East Prussia (the semi-mythical \textit{Ostmark}), had its origins in the belief that this area was where the romantic, medieval, and pure Germanness (\textit{Deutschtum}) thrived.\textsuperscript{27} Military scenarios of sudden and deadly attacks by Poland against this region crowded the pages of military journals.\textsuperscript{28} In this matter, the journals were following the trend set by the popular publishers of the day. Books on the “Polish threat” appeared frequently; a good selection of them was reviewed in the military journals.\textsuperscript{29} The overall verdict of this coverage was that the threat from the east was clear and present but it was not getting enough attention from the

\textsuperscript{25} For an example of a report on the Polish law on private schools and its effects on minority schooling see, MW 18 March 1932, 1258.


\textsuperscript{27} Krüger, “The European East,” 20-1. For the development of border protection policies of Weimar Republic see, Jun Nakata, \textit{Der Grenz- und Landesschutz in der Weimarer Republik 1918 bis 1933} (Freiburg: Rombach, 2002).

\textsuperscript{28} See for example, “Der polnische Einfall in Ostpreußen,” DW 12 February 1932, 124-5.

\textsuperscript{29} For example, the advertisement for Hans Nitram’s \textit{Achtung! Ostmarkenrundfunk! Polnishe Truppen haben heute Nacht die Ostpreußische Grenze überschritten} (Oldenbourg: Gerhard Stalling, 1932), DW, 19 February 1932, 144.
In the opinion of German military observers, Poland was increasing tension by manipulating news against Germany, and this policy would inevitably lead to war. German military commentators believed that Germany should find a way of defending itself against this threat and mobilize its population despite restrictions. The combination of the coverage of Geneva talks and the specter of a Polish attack was a clever tactic that was aimed at underlining Germany’s right to defend itself in such a hostile environment. Purported reports about Polish militarization of the Corridor, along with Poland’s “military colonization” of Ukrainian and Belorussian areas contributed to these efforts. The aim of these reports in general was that the newly independent Poland had been following an expansionist policy under Piłsudski.

The articles and editorials against Poland were not limited to political and diplomatic issues, but also ventured into the areas of race and society. The condescending tone taken toward Poland by many contributors often became racially tinged. Anti-Polish attitudes among the Germans developed as a type of modern

31 “Polnische Kriegshetze,” MW, 4 May 1932, 1466.
32 “Gefahr in Osten! Die Notwendigkeit der Mobilisierung aller nationalen Kräfte,” DW, 20 May 1932, 361-2. This cover page report included a photo of Polish youths training in a paramilitary exercise.
35 See for example the report on the supposedly low quantities of soap used by the Poles in comparison to the Germans, “Seife als Kulturmesser,” MW, 25 July 1932, 131. In all fairness to the MW, this report originated from the Schlesische Zeitung.
racism, whereby Polish “otherness” helped to construct German identity.\textsuperscript{36} One author even suggested that Poland could not have become a real state without the efforts of the German military administration during World War I; the underlying message in this article was that not only the German occupation had been beneficial to Poland, but also, inadvertently, Germany had created a monster at its borders.\textsuperscript{37}

By late 1932, these grumblings about who the Poles were and what they wanted transformed into how the Germans should resist them. Interwar German governments never renounced the idea of revising the eastern borders; in fact, no government could have survived such a decision.\textsuperscript{38} While the republican government seemed too reticent to deal with the Polish threat, the Nazis took up the challenge, especially on the issue of the future of the Free City of Danzig, and found support in the German military press.\textsuperscript{39} To many observers in the military, the attitude of the certain sections within the civilian establishment, especially among the Social Democrats, toward problems with Poland was bordering on treason. As one author commented, if the commentators on the Left had followed the military press more often, they would appreciate the seriousness of the threat. German leftists should be careful with their statements on such issues, because

\textsuperscript{36} Michael G. Müller, “Poland and Germany from Interwar Period through to Time of Détente,” in Mühle, \textit{Germany and the European East}, 96-7.

\textsuperscript{37} “So haben wir Polen aufgebaut,” MW, 25 September 1932, 390-2. For the legacy of the German military occupation in World War I as a way of developing the German view of the East see, Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, \textit{War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity, and German Occupation in World War I} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

\textsuperscript{38} Krüger, “The European East,” 19.

\textsuperscript{39} “Antideutsche Orgien aus Polen,” MW, 25 September 1932, 402. This article, originally from the Berliner-Börsen Zeitung, reported on the anti-German demonstrations in the neighboring Gydnia.
Germany was slowly finding its way back into history despite the Social Democrats.\textsuperscript{40} This warning is the view of radical nationalism which switches its gaze effortlessly from the external enemy to the internal and threatens to punish the latter when it is (yet) powerless to reach the former. Such veiled threats in the summer of 1932 were reflections of the increasing confidence of the radical Right in Germany and a portent of the coming showdown with the SPD-controlled administration of Prussia. By the time leftwing journalists started paying more attention to the ramblings of the military press, the scale had already tipped violently to the side of the radical Right in the Weimar Republic.

When one looks for a symbol of Weimar’s troubles in 1932, the street clashes between various political groups come to mind first. How to stop or control political violence was at the top of the agenda for many federal and state authorities. Recent scholarship has focused on political violence in Weimar Germany and its place in historiography.\textsuperscript{41} Under the influence of various factors that plagued Weimar politics, the increased clashes between ideological enemies led to a “subversion” of the state’s monopoly of violence and engendered a fascination with a brutal political culture.\textsuperscript{42} Whether this increase in violence (also elsewhere in Europe) was a product of a general “brutalization” of masses following World War I or the result of continuities in the road

\textsuperscript{40} “Die polnische Gefahr und der Vorwärts,” DW, 3 June 1932, 393-5.

\textsuperscript{41} For a review see, Benjamin Ziemann, “Germany after the First World War—A Violent Society? Results and Implications of Recent Research on Weimar Germany,” \textit{Journal of Modern European History} 1, no. 1 (2003).

to modernity is the subject of an ongoing debate. Whatever the motivations and pathologies behind it, violence itself was a reality for many Germans in urban centers, especially in Berlin. The politics of street fighting depended on meanings and perceptions as much as it did on actual tactics and casualties. In the conservative circles such as the military, the perception of the violence was always through the prism of anti-communism even if rightwing paramilitaries like the SA also worried them. For many in the military press, the choice was made clearly on the side of the latter in 1932.

The plain statistics of casualties represent the shocking levels of violence in 1932. The bloody month of July, within weeks of the lifting of the ban on the SA and running up to the Reichstag election of 31 June, almost five hundred political riots took place, with close to a hundred deaths and over one thousand wounded. But the fighting did not have to reach extremely violent levels in order to influence public opinion. Chronic use of rituals and symbols allowed even limited skirmishes to challenge the state’s monopoly of violence. The fascist version of paramilitary politics found ready praise

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46 Schumann, Politische Gewalt, 359.
in a segment of the military press, especially in the *Deutsche Wehr*.\(^{47}\) The state was not defenseless; the police forces, especially in Prussia, tried to combat the increasing use of violence in political action. However, a thorough defense of the constitutional regime against ideological extremism was impossible due to a lack of constructive cooperation between parliamentary parties, some of which had as much contempt for the republic and its constitution as the extremists on the streets.\(^{48}\)

In a country that was a “postwar society,” where a thwarted revolution marked the birth of the new regime, the fear that the delicate balance achieved in the republic would crumble into civil war was a part of the popular and political culture.\(^{49}\) The extreme wings of the political spectrum played to these fears. On both sides, the NSDAP and KPD painted themselves as defenders against the other’s aggression. They had built themselves, based on their fighting branches, into “armed civil–war parties” by the early 1930s.\(^{50}\)

This increase in paramilitary activity was recorded by the military press as well. After 1930, the NSDAP was an option against the escalation of the communist threat for the military, despite the short-lived ban on the entry of the Nazis into the *Reichswehr*.\(^{51}\)

\(^{47}\) O. Welsch, “Die 10 Gebote des Faschismus,” DW, 8 January 1932, 24. This was a translation of a tract by the Italian minister Giurati.

\(^{48}\) On the impossibility of an effective protection of the constitution see, Andreas Wirsching, *Die Weimarer Republik. Politik und Gesellschaft* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2000), 107.


\(^{50}\) Andreas Wirsching, *Vom Weltkrieg zum Bürgerkrieg? Politischer Extremismus in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1918-1933/39. Berlin und Paris im Vergleich* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999), 575.

\(^{51}\) Jasper, *Zähmung*, 69.
This decision not to count membership in the SA as grounds for exclusion from the army found easy supporters in the military press. Some columnists used this opportunity to harass the SPD-dominated Prussian administration and question the integrity of officials such as the head of the Prussian police, Wilhelm Abegg.\(^{52}\)

For unofficial representatives of the military, despite the official distaste with which the Reichswehr observed such paramilitary units, the SA provided a ready force for the military to draw upon in case of an emergency, especially in the area of border defense. As the federal government’s ban on the SA came to force in April 1932, loud protests emerged from nationalist circles, including the military press. To ban the SA would weaken the resistance of nationalist forces in the country, they complained. As one commentator icily pointed out, “those who wanted to abolish such units would do better to strive to annul the Versailles Treaty.”\(^{53}\) The conflict over the banning of the Nazi paramilitaries soon became a cover-page issue for the military press.\(^{54}\)

Parallel to the coverage of the SA ban, reports on Hitler began to creep into the military press in the spring and early summer of 1932. These reports occasionally took the form of monitoring what the foreign press was writing about Hitler, especially the French papers that presented Hitler as a rejuvenator of German military values.\(^{55}\) The coverage of Hitler and the reviews of books on him often emphasized his credentials as

\(^{52}\) See for example, Georg Soldan, “Reichswehr und Nationalsozialismus,” DW, 19 February 1932, 135.


\(^{55}\) “Hitler baut die alte Armee wieder auf,” DW, 18 March 1932, 222.
an old front soldier and praised the military experience of the Nazis. At other times, the reports took a sarcastic tone and lambasted the critical attitude of the liberal and left wing press toward Hitler. In such moments, Hitler became “the man who [stood] at the heart of the national movement.” Journals such as Deutsche Wehr softened the image of the Nazi party and made it more palatable for the more conservative, military circles, while continuously attacking leftwing politicians and leveling charges of treason against them.

The increasingly heated debate about the nature of the Nazi movement and the possibility of using it against the radical Left in Weimar Germany shadowed the shuffle at the Reichswehr ministry that brought about the replacement of Wilhelm Groener with his former protégé Kurt von Schleicher. The break between the two came about in April over the SA-ban and the issue of how to control the Nazi movement. Schleicher’s decision to move against Chancellor Brüning involved a change in his policy as the head of the Ministeramt. While he first campaigned for the necessity of the proscription of the SA, he soon changed his views and began to engineer the isolation of Groener from the military chiefs. This move left Groener without the support of the military about his policy of containment of the Nazis and led to his resignation in May. Groener was

56 Soldan, “Das Frontsoldatentum um Hitler,” DW, 22 April 1932, 297-98.

57 “Hitlers Besuch auf Kreuzer Köln,” DW, 10 June 1932, PAGE?

58 See for example, “Reichswehr und Nazis,” DW, 11 March 1932, 203, that targeted the KPD deputy Ernst Torgler for such a treatment, following a speech by him in the Reichstag; or, “Der Soldat als Vieh,” DW, 25 March 1932, 240, reporting on the ministry’s libel case against the magazine Tagebuch.

aware of his erstwhile friend’s machinations and referred to them in his retelling of the events in April 1932.\(^{60}\) He changed his mind about the futility of trying to tame the SA only too late; once he tried to move against them, he underestimated the influence of the newly-reelected President Hindenburg and Schleicher’s ability to manipulate the president and his close circle.\(^{61}\) The ensuing struggle brought about both Groener’s resignation and the fall of Brüning’s cabinet at the end of May. As Franz von Papen became chancellor at the head of the so-called ”Cabinet of Barons” to deal with Germany’s political and economic problems moved in to Groener’s former seat at the Reichswehr Ministry.

When Schleicher engineered Papen’s way into power, his plan was to draw the NSDAP into moderation by lifting the ban on the SA and to enlist Hitler’s support for the new government. This experiment required both the backing of the military and the continuing support of Hindenburg.\(^{62}\) The sharp increase in political violence during the summer of 1932 challenged the feasibility of this plan. The new government under Papen and its security and defense authorities were trying to pass further measures even as they lifted the ban on the SA. The possibility of continuing some form of a ban on political paramilitary activity monopolized cabinet meetings throughout June; the regulations limiting the use of uniforms in political meetings were loosened at the end of

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\(^{60}\) See Wilhelm Groener, “Chronologische Darstellung der Vorkommnisse, die zu meinem Rücktritt als Reichswehr und Reichsinnenminister geführt haben,” BA-MA RW 1, vol.1.


the month.⁶³ Throughout these negotiations, key individuals in the Defense Ministry, such as the director of the Ministeramt, Colonel Ferdinand von Bredow, were in touch with the representatives of the radical right. Schleicher’s subordinates maintained contact with emissaries from the SA, while they were also accepting deputations from Berlin’s increasingly worried Jewish community. When these messengers raised the issue of swelling anti-Semitic mood in the city, their protests did not elicit a response beyond suggestions that the community also pay attention to the writings in the left-wing press of the representatives “of their race.”⁶⁴

Certain sections of the military press made their opinions on a further ban of uniforms threateningly clear to the von Papen administration. Drawing parallels with the pre-war socialist movement and its supposed will to destroy German unity, these commentators highlighted the anti-military stance of Weimar’s leftwing and liberal deputies and journalists. For these observers, German youth’s fascination with the uniform—by which they meant exclusively the Stahlhelm and the SA—was the sign of a desire for community (Gemeinschaft), instead of the atomized, individualistic republican society. This fascination was a representation of Germany’s will to defend itself and of its freedom. According to such observers, von Papen cabinet would do well to heed this call coming from the youth.⁶⁵

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⁶³ See for example the cabinet meeting of 18 June 1932, BA-L R43I/2701b, 123-127.

⁶⁴ BA-MA Nachlass Bredow N 97, vol. 1, 14-15, 22 June 1932. Bredow’s daily summaries for Schleicher include a visit by SA members who tried to pressure the military for an understanding on the role of the SA and the eventual lifting of the ban on uniforms. See, Ibid., 18.

⁶⁵ See the unsigned cover page editorial, “Der Kampf um die Uniform,” DW, 22 July 1932, 505-507.
The lifting of the ban had the feared effect on political tension. During the early summer of 1932, the number of political murders reached double digits. The armed clash between the Nazis, Communists, and the Schutzpolizei in Hamburg-Altona on 17 July, that left seventeen dead and sixty-four injured, marked the highest point of violence in 1932. It broke out as a response to an SA parade which was considered a direct provocation by the local Communists.\textsuperscript{66} The Reichswehr Ministry observed the worsening political violence and reported on it in its internal documents. Reports supporting and praising the role of the SA in the event found their way to the Wehrmacht-Abteilung, whose head, Lieutenant-Colonel Eugen Ott, was a close confidant of Schleicher and a critic of the Nazis.\textsuperscript{67} Despite the critical stance taken by the more politicized officers of the military, such reports reflected the wide ranging support that the SA enjoyed in some military quarters. However, the record of the discussions in July between Goering and Schleicher’s subordinates such as Bredow and Ott shows the politically astute operatives in the Defense Ministry to be suspicious of the Nazi leadership’s public and private statements.\textsuperscript{68} Notwithstanding these worries, Schleicher and his aides continued their dangerous game with the SA and their contingency planning.

Schleicher’s confidants had been listening to the complaints of the Nazi leadership about the Prussian police and bureaucracy since the beginning of the summer;


\textsuperscript{67} BA-MA RW 6, vol. 38, 20 July 1932. Ott’s career was closely linked to that of Schleicher’s. After the Nazi takeover, he was removed from his position in the ministry. He later became ambassador to Japan.

\textsuperscript{68} BA-MA N 97, vol. 1, 47-48, 26 July 1932.
but the conditions were just becoming rife for the removal of Otto Braun’s administration. The clash between the von Papen government and the Prussian administration reached a new level in July. The “Altona Bloody Sunday” provided one pretext among many for the attack on the SPD-led Prussian government on 20 July. Von Papen and other conservatives in his cabinet had wanted to sideline social democrat Otto Braun’s Prussian rule for some time. The ensuing action, which was undertaken with Reichswehr’s tacit support, placed Prussia under a caretaker government, with a Reichskommissar in charge of its police, and weakened the resolve of republican elements against the NSDAP in the Reich; effectively, the Nazis had no power to contend with but the military in the largest Land of Germany.  

And the members of the Reichswehr—especially among the younger officers—showed increasing interest in the solutions offered by the Nazi party. This interest was threatening enough that it elicited a response from the Defense Ministry in the form of an internal warning.

The victory of the conservatives against the SPD in Prussia highlighted the position of the military and of Schleicher in general. His attempt to assuage the fear of a military intervention was to address the nation in a speech that stressed the necessity of a “government above parties” in times of crisis. The fact that the defense minister would address the nation and support the ousting of a democratically-elected state government

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70 BA-MA N 97, vol. 1, 5 August 1932, 66-70. This order warns explicitly about the possible transfer of weapons from the military to the SA organized by Röhm who is referred to as “Hauptmann a.d. Röhm.”

illuminated the thin fabric of pretense with which the military shrouded its political leanings.

A further measure that the Papen government took to curb political violence was to introduce Special Courts to deal with political murders in August. The aim was to mete out quick punishment in such cases, leading to death sentences. The first and perhaps the most sensational test of the new law took place within a few hours of its passing. The small Silesian town of Potempa witnessed the brutal murder by SA men of a Communist on 10 August. The case was tried under the new law and the perpetrators were swiftly sentenced to death. Hitler and NSDAP officials reacted to the decision with furious contempt. When Papen commuted the sentences to life imprisonment after conferring with Hindenburg and the interior minister Gayl, Schleicher was also present at the meeting.  

The aftermath of these events in the summer carried into the autumn of 1932, when the Constitutional Court deliberated the legality of Papen’s ousting of the Prussian government. The decision of the court on 25 October 1932 confirmed the decision of the central government while exonerating Prussian ministers of any wrongdoing. This confusing ruling reflected the tension between the federalist principles and conservative tendencies of the Weimar bureaucracy. For the purposes of the *Reichswehr* leadership, and especially of Schleicher, the decision of the court was a test for the feasibility of the plans to sideline republicanism while continuing to avoid the formation of a majority government by the Nazis. The *Ministeramt* followed the deliberations of the court

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closely and reported to Schleicher throughout October 1932. It also campaigned actively behind the scenes to pass a harsher law against slandering the state authorities, including the military.\textsuperscript{73} In this matter as well as in many others pertaining to politics the military took an active role in 1932, and its political arm strove to influence political decisions at both the state and federal levels. More conservative voices among military columnists used this opportunity to agitate for a national-minded reform in the ranks of the \textit{Reichswehr} that would both block the path to civil war and be an example to the nation in its revival.\textsuperscript{74}

Despite domestic troubles, the summer of 1932 brought some relief in the international arena. The problem of reparations, the bane of every Weimar administration, ended in July with the Lausanne Conference. The plans to settle the reparations problem with a one-time payment, already initiated in the Brüning era, found a resolution under Papen’s leadership. The final number was 3 billion marks, and Papen considered this result as a confirmation of his leadership.\textsuperscript{75} But for Schleicher and other top military figures, the decision of the Lausanne Conference was no surprise. That the reparations should have been lifted was self-evident to them; what mattered was the issue of rearmament and equality.\textsuperscript{76} Despite the success of the Lausanne Conference, or perhaps because of it, dissenting voices from the military pushed for more radical results

\begin{itemize}
\item[73] See the reports of Schleicher’s right-hand man and the head of the \textit{Ministeramt} Colonel Ferdinand von Bredow about these developments in BA-MA N 42, vol. 22, 204-215.
\item[74] Von Metzsch, “Wehrpolitische Reformation,” DW, 2 September 1932, 601-603.
\item[75] Steiner, \textit{The Lights}, 684-688.
\item[76] Hildebrand, \textit{Reich}, 553.
\end{itemize}
and advocated a unilateral approach. Many observers in the bureaucracy and the press agreed with this sentiment, and Germany pulled out of the Geneva talks on 22 July. Schleicher’s opinions on what shape the German military thought should take in the era of Versailles and the need to insist on Germany’s “rightful” push for equality appeared in approving columns of the military journals. This difference of opinion was the beginning of the end for Schleicher’s support for Papen. It was also a symbol of the growing cleavage between the military and diplomatic wings of German foreign policy. In the end, those who advocated the importance of equality in armaments won. The continuing crisis around the Papen administration highlighted Schleicher’s ambitions, even if being the front man did not really suit his method of operation in politics. By early December, Hindenburg withdrew his support from Papen, and Schleicher started building the last Weimar government before Hitler.

Schleicher’s ambition of creating a Querfront that involved splitting the group around Georg Straßer from the NSDAP floundered due to his overestimation of the latter’s influence in the party. His overestimation that Hindenburg would give him the dictatorial powers that he helped deny to Brüning or Papen brought his tenure to an end in less than sixty days and led to the naming of Hitler as Weimar’s last chancellor.

The victory on the international equality issue, a cause that the military championed since the early 1920s, however, finally came during this period. The

77 See for example, Capt. Schulz-Oldendorf (Ret.), “Heraus aus der Weltbürgerei—zurück zur deutschen Ehre,” DW, 15 July 1932, 489-490.

78 Niedhart, Aussenpolitik, 31.


80 Hildebrand, Reich, 554.
reopening of the Geneva Conference in November brought in a new period of aggressive campaigning for military equality by Germany, a move which found ready support in the military press.\textsuperscript{81} The Five-Power Conference in Geneva finally recognized Germany’s status as an equal on 10 December. But this decision was “too little, too late” for Weimar Germany. When Schleicher obtained the result that Brüning and Papen before him failed to achieve, the military press was silent.

While this victory came too late to “save” Germany’s domestic politics, for the proponents of military revival, equality had the effect of an “appetizer.” Just as the French and Polish observers feared, German military commentators took this success as their right, and they began to agitate for full-scale rearmament, a policy which Hitler promised them readily. The views of Nazi figures on defense issues began to creep into the pages of military journals, albeit with the disclaimer that the great emphasis laid on defense by the Nazi party necessitated the coverage of their ideas in the military press.\textsuperscript{82}

On the domestic front, the military’s willingness to consider the SA as a potential ally in border protection and as a nationalist talent pool, despite the higher echelon’s distaste for the SA’s methods, helped neutralize the republican and constitutional forces that the Weimar Republic sorely needed in times of crisis. Demonizing pacifists and leftists, accusing them of treason, and decrying only their acts of violence while

\textsuperscript{81} “Der Wiederbeginn der Abrustungskonferenz. Die von Frankreich sabotierten Gleichberechtigungsverhandlungen,” MW, 4 November 1932, 545-548

\textsuperscript{82} See for example, Maj. (Ret.) Fritz Matthaei, “Das nationalsozialistische Wehramt,” DW, 25 November 1932, 797-799. In the same issue, the editorial board published several letters sent by members of the NSDAP to show the long reach of their journal into the diverse corners of German national movement. Ibid., 800-801. Another example is Col. (Ret.) Friedrich Haselmayr (who has the title, “Referent im Wehrpolitischen Amt der NSDAP”), “Das Aufgabengebiet des Wehrpolitischen Amtes der NSDAP,” DW, 16 December 1932, 842.
relativizing the effects of the extreme-rightwing terrorists bolstered the paramilitaries of the NSDAP and aided their rise. Although military commentators were still ambivalent about the “meaning” of the Nazi movement, their moral double standard laid the groundwork for the system that would begin to encroach upon their territory by 1934.
Arriving in Germany on a cold December morning in 1933, Patrick Leigh Fermor describes in *A Time of Gifts* the contradictions and tensions of Nazi Germany in its first year. His captivating account of quaint towns in the dead of winter, seen through the eyes of a British teenager on a foot-journey across Europe to Constantinople, relates how quiet Rhineland plazas suddenly bustled with SA marches; a half an hour later, the same young thugs could be seen in a pub around the corner, singing bawdy folk songs. Kind and hospitable pensioners, always ready to help a traveling student, coexisted with red-faced fanatics spoiling for a fight over the Anglo-German rivalry. Polite chitchat about Shakespeare and Goethe unexpectedly broke into tirades over the loss of Germany’s colonies or the denial of its right to own a proper military.¹ Fermor’s travelogue is a good reminder that in the first year of Hitler’s regime, Germany was a mixture of tradition and violent change. The hold of the new rule over the society was by no means complete; but a shift in the norms and discourse was already taking place.

The military culture was no exception to this shift. The transitional period of 1933-34, the process of dismantling parliamentary democracy, resonated among the ranks

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of the military, where the adaptation to the new order happened faster than many other sectors. Military journals fulfilled a significant role in this process despite the hesitant attitude of older and more traditionally conservative officers toward Nazi ideology. When this transitional period was over in August 1934, the armed forces of Germany began their lockstep advance with the regime under the new ideology.

A similar process of transition was taking place in Turkey during the same period. The first ten years of the new regime were over; the republic was preparing for the celebration of its survival in the first phase and trying to adapt to the international climate of the 1930s. One of the most astute cultural and political observers of the period was Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (1889-1974). Written in 1934, his novel Ankara depicts the changes in the life of a middle class woman between 1922 and 1937; the development of the young republic is echoed in these changes characterized by her three marriages. Karaosmanoğlu reveals the muted disappointment that gripped many intellectuals at the end of the first decade of the republic; the true advocates of the regime had to expose the corruption, decadence, and frivolity of the new ruling elite, while extolling the purity of purpose and unique leadership of Mustafa Kemal, now called Atatürk. Karaosmanoğlu makes his heroine, in this intellectual atmosphere, imagine a fictional twentieth anniversary of the republic in which the deviations of her era would be corrected and the buoyant militancy of revolutionary spirit would be revived.² In these fantasies, the military appears as the trustworthy representative of such spirit. As the regime consolidated itself domestically at the turn of the 1930s, its concerns shifted to the international arena. The rest of the decade would be spent looking for viable plans to

preserve the independence of the republic. The attempts to arrange alliances, especially in the Balkans, became more serious during this period. Worries over the preservation of status quo in the Mediterranean also increased. And the regime change in Germany captured attention among Turkish observers who followed the dynamics of international politics in Europe.

Turks were not alone in monitoring the changes in Germany; the fast pace of the dismantling of democracy took Europe by surprise. By the first week of February 1933, the new administration placed a ban on Communist Party meetings, and established strict limits on demonstrations and press freedom. The Reichstag fire of the 27th of February led to emergency decrees on political activity, and by early March the government annulled the KPD seats in the parliament. The elections in March gave the Nazis 43.9 per cent of the vote; a result that was less than they sought. Still, this new majority emboldened the government and led to the declaration of the “Enabling Act” on the 23rd of March, giving the regime dictatorial powers under the cloak of legitimate emergency action.

Two days earlier a carefully staged act took place in Potsdam. Titled “The Day at Potsdam,” this ceremony placed a humble and serious looking Hitler next to Hindenburg in an act of solidarity and cooperation, a pose that underlined Hitler’s and the Nazi movement’s supposed respect for the conservative order and military past of Germany. Military press used this image of the famous handshake between the civilian-clad Hitler and uniformed Hindenburg to highlight the loyalty of the Nazi movement to the State and to underscore the difference between Hitler and the politicians of the old Weimar Left.
This image set the tone of the relations between the defense press and the Nazis in the early stages of the new regime. Hitler further stressed this message at a speech to the SA and SS leadership in July, declaring that the SA was no competitor to the Wehrmacht.

As the domestic actions of the Nazi regime got underway in 1933, its international policy began to receive more attention toward the end of that year. In October Hitler took the country out of the League of Nations and of the Geneva talks so reviled in the military journals. He backed this move by arranging a referendum on the issue which reflected the support he established among the population. In December, Hitler declared the unity of the party and the state, opening the path to the single-party state.

These developments found their echo in the military leadership. In March of 1934, the Reichswehr applied the “Aryanization” policies of the new regime by excluding Jews from its ranks. The rest of the chronology for 1934 with regards to civil-military relations concerned the increasing tension between the SA and the military as well as the broader issue of the role of the military in the one-party state. This score was settled by Hitler’s swift action against Röhm and the SA leadership on 30th of June. The military supported the role of the SS in this action, in the hope of sidelining the traditional military’s only rival for the position of the “sole weapons’ bearer of the state.” This support meant that the military would have to keep quiet about the cold-blooded murder of two of its generals, Schleicher and Bredow, in the action. Within one month, the old representative of the conservative order Hindenburg—who had been shielded by his advisers from the news of the killing of his erstwhile confidant, Schleicher--was dead, and the military supplanted its former oath with a newer one that pledged loyalty to
Hitler. As the pomp of Hindenburg’s funeral spilled onto the pages of the military press, the freedom of action for the old guard in the military was already limited; in late July, the SS became an independent organization on the road to becoming the self-supported armed militia of the party. These developments ended the initial phase of consolidation for the Nazi regime. At the Sixth Party Congress in August 1934, Hitler declared the “end of the National Socialist Revolution.”

For Turkey, the years 1933-34 marked the beginning of the second stage of reforms and the regime’s search for suitable diplomatic course in the tense environment of international relations in the Balkans and the Mediterranean. Domestically, important steps were taken such as switching to call for prayer in Turkish instead of Arabic in February, 1933, assigning surnames to the population in June, 1934, and establishing women’s voting rights in December, 1934. These reforms were a part of Turkey’s increasing attempts to distinguish itself from its Middle Eastern neighbors and stake claim as a “modern and civilized” nation that broke away from its past. The tenth anniversary of the Republic in October 1933 provided the military with a significant display of its role as the defender of the regime, a position echoed in the ceremonies for the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Military Academy in August 1934. The military leadership was thus able to simultaneously highlight its role in the modernization of the country since the 19th century and declare its loyalty to the republican regime.

The text of the oath was: “Ich schwöre bei Gott diesen heiligen Eid, daß ich dem Führer des Deutschen Reiches und Volkes Adolf Hitler, dem Oberbefehlshaber der Wehrmacht, unbedingten Gehorsam leisten und als tapferer Soldat bereit sein will, jederzeit für diesen Eid mit Leben einzusetzen” (I swear by God this sacred oath that I will render unconditional obedience to Adolf Hitler, the Führer of the German Reich and people, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and will be ready as a brave soldier to risk my life at any time for this oath.). For the original text see, http://www.verfassungen.de/de/de33-45/vereidigung34.htm; for the translation, William L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany (New York: Fawcett Cress, 1985), 314.
The foreign policy of the regime favored a course of reconciliation with former enemies such as Greece. The visit by the Greek premier Venizelos for the occasion of the signing of the Friendship Treaty between the two countries in September 1933 exemplified such a policy. The establishment of the Balkan Pact between Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Romania in February 1934 underlined Turkey’s interest in cooperation in the Balkans among those countries that rejected irredentist policies that aimed at changing the borders set in the treaties following World War I. However, these diplomatic maneuvers could not hide the regime’s nervous look at expansionist plans of Mussolini’s Italy and the uneasy balance in the Balkans. The military press followed these developments and placed importance, as in many countries around Europe during this period, on preparation for a future conflict that seemed unavoidable.

In Germany, a quick adoption of the Nazi discourse and values by the military press took place in the early months of 1933. As early as February, positive reports on the building of the new cabinet began to appear; Blomberg’s name as the new defense minister also found approval in such reports. The journals gave coverage to books, brochures, and propaganda materials that focused on the Nazi movement and its leadership. Mein Kampf reemerged in book reviews, and enthusiastic reviewers urged their fellow officers to read and learn from it. By April 1933, cover-page articles on

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4 “Das außерordentliche, monumentale Ereignis der Bildung des nationalen Kabinetts,” DW, 3 February 1933, 67.

5 These included titles such as Hitler regiert by Hans Wendt or Hermann Göring. Ein Lebensbild by Martin H. Sommerfeldt.

Hitler took a hagiographic tone. On his birthday, one article placed his picture in the middle of a German pantheon, accompanied by the pictures of von Richthofen, Göring, and Schlageter; “men and heroes” would exemplify Germany’s journey through difficult times, according to this anonymous author. On his next birthday, one editor claimed that Germany had to thank Hitler, because he “forged . . . and awoke a nationalist, German Volk,” while another journal put his face on the cover. Another author extolled Göring’s “statesman-like” approach and “clear views” when heaping praise on his book, Aufbau einer Nation. In a different article, Hitler’s qualities as a German, front soldier, and chancellor received attention. But there was also a warning: without achieving freedom from the outside, the achievements of the “national revolution” would remain questionable. At this stage, the military’s threat analysis put inner reorganization behind its real worry of revising Versailles. The task, according to the contributors of these journals, was to push along on that path; the Nazis promised the military and the nation that this path would lead to an “honorable” existence.

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7 “Männer und Helden,” DW, 22 April 1933, cover page.

8 George Soldan, “Unser Reichskanzler,” DW, 19 April 1934, cover page.


10 Regierungsrat Dr. Suermann, “Aufbau einer Nation,” MW, 4 March 1934, 1089-1090.

11 “Hitler,” MW, 25 April 1933, cover page.

12 The concepts of honor and defense come up frequently in the DW articles from 1933, especially following the statements made by Goebbels on the issue of revision. Some examples are Volkmann-Leander, “Ehre, Wehr und Wehre,” DW, 9 June 1933, cover page and W. Gründel, “Ehrlicher als bisher,” DW, 16 June 1933, 369-370.
The cult of personality surrounding Hitler spread to the military with the blessing of its new leadership. In 1934 Blomberg ordered Hitler’s name to be included along with Hindenburg’s in the ceremonial “Hurrah” shouted by the troops and forbade any exceptions to this rule. Another decree by Blomberg reminded the troops that “the Führer und Chancellor had ordered that the form of address to him by all the members of Wehrmacht was ‘mein Führer.’”

Visits by Hitler to military installations or ships began to receive attention from the military press. This coverage helped to highlight Hitler’s connection to German military tradition and to differentiate between him and Weimar politicians who were supposed to be not sufficiently military in their stance. These reports also underlined Germany’s new attitude toward the disarmament talks and showcased the regime’s willingness to increase its defense capability.

The elections in March 1933 were the first test of the new administration. Military commentators were aware of the meaning of the Nazi movement for the issues of rearmament and foreign policy; the editorials and articles in the journals, especially in the more candid Deutsche Wehr, weighed in on the side of the Nazis and stressed the significance of the break with the habits of Weimar politics and its “system parties.” One cover-page article published two days before the election recounted the perceived insults

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13 BA-MA RH 12-5/43.88, 23 April 1934.
14 BA-MA RH 12-5/43.123, 6 August 1934.
15 See, for example, the report on Hitler’s visit with Blomberg after the 1933 Nürnberg meeting in the “Wehrpolitische Umschau” section of DW, 13 September 1933, 562, and “Der Kanzler beim Reichsheere,” DW, 20 September 1933, 585.
of the Versailles Treaty, adding that the real culprits were not the foreigners, but their pacifist and leftwing accomplices at home. Therefore, the author continued, the decision in the coming election was simple: to give a vote of approval for the new administration that had the support of the president Hindenburg and the large section of German people. The contempt and disrespect of the author for the Weimar democracy could not be more open. His references to the “pacifist-treasonous disease” must have left no doubts in the minds of his readers.\textsuperscript{16}

The post-election coverage of the same magazine praised the results, supported the “law-and-order” stance of the new administration, reported favorably on the new, strict rules against leftwing demonstrations, which included a ban on the display of red flags in Prussia.\textsuperscript{17} With the annulment of the KPD seats in the parliament and the destruction of the communist presence in German politics, the defense press jumped into the triumphalist mood with effortless opportunism. The language of the reports on political developments became more defiant after the elections; the commentators could now boast of a “nationalist counterrevolution” with glee.\textsuperscript{18} If there was any tendency to dampen the belligerent rhetoric among military writers against parliamentary democracy before Hitler’s appointment to the chancellery, it disappeared in the hands of gloating editors after March 1933. The full opprobrium of the anti-democratic rhetoric flooded the pages of the military press. The military establishment followed closely along these

\textsuperscript{16} Maj. Otto Lehmann (Ret.), “Wehrwille, das Kernstück der Wahl vom 5. März,” “DW, 3 March 1933, 129-130. Another commentary on the same page refers to the communists as “High treason material” and supports the use of SA units as “Hilfspolizei.”

\textsuperscript{17} DW, 10 March 1933, 146.

\textsuperscript{18} DW, 17 March 1933, 162.
lines and initiated an official disparagement of the symbols and personalities affiliated with the Weimar Republic. An internal order from April 1934, initiated by the Interior Ministry, instructed military personnel to take down any such portraits or busts and designated such symbols as markers of the “November collapse.”\(^\text{19}\) A further communiqué from the Interior Ministry stressed the importance of getting rid of such symbols including the black-red-gold flag of the “November system.”\(^\text{20}\)

The actions of the Nazi movement against democratic elements in Germany garnered full support in the editorials of the military journals. The targets that the journals focused on in the crisis years of the Weimar Republic such as socialists, pacifists, and liberals, as well as the parliamentary system itself now could be pilloried with the full backing of the new regime. Especially the reporters of the “Weltpolitische Umschau” section of the Deutsche Wehr went out of their way to justify the oppressive measures of the new regime and the smashing of the democratic bastions of the old republic. The support for the dismantling of parliamentary democracy extended to the championing of the Enabling Act of 23 March 1933.\(^\text{21}\)

Exhortations for discipline, law, and order appeared frequently in these sections. One new addition was a targeting of the Jewish community. Carefully worded criticisms were channeled in this direction with exceptions for the “nationally-minded members who had nothing to fear.”\(^\text{22}\) The supposed connection between the “anti-nationalist”

\(^\text{19}\) Order signed by von Reichenau, BA-MA RH12-5/43.48, 21 April 1933.

\(^\text{20}\) Signed by Helmut Nicolai, BA-MA RH12-5/43.112, 4 July 1934.

\(^\text{21}\) DW, 31 March 1933, 195.

\(^\text{22}\) DW, 24 March 1933, 179.
segments of society and the Jewish community that undergirded the republic was the theme of such attacks, which reflected the steady parallelization of the Nazi and established military discourse in post-1933 Germany. This attitude also spread to the opinions of the military press on the Jewish presence in Germany. At least one of the journals took an early stance on the issue of “aryanization” of Germany and blocked advertisements from “non-Aryan” companies. In a sign of self-\textit{Gleichschaltung}, the editorial staff of the military press began to adjust itself to the Nazi ideology.

In the eyes of the editorial staff of these journals this emergent harmony between Nazi propaganda and military worldview required the adjustment of the military’s stance vis-à-vis politics and ideology. To this end, the journals would have to be transformed into influential proselytizers for the Nazi cause among the military. The possibility that some members of the military were still hostile to the new regime and would not want to go along with its agenda urged the editors of the journals to attempt to codify and publicize the “meaning” of the Nazi movement as a part of their publication policy. As the regime established itself and continued the process of \textit{Gleichschaltung} of Germany’s institutions and society throughout 1933, this mission received prestigious editorial space in the form of detailed articles that outlined the meaning of the so-called “national revolution.”

These attempts to codify the meaning of Nazism for the military allowed editors and authors to bend the parameters of conservatism with which most officers

\footnote{At first this stance was offered as a defense against foreign boycott of German businesses. See the notice in DW, 31 March 1933, 201 (along with a photo of one such boycott in an English speaking country). By mid-1933, however, this position became more formal with a notice that warned potential advertisers. DW, 16 June 1933, 376.}
professionalized in the Weimar era were comfortable. The necessary role of the military in the transformation of the society was a major component of the reshaping of the conservatism of the officer corps.\textsuperscript{24} The adjustment of the professionalism and ethos of the officer corps to the Nazi values and the ideas of Hitler engrossed military commentators.\textsuperscript{25} One unsigned editorial from August 1933 placed the “revolution” of 1933 within the framework of reversing the “injustice” of the revolution of 1918.\textsuperscript{26} After having exhorted young officers to have an understanding of Nazism, not just an opinion on it, and to read \textit{Mein Kampf}, the author asserts that National Socialism is “not a political program, but a \textit{Weltanschauung}.” Therefore, he continues, through this worldview, “all of the old concepts such as state, church, people, culture, and justice have received a new, subjective meaning.” This new approach would create a new understanding of the community of “people, race, and state,” which would struggle against “racially strange and race-endangering” elements, leading to the erection of a “total state.”\textsuperscript{27} The role of the officer in this process, according to the author, is to make the transition from “sozialnationalist” to the “nationalsozialist” through self-criticism and to put the good of the community ahead of the good of the individual. To clear away any misunderstandings about the importance of such a revolutionary process among the

\textsuperscript{24} By March, articles on this subject began to appear frequently as editorials. See for example, “Reichswehr und Nationalsozialismus,” DW, 31 March 1933, 193-195. The note above the article drove home the point that most of the readers of the journals were also members of the NSDAP, which, while perhaps exaggerated, possibly reflected a sizeable tendency.

\textsuperscript{25} “Die Reichswehr nach der nationalen Revolution,” DW, 5 May 1933, 273-274. The author of this front-page piece sums up with the slogan, “\textit{Ein Führer, ein Volk, ein Heer}!”

\textsuperscript{26} “Der Soldat und die nationale Revolution,” MW, 18 August 1933, 209-211.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 210.
archconservatives in the military, the author adds that this transition would also have to include a rejection of feudal and estate-based understanding of the society. With its confused mixture of socialist and fascist themes, the editorial captures the shift in the stance of the military establishment from the older style of conservatism to the ideology of the Nazi movement, while trying to position the military as an institution in the most advantageous spot as a result of the reshaping of the German society. It divulges the three main sources of the new military thought in the Nazi regime: older, conservative values; newer, fascist and racist discourse; and a sense of clever opportunism to ensure the survival of the officer corps in the new order. The “social” angle of this mixture appeared as a necessary part of uniting the nation. One officer commented that the three bases of German Soldatentum was the “idealist, nationalist, and social” and rejected materialist goals as the basis of building a nation. This call for a “socially conscious” basis for the recreation of a nationalist Germany reflected the socioeconomic worries of the younger generation of officers who attempted to find alternative to the “threat” of communism. Throughout the rest of the period of 1933-1934, articles and editorials attempted to work through these sometimes competing sources and motives.

One symptom of these worries over the “social question” was the issue of control of the working class. The dismantling of the SPD and KPD as political factors and the brutal treatment meted out to well-known labor organizers and pro-union intellectuals in the early months of the new regime still left unfinished task of “regaining” the working class. The journals followed these developments, and commented on the success of the

28 Ibid., 211.

neutralization of working-class politics, which they considered an alien influence on German society, closely linked with what they saw as the “Jewish-Bolshevik enemy.” The verdict of one commentator was the “de-proletarization of the German working class” and its return to the nationalist fold. The transformation of May Day into the “Day of National Labor” as a national holiday was one way that the new regime attempted to entice the working class. The military encouraged this move, and Blomberg issued a communiqué that underlined the importance of the cooperation between soldiers and workers. Military journals provided extended coverage of this new event and tried to drum up enthusiasm for it, betraying a continued insecurity toward the working classes and their politicization.

The principles of the new regime required a political reorientation of the officer corps. Guidelines established during Groener’s tenure as minister had to be revised according to the needs of the new system. The leadership in the ministry aimed to bypass the cautious stance toward political engagement fostered by Groener; Blomberg urged the military to adapt “all its behavior in the public space” to accentuate nationalist thought. As the journals tried to proselytize for the Nazi party, the military command structure aimed to instruct the officer corps through speeches by key figures. Blomberg himself often undertook such efforts and drew the lines that marked the break with the Weimar era sharply in his speeches. His emphasis in these speeches was on the dawn of the era of

31 “An die Wehrmacht!,” MW, 4 May 1933, 1362.
32 “Der Tag der nationalen Arbeit,” MW, 11 May 1933, 1369.
33 BA-MA RH12-5/43.40, 11 April 1933.
authoritarian “leadership principle” which was supposed to bring an end to the “search for majority and collection of opinions” associated with the parliamentary system. He urged his officers to accept this change to adapt themselves to the reality that the “liberal principle of the freedom of the individual” was no longer standard.\textsuperscript{34} Such phraseology betrayed the willingness of the military’s higher echelons not just to adapt to the Nazi principles but to ingrain them in the training of the younger generation of officers.

For this purpose, the military leadership arranged a list of presentations for officers on topics that they deemed suitable for the new agenda. This list included a range of subjects from the national socialist worldview to race and population policy.\textsuperscript{35} The military elite clearly decided that a wide variety of subjects fell within their area of interest, and these subjects should be covered in the training of young officers as the military trained for its future role under the Nazis.

The result of this interest in instilling newly acquired political virtues among the officer cadres was a periodical entitled “The Guidelines for Instruction about Contemporary Political Issues” that first appeared in April 1934. It contained separate sections on the most significant event or topic for a select period, basic principles of National Socialism, and short notices on the changes that affected the armed forces. The issues often included the text of speeches by Hitler or other leading Nazis as well as communications between Hitler and Blomberg. Its aim was to guide the members of the

\textsuperscript{34} Excerpts from a speech by Blomberg to the officers of the 6\textsuperscript{th} Division, \textit{Wehrkreiskommando} II in Stettin on 15 September 1933, BA-MA RW 1/36. There is a note by Reichenau in the folder that states that publication of the speech in the press should not follow.

\textsuperscript{35} BA-MA RW 6/158, 19 September 1933.
military into the political principles of new Germany and highlight the relationship and trust between the Nazi leadership and the military.\(^{36}\)

The lead articles focused on the link between the new regime and the traditions of the military, especially as symbolized by the “Day at Potsdam” of 21 March 1933. The first anniversary of this ceremonial handshake between Hitler and Hindenburg provided a chance to highlight the virtues of obedience and comradeship and to stress “the commitment to Prussianess and the soldierly spirit that is consummated in the rebirth of German honor.”\(^{37}\) The second issue celebrated Hitler’s birthday, included a letter from Blomberg to Hitler declaring the Wehrmacht’s loyalty, and included a sketch of Hitler’s military service and frontline war experience.\(^{38}\) Mythologizing Hitler as a person and as a leader became part of military indoctrination.

As the Reich Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda came into operation under the leadership of Josef Goebbels, the military sought to establish a line of communication with this ministry solely through the *Ministeramt* under General Walter von Reichenau.\(^{39}\) The sensitive political nature of this connection could only be trusted into the section that flourished earlier under Schleicher and his deputy Bredow.

The hurried endeavor on the part of the defense press to adapt to the regime and to secure a favorable position in it pushed the editorial staff to new lines of thinking about

\(^{36}\) In this study, I use the copies from the Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv, catalogued under RH 12-5/43, *Richtlinien für den Unterricht über politische Tagesfragen*.


\(^{39}\) BA-MA RH 12-5/43.39, 6 April 1933. As the Reichswehr was reorganized to become the Wehrmacht in February 1934, the *Ministeramt* was renamed the *Wehrmachtamt*, and Reichenau was promoted to colonel.
the relationship between officers and politics. Disregarding some of the most cherished principles of the early forgers of Reichswehr’s code of behavior, the proselytizers of the new ideology urged their fellow officers to “politicize” their way of looking at the world. One author went as far as declaring that “the heresy of fully apolitical soldier has exhausted itself.”

Thus, the goal of the new generation of officers should be training of National Socialist soldiers to serve Germany. To achieve that goal, the officer corps must embody the ideas of National Socialism. As another author commented, this affinity between Wehrmacht and National Socialism came from the fact that they both supposedly shared the same roots: nationalism and front experience. Wartime experience, another suggested, contributed to the formation of Hitler as the leader he became. The experience in the trenches prepared the members of the officer corps for the struggle that led to the establishment of the National Socialist regime.

The nationalism to which the conservative thinking of the older members of the officer were accustomed to transformed into a new nationalist idea that used the experience of World War I as a catalyst. The building of the new German society under Nazism was advertised as the “resurrection of the German front soldier.”

Commenting

40 “Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reiche,” DW, 20 November 1933, 741.

41 Ibid., 742.

42 “Wehrmacht und Nationalsozialismus,” MW, 4 February 1934, 947-948.

43 “Der Weltkrieg und Nationalsozialismus,” DW, 13 December 1933, 777-778.

44 “Der Soldat als Vorkämpfer des Nationalsozialismus,” MW, 18 December 1933, cover page.

on the nature of the conflict between the society and the military, which was now supposedly overcome with the arrival of Hitler and the Nazi regime and which was classified as the conflict of “authoritarianism vs. parliamentarism,” one author claimed that it did not affect the loyal nature of the German soldier, because he had been leavened with frontline experience.\footnote{46} The ideas of the New Right prevalent in the 1920s, first espoused by the likes of Ernst Jünger, could now be used by the military establishment as a way of acclimatizing the officer crops into the new German order. This process required the renaming of concepts and actions to make them more palatable, especially about politics.\footnote{47} The same journals that advocated a distanced attitude to the ideals of democratic parliamentary system, even when that system was fighting for its existence, now urged readers into wholehearted reveling in the new ideology.

While the affinity between the military and the Nazi movement received praise from journal editors, the authors reminded their readers about the difference between the Weimar years and the Third Reich. Blaming the past regime for Germany’s misfortunes and congratulating the Nazis for their harsh treatment of the vestiges of the Weimar era, these authors underlined the significance of the stance of the military toward the supposedly un-German and anti-nationalist circles such as SPD-led administration of Prussia. Disregarding the fact that this legally elected administration became a victim in

\footnote{46} “Soldat und Volk,” MW, 11 June 1934, 1579-1581.

\footnote{47} Such propaganda continued to appear in the pages of the journals throughout the first year of the regime and reflected the concern of its supporters as a top priority item. Deutsche Wehr’s editorial board published a clarification later that perhaps that the opinions reflected in the 20 November article were not shared by all. That is why it promised to allocate more space to articles from different opinions on the issue. However, judging from the general tone of the articles in the journal in 1933-1934, it would not be wrong to note that those views were shared by at least the members of the board. “Nochmals: Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reiche,” DW, 27 December 1933, 816.

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the hands of von Papen and the all-too-willing military—or perhaps explicitly because of it—one commentator called the coup against Prussia in July 1932 “the first great Gleichschaltung.”⁴⁸ That administration was seen as too weak and unwilling against the pacifists; now, the journals urged, was the time to groom the press in the continuing fight against international pacifism and domestic anti-military tendencies.⁴⁹

The campaign against political adversaries and pacifist segments of the society continued in the representation of perhaps the most significant effect of regime change regarding the military: the reinstatement of pre-Weimar insignia and the black-white-red flag alongside the party flag with the swastika.⁵⁰ The military adopted the change with speed and allowed the use of the Nazi flag alongside the national flag when more than one pole was available in front of its buildings.⁵¹ The shift to older symbols taking place throughout 1933 pleased the members of the military press and ushered in a series of articles that bolstered the sense of justification.⁵² These articles and editorials focused on

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⁴⁸ “Der Weg der Wehrmacht durch den Weimarer Staat,” DW, 5 April 1934, 206.

⁴⁹ “Wehrpolitik—einst und jetzt. Die Presse im Kampf um Pazifismus und Wehrgeist,” DW, 12 April 1934, 221-222.

⁵⁰ The use of the old colors was a source of controversy throughout the Weimar era. The black-white-red flag was cherished by conservatives and rightwing extremists who despised the black-gold-red flag of the republic and used the old flag as a symbol of resistance against it. As a compromise, the republican authorities allowed its use in the overseas missions of Germany. Hitler tolerated the dual usage as long as Hindenburg was alive. Soon after his death, the swastika began to overshadow the old national flag. Finally, the old colors were banned as “reactionary” in September 1935.


⁵² For the notice regarding the reinstatement of the old colors with the iron cross in the middle and the old tricolor cockade on the helmet see, “Verordnung über Hoheitszeichen der deutschen Wehrmacht,” MW, 18 March 1933, 1203. The order was cosigned by Hindenburg, Hitler, and Blomberg. The message from Hindenburg underlined the link between the black-white-red flag and the nation, symbolizing the unity of the two in difficult times.
the Nazi administration’s reverence for the symbols of “old” military; according to their authors, the move to reinstate these symbols and the old flag was to be the final nail in the coffin of the hated republic and all it represented. At the same time, these pieces in the military press also reveal the devotional element in the reception of military symbols and a quasi-religious awe towards emblems of shared suffering. While all militaries cherish such traditions, in the interwar German case this reverence was augmented by the shame of defeat and the perceived loss of social and political significance. The reinstatement of pre-Weimar symbols by the Nazis strengthened the sense of professional solidarity; it was a calculated move on the part of the new regime towards German conservatives on the one hand and toward the military-worshipping cohorts of the New Right and “soldierly nationalism” on the other.

The journalistic coverage of these changes divulged the rhetoric of victory along with a sense of relief, as if the Republic was not more than a bad dream; for the military observers an the readers of their journals, Germany and its armed forces returned to their roots after a brief interlude. Celebration of the return of the older symbols also led observers to agitate for a quick return from the “defense” to “war” in the name of the ministry. One author suggested that the use in the Weimar era represented the “defenseless” nature of that entity; now that the new “national” regime was in place, the ministry should also return to its old title. Throughout in this transitional phase of

54 Col. von Ditfurth (Ret.), “Warum noch Reichswehr,” DW, 2 June 1933, 343-344. The editorial board of the journal, however, followed up with a note that justified the use of “defense,” and placed the blame for the uncomfortable usage among the population on the politicians of the previous era. See, “Warum noch Reichswehr,” DW, 12 July 1933, 422. The eventual solution to switch to “Wehrmacht” received support
1933-34, contributors to the defense of press betray an agenda of erasing all the legacy of the Weimar and destroying the vestiges of what they declared to be alien to the German military tradition.

The changes taking place in the name and insignia slowly extended to the jealously-guarded distance between the military and the new official ideology. By August 1933, Blomberg issued an order that established the Nazi salute for the civilian employees of the military. The salute was declared as “the German salute” by the Interior Ministry and would apply to civilian employees on and off duty. Additional ordinances aimed to regulate the salute duty between the military and nationalist organizations. The reason behind this move was to initiate the Nazi organizations such as SA and the SS as well as veterans’ groups such as Stahlhelm, into the military orbit and make their cooperation easier. These edicts also controlled the salute duty for the flags of nationalist paramilitaries. Among these changes in 1933 was also the introduction of the new oath for the armed forces that emphasized “the Volk and the Fatherland.”

from the journals. For example, von Platen, “Reichswehrministerium-Kriegsministerium—keins von beiden,” DW, 16 August 1933, 503-504.


56 “Grußpflicht,” MW, 4 October 1933, 426. This decree stipulated that uniformed members of the military could use the Nazi salute only for the person of Hitler alone, as long as they were not on duty (during maneuvers or at resting periods). The salute was made mandatory for the Wehrmacht after the 20 July 1944 assassination attempt on Hitler.

57 “Der neue Eid der Beamten und Soldaten,” MW, 11 December 1933, 731.
was seconded by Blomberg in 1934 who ordered both military and civilian employees of the Wehrmacht to abide by it.\textsuperscript{58}

The interest on the part of the military in the organization and impact of the paramilitaries of the Nazi party led to an increased coverage of them. This was partly due to a need to inform the members of the armed forces about their insignia and organization, now that there was a reciprocal salute obligation between the two sides.\textsuperscript{59}

The aim to publicize the unity and discipline of the party among the Wehrmacht was the other reason behind this interest; block charts that descended from the supreme position of the Führer and stressed the “leadership principle” in the control of the organization adorned such information pieces.\textsuperscript{60}

As the \textit{Gleichschaltung} gained speed among the institutions of the country, the outward appearance of the military also received the attention of the Nazi leadership with the willing cooperation of Blomberg and his advisors. Following the first anniversary of the Nazi takeover, the military adopted for its uniforms the badge of the NSDAP, the eagle and swastika emblem. This change also phased out the state cockades on the uniforms that units carried based on their \textit{Land} origins. According to one author, this move would signal the unity of the military with its nation and the end of Germany’s former disrupted condition and its “small state bickering.”\textsuperscript{61} Another contributor, a

\textsuperscript{58} BA-MA RH 12-5/43.81, 23 March 1934.

\textsuperscript{59} “Abzeichen der NSDAP,” MW, 4 December 1933, 699.

\textsuperscript{60} “Die Organisation der NSDAP,” MW, 18 December 1933, 770.

serving member of the armed forces, noted that the adoption of the Nazi insignia symbolized the transition from the Prussianness—of which he was still proud—to Germanness; and he evoked the “German national socialist soldier’s spirit.”

This unity of the nation and the military supposedly established with the adoption of Nazi emblems, another author commented, would mean that the officer’s vocation was to be a leader and national socialist in order to evaluate militarily the “great experience of our times.”

Within one year of the Nazis arrival in power, the military leadership had abandoned its much-touted, supposedly “above parties” stance and allowed itself to be brought into the fold of the Nazi order in appearance and principle. The denial of the political nature of this move, a gesture that the military avoided for the Weimar establishment at all cost, distorted the editorials and analysis of the contributors to the defense press who observed the activities of the NSDAP and its organs with star-struck wonder and urged the officer corps to submit itself to the siren call of institutionalized fascism. In the creation of a new Volksgemeinschaft, military establishment willingly followed the stereotypes and values provided by the Nazi elite.

A favorite among the changes instituted by the Nazi regime that pleased the defense circles was the reestablishment of military courts in May 1933. These courts had been phased out in 1920 under the Weimar judicial system. The treatment of violations involving military personnel under civilian law was a major point of contention in the

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Weimar era. The return to pre-Weimar standards in military law was a priority of the military establishment. Some of the criticism leveled at the lack of a military court system stemmed from the charge that getting rid of these courts had been a socialist and pacifist idea. In support of the reintroduction of military justice, the defense press published articles by prominent legal professionals who were eager to praise this change.

The existence of female judges in the judiciary was one of the reasons for criticism of the non-military justice. According to this reasoning, that a female would sit in judgment over a soldier was irrational and unfair. Women and civilian males could never understand what it meant to be a soldier; military judges were the only ones who could do that job properly and honorably. While some of this attack was aimed at civilians in general, the real target was the concept of the female judge. Women’s admission into the profession was a Weimar achievement that was resented by many conservatives. Therefore, the reinstatement of military justice provided the journals with a chance to kill two birds with one stone.

A month before the official declaration, the Chief Prosecutor in Gleiwitz decried the rule of “women’s justice” over soldiers. After the reinstatement of military courts another author echoed this sexist sentiment and alleged that discipline was weakened due to unwillingness of civilian courts to pass harsh sentences. The reestablishment of

\[65\] M. Rittau, “Fort mit der Weiberjustiz über Soldaten,” DW, 15 April 1933, 230-231. The same Rittau also contributed an article that praised the new regulations that stipulated harsher sentences for defamation against the military. See, Martin Rittau, “Strafrechtlicher Schutz der Wehrmacht,” MW, 25 January 1934, 928-930.

military justice would be most important for securing the foundation of the state. Another commentator noted that the abolition of the military courts had not taken place due to the Versailles Treaty; it was a direct action by the leftists Weimar parties to whom the existence of military courts was a “thorn in the side.” For the undoing of this “wrong,” the new nationalist administration could not be thanked enough. “German public should be filled with joy” that such an “injustice” against the military was repaired. With such gushing responses, the reestablishment of military justice reflected the vision that these journals fostered in regard to Germany as a nationalist society. The separation of the military from the civilians in the legal sense, which revealed a principle of superiority for the military, was the affirmation of the Nazi commitment to the veneration of the German soldiery. At the same time, it offered the military one of the many incentives the officer corps required in return for its loyalty to the regime.

As the military became more comfortable with the new regime due to these changes, the journal editors highlighted problems pertaining to the actual presence and size of the armed forces. For many contributors, the new nationalist administration would have to tackle the defense problems of the country as soon as possible, and the size and composition of the military were at the top of this agenda. Disagreements on this issue arose from the nature of a possible enlargement of the armed forces. The ban on conscription that the Versailles Treaty imposed on Germany would have to be bypassed


69 Dr. W. Felgentraeger, “Zur Wiedereinführung der Militärgerichtsbarkeit,” DW, 27 September 1933, cover page.
somehow; the question was what kind of military would replace the Reichswehr. At this juncture the proponents of a large, conscript-based “mass army” and those of an elite army without the limits imposed by Versailles found themselves at odds. Those who took part in these exchanges focused on the suggestion of raising a militia army to bolster the existing armed forces and enroll the nation in the defense effort.

For some observers, the prewar combination of a strong standing army with a large pool of militia was the key to preparation for total war. For others, to insist on a militia to support the army or to support a mass military was nothing but foolishness, an outdated idea that outlived its use; the solution was a hard, elite-based army that learned from the mistakes of the previous war. The controversy over this question kept the editors of the journals busy for the following year, especially in reviews of books by competing authors, Hess and Soldan. By 1934, the supporters of the large, conscript army were gaining ground, despite the presence of paramilitary party organizations such as the SA. Before Hitler’s declaration of a return to conscription and increased rearmament in 1935, the organs of the party used their means of propaganda for this purpose, and the journals supported it. But this new army would have to be based on a politically motivated youth that would be prepared to defend the national socialist ideas along with the nation. The sidelining of the SA in the Röhm purge eliminated any

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70 “Miliz. Von der Parteien Haß und Gunst entstellt, schwankt ihr Charakterbild in allen Köpfen,” part 2, MW, 11 March 1933, 1148-1152. Strongest proponent of this proposal was a retired major, Kurt Hesse.

71 George Soldan, “Im Irrgarten der Miliz,” DW, 15 April 1933, 225-227.

72 See for example, “Neue Literatur zur Milizfrage,” DW, 27 September 1933, 601-602.

73 Excerpts from an article from the Völkischer Beobachter by Gerhard L. Binz appeared in the journals for this purpose: “Jugend, politische Soldaten und Waffenträger,” DW, 14 February 1934, 99-100;
possible competition from a militia-based formation. It is most likely that those authors who rejected the preponderance of a militia had in mind the highly visible stance of the SA in Germany in the months following the Nazi takeover. But it is difficult to gauge their exact opinions on the SA and SS, due to the loud silence of the journals about the events of summer 1934. The position of the journals on the superiority of Wehrmacht as the sole bearer of arms in Germany was clear from their responses to the publication by the Defense Ministry of “Duties of the German Soldier” in June 1934. This list comprised eight items that underlined the role of the armed forces as the protector of the “Reich and the Fatherland, the nation that is united in national Socialism, and its Lebensraum.” For the editorial staff of both journals, this declaration, which touched all the crucial chords of loyalty, obedience, and honor as soldierly virtues, was the embodiment of the principles they long cherished. It also reiterated the superior role of the military vis-à-vis the paramilitaries as it appeared shortly before the showdown of 30 June 1934.

When the purge against Röhm and the SA leadership, which also cost the lives of the retired generals Schleicher and Bredow along with numerous, mostly conservative rivals of the regime, but in the official military circles this settling of scores by the Nazis appeared only as a justifiable and defensive action against mutineers and traitors. Hitler was represented as having acted with “soldierly decisiveness.” The “Guidelines”

“Waffenträger und politische Soldaten in ihrem Verhältnis untereinander und zur Jugend,” MW, 18 February 1934, 1015-1017.

74 “Die Pflichten des deutschen Soldaten,” DW, 7 June 1934, 341-342; also in MW, 11 June 1934, cover page.

75 See the communiqué issued by Blomberg, BA-MA RH 12-5/43.107, 1 July 1934.
published a notice from the ministry that justified the action taken by Hitler and glorified it.  

Officers were banned from attending the funeral of the two generals in uniform, and open discussion of the event was suppressed within the military. Only a handful of military figures such as old Field Marshal von Mackensen protested against the murder of the generals. Even if there were other dissenters among the officer ranks about the killings of 30th June, the journals were not willing or able to discuss these opinions. Blomberg’s harsh attitude against commentary on this topic silenced potential criticism.

Hindenburg’s death on 2 August 1934 provided the journals with ample opportunity to stress the old military traditions of Germany and the role played by the president in upholding them. For the military establishment, he was “the greatest German of the era of the World War.” His name appeared with adjectives such as “guardian” and “genius.” At the same time, his death also removed the last obstacle to the full integration of the military with the Nazi regime. As the Wehrmacht adopted the oath of loyalty to Hitler (passed into law on 20 August 1934), the role devised for itself by the military in the new Germany reached its final stage. In the “Guidelines” the oath was publicized as an “oath to the unbreakable union of Hindenburg and Hitler in the service of Volk and Fatherland.” This voluntary gesture, which symbolized the old Germanic ritual of loyalty and removed any obstacle on the path to a full cult of personality around Hitler, found its support in the defense press in glowing terms. As

77 “Hindenburg,” MW, 4 August 1934, no page.
78 “Der Wächter,” DW, 9 August 1934, cover page.
one author commented, “the military loved Hitler, because he showed himself as true soldier.”\textsuperscript{80} Just how long this “love” would last, especially in the light of increasing competition from the SS, would become clear in the following years.\textsuperscript{81}

While the intense restructuring of politics and society was the trademark of 1933-34 in Germany, the developments in Turkey in the same period reflected the regime’s need to bolster legitimacy at the end of its first decade and to construct a cult of personality around its leader. As the republic became more secure as a political entity and the early phase of reforms were already underway, the course for the 1930s concerned the response to the increasingly destabilized international situation on the one hand and the search for intellectual bases for legitimacy on the other.

This search for intellectual grounding was had several dimensions. The rise of fascism in Italy and Germany and the popularity of right-wing authoritarian movements across the Eastern and Southeastern Europe forced the elite of the republic to differentiate themselves from those regimes and deny parallels that existed between those regimes and Turkey. While there were influential figures among the ruling elite of the country who sympathized with and were impressed by fascism, the leadership shied away from this trend, partly because of the insistence on the independence of the regime and its original identification with the anti-imperialist struggle of the post-Versailles era. On the other hand, geographical proximity of the country to Soviet Union added further complications.

\textsuperscript{80} “Der Treueid der Wehrmacht auf den Führer,” MW, 28 August 1934, 285.

During the War of Independence, the two countries cooperated due to a shared hostility toward Great Britain and France. However, the regime in Turkey was as antagonistic ideologically to communism as it was to fascism. Despite Turkey’s policy of good relations with the Soviet Union, the country’s security establishment continued its relentless persecution of real and suspected communists and fellow travelers throughout the 1930s. Such hostility toward communism encouraged regime-friendly ideologues and publicists to strive for a “third way” and to establish the credentials of Kemalism as a significant ideology.

The solution to this problem of creating an alternative ideology briefly appeared in the short-lived Kadro (Cadre) movement. Founded by a small group of intellectuals, most of whom were former communists who made their peace with the regime, and based around the eponymous journal between 1932 and 1934, Kadro movement declared the end of liberal politics and capitalism. It advocated centralized economy, a mobilized society for the furtherance of the revolution, and importance of a strong state. The Great Depression provided the example that the Kadro members needed in order to show the weaknesses of market economy. Decrying the excesses of capitalism and what they considered to be the confusion and corruption of liberal parliamentary regimes in Europe and elsewhere, contributors to the journal Kadro justified the regime in Turkey and attempted to come up with a coherent ideology to legitimize it. They maintained that the regime in Turkey would find an alternative path to development by combining elements of communist and fascist approaches, while not adhering to either. As an ideological movement, they were a direct product of the era of Great Depression, with its emphasis
on chaos and instability as well as fear of economic and political dissolution. Their zealous support for a statist economy and country-wide economic and social mobilization soon displeased the business-friendly circles among the new Turkish elite, and ensuing pressure led Mustafa Kemal to withdraw his support for the group and end the publication of the journal. While the regime was trying to bolster itself in its second decade, it was not willing to adhere to a strictly formulated ideology regardless of political tendencies.82

The early to mid-1930s also marked the republican leadership’s attempts to establish legitimacy by establishing historical and ethnic precedent for existence of the new nation-state. These attempts took the form of pseudo-scientific foray into history, linguistics, and anthropology that underlined the supposed supremacy of the Turks over other local ethnicities in the region while also “proving” their connection with Europe and Europeans. A series of conferences that involved Turkish and foreign scholars and had the full support of the government contributed to these attempts and signaled the regime’s political and financial investment in justifying these claims. These conferences reflected the penetration of contemporary influences of eugenics and the fascination with race-based theories. The founding of various government-sponsored institutions on language and history gave these plans legitimacy and support of the leadership. These developments coincided with the reforms to “purify” the language from foreign—especially Arabic and Persian—elements. The emphasis on “racial superiority” of the

Turks and the misuse of anthropology for pseudo-scientific purposes contributed to the radicalization of nationalism and found an outlet in state-sponsored publications.\textsuperscript{83}

The glorification of state institutions as an attempt to legitimize the republic also had an impact on the representation of the military in the public space. The coverage of the military in daily newspapers, especially during national holidays, highlighted the importance of the military for the national liberation struggle. The military past of the country’s leader and his close circle found a central place in the description of ceremonies. The coverage included lavish portrayals of the ceremonies with photographs and artwork. The two most important national holidays, the commemoration of the Grand Offensive (1922) on 30 August and the celebration of the founding of the Republic (1923) on 29 October, provided an opportunity for newspaper editors to underline the connection between the people and their military and to assure the people of their defensive capabilities.

Commenting on the anniversary of the Grand Offensive of 1922 against the Greeks, one columnist in the daily \textit{Cumhuriyet} compared that victory to the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Accordingly, the fight against the Greeks was an extended struggle against imperialism that became a shining example to other subjugated and embattled nations of the “East.” He continued by referring to the victory as the “basis of our revolution and the provider of light and social liberation to the East. . . that turned Turkey into a modern nation and state.”\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Cumhuriyet’s} coverage of the anniversary, the

\textsuperscript{83} The story of pseudo-scientific approaches to Turkish ethnicity and history in the single-party era is told in Nazan Maksudyan, \textit{Türklüü Ölçmek: Bilimkurgusal Antropoloji ve Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Irkçı Çehresi, 1925-1939} (Istanbul: Metis, 2005).
headline of which was “the victory of victories,” included a painting that showed three figures dawning over Anatolia: Mustafa Kemal, the president and the founder of the republic; İsmet (İnönü), the prime minister; and Fevzi (Çakmak), the chief of staff.\textsuperscript{85} The recurring theme of the “incomparable” nature of this military victory was one way for Turkish journalists to claim equality with Western nations in martial capability as well as historical greatness. One commentator even chastised his colleagues for not doing enough for glorifying the event and declared that it was more important than the Battle of Marne.\textsuperscript{86}

On the other hand, the coverage for the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Republic, showcased the connection between the new state and modern technology. Newspaper reports of the ceremonies appeared alongside depictions of technological advancement since 1923. Factories, industrial installations, and railroads took a prime position in the depictions; portrayal of a modern, progressive state was the aim of the editors. The military fit well into this picture of a technologically self-sufficient country, regardless of the inaccuracy of these descriptions. Knowing the dire financial and industrial situation of the country and its difficulties in finding credit for development in the age of economic depression, newspaper editors highlighted these achievements however small they may have been. The image of the military as a well-equipped and well-prepared institution, “ready to break the hands that would dare to touch the republic

\textsuperscript{84} Abidin Daver, \textit{Cumhuriyet}, 30 August 1933.

\textsuperscript{85} The same picture appeared in that month’s issue of \textit{Askeri Mecmuası} as well. A note on page 4 of the newspaper referred readers to the current issue which was dedicated to the event.

\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Cumhuriyet}, 1 September 1933.
and the revolution from within or without,” corresponded with the public relations campaign surrounding the tenth anniversary of the republic.87

The tone of the Ministry of Defense’s own report on the achievements of the military since the founding of the republic vacillated between bombastic self-satisfaction and sober assessment. Its authors referred to the bond between the people and their army, but also did not hesitate to label the republic a “nation of farmhands.” The section dedicated to training underlined the importance of teaching literacy and other skills to the recruits, while another passage was titled “army as the school of the nation.” The bureaucrats of the defense establishment were using common terminology of the period readily available in foreign (including German) military periodicals, but they also paid attention to the specific needs of the republic’s military, especially in the areas of finance and industry. The never ending struggle to produce military equipment domestically (a worry that haunts the Turkish military even today) echoed the regime’s need to conserve hard currency and to secure independence. The developments of 1938-39, when Turkey frantically tried to enter into defensive alliances with France and Britain, would show how timely these worries were. Despite these glitches, and perhaps characteristically of most bureaucrats, the authors of the report managed to finish on a positive note, and praised the capacity of the Turkish military to “create miracles under most adverse conditions.”88 However, the report ignored political offenses committed by the members of the military. There was no mention in this report of officers who had been cashiered

87 See for example, Cumhuriyet, 29 October 1933, 8-9.

88 For the text of the report, see BCA 030.10./47.301.12, 17 August 1933.
and jailed for communist agitation, a charge found in the archival records but not reported on often.89

The gendarmerie released its own report on the tenth anniversary. As a force that was charged with law enforcement, its report focused more on the issues of smuggling, banditry, and corruption. The report stated the need to represent authority with nationalist and patriotic feelings and morals. The gendarmerie could represent the state only with well-trained professionals, and this necessity brought under question issues of qualified manpower shortage. When the report covered uprisings and rebellions that shook the social and political fabric of the early republic, the authors deftly followed the official line of the regime and ascribed such problems to the incitement of “evil elements” in the society and to the negative influence of foreign powers. Especially the coverage of the uprisings with ethnic origins, various Kurdish rebellions in Eastern Anatolia, managed to report these troubles without mentioning the Kurds as a minority in rebellion. The report referred to such disturbances as the result of the machinations of “those who [did not] want Turkey to succeed.” But, the report concluded, eventually “calmness and security have prevailed.”90

The ceremonies in August 1934 provided a further propaganda opportunity to unite the fate of the republic with its military. That year was also the hundredth

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89 There is a series of cases in the records between 1932 and 1934. For example, BCA 030.11.1/71.17.3, 10 July 1932; 030.11.1/74.31.6, 12 November 1932; 030.11.10/92.42.20, 26 November 1934. These cases often involved very junior officers, 2nd and 1st Lieutenants. It is difficult to assess how serious the offenses were. The records often describe possession of banned literature, but quickly jump to sedition, aiding known communists, and incitement to revolution. These proceedings seem to be the precursor of the notorious anti-communist show trials of 1937-38 that involved the Army and Navy, and that ruined the careers and lives of many members of the military and civilians, including the well-known poet, Nazım Hikmet.

90 BCA 030.10/128.923.6, 1933.
anniversary of the establishment of the Military Academy. Editorials in the Cumhuriyet used this opportunity to underscore the preparedness of the military and to establish a lineage between the contemporary military and this “hundred year old monument to heroism.”

This emphasis on historical pedigree was an example of the curious and complex relationship that the republican elite had with the Ottoman past. While trying to distance themselves from the legacy of the empire, they could pick and choose which traditions they wanted to maintain, especially in military matters. At any rate, it would have been impossible for the republican leaders to deny themselves this heritage, because a sizeable majority of their numbers, including Mustafa Kemal, had been through the ranks at the academy.

This fascination with pedigree pushed some journalists to draw outlandish parallels with history in their search for legitimacy. As their difficult relationship to the Ottoman past forced them to sidestep a large chunk of imperial traditions, they frequently looked back to a more distant past. Like the state-guided social scientists of the period, journalists and military commentators evoked the Central Asian connection as a path to historical greatness. Ancient Turkic chieftains, such as Mete Khan or Attila the Hun, found their places in the pantheon of former Turkish “heroes” in the editorials, establishing a long line of conquerors ending with Mustafa Kemal.

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91 Ibid., 30 August 1934, 7.

92 Abidin Daver, Cumhuriyet, 7 November 1934, 5. It is interesting to note that this connection is still underlined by military authorities in Turkey. The unofficial founding of the Land Forces is dated back to 209 BCE, the beginning of the reign of Mete Khan. One can find posters that advertise this connection in the mess halls and barracks of military installations. The same date is also used by some present-day columnists who espouse a nationalist line.
Newspaper support for historical lineage coincided with similar articles in the military press. One popular theme was the historical connection between Mongols and Turks. Presenting an admiring overview of Genghis Khan’s military campaigns, one commentator exhorted readers and military commanders alike to take pride in Mongol victories. The nationalist tone of this author was further colored by a racist attitude; according to him, the Mongols were just Turks who lived among the “yellow” races. He pointed out that “enemies” created an artificial divide between modern day Turks and Mongols/Tartars. The emphasis on the study of western military history was misplaced, he continued; the Turks had enough examples from their own past to look up to. One can find in such articles the signs of the two-fronted identity struggle of the single-party era. On the one hand, the Turks had to be differentiated from Asian peoples (“yellow races”), while bolstering Turkish history with martial qualities of Central Asian/Turkic origins. On the other hand, another set of borders had to be set against western nations, whose achievements had to be constantly weighed against those of the Turks. Conflicting impulses of inferiority and superiority marked the general tone of such pieces.

In an effort to booster national morale, the editorials of the Askeri Mecmua, country’s prime military journal, highlighted the significance of the anniversary of the 1922 victory. The War of Independence was portrayed as a fight for “all or nothing,” or “a war for salvation.” In this Manichean description, the figure of Mustafa Kemal took the central place. The editors praised his skills as a commander and a forger of alliances.

He was portrayed as the final link in a long chain of great historical Ottoman and Turkish heroes, “a great man from a great nation.”

In most of these editorials and articles, as befitting a military journal, the connection between the leader and his military was at the core of the explanation for the success of the nationalist struggle of 1919-1922. The aim of the military press as well as regular print media was to assure the public that this achievement would continue in peacetime.

The concern with the safety of the republic led military commentators to cover topics common in western military journals of the period, including German. Chief among these were problems about air defense and the future of air war. The presentation of these issues, however, was always tandem with a nationalist approach to defense issues. For example, while the predictions about the use of heavy bombers in a future war was grim as in most western studies, the preparation for such a contingency appeared as a civic duty; it was “a debt to fatherland for every Turk.”

As the military establishment tried to lay out the framework of a proper defense system for a future war, the question of how to finance it attracted the attention of military authors and editors. As in Germany, and following the lessons learned in World War One, the defense press in Turkey saw the solution in a state-controlled economy that centralized industrial production. This attitude was parallel to the line advocated by the

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94 Editorial for the anniversary of 30 August, AsMe 94, September 1934, especially 18-20.

95 This connection was especially important for the narrative on the transition from the guerilla-like early formations of the nationalist struggle to the organized army of 1920-1922. The role played by commissioned officers from the former Ottoman army who led the resistance (such as Mustafa Kemal) was a major theme. See, for example, Col. Kenan (Ret.), AsMe 95, December 1934, 890-893.

Kadro movement and echoed the statist debate discreetly going on in the ruling circles. One article favoring a state-controlled industry quoted the Prime Minister İnönü’s statist opinions and claimed that it was essential to nationalize heavy industry to back up plans for armament industry.97 This opinion was likely shared by most of the officer corps as opposed to those who favored economic liberalization. As in the development of the Kadro movement, these views thrived in the chaotic and depression era economy.

In their quest for alternative economic and political avenues for development, Turkish military commentators followed the example of western critics of liberal and democratic values. Shying away from direct political commentary, due to the strict attitude toward the politicization of the military, they often relied on translations from foreign military publications. Those that were most popular focused on the achievements of the Turkish Republic and the role played by its military. One selection managed to attack “liberal” political ideas and predicted their downfall in the near future, while urging Germans to look up to Turks and end their “captivity and shame.”98

These comparisons with western regimes, both democratic and authoritarian, led some Turkish commentators to dramatic exclamations. Seemingly unaware of the coverage dedicated to youth physical training and sports in western military journals, one author claimed that compulsory physical education was not enforced in most developed


countries due their “unwillingness to control population.” Emphasizing the connection between sports and the cultivation of healthy generations, he offered canned interpretations of Social Darwinism while advising temperance and a steady lifestyle. Accordingly, “physical ability at a dangerous moment [was] also a measure of the value a nation,” and war was necessary for the “purpose of salvation and freedom of the fatherland.” These opinions were similar to those offered in German military publications, especially as a tool for highlighting the supposed unwillingness and ignorance of elected officials in these matters. In the Turkish case, they helped to advertise the officer cadres’ interest in social issues while displaying a sense of awareness of contemporary military debates.

By late 1934, both countries had entered into a new period. For Germany, the military’s acquiescence in the violent takeover of the regime by the Nazi movement was a given. Furthermore, the officer corps had given its tacit approval to the bloody purges against the SA. In a famous scene from Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will*, an overexcited Rudolf Hess pays special attention to the assembled generals among the guests of honor, thanking them in the name of the Nazi Party for their support and loyalty to the new regime. The generals, in turn, are shown in their full regalia, providing visual encouragement for the new Germany in a grim-faced and somber fashion. While the personnel shuffle of early 1938 that marked the end of final vestiges of independence

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100 Ibid., 785, 788.

101 *Triumph of the Will*, DVD, directed by Leni Riefenstahl (1935; Synapse Video, 2006).
from Hitler’s policies for the military elite was still to come, the writing was on the wall for those members of the military who still thought that the Nazis could be contained.

For Turkey, on the other hand, the end of the first decade of the republic signaled simultaneously a sense of security and an awareness of the shortcomings of the young nation-state. The early- and mid-1930s indicated that attempts to formalize a coherent ideology for the ruling party would ultimately fail. Kemalism would remain a mixed ideology that contained competing attitudes and opinions.  

In such an environment, the military had to come up with its own guidelines within the framework of official understandings. The yearning for a cutting-edge defense system had to coexist with the realities of an underdeveloped and isolated country. An impulse to emulate authoritarian regimes of Europe instead of the established liberal democracies of the period received further support from the notion that in the chaotic era of Great Depression, political and democratic liberalism was on the verge of failure.  

For both countries, the late 1930s would bring new challenges in the areas of harmonization with the political regime and preparation for increasing radicalization in the international arena.

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In an interview conducted three weeks before his death in May 2008, the last survivor of the group of officers who tried to assassinate Hitler on 20 July 1944, Philipp Freiherr von Boeselager, struggled with a question about the attitude of the German elites toward the political situation in the mid-1930s: “For those who had a certain sense of morality, the Röhm Putsch was the crucial point.” However, when asked about the responses to the Nuremberg Laws, Boeselager’s answer was that young officers like him (he graduated from Gymnasium in 1936) were only a little touched by such developments; they concerned themselves frantically with the soldiers and the complicated process of military build-up.\(^1\) Even among those who later opposed Hitler and his policies in the most radical fashion, the attitude of the young officer cadres in the pre-World War II years was one of professional passivity toward domestic changes in a rapidly rearming Germany.

The central years of the pre-World War II Nazi regime, 1935-1937, were a period of policy extension and bold international gestures. The racialist ideology of the party, as represented by the Nuremberg Laws codified the position of “non-Aryans” in German

\(^1\) *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 May 2008. The interviewer was Frank Schirrmacher.
society and created a complex social ranking system, while the decision to reinstate conscription and to build an air force (both in violation of the Versailles Treaty) raised the tension in the international arena. As Germany pushed forward on the path to rearmament and military industrialization, the strains caused by limited resources and options became apparent. The reverberations of these policies were felt in the defense press, where loud support for these steps betrayed an increasing radicalization of military culture and cooptation of a vocal segment of the officer cadres.

Territorial adjustments were at the top of the policies that were supported by the defense press. As predicted, the Saar plebiscite that led to the reentry of the province into Germany and the remilitarization of Rhineland found support among military observers. These steps were seen by many Germans as rightful readjustment of the clauses of Versailles Treaty against which the defense press had long protested. It was not surprising that the journals cheered on the new regime for these achievements.

Along the same lines, the building of an air force and the reestablishment of a conscript army fulfilled the long-time expectations of military observers who formed the core group of authors at defense press. After all, the rearmament was one of their main expectations from the new regime. At the same time, the journals began to show a marked interest in political developments in neighboring countries such as Czechoslovakia and Austria and to envision a future foreign policy that would increase Germany’s influence in Central Europe. As the rearmament policy brought with it a new sense of confidence, the number of articles that focused on colonies and overseas conflicts in Latin America and Asia also grew.
The formation of an alliance, a sense of common aims, between Italy and Germany by 1936 strengthened the anti-communist tone of the opinions expressed in the military journals and added a more critical attitude toward the ideology and geopolitical position of the Soviet Union. Accordingly, Stalin’s purges among the ranks of the military cadres did not escape the attention of the German defense press. And finally, the central event of European international relations during this period, the Spanish Civil War, unified the opinions of military authors on what they perceived as the “struggle against bolshevism.”

The official alignment of the military with the new system continued during this period, while various levels of the command structure participated in the adoption of National Socialist terminology and concepts for the instruction of the troops. The military evolved, at least in the statements of its highest representatives, from the “apolitical” instrument of armed force to the “guardian and protector of National Socialist Germany.” To that end, an order issued by Blomberg stated that the first year of the Nazi rule had been spent over the achievement of political and economic rebuilding of the nation. The second year was to focus on the “spiritual penetration of the nation with the main ideas of the National Socialist state.” For this purpose, a bulletin called the “Guidelines for the Instruction in Political Issues of the Day” (Richtlinien für die Unterricht über politische Tagesfragen) was to be published. It would appear once or twice a month.\footnote{BA-MA RWD 6/17, 4 April 1935.} The importance that Blomberg and his staff attached to this bulletin must have escaped some members of the military establishment, because within a couple of
weeks a stern notice from the top of the Defense Ministry that the order originated with Blomberg and it should be treated like all other duties for the commanders.\textsuperscript{3}

The training and indoctrination of officers along the lines of the new ideology had to exist within the established norms and regulations. However, as the military began to expand in 1935, the need for a larger body of officers, especially those who were kept in the reserve, presented further problems of ideological streamlining. Rapid inclusion of new members into the reserve corps created indoctrination problems, leading to a communique by Blomberg that requested the selection for reserve ranks only of candidates who adhered to the concepts of the new state; officers who were indifferent to or dismissive of such concepts were to be weeded out.\textsuperscript{4} At the same time, the appearance of a large number of writings by former and serving members of the officer corps worried the High Command about the suitability or the compatibility of such material with the new concepts of the state. An order requiring the approval of such works was sent to the units in order to go along with the directions of the Party office that oversaw the “Protection of National Socialist Literature.”\textsuperscript{5} It is most likely that some of the most direct subjects of this order were the editors and authors of the defense press.

As the ideological reorganization continued during this period, the cult of personality toward Hitler even among the highest echelons of military power, who were previously cool to such politicization, increased. Even a Prussian conservative as staunch as Werner von Fritsch, commander of the army, would go on record on the occasion of

\textsuperscript{3} BA-MA RWD 6/17, 17 April 1935.
\textsuperscript{4} BA-MA RWD 6/17, 22 July 1935.
\textsuperscript{5} BA-MA RH 1/52.98, 18 May 1936.
the remilitarization of the Rhineland by stating that Hitler was a front soldier above everything, and the soldiers understood him; they would serve him as the “first soldier of the Reich.”

In March of 1937 a series of guidelines for the proper attitude and training of the officers under the new regime was prepared by Maximilian von Weichs who was then the commander of the 1st Panzer Division. Von Fritsch’s office later issued a supporting document approving of these guidelines to the troops. This document stated that a revolution in both the outer and spiritual attitude of the whole nation was taking place, and the military had to be an example in this process. The highest honor for a young man was military service; training in arms was a right. Under these circumstances, a new kind of officer’s attitude based on older principles had to develop. The guidelines for this type of formation were rigor against oneself, a natural consciousness of status, a well-developed sense of honor, a simple lifestyle, Germanness in essence, and love for nation, fatherland, and the Führer. This language was not in itself new or revolutionary; these words would fit well with the worldview of old style conservative aristocrats like Fritsch and Weichs. But the use of this language in conjunction with the notion of a “spiritual renewal of the nation” was a political move. The language of the new ideology was penetrating the military bureaucracy and its principles of training and education.

In early 1935, the signs of this level of increasing support for the new regime surfaced in the coverage of the Saar issue. As soon as the voting was over, the defense press, especially the Deutsche Wehr, celebrated the results and warned western powers

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6 BA-MA RH-1/52.67, 11 March 1936.
7 BA-MA RH 53-7/188.74-75, 13 April 1937.
not to interfere with the decision of the people of the Saar region. According to editors of the journal, “in reasonable French and English circles, there could be no doubt that a clear result for Germany would be most useful to international politics.” The solution of the “Saar Problem” became, in the view of defense press, an affirmation of Germany’s new course under Hitler and its successes against aggression by foreign enemies. An editorial stated that the return of the Saar corrected a historic injustice, and “two great historic lies and plans of plunder, from Louis XIV to Clémenceau and the French General Staff, were foiled.” After the re-admittance of the province into the German Reich, the same journal celebrated the event and claimed that “a foreign administration . . . returned the rule to its rightful owner” and “quitted the land in awareness of its failure.” The defense press took part in the jubilation of this territorial revision and its easy victory for the Nazis.

The decision to return to a conscript-based military brought about louder and ideologically more fervent congratulations from the defense press than the reports that welcomed the Saar region into the Reich. Since the Versailles Treaty, the revision of the clauses that established limits on the size and equipment of the military was one of most basic points upon which all German nationalists from different segments of the society could agree. With the revocation of these stipulations by the Nazi regime, the arguments that connected racial and national preparedness with military training appeared as a sign

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8 “Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 17 January 1935. In this period, the Wehrpolitische Umschau section of each issue became the venue for the editors of DW to express their opinion on domestic and international developments of the previous week.


10 “Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 28 February 1935.
of vindication in military journals. In a lead article sprinkled with quotations from Mein Kampf, one author remarked that “the racially unified national spirit defines the qualities of the people.” Furthermore, “the worldview of the German people was National Socialism,” and “now once again military service [would] form the last stage and the crown of the education process to healthy völkisch spirit.” Accordingly, “the army accomplishes the highest level in the education of national spirit.”

The old belief in the “Army as the School of the Nation” was dusted off by military commentators and put forward as the educational path for the nation’s youth.

For some in the defense press circles, this policy step provided an opportunity to celebrate on the occasion of Hitler’s birthday the following month. The revision of the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty became unified with the “savior” qualities of Hitler’s personality and allowed editors to heap praise on him as the person who achieved things not possible in the Weimar Republic. Now he could be pictured receiving the salute of the honor guard and carrying the title, Supreme Commander (Der Oberbefehlshaber). In the view of one military commentator, with the reinstatement of conscription (“this manful act”) “the most disgraceful chain of the Versailles Treaty had fallen.” According to this author, the result of this process provided the “hopeful

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12 The event led to many commemorative items and cultural icons. One was a medallion which was portrayed on the cover of DW on 25 April 1935.

13 MW, 18 April 1935, cover page.
perspective for Führer’s birthday this year,” and he finished his message with “Heil Hitler.”

Around the same time, more pictures of Hitler in military regalia accompanied by senior military figures began to appear. These pictures often included important commanders from the Imperial Army such as August von Mackensen. The combination of contemporary military figures, who owed their position to the new regime, with older personalities such as Mackensen helped underline the continuity of tradition that led to Hitler himself as the “leader of the well-fortified Reich.” Militant nationalism and cult of personality came together in the form of revisionist fervor. Attempts at cult of personality were not limited to Hitler alone. Göring, too, received some of the praise handed out by the defense press, because of his role as the “old practitioner” who forged a new air force on the basis of the experience of World War One. By mid-1935, he could be pictured in his new Luftwaffe uniform of a three-star general (which meant a six-rank jump from his rank at the end of the First World War) conferring with his staff.

The official notice of the new Defense Law appeared in the journals at the end of May 1935, and praised both the new legislation and Hitler’s role in creating it. The front

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15 This was the caption used by DW on the cover of the issue on 4 April 1935.

16 Lehmann, “Vom Werden der deutschen Luftmacht,” DW, 18 April 1935, 225-227. This article appeared on the cover page alongside a photo of Hitler with a caption that hailed him as “the Maker of German defense freedom,” and congratulated his upcoming birthday. As an example of the bolder political tone that the defense journals were beginning to take in this period, this article reflected the growing tension with the Soviet Union, and declared that that country’s military intentions were not solely based on defense, but on potential world revolution.

17 DW, 18 April 1935, cover page. For Göring see Richard Overy, Goering (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2003), especially chapter 2-3.
page of one journal headlined that an offer of gratitude was due both to “Führer and the men of the Wehrmacht who stood by his side at this great historic decision.” These men of the army were also products of a transition period, another author commented. The previous era, the Weimar Republic, only allowed Reichswehr to exist, “a surrounded, misjudged, and often slandered force;” as another contributor previously remarked, “exotic animals” in uniform. The policy of a return to conscription was also the bridge from that “old” military--whose members were the heirs to the tradition of the imperial military--and the new Wehrmacht. Therefore, the new law gave military authors another chance to deride the republican experiment, while highlighting the role of the military within it as a form of Babylonian captivity.

Contempt for the institutions and symbols of the republic spilled over even to its military regalia. When the new naval ensign, which had an iron cross on the top left corner and a swastika, was presented to the public, the editors of one journal used the opportunity to label the black-red-gold tricolor on the corner of the old ensign as “cowardly colors” that “were debased from a symbol of German unity to one of subjugation and therefore outlawed.” The piece further explained the meaning of the new ensign as having taken the “black-white-red from Bismarck’s Empire, the swastika from the race and ethos of the Third Reich, and the iron cross from glory and tradition.” The battle standards for the line units of the army, as well as air force and naval units, that

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19 George Soldan, “Zum deutschen Wehrgesetz,” DW, 30 May 1935, 325-326. The name change came with the restructuring of the Reichswehr in February 1934.

20 “Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 14 November 1935.
appeared the following year all included swastikas on each corner to adopt to this new combination.\(^{21}\)

Along with the emphasis on National Socialism came also a sense of historical connection with Germany’s previous tests against adversaries. Listing four key such periods in German history (the time of Frederick the Great, the War of Liberation against Napoleon, the Wars of Unification, and the First World War), one prominent military author designated the events of 1935 as a source of pride.\(^{22}\) He hoped the return of conscription that “returned them the freedom for defense would also give them the freedom to be proud.”\(^{23}\)

As the length of active service was raised to two years in August 1936, the journals supported this decision as a just response to the continuing armament of neighboring nations. However, this justification also bore signs of a self-conscious unease. The perceived insufficiency of the one-year conscription term had already appeared in the press; the difficulties of reshaping the civilian into a soldier and the responsibility of company commanders to make sure that their men would not forget their training as soon as they returned to their civilian environment were common worries then as they are now.\(^{24}\) But for German military commentators of the mid-1930s, the question of military training for the conscript went in tandem with the calculation of the response

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\(^{21}\) Some of the new battle standards appeared on the cover of MW on 18 September 1936.


\(^{23}\) Ibid., 118.

\(^{24}\) See for example, “Gedanken über die einjährige Dienstzeit,” MW, 11 September 1936, 490-492. This article was published after the two-year service came into effect.
from other European powers. Even after Hitler made quite clear his revisionist intentions, the possibility of a sharp reaction from France or Britain concerned some in the defense press. In those cases, authors relied on comparative statistics to prove Germany’s case, especially using France and its eastern allies as test cases. One such example took the case further by bringing the Soviet Union into the comparison, while emphasizing the existence of a renewal of the historical Franco-Russian alliance and the crucial need for “defense against a Bolshevik attack against our country.” The author claimed that the new recruit of the era of the two-year service would perform better if he were to understand the “National Socialist basic principle of community and the readiness to sacrifice oneself that is connected with it.”

The ideology of the state and its policies regarding the military establishment were beginning to take over the language of military service.

The relationship between the new conscription law and nationalist rhetoric repeated itself in the discussion of the rebuilding of an air force. While rebuffing the claims from the British and French press about the hostile intentions behind Germany’s rearmament plans, military journalists chose to construct their arguments along the lines of repairing perceived injustices committed against Germany in the Versailles Treaty. To this end, they did not shy away from using opinions from the foreign press, especially when it was a British newspaper that termed the effects of the Treaty as “historic plunder.” The justification for the air force was then discussed in the form of defensive planning that required Germany to have weapons similar to those of its neighbors.

The blueprint of these plans appeared in a speech by Hitler on March 16, 1935. Lambasting the “injustices” suffered by Germany as a result of the Versailles Treaty, and recounting the magnitude of the disarmament process that followed that treaty, Hitler declared the actions of the victors of World War One left Germany at the mercy of any armed threat. In a sentiment that was often echoed in the pages of military journals, he added that the promises of equality, stemming from the agreements of December 1932, failed to materialize, and reminded listeners that the new German Reich was in no position to continue to participate in the League of Nations. Under the circumstances, he continued, the new German government had no choice but to initiate plans to strengthen Germany’s armed forces, leading to the decision to declare an army of thirty-six divisions and to re-instate conscription.27 The enthusiastic response that the speech received signaled the opening of the new phase in which German policy would openly challenge both the Versailles settlement and the League of Nations. The ceremonies that followed the next day capitalized on the success of the speech and re-emphasized Hitler’s wish to restore the position of the military.28

The editors and authors of the defense press, especially of the Deutsche Wehr, took their notice from these developments and, as it could be expected, engaged aggressively in both proselytizing along the same lines and defending against real or perceived criticisms of the decision. In their editorials and articles covering the reshaping

26 “Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 21 March 1935.


of Germany domestically and the flexing of its power internationally, the tone of the journals became more accusatory and daring. For the overall attitude of the German defense press, the decisions of 1935 reframed all discussions. Journal pronouncements on domestic and international policy post-1935 should be viewed through this prism.

In the annual stocktaking of the journals during early 1935, the comparison with the Weimar Republic and the early Nazi years was at the center. The improvements in the defense situation of Germany had to be showcased, while justifying the domestic policies of the regime. Thus, for instance, the author of one such piece judged the events of 30 June 1934 as having led to “the extensive strengthening of the German state’s authority,” without mentioning the fate of the murdered generals von Schleicher and von Bredow. The consolidation of power under the Nazis and the influence of this process on German foreign policy moved the same author to celebrate “the re-ascent of Germany into the regulating organ of European politics.” The choice of phrases in such a description included “a sixty-five million-strong nation that was led by an administration conscious of its responsibility [to a German nation]. . . that wants to live as a free people among other free peoples.”

As the defense press’s commitment to the new Germany solidified, the desire to package the new regime and its policies as nothing more than the embodiment of a struggle for order and equality produced a rhetoric that often combined posturing and wishful thinking.

The decisions of 1935 regarding defense policy prompted the Deutsche Wehr to provide one more such a review by the end of the year; normally, such reviews were reserved for the beginning of the new year. In the editorial piece, 1935 was designated as

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29 “Wo stehen wir?,” DW, 3 January 1935, 1-2.
Germany’s strongest year. For the author(s) of the editorial, the successes of 1935 had to be measured against the events of a decade earlier, the era of Locarno. Accordingly, the article justified the move taken by the new administration to flout the Versailles Treaty to embark upon a path of rearmament. In the meantime, Germany had become much more powerful, the editors claimed; the patience of Germans had run out waiting for the League of Nations. Security and peace were to be sought not in Geneva, but in direct, bilateral negotiations. The conclusion of the article emphasized that Germany was no longer “a plaything and object of egotistical and ambitious European politics.”

While some military commentators focused on the diplomatic dimension of the policies of 1935, others insisted on the indispensable nature of conscription for the cohesion of the state. Declaring the defensibility of the political system as the highest law,” one author extolled what he termed “the renewal of the nation” through the new conscription legislation that “planted the soldier into the people.” Such an action defined “the inseparability of the politician and the soldier.” According to another author, the German officer had never misplaced the trust of its country in him, and he would continue in that direction “now that the people and the military [had] found their historically close solidarity again.” This solidarity, the editors reminded on the anniversary of the signing of the Versailles Treaty, was now undoing the “chains” placed

30 “Wo stehen wir?,” DW, 26 December 1935, 837-838.
on Germany; among recent achievements was the tightening of the penal code that led to a “moral cleanliness.”

This organic relationship, a mainstay of nationalist thinking, inspired authors to investigate the connection between the soldier (especially the officer) and politics. While the old excuse of German officers to remain “unpolitical” in the Weimar era was a way of distancing themselves from the republican regime, under the new regime such distance was unnecessary. According to this point of view, as one author remarked in a book review, the “unpolitical attitude” only applied to the officer’s distance to day-to-day politics; but as far as the new “national revolution” was concerned, “the officer was not only allowed to be the carrier of the national socialist worldview, but also should and must be.” Whatever the “inhibitions” of the officer corps were towards regular, parliamentary politics, they seemed to disappear certainly when the individual ideological course taken by the state suited them. The concept of civil-military relations and the proper attitude of the officer corps toward the state became subverted under such circumstances, when the officer corps and its institutions allowed themselves to follow principles so devoid of inherent consistency. The violent suppression of democratic process and dissent became nothing more than the “replacement of endless criticism (kritische Zerreden) with leadership.” Accordingly, the military, the party, and the bureaucracy became a partnership, respectively, of the carriers of “weapons, state’s idea, and administration.”

33 “Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 4 July 1935.
34 “Die nationalpolitische Bedeutung der Wehrmacht,” MW, 16 April 1937, 2487.
The shaping of a new political role for the German military, based on its supposedly traditional connection with the nation, became more crucial for the defense press as its members foresaw a need to prepare for a future war under the Nazis. The notion of Total War had already been there in the Weimar era; but the new regime allowed military theoreticians to pontificate about the virtues of an authoritarian regime that would fortify its people and military for the coming struggle. Thus, the journals were able to declare openly that in the process of increasing a nation’s “potentiel de guerre” for Total War, the defense policy had “militarized the entire life of the state.” This militarization was a sign of the connection between the defense policy and apparatus of the state, mobilizing the “totality of a people’s will.”36

A study prepared by three staff officers and delivered as a lecture in 1936 outlined the reasons behind the defeat in the First World War and blamed the lack of morale and psychological preparation as chief culprits in the downfall.37 The preparation for the next Total War, where these mistakes would not repeat themselves, had to be a continuous process. The defense press acknowledged this process and approved of it as the proper course.

In the realization of this process, the role ascribed to the Nazi takeover of power was central. The journals eagerly celebrated the anniversary of 30 January 1933 and assigned to it and Hitler almost prophetic qualities. The date had already become “the anniversary of the Third Reich” for the military journals. Editors drew parallels between

35 “Wo stehen wir?,” DW, 1 January 1937, 1-2.


that date and the foundation of the Second Reich on 18 January 1871, or insisted that in
the consciousness of the German people it had become so; “a changed picture of state and
people” was supposed to have emerged in the previous two years, in which “a strong state
leadership had taken the place of parties.” 38 The seemingly positive coverage in some of
the foreign newspapers, such as the Daily Mail, provided more ammunition for the
defense press’s attack on the republican past.

At the same time, the defense press used the anniversary of the Nazi takeover to
compare Germany with the rest of Europe, especially in the light of worsening
international conditions and the attempts toward a reconciliation between France and the
Soviet Union. According to one comment, while Germany celebrated its “liberation,” the
rest of the European states slid closer to communism. 39 Such comments were a reflection
of the official Nazi policy to overturn the policies originating in the Weimar era toward
the Soviet Union. As Hitler increased the tone his criticism of what he termed
“international Bolshevism,” the journals picked up on this mood and amplified such
criticism, announcing the “twilight of Bolshevism.” 40 The language of the comments and
editorials reflected this new bombastic tone; for Deutsche Wehr’s report on the twentieth
anniversary of the Russian Revolution, Josef Stalin became the “Asiatic destroyer,” while
his anti-Nazi remarks earned the New York mayor La Guardia the title of “New York’s
main Jew.” 41

38 “Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 7 February 1935.
39 “Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 6 February 1936.
40 “Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 7 February 1937.
By 1937, attacks against the League of Nations and the Soviet Union would make up the two major themes in the diplomatic commentary of the military journals. The defense press’ case against the League of Nations focused on the charge that the organization was an instrument for the victors of the First World War, and biased toward the strong. After the German withdrawal from the League, most military commentators criticized the organization for being unsuitable for conflict resolution, preferring bilateral agreements as a diplomatic tool. Germany’s revisionism could be more easily accommodated by such an approach; Hitler increasingly emphasized his preference for direct treaties between Germany and its neighbors. Accordingly, the editors of the defense press reviewed the actions of the League unfavorably and by the late 1930s began to suggest that it had long forfeited its legitimacy. Looking for foreign opinions that also supported this thesis, they raised doubts about the achievability of world peace and declared that the League was a flawed institution.42

In 1935, before the formation of the Berlin-Rome Axis and the emergence of the Ethiopian and Spanish crises, the journals continued to present Germany as a lonely fighter for equality and security in the face of League of Nations’ machinations. In this world of affairs, according to military authors, Italy was still a potentially hostile nation and a possible Franco-Russo alliance was a conduit for communist contamination. In their view, this situation at the heart of Europe could be solved by allowing Germany to achieve parity with its neighbors and relieve the tension. How far this new dimension in the rearmament race would add to the already tense condition did not play into the

42 See, for example, “Ist ein Weltfriede möglich? Was ist mit dem Völkerbund nicht im Ordnung?,” DW, 2 December 1937, 797-798. This piece contained large sections of a translated article by a retired British general, Sir Hubert Gough.
suggestions of the members of the defense press. The revision of the Versailles Treaty would have to take precedence over possibility of future conflicts, they insisted, because the constrictions imposed on Germany were the source of the problem. According to one author, the correct call to the world community should be, “give Germany decent security, and you will have peace.”

The defense press in Germany extended its support to other nations that defied international organizations and their legitimacy. It would not be enough for Germany alone to reject the intervention of the international community. The censure and warnings of the League had to be portrayed as illegal meddling, especially when they were aimed at other nationalist/authoritarian regimes. One example of this practice was the coverage of Japanese affairs. Just as it would do for Italy later, Germany supported Japan’s foreign policy, especially over the Manchurian question. Japan’s exit from the League in 1933 was fondly remembered by at least one German military journal, which condemned the inability of the League to represent nothing more than the interests of a “limited victors’ clique.”

As Germany came to an understanding with Italy in 1936, the defense press’s criticism of the League of Nations turned into an instrument of supporting Italy’s policies in East Africa. Following this course allowed the military commentators to draw attention to the seeming helplessness of the League and to highlight the superiority of regimes that shared a similar ideology. When Italy finally pulled out of the League to

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43 G. (possibly retired Rear Admiral, and one of the editors of DW, Reinhold Gadow), “Sicherheit!,” DW, 7 March 1935, 137-138.

44 “Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 4 April 1935.
protest the unwillingness of that institution to recognize its “Empire” in East Africa, the echo in the German military was of sympathy for a common destiny.\textsuperscript{45} While observing Mussolini’s intentions as generally hostile to Germany in the years before 1935, German defense press often praised and admired the fascist leader’s domestic policies and his militarist stance. After 1936 it was easier to increase the dose of that praise. When Italy joined Germany and Japan in the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1937, the sense of justification in the face of British and French hostility permeated the reports in the journals. In the editors’ view this reaction was a mixture of imperial jealousy and Marxist propaganda.\textsuperscript{46}

As early as the summer of 1935, positive reports about the Italian build-up in Somalia and Eritrea began to appear in the defense press. While reporting on the views in the Italian press about the upcoming campaign, one article included comments about the “low level of culture” in Ethiopia and the practice of slavery in this land, which they called “barbaric.” However, the same report also warned about the possibility of a protracted war and the difficulties of the terrain.\textsuperscript{47} By late 1935, key military officials heard Hitler’s own opinions on the matter. His unwillingness to go along with sanctions against Italy imposed by the League of Nations; after the Autumn maneuvers in 1935, he told senior military figures that Mussolini was justified in his policy and he wished him full success in the campaign.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{45} “Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 16 December 1937.

\textsuperscript{46} “Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 18 November 1937.

\textsuperscript{47} “Die Abessinien-Konflikt und die Mächte,” DW, 27 June 1935, 394-395.

When some foreign observers also began to support Italy’s ambitions in Ethiopia, they offered a renewed chance for German defense press to ridicule the concerns of the international community in this “first of the League wars.”\footnote{“Der erste der Völkerbundskriege,” MW, 25 December 1936, 1312-1314. This was a commentary on an essay with the same title by the British general and military historian J.F.C. Fuller.} As the journals reported on the proceedings of the League regarding the Italian invasion, the editors managed to mention Italy’s “cultural services in the conquered land,” such as the building of hospitals and roads.\footnote{“Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 30 April 1936.} After the conquest and annexation of the country, the editors turned their attention to the long-term effects of the Italian presence in the region. One of these effects was the impact on interreligious affairs in North Africa and the Middle East. The dynamics of religion and imperialism in the region continued to interest German military commentators.\footnote{O. Welsch, “Islamwelt und abessinischer Krieg,” DW, 14 May 1936, 317-319.}

The consolidation of Italian East Africa was the logical extension of the conquest of Ethiopia. German defense press showed interest in these developments and made predictions on the viability of the defense of these newly territories.\footnote{Hz. M-D., “Die Erschließung von italienisch Ostafrika,” DW, 9 December 1937, 812.} The activities of the Italian military around the Horn of Africa appeared in the German press as the emergence of a new Italy, one that created a new empire, which one author called the “Fourth Italy.” The previous three were the ancient, medieval, and nineteenth-century versions. The difficulties placed on the country by geography and demography were seen as the reason for the push for empire, as well as the lack of access to the spoils of the
First World War by Britain and France. The reports about high-ranking Italian military officials underlined Italy’s right to exist among other empires and to create a sphere of influence for the country. These other powers included Japan and the “Anglo-American Empire,” which the Italian general Visconti-Prasca called a partnership of Plutocracies.

Under these conditions, the German defense press suggested, Italy’s plans for an expanded military and a thoroughly militarized society was to be admired. Reporting on these developments, an article provided a detailed breakdown of training and indoctrination for Italian school children and praised the fascist emphasis on the “human factor” in the moral preparation of the nation. These military improvements appeared as a part of Italy’s attempt to solidify its hold in its new territories in the second year of its empire-building. The financial cost of this imperial outreach was also a part of the German defense press’s analysis of the fascist example, whereby the planning required detailed forecasting for the exploitation of the newly acquired lands. One author justified such a costly operation, which defied international law and destroyed an independent state, by stating that it had nothing to do with capitalist interest but was undertaken for the people’s future. This deep interest in the expansion of Italian experience provided both a chance to show the strength of a new ally that also rejected the international system and a possible future example for Germany.

54 “Italien und die großen Imperien,” DW, 21 January 1937, 50-51.
On the issue of colony-building, the military journals continued their coverage of colonial issues, both as a remembrance for the lost German territories and as a way of scrutinizing the affairs of the British and French governments. Foreign assignments in the shape of a colonial official figured as desirable postings, and examples from other militaries that offered such positions were used to underline the importance of colonial service.\textsuperscript{58} These sentiments were in accordance with the statements by some of the key figures in the administration such as Hjalmar Schacht, the president of the \textit{Reichsbank}. The editors of one journal quoted an article by him, in which he declared the problem of colonies to be one of economic survival, not one of national pride or imperialism.

According to Schacht, Germany had to obtain its raw resources from territories that belonged to it and from places that circulated its own currency.\textsuperscript{59} “Sober” justifications of the need for colonies appealed to the readership of military journals that considered Germany’s lack of such access as a major hindrance to economic development. Another ongoing concern was the well-being of German nationals who lived in or near the colonial possessions of other European powers. The uneasy relationship between the British and the Germans in Southwest Africa, for example, kept alive the interest of the military audience in Germany’s connection with its former colonies.\textsuperscript{60}

The resettlement following the First World War appeared open to revision, if only to secure world peace. Whenever a British or French official pointed out problem areas


\textsuperscript{59} “Wehrpolitische Rundschau,” MW, 25 December 1936, 1307. However, it should also be remembered that Schacht at this time was falling out of favor with Hitler. See Ian Kershaw, \textit{Hitler: 1936-1945, Nemesis} (New York: Norton, 2000), 47.

\textsuperscript{60} “Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 15 April 1937.
in the colonial distribution or called for a reorganization of the system, German observers reported these suggestions and used them to bolster Germany’s case. After all, one author declared, the developments of the postwar era became “a terrible source of injustice and dissatisfaction.”61 The declarations on the topic by Nazi officials on scheduled occasions, such as the 1936 Nuremberg Party Rally, had to be declared as having a worldwide effect and relaying Germany’s request to its competitors.62 The main target of this coverage was often Great Britain. The discussions in the British parliament or in the House of Lords regarding the increasing German commentary on the colonial competition received treatment in the German defense press as a sign of the new regime being taken seriously.63

Due to the fact that Germany no longer had any colonies, the organization and administration of overseas forces had to be observed through the experience of other powers. Chief among these were the British, the French, and the Belgians. The editors offered a selection of articles written by specialists from these militaries and summarized their findings on the details of colonial military organization. While most of this material was of factual nature, often such articles and the commentaries offered about them by German editors, ventured into areas suffused with racial prejudice. Among the debated issues were the “nature and character” of the local population, their suitability for military


service, and the feasibility of organizing native soldiers in homogeneous units.\textsuperscript{64} The achievements in military reorganization for colonial purposes, for example in the case of Italy, met with approval as proper response to the challenges of the consolidation of overseas territories.\textsuperscript{65}

The defense press’s attitude toward the Soviet Union, on the other hand, had two dimensions. One was channeled through ideology: the depiction of communism as an international threat that could undermine the well-being of any state, even the established parliamentary democracies of Western Europe. The other was the emphasis on a specifically “Russian” threat from the Soviet Union, a continuation of the expansion from the east that went back to the Tsarist times.

The international climate in the mid-1930s strengthened these suspicions. As the possibility of a Franco-Russian alliance began to emerge, and continued appeals to collective security found support in the Soviet foreign policy as a bulwark against Germany along with the Popular Front resolutions of the seventh congress of the Comintern in 1935, the journals pointed these “ominous signs” and portrayed the Nazi Germany as the only country willing to put a stop to these developments. The arrival of Leon Blum and the Popular Front in France and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 provided a new platform for the defense press to elaborate on these themes. Each declaration by Hitler on communism or the Soviet Union became a rallying call in the

\textsuperscript{64} See for example, “Grundsätze für die Organisation von Kolonialtruppen,” DW, 21 March 1935, 170-171. This was based on a Belgian tract. The second part of this article appeared in DW, 20 June 1935, 377-379.

\textsuperscript{65} “Eine neuzeitliche Kolonialarmee,” DW, 26 November 1936, 780-781.
pages of the journals, and any support voiced by another head of state, for example Franco or Emperor Hirohito, appeared alongside these declarations.66

In an attempt to provoke supporters of parliamentary democracies and to warn them about their weakness against international communism, editors commented on the situation in France during the Popular Front administration. In their view, Blum and his cabinet were establishing a regime under the dangerous influence of Marxism and pacifism. The result could only be the weakening of France’s military.67 Knowing the general animosity of the defense press toward France, it is probably not unreasonable to detect a sense of gloating in this analysis. On the one hand, democratic regimes were warned about their weakness and foolishness to follow such paths, on the other, the superiority of the Nazi system was supposedly proven. The policies outlined by the new French administration on the reorganization of the armed forces were ridiculed by the German defense press as “democratization” (always in quotation marks) of the military, an idea that was suggestive of an undisciplined and distinctly civilian approach to civil-military relations.68 For the editors of the military press, these developments were apart of the general trend of communist infiltration that made inroads in Belgium and Spain but were checked in places such as Brazil or Switzerland with the help of preventive authoritarian legislation of which they approved.69

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68 “Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 4 June 1936.

69 “Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 18 June 1936.
Analyzing some of these pieces on the perceived communist threat, several subthemes emerge. One is the use of the term Bolshevik instead of communist. While communism and anti-communism are mentioned in the pages of the German military journals, the prevalent adjective is Bolshevik, with all the pejorative undertones of conspiracy. When writing about military or diplomatic efforts on the part of the communists—whether in the Soviet Union or countries like France—this negative depiction extended to the other subtheme, the use of term soviets (as revolutionary councils) or Räte. These organs appeared in military literature as a symbol of the breakdown of authority, but also as a direct legacy of the Revolution of 1917. The continuous use of these two words—Bolshevik and soviets—instead of, or in conjunction with “communist” may be interpreted as the constant reworking of the theme of betrayal and defeat dating back to 1918/19 and the Dolchstoß legend. The linking together of these terms reminded readers of the causes of the breakdown of discipline and the threat of revolution at the end of the First World War. For many people of the editors’ generation, these concepts were parts of a tight fabric of convictions and accusations covering the whole expanse of what happened between 1918 and 1933 and the “redemption” by Hitler and the Nazis. At the same time, the emphasis on such continuous threat helped the members of the defense press to portray themselves (and the German state in general) as the sole purveyors of sanity and reason, while the rest of Europe either ignored the threat or was willing participants in it. This kind of “Cassandra complex” colored most of the analyses and editorials about communism and the Soviet Union in the military journals.
For the journals, the actual strategic comparison between the two systems, Nazi and Soviet, and their foreign policy aims came before the ideological conflict. As serious and factual publications, they had to counter the claims by foreign press about possible German aggression toward the Soviet Union. In the tense shuffle for collective security, the activities of Soviet officials, both from the Comintern and the Foreign Ministry, came under intense scrutiny. The German defense press saw it as a duty to challenge any accuser and to publicize that it was the Soviet Union that pursued a hostile foreign policy. In this discourse, alarmist statements by Soviet officials such as Marshal Tukhachevsky became “Russian fantasies.”\textsuperscript{70} The comments by civilian figures such as Karl Radek of the Comintern or Vyacheslav Molotov, who was then the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, received more detailed rebuttals; the answer was to portray Soviet policy as a revival of the 1914 alignment against Germany.\textsuperscript{71}

Comintern itself came under harsh attacks in the German defense press as an enemy institution. Its last congress, which had convened in 1935, was covered in the journals and its declarations led to colorful accusations. The editors insisted on highlighting the concept of a threat against the west and Japan by the Soviet Union, based on the proceedings of the congress.\textsuperscript{72} The inclusion of Japan into the Soviet threat zone allowed the editors of the defense press to declare solidarity with Japan’s activities in East Asia and contrast it favorably with the Soviet Union. Accordingly, Japan had

\textsuperscript{70} “Russische Phantastereien über unsere Wehrmacht,” DW, 18 April 1935, 228-230.

\textsuperscript{71} See for example, Theodor Adamheit, “Die neue Front der Sowjetpolitik,” DW, 23 May 1935, 308-310. The second part of this followed on 6 June 1935, 343-345. Adamheit was a German originally from Russia who published on the theme of “Red Imperialism” in the 1930s.

\textsuperscript{72} “Wehrpolitische Umschau,” DW, 5 September 1935.
“sober” generals, whereas Moscow provided only “saber rattling.” German overtures toward Japan had already started; the journals were ready to support this policy with claims such as the existence of a “moral influence of the Japanese among Asian peoples since the Russo-Japanese War.” Within all such posturing was the plan to prove that Russians had traditional goals to achieve in Central Europe and that they were a major part of a group of countries that were trying to declare “World War on Germany.” The principles such as securing the “independence of Austria” or “stopping Germany’s push towards East” were supposed to be keywords in this agenda.

While portraying the Red Army as a force aimed at the heart of Central Europe and against Germany, the journals also attempted to deflate what they considered to be the myth of the Soviet military. Just as Soviet publications decried the capitalistic system behind the western armed forces, the German defense press tried to increase the stakes and tried to include the Soviet social structure in their analyses. According to one author, hampered by high levels of illiteracy and powered by an intense dislike toward communism, the loyalty of the majority of Russian recruits to their military had to be questionable. If one were to add to this equation the brutal treatment of the conscripts and the sub-standard facilities, the Red Army was not necessarily the mighty to force to be reckoned with. The underestimation of the Soviet military that would prove fatal in less than a decade already had its foreshadowing in the defense press.

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73 Adamheit, “Moskau zwischen Ost und West,” DW, 4 July 1935. 412-413.
74 “Russlands ewiges Kriegsziel,” DW, 20 February 1936, 117-118.
75 Agricola, “Ist die Rote Armee zuverlässig?,” DW, 12 December 1935, 801-802.
In 1936 a series of reports titled, “Letter from Moscow” (Moskauer Brief), began to appear in the Deutsche Wehr. Filed from Moscow by an unnamed correspondent, the pieces purported to relay information from sources close to the Soviet elite, especially the military. Switching seamlessly from factual to gossipy, this feature seems to have been a popular success, because it continued to appear regularly, at times in biweekly intervals. The focus of these dispatches was decision-making within the Soviet military policy. At the same time, they ventured into ideology and politics and betrayed a deep and almost perverse fascination with the inner workings of the Soviet state.

One of these reports focused on the threat of expansion by the Soviet Union. The worry on the part of many members of the defense press regarding the possibility of new leftwing regimes in Western Europe, based on the Popular Front experience in France, guided this interest in the supposed connection between Soviet strategy and the domestic politics of western democracies. The author of this report claimed that a quotation from Lenin came up in a recent high-level staff meeting in Moscow; he was supposed to have said that France was the European country most amenable to communism and that if Soviet Union had bordered France, he would not worry about the revolution in the west. This reminder of Lenin’s view of France, according to the author, was a good example of how the Soviet leadership viewed the proliferation of the Popular Front in Western Europe. He continued that the concept of “national bolshevism” was false; the ideology had no Russian fatherland. It had to be international and it had to expand.76

Inadvertently, this information should have reversed the earlier claims about the specifically “Russian” nature of communism and its role as a continuation of imperial

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76 “Moskauer Brief,” DW, 4 June 1936, 365-367.
Russian policy. But this contradiction was not apparent or was offered as an alternative by the editors. Moreover, it would also have to be contrary to the fascist principle that denied the legitimacy of international solidarity as a competitor to the nationalist sentiments. The editors of the defense press were using diverging arguments to highlight the hostile intentions and nature of their Soviet enemy. However, their reports focused on the imminence of such a threat and appealed for a cross-Europe defense against this aggression. One of the editors reminded his authors that the Europe of 1930s was much stronger to withstand a Russian threat, because with the exception of France, Belgium, and Czechoslovakia, the most Central Europe and the Balkans were ready to unite for such an effort.  

The problem of securing Germany’s eastern flank was connected to the reports on the perceived threat. Ignoring the general hostility that Germany had shown to Poland since 1919, the defense press chose to highlight the weaknesses of the Polish regime since the death of Marshal Pilsudski and warned of a communist takeover in the manner of the Popular Front example. One report from Moscow reminded the readers the comment by Georgi Dimitrov, “the road to world revolution leads over the corpse of Poland.”

As factual as the reports on the Soviet Union tried to be, the fascination with the individuals behind Soviet military policy and their ethnicity continued to appear their analyses. One recurring theme was the number of Jews in the key positions of the Red Army. While the ending of such reports left out as to what was to be concluded by such information, authors often listed the name and rank of high-level Jewish officers, leaving

78 “Moskauer Brief,” DW, 6 May 1937, 297-298.
the readers to draw their own conclusions. The overall impression of such pieces was that while most of the high-level commanders were “Aryan,” either their deputies or many important political officers in the military were Jews. Detailed reports on the origins and career of key Soviet military officials continued to appear throughout 1937.

The defense press’ interest in the inner workings of the Soviet military led to the extensive coverage of the Great Purges. Both the author of the “Letters from Moscow” and commentators who were in Germany contributed to these reports. The interpretation was that there was major power struggle between various factions in the Soviet leadership, one that included interference by a Jewish section that was led by Lazar Kaganovich who had influence over Stalin. These types of reports differentiated between two separate groups of officers: technicians who adhered to the communist system because they were careerist (such as Mikhail Tukhachevsky) and the so-called “parade generals” (such as Kliment Voroshilov), who earned their position due to their loyalty to Stalin. The Deutsche Wehr explained the fall of the NKVD chief Genrikh Yagoda in March 1937 as a machination of the Kaganovich clique. The thread of coverage that ended with the massive purge of the military leadership and the execution of Tukhachevsky concluded that the stories of a military putsch must have been valid.


80 “Köpfe der Roten Armee,” DW, 4 March 1937, 154-155. This report was continued on 18 March 1937, 185-186.

81 “Putsch in der Roten Armee. Eine psychologische Untersuchung,” DW, 10 September 1936, 595-596.

82 “Moskauer Brief,” DW, 13 May 1937, 314-315.
The move to sideline and eventually eliminate Tukhachevsky presented a conundrum for the German defense press. Previously, he had been portrayed as a tough careerist officer who occasionally made comments hostile to Germany, despite his professional attitude. The analysis of German commentators took the charge of a military putsch led by him seriously. As the NKVD moved against him, he increasingly became a tragic figure, a would-be Napoleon who played his cards too early and who lost the leadership struggle (if, indeed, there was one).\(^{83}\)

After Tukhachevsky’s execution, the press offered an almost appreciative review of his career. In his death, he became a far-sighted reformer. The editors of the *Deutsche Wehr* decided that they had been mistaken in their previous reports about him and that he had never really been a careerist; instead, he was a true patriot who was sidelined by a hostile clique and possibly by a Jewish conspiracy.\(^{84}\) However, a final report on the purges in the military seemed to accept the charges of putsch planning.\(^{85}\) It is hard to gauge the sincerity of these reports regarding the purges. Clearly, the shuffle and paranoia created in the Soviet military by the purges must have been welcomed by the German defense press; there had always been rumors of involvement by the German military intelligence in these events.\(^{86}\) However, at least a portion of German military commentators were willing to accept both the charges of conspiracy by a “patriotic”

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\(^{83}\) “Kaganowitschs Sieg über Tukhatschewski,” DW, 27 May 1937, 347-348.


\(^{85}\) “Moskauer Brief,” DW, 29 July 1937, 491-493. A follow-up to this reported on the extension of the purges to the regimental level. See “Moskauer Brief,” DW, 9 September 1937, 591-592.

military leadership as well as a Jewish-led cabal in the Soviet elite that was determined to thwart it. The defense press’s coverage of the Soviet purges says less about the actual facts in these events and more about the way the editors and authors wanted to situate the Soviet Union and its military in their worldview.

Under the circumstances, it is safe to assume that the editors of the journals were following the general tone of the Nazi regime toward these subjects. The final validation of this process was the crucial meeting between Hitler, the military chief and the Foreign Minister on 5 November 1937 described in the Hoßbach Memorandum. In this meeting Hitler outlined the German aims for the future, especially for the solution of the problem of autarchy. These aggressive designs were used after the war as a part of the prosecution’s argument in the Nuremberg Trials. Hitler insisted in one of the case studies covered in the meeting that after 1943-45 Germany would reach its weakening point and that its problems would have to be solved by force by at least that point. The other two case studies dealt with the eventualities in which it would be necessary to attack Czechoslovakia and Austria. The boldness of these plans raised objection from the military leadership present at the meeting. It was not the principle of these ideas that created tension with the chiefs; they had agreed with the idea that some of these steps would be undertaken in the near future. The problem was the suddenness of the decision and its timetable. These disagreements would soon pave the way for Hitler’s move

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87 For Hoßbach see Friedrich Hoßbach, Zwischen Hitler und Wehrmacht, 1934-1938 (Wolfenbüttel: Wolfenbütteler Verlaganstalt, 1949).

88 Kershaw, Nemesis, 46-51.
against the military leadership in early 1938 in order to forge a more pliant command structure that did not disagree with him.

The themes outlined in this meeting were not foreign to the editors and authors of the defense press. The emphasis on the realignment with Italy and support for Japan, as well as the demonization of the Soviet Union, had become staple topics by late 1937. The aims outlined in the meeting in November, especially on the future of Austria and Czechoslovakia, had been on the agenda of the defense press, with the frequency of articles on these two countries increasing throughout this period. Austria was of interest to the defense press because of the conservative rejection of the ban on a possible unification with Germany at Versailles and St. Germain. The editors observed the developments in Austria, especially the difficulties its army was facing in this period in modernization and strategic planning. Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, was of interest due to its alliance with France, its German minority, and its position in Central Europe as a crucial factor.

Austria’s future between Germany and Italy was a part of this theme at the end of the 1930s. The emergence of the Berlin-Rome Axis and the difficult relationship with other neighboring countries provided an opportunity to examine the dynamics of the region and the possibility of further tension. 89 Central Europe in general received more attention than earlier in this period, with a series of articles devoted to the developments in this region and the role that Germany could play in the near future. 90 These forays into different scenarios in international politics signaled both an increasing confidence in the


90 See for example, Franz Swoboda, “Der mitteleuropäische Wehrraum,” DW, 2 December 1937, 795-797.
ability of Germany to revise the European balance and a belief that external threats would necessitate for Germany to take action in order to ensure its safety.

The period of 1935-1937 marked the beginning of a new phase in the military culture of Germany. The entry into the era of rearmament, the rejection of collective security and international cooperation, and the realignment of military training with the new ideology led to the radicalization of the language used in the military journals and shifted the emphasis from traditional conservatism to an ideological stance that was more attuned with Nazi principles. The changes of 1938 that eliminated any possible criticism of Hitler’s policies by the military elite were still in the horizon. The editors of the journals continued the pretense of factual analysis and sober observation, but the language of radicalization was already present, especially in the Deutsche Wehr.

When one considers the brief period that elapsed from 1934 to 1937, from the Röhm Affair to the Hoßbach Memorandum, the change in the mood and tone of the defense press was significant. No one would expect the military to be immune to the changes, but the quick adoption of the ideological guidelines of Nazism and the unleashing of more radical attitudes on international revision betray the readiness of at least a sizeable segment within the defense press to adjust readily to the new regime. An analysis of the choice of themes and views in this period shows how acclimated the defense press was to the new masters of the military and how quickly the previously touted notions of an “apolitical” officer corps were left behind. To see the level of involvement in the regime it is more useful to look at the pre-war period when the avenues of subtle dissent were more open. As one examines the path chosen by the
defense press in this period, the protestations of intellectual and ideological purity that the key members of the military adopted after 1945 sound increasingly hollow.
CHAPTER 6

THE END GAME: GERMANY AND TURKEY, 1938-1939

During the last eighteen months before the outbreak of the Second World War the defense presses of Germany and Turkey reflected the tense mood of the international relations of the period. Germany’s aggressive foreign policy that brought gains in issues such as the Rhineland in the previous years entered into more dangerous territory with the heightening tensions of Austrian, Czech, and Polish problems. Turkey, on the other hand, had to adapt to this new environment, in which relatively weak collective security schemes such as the Balkan Entente would have to give way to a search for a stronger link with the West, especially with Britain. While the impact of foreign policy dominated the discourse in the military journals as usual, the ideological and cultural implications of such decisions also found their way to editorials and articles in this most fateful year of the interwar era.

The officer corps in both countries had to follow the dictates of governmental policy as expected; however, the justifications and reasoning offered to support such policies, especially in the German case, stretched the limits of plausible argumentation and led to fantastic claims at an Orwellian level. Under these circumstances, aggression became defense or old animosities disappeared from view for new ones. The aims and

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wishes of regimes were knitted together in pacts and alliances, whose glorification echoed in the editorials. A blend of wild euphoria, wishful thinking, and not-too-well hidden worries colored the coverage in the defense press in the months leading up to the war.

The four major themes of this period were the Blomberg-Fritsch Affair, and the territorial issues with Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. The first major event that concerned the military was the reshuffling of the command structure in February 1938. Known as the Blomberg-Fritsch Affair, this move helped Hitler to get rid of commanders who could prove difficult once the decision to initiate military expansion was taken. It also reached into the top-level management of the Foreign Ministry, replacing Konstantin von Neurath with the more pliable and adventurous Joachim von Ribbentrop. The dissolution of the Defense Ministry and the establishment of Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW) with Wilhelm Keitel at its head solidified Hitler’s control over the armed forces.

The policy of expansion became visible within a month of these decisions. The long-awaited Anschluß, the annexation of Austria into Nazi Germany, in March 1938 was a logical continuation of the geographical revision of the terms of the Versailles Treaty that began with the remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936. A hastily arranged referendum finalized the annexation process in April. A jubilant defense press openly supported the march of the German troops into Austria.

The next step on the agenda was the Sudetenland crisis with Czechoslovakia. Throughout the month of September, increasing number of clashes arranged by the
Sudeten German minority prepared way for the Munich agreement by the end of the month that led to the German occupation of Sudetenland and marked the high tide of Western appeasement toward Hitler. The invasion of the rest of Czechoslovak lands in March 1939 and the establishment of the German Protectorate over Bohemia and Moravia clarified the extent to which Germany was willing to stretch the benefits of Anglo-French lack of cooperation and coordination. The last piece of land that Germany was able to annex without causing a war was Memel in late March 1939.

The enormity of the German threat moved the British and French governments to try to patch up a series of defensive agreements starting from the late Spring of 1939. The Italian invasion of Albania in April and the awareness about Soviet Union’s approaches to both the Western powers and to Germany exacerbated the situation. The Polish question and the future of Eastern Europe between Germany and the Soviet Union took up the last six months before the war. The signing of the Pact of Friendship and Alliance between Germany and Italy (better known as the Pact of Steel) in May 1939 and the Treaty of Non-aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) in August 1939 finalized Germany’s diplomatic preparations before the commencement of hostilities against Poland on September 1st, 1939.

On the Turkish side, the main theme of the last year before the outbreak of the war was the search for a suitable alliance with the West before the coming of the deluge. The death of the founder and president of the republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on November 10th, 1938 created a mood of confusion in which foreign policy needs of the country had to be adapted to the new leadership emerging under Atatürk’s colleague
Ismet İnönü. Turkey’s one victory on the diplomatic front in this period was the annexation of Alexandretta despite serious protests by Syria in June 1939. Pressure from Turkey on the side of the Turkish minority in the province had led to the formation of the Republic of Hatay between September 1938 and June 1939. The French move toward courting Turkey for an alliance against Germany had allowed the alienation of Syria. The Anglo-Turkish Mutual Aid Agreement, signed in May 1939, marked the desperate need of Turkey for assurance of military support against hostile powers. This agreement eventually led to the Mutual Aid Agreement between Britain, France, and Turkey in October 1939. However, German military and its officer corps continued to be a source of fascination and role model for many officers in the Turkish defense press. As the war began, Turkey continued its intricate balance between Germany and the Western allies that it would keep almost until mid-1945.

In Germany, the changes signaled Hitler’s displeasure with the officials who were rather reticent about the plans outlined in the Hoßbach Memorandum of 1937. Neurath’s departure and the rise of Ribbentrop were the civilian side of this operation. The two top military figures, Werner von Blomberg and Werner von Fritsch, were targeted because of a possible to resistance to Hitler’s plans in 1938-1939. Blomberg’s fall came due to his “disgraceful marriage “ to a former prostitute; Fritsch was forced to retire due to a trumped-up charge of homosexuality. The creation of the OKW with Keitel at its head, the appointment of Walther von Brauchitsch as the commander of the army, and the further isolation of General Ludwig Beck because of his misgivings about the timetable,
but not the legitimacy, of the plans against Czechoslovakia completed the streamlining of the military according to Hitler’s vision and Himmler and Göring’s ambitions.¹

It is impossible to ascertain the opinion of the members of the defense press regarding these developments because of the lack of analysis in the editorials. Both Blomberg and Fritsch were respectable officers; Fritsch especially was considered a man of integrity with very high qualifications. The coverage in the military journals was in a matter-of-fact fashion, with only the minimum of details available to readers. The service record of the generals, especially Fritsch, and their distinguished careers accompanied these reports. Fritsch’s appointment as the ceremonial commander of the 12th Artillery Regiment in Schwerin was a way of softening the blow. It appeared in the defense press without commentary but as an honorable posting to end a distinguished career.² The ceremony of the appointment also received coverage with a laudatory address by Brauchitsch and a photo of Fritsch taking the regimental salute on horseback.³ A lack of similar interest in Blomberg might have been due to his closer connection with the regime. Fritsch appeared as the perfect example of the Prussian officer, a bearer of the traditions of the Imperial Army. Therefore, his fortieth anniversary in service was an opportunity for the journals to praise him without offering criticism about the recent treatment he received from the Nazi regime. His qualities as an officer and his services to the protection of the German military’s traditions were at the core of the praise offered

¹ The announcement of the changes and the emergence of the OKW appeared in MW, 11 February 1938.
for that occasion.\footnote{Soldan, “Generaloberst Frhr. von Fritsch,” DW, 22 September 1938, 645; “Gedenktag,” MW, 23 September 1938, 818.} The defense press would remember him once again after his death near Warsaw during the Polish campaign as a brave soldier who “fell before the enemy for Greater Germany’s honor and future.”\footnote{Wetzell, “Generaloberst Freiherr von Fritsch,” MW, 1 October 1939, 819.} It may be that these repeated mentions of his name were a way of atoning for the silence of the officer corps about his fall. It is also possible that many among the higher ranks of the military elite accepted the charges about these senior officers or at least agreed with the shuffles at the top of the military. However, the final disappearance of the claim of independent action within the Nazi regime of the military signaled a beginning of the era of total control of all sectors of power in the dictatorship. After this time, the consequences of dissent against Hitler by high-ranking members of the military would be more costly.

The “house cleaning” of February 1938 eliminated potential negative feedback from the military elite for the next step, the annexation of Austria. The union between the two countries had been expressly prohibited in the treaties of Versailles and St. Germain, despite a sizeable push for it among German and Austrian conservatives. Austria’s future was also a problem between Hitler and Mussolini; however, by 1938 the latter was no longer unopposed to such a move. The deterioration of the relationship between pro-independence Austrofascists and the Austrian Nazis in the previous months prepared the way for the annexation. When the Austrian chancellor, Kurt Schuschnigg, tried to organize a plebiscite for the continuation of independence, Germans arranged an
overthrow of the government, which led to the entry of German troops into the country on 12 March 1938 and the subsequent referendum for unification on 10 April 1938.

The coverage in the German defense press emphasized the support that the annexation received among the Austrian population. Accordingly, the event was described as a way “to offer the Austrian nation an opportunity to shape its future and, with it, its destiny through a real referendum.” The decision to swear the members of the Austrian military into the German military accompanied this declaration. The photos of parades that involved the newly combined military soon appeared in the defense press. While these ceremonies began to grace the covers of military journals, editorial boards published gushing appraisals of both the Austrian officer corps and its military’s role in the “greater German defense zone.” In his response to this welcome, a frequent Austrian contributor to German defense press weaved together a twisted path of historical union between the two countries, reaching from the Holy Roman Empire to the sufferings of the First World War. In this account, the rulers of the “rump country” since the end of the war became irresponsible traitors who did not listen to the wishes of their people. Without naming it as such, the author condemned the clerical-fascism of 1930s Austria and compared it unfavorably with Hitler’s vision of Germany, praising him as the “greatest on earth.” The more “generic” type of fascism with its emphasis on revisionist nationalism and social purification had more appeal than the older form of

7 See for example, MW, 25 March 1938.
authoritarianism that solely relied on the supposedly traditional fabric of society. The 
unification became, in the words of another author, a historical necessity, a fact that was 
originally insisted upon by the Austrian First Republic but denied by the victors at 
Versailles and forsaken by the Weimar Republic. Only now, remarked the author, could 
Austria return home to the Reich.\textsuperscript{10}

To finalize this territorial acquisition and to claim the support of both the 
Germans and Austrians, the Nazi regime organized a referendum instead of the plebiscite 
planned by the Schuschnigg administration. The journals canvassed heavily for a “Yes” 
vote in this process. Slogan boxes appeared at the margins of articles, exhorting people 
to vote “Yes” for “the Germany of power, work, honor, and freedom.”\textsuperscript{11} Editorial notices 
exclaimed the popular slogan “\textit{Ein Volk—Ein Land—Ein Führer}.”\textsuperscript{12} Still other editorials 
celebrated the first referendum in the unified country, calling all to “return to the Führer 
the same confidence that he had in his nation.”\textsuperscript{13} Supposedly apolitical guardians of the 
nation had become ideological propagandist of the loudest kind. After the referendum, 
short but proud notices advertized the “resounding Yes” of the country.\textsuperscript{14} Just how 
inclusive this new Reich was with its “overwhelming support” would become clear with

\textsuperscript{10} “Heimkehr ins Reich,” MW, 25 March 1938, 2481-2483. 
\textsuperscript{11} DW, 31 March 1938, 217. 
\textsuperscript{12} “Wehrpolitische Rundschau,” MW, 8 April 1938. 
\textsuperscript{13} “Fünfzig Millionen wählen,” DW, 7 April 1938, 225. 
\textsuperscript{14} “Wehrpolitische Rundschau,” MW, 15 April 1938.
the terse announcement of a law about the “responsibility of the members of former Austrian federal and state administrations and their accomplices.”

Even before the referendum took place, German military commentators focused on the strategic value of Austria. Its agricultural and mineral wealth, along with its position on the Danube became significant additions to Germany. Such discussions openly mentioned the Soviet Union as a possible threat and highlighted the Austrian lands (now named Ostmark) as an important line of defense not only for a unified Germany, but also for Hungary. At the same time, the new borders Germany appeared as a continuation of the Berlin-Rome Axis, and a formation of a stronger alliance at the heart of Europe. Czechoslovakia and its Danube fleet became targets in these comments. The completion of the German unification also signified a major blow against the last hopes of the Little Entente.

These brief comments were harbingers of the coming crisis with Czechoslovakia. The Sudetenland problem and the overt support that Germany offered to Konrad Henlein and his Sudeten German party were on the agenda of defense press editors in late spring of 1938. The changes in the Czechoslovak administration, the partial mobilization of its military in September, and the increasing number of ethnic clashes appeared in the weekly notes. A close coverage of the Munich conference up until the entry of the

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15 “Wehrpolitische Rundschau,” MW, 2 September 1938.

16 “Das Land Österreich,” MW, 8 April 1938, 2617-2620.


18 See for example, “Wehrpolitische Rundschau,” MW, 3 June 1938.

19 For a combination of these three topics see, “Wehrpolitische Rundschau,” MW, 30 September 1938.
German troops into Sudetenland followed these reports.\textsuperscript{20} The defense press had an unflagging interest in the diplomatic and political unfolding of the Sudeten crisis.

The actual heightening of the tension between the two countries had been paralleled by a steady coverage of issues pertaining to Czechoslovak politics, society, and military even before the full emergence of the crisis over the Sudeten Germans. Articles and editorials that focused on the military potential of Czechoslovakia and the problems it might face, as well as its role as a threat against Germany and as a French ally made frequent appearance in the military journals. The central location of the country in Europe and its relatively well-developed weapons industry compounded these worries. Certain authors in the defense press chose to exaggerate this potential as an ability to project force into Germany, especially as a base for air forces and in possible conjunction with a Soviet alliance.\textsuperscript{21} The presentation of the country as a society that places emphasis on military training for youth and on fighting potential complemented the picture of a state ready for conflict.\textsuperscript{22} This fascination with Czechoslovak military readiness also functioned as an interest in its equipment and hardware, especially its mechanization.\textsuperscript{23} After the occupation of the country in 1939, Czechoslovak military equipment, especially those from its Škoda works, would be taken over by the Wehrmacht.

In all of the commentaries and editorials about Czechoslovakia in the defense press, one detects either a tone of demonization or of ridicule. These different

\textsuperscript{20} See for example, “Wehrpolitische Rundschau,” MW, 7 October 1938.


\textsuperscript{22} “Prag militarisiert die Jugend,” DW, 21 April 1938, 261-262.

\textsuperscript{23} “Die Waffen des tschechischen Heeres,” DW, 8 September 1938, 609-610.
approaches might have been genuine; or alternatively, they were a part of an attitude that wanted to portray Czechoslovakia as both a dangerous and contemptible neighbor. The partial mobilization of May 1938 received such a combined treatment. While highlighting the number of troops that the Czechs were able to call to colors at a short notice, one author pointed at the inability to provide enough funds to continue the mobilization along with the chaos unleashed upon agriculture in border areas. This situation made the official Czech propaganda about the mobilization ("the great preventive deployment") somewhat suspect in the eyes of German observers.²⁴

The articles that focused on its relations with its neighbors also became useful tools to underline Czechoslovakia’s problems. In a piece on Czech-Polish military relations, the author pointed out border problems between the two countries, but also mentioned attempts to come to an understanding by some members of the military. However, while drawing attention to Poland’s unease about the situation of Czechoslovakia’s Polish minority, he did not forget to add that their status was just like all the other minorities under the Czechs.²⁵ To portray Czechoslovakia as a problematic state, despite of its record of being more democratic than any of its Central European neighbors, was a task the German defense press took on wholeheartedly. This task would include involving Poland in the list of aggrieved nations until the Czech problem was eliminated.

²⁴ "Der großartige Präventivaufmarsch," DW, 1 September 1938, 594-595.
Destabilization of Czechoslovakia and its international standing had to be based on its delegitimization. This task would require the deconstruction of the conditions that led to the founding of the country from the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of the First World War. The shifting of borders and the acquisition of land from neighboring countries became, in the hands of German editors, useful examples of unjust meddling by foreign powers; this focus in the German journals kept Czechoslovakia’s potential problems with its eastern neighbors in the public view.26

As a part of this delegitimization process, the journal editors emphasized the multi-ethnic nature of Czechoslovakia and labeled it as an “artificial state,” a product of the Paris Peace Conference. Now that they had this problem in their hands, western governments, especially Britain, should help to solve it.27 If Germany was “national community,” according to this attitude, countries such as Czechoslovakia should be presented as its antithesis. “Unnatural and inorganic,” they would not only maltreat their minorities such as the Sudeten Germans but also threaten European peace because of their hostile policies. As these views appeared, the alternative spelling of “Tschecho-Slowakei” also became more popular even before its official use by the Second Czechoslovak Republic (1938-1939). The constructed nature of the country had to be showcased at every opportunity in order to remind readers about its problematic status.

After the annexation of the Sudetenland, this attitude allowed the journals to raise the dose of attack against the Czechs. One article written by a former member of the White Army in the Russian Civil War outlined all Czech “treacheries” against the

26 For example, “Ostprobleme der Tschecho-Slowakei,” DW, 11 August 1938, 537.


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Austrians, Russians, and Whites, charging the Czechs with, among others, theft, plunder, cowardice, and treason. In his presentation, the Czechs became evil intermediaries who served all the powers and movements that were inimical to Germany, especially the Soviet Union and international communism. This connection made them accomplices in a vast “Judeo-Marxist” conspiracy.\(^28\) While it is easy to classify such articles as nothing more than mindless drivel, their appearance in military publications gave them a degree of official sanction and represented the level of fanaticism among at least a portion of the officer corps regarding the contempt toward Germany’s eastern neighbors.

The aftermath of the Sudeten operation offered an opportunity to portray German troops on the field, in an aggressive campaign for the first time since the end of the First World War. Rhineland and Austria operations had been conducted with very limited or no consideration for an opponent. The entry of German troops into Czechoslovak territory allowed editors to use photos that depicted specialists such as mountain units moving about with no resistance.\(^29\) The fortifications on the former border with Czechoslovakia featured in the photos as well in order to prove the potential threat that this region could have presented to Germany.\(^30\)

Geostrategic worries had to be connected with human interest, if German propaganda wanted to bolster a sense of justification for the action. For the journals, this route went through inventing a military past between the people of the Sudetenland and the rest of the Germans. This past was to be found in the First World War. Thus, the

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\(^{28}\) "Die Tschechei und ihre Legionen von einem ‘Weißen General’;,” DW, 6 October 1938, 677-678.

\(^{29}\) MW, 14 October 1938.

\(^{30}\) MW, 28 October 1938.
Sudeten Germans, especially those from rural areas, became valiant soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian army who were among the best that that army had, because they were Germans and no different than German soldiers in general. In fact, this newly-invented myth continued, whenever such units contained mixed Czech and German troops, it was the Germans who saved the day and made a difference in the performance of the unit. According to this version of the story, western allies had delivered these fine troops and their people with them into the hands of the “majority of a foreign nation” after the war.  

However, real worth of the territory was clear in most of the other editorials and articles, which underlined the economic and strategic value of the recently added regions along with their human and historic connection to Germany. With the addition of this missing piece of land, one editorial boasted, “German Reich is arisen.” The euphoria of conquest quickly led to a steady production of publications about the event; soon the journals were reviewing books with titles such as “Hitler Liberates Sudetenland.”

The breakdown of the Czechoslovak government’s authority and the following political crisis appeared between the lines of brief news that the journals presented at every issue. The competing claims by Slovak, Hungarian, Ruthenian, and Polish nationalists and the speed with which the neighboring states took advantage of this situation leading to further loss of territory for the Czechs were described in an official tone without commentary. The outcome of these developments and the futile responses to them by the new Czech governments were in the defense press version the logical

32 “Sudetendeutschland,” MW, 14 October 1938, 993-996.
results of a rightful and peaceful revision of a territorial injustice.\textsuperscript{34} Coupled with Hitler’s assurances of devotion to peace in Europe following the invasion, this version of the story helped create an image of Germany proudly changing the course of its fate.\textsuperscript{35} Despite the possible misgivings that were created by the Blomberg-Fritsch Affair, Hitler emerged from these reports as the leader who could “deliver.” Added to this was Germany’s role as the “arbiter” between the newly created state and Hungary, which had its own aims about territorial expansion; Hitler took full advantage of this situation as well by using German and Italian leverage for Hungary, leading to the First Vienna Award of November 1938.\textsuperscript{36}

The journals continued to report on these developments while trying to adhere to a style that combined nationalist rhetoric with strict legalese. The image of proper revision of the events of the previous two decades had to be protected at all costs. The step that legalized the Sudeten operation was the declaration of the territory’s unification with Germany “under constitutional law” on 21 November 1938.\textsuperscript{37} The next time that the region became a news item was in March 1939 when German troops invaded the rest of the former Czech lands and renamed them the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and created a separate Slovak state. Journals commented on the event as the only logical outcome for Germany’s future and security. Accordingly, “history” had dictated these results, because Czechoslovakia had been an artificial state. Now it was

\textsuperscript{34} “Wehrpolitische Rundschau,” MW, 14 October 1938.

\textsuperscript{35} “Wehrpolitische Rundschau,” MW, 21 October 1938.

\textsuperscript{36} Some details of the proceedings reported in “Wehrpolitische Rundschau,” MW, 11 November 1938.

\textsuperscript{37} “Wehrpolitische Rundschau,” MW, 2 December 1938.
time to fix that problem and to prove that Czechs could live with Germans, albeit under their protection.\textsuperscript{38} Within a period of seven months, the editors of the defense press managed to follow the course of German policy toward Czechoslovakia and to support it fully. First, the future of the Sudeten Germans had to be vouchsafed. Second, it was the state itself that would have to be declared artificial and illegitimate. And third, the necessities of history had to be fulfilled by annexing the rest of the country. In each of these steps, editors and authors proved to be perfect cheerleaders, boasting about the geographic and demographic benefits of these developments. The misrepresentation of historical, legal, and sociological conditions to justify the German position had become their habit during this period.

The third major territorial problem that Germany had with its neighbors was with Poland. Due to its high level of military preparation and its alliance with France, as well as its geographic position between Germany and the Soviet Union, Poland was a more complex problem for German policy. Therefore, the attitude of the defense press was also more ambivalent. While throughout the 1930s hostility toward Poland had been a major theme, by the end of the 1930s the problems with the Soviet Union necessitated a more careful approach toward Poland, especially as long as Czechoslovakia had to be isolated. Germany’s failed attempts to draw Poland into the Anti-Comintern Pact and its inability to solve the Danzig issue exacerbated the tensions, but until the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the future of German-Polish relations, in the view of military editors, was not necessarily destined for war.

\textsuperscript{38} Siewert, “Kreislauf der Geschichte,” DW, 30 March 1939, 229-230.
The key element in this relationship was Poland’s position toward the Soviet Union. It was true that both Germany and the Soviet Union viewed Poland as an “unwanted child” of Versailles, a shared view that would finally cause its downfall. But for Germany in the late 1930s, hostility toward Soviets was more crucial than settling accounts with Poland, which was, after all, another nationalist, authoritarian regime. It was this delicate balance between the territorial revisionist and the ideological predator within the German leadership (echoed in the ranks of the defense press) that fostered the delicately ambivalent attitude toward Poland until the summer of 1939.

Two contributors in the *Deutsche Wehr* provided most of the articles on Poland: One was a former officer who wrote under the pseudonym of Agricola, the other was one Dr. Anton Loeßner, author and translator of several works about Poland. Both showed a detailed knowledge of Polish power structure and claimed to have sources within the officer corps. In their contributions, a sense of respect for the high level officers of the Polish military came through. These authors felt obliged to emphasize the level of education favorably in comparison to that of the Soviet officer corps and to highlight the border defense preparations by Poland against a possible Soviet attack. In its coverage of the twentieth anniversary of the funding of Polish Republic, the *Deutsche Wehr* emphasized the role of the military in Poland’s national liberation and the importance of military leaders in setting the course for the Republic since its birth. The lesson to learn from this experience, the author claimed, that “a strong army [was] the guarantee for the healthy development of domestic policy and the success of foreign policy.”

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One example of the access given to these German commentators was the report of an interview with Poland’s chief strongman, Marshal Edward Śmigly-Rydz.\(^{40}\) Comrade and confidante of the deceased leader Piłsudski, the Marshal of Poland appeared in this interview as an urbane and intellectual commander who dazzles the interviewer with his vast knowledge and professional bearing. The adulation heaped upon the commander by the local population was also included in this report. The author continued his article by comparing the Polish and Soviet sides of the border between the two countries and commenting on the readiness of the Polish troops. The elite status of Polish border guards received attention and praise in the German press, as long as it was something that the Russians had to worry about.\(^{41}\)

The Great Purges that decimated the Soviet command structure continued to appear as a major factor in such analyses, leading German contributors to assess the Soviet military leadership unfavorably.\(^{42}\) After the aborted crisis and the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Poland and Lithuania in March 1938 and the German annexation of the Sudetenland in October 1938, a strategic assessment of the Polish-Soviet became more imperative. Accordingly, German journals continued to report on what they saw as the relative weakness of the Soviet military leadership and the influence of political officers in its decision making process.\(^{43}\) It is interesting to note that such commentators did not seem to grasp the irony of criticizing the role of Soviet political

\(^{40}\) Agricola, “Warschauer Brief,” DW, 5 May 1938, 288-289.

\(^{41}\) Agricola, “KOP (Polnisches Grenzschutzkorps),” DW, 2 June 1939, 402-403.

\(^{42}\) Loeßner, “Die Rote Armee ohne Führer,” DW, 28 April 1938, 277-278.

\(^{43}\) Loeßner, “Die Rote Armee in polnischer Beleuchtung,” DW, 15 December 1938, 870-871.
commissars, while ignoring the blatant politicization of the German military after 1934. “Dualism in leadership” was only what the communists suffered from, according to this view.

Despite cherishing the distant possibility of garnering Polish support against the Soviets, defense editors and contributors closely followed Polish attempts to establish a strong and independent foreign policy. It is difficult to guess whether this coverage originated genuinely from the defense press or was suggested by circles within the German government. Long pieces focusing on Polish foreign policy initiatives that alternated between opinion pieces and ministerial white papers appeared in the journals in 1938-39. In these pieces, Polish foreign policy was thought to reach in two directions: the Baltic and Eastern Europe. Accordingly, worried commentators exaggerated the danger of the birth of a “Helsinki-Bucharest Axis” or a “Third Europe” between Germany and the Soviet Europe under the Polish aegis. These attempts, when coupled with Poland’s recent approaches to Romania, signaled a possible alliance between Eastern European powers, however unrealistic they seemed. Courtesy visits by Lithuanian military officials, which would have been unthinkable a couple of years earlier, showed Poland’s willingness to smooth regional problems in order to have a free hand against the two bigger predators to its East and West. Such alliances, as German commentators argued, could lead to an increasing French influence in the region that


45 On the military worth of such an alliance see, Loeßner, “Polen und Rumänien,” DW, 2 June 1939, 403-404.

46 On Lithuania see, Loeßner, “Polen und Litauen,” DW, 30 June 1939, 468-469.
would continue the post-1919 attempts to encircle Germany. Any possible change of course in Polish foreign policy, especially by the supposed rise of the pro-French circles in Warsaw, was seen as a threat to Germany and its aims in the region.47

The search for a viable alliance in the East and West by the Polish leadership was a part of the frenzied diplomatic traffic of Spring-Summer of 1939. For the German defense press, Poland always had a “political” officer corps going back to Piłsudski and to the Colonels’ Group that had a sizeable influence after his death. Commentators such as Loeßner ascribed the shifting favoritism toward the West in the Polish foreign policy to the change of attitude following the invasion of the rest of the Czech lands in March 1939. Ignoring the threat that this move posed for countries such as Poland, the defense press instead focused on the evil influence of figures such as General Sikorski or Colonel Beck that favored a pro-French policy. In the German view, this policy was an extension of politicized military in Poland, and had Piłsudski been still alive, he would not have allowed it.48

As the summer of 1939 wore on, the tone in the defense press became harder, and the emphasis shifted to a more critical look at Poland as a state, echoing the propaganda wave preceding the move against Czechoslovakia. The aim was to delegitimize Polish claims over territory by historically “deconstructing” them and to question its viability as a nation. Accordingly, Polish historical claims became “chauvinistic propaganda,” and the percentage of minorities and the state’s problematic attitude toward them appeared as

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proofs of its illegitimacy.\textsuperscript{49} With the plans for a rapprochement between Stalin and Hitler approaching, and the hopes of a viable defense of Poland through a Western Alliance diminishing, the defense press hardened its tone toward Poland, echoing the civilian authorities and newspapers and preparing the ground for the coming invasion which would trigger of the Second World War.

The situation in Turkey was also heavily influenced by international dimensions. The need to conclude a viable defensive treaty with the western powers did not appear openly in the defense press of the country, but the emphasis on non-material strength of the nation betrayed the industrial and financial shortcomings of the young Republic. The death of its founder and first president dealt a psychological blow as well. Despite Turkey’s eventual treaty with Britain, Germany was the country whose military was mentioned as a model in the defense press. The death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, national/psychological preparation for Total War, and the comparison with Germany were the three main themes in the defense press during this period.

Arguably the most important event of this period in Turkey was the passing of the founder and leader of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on 10 November 1938. In many ways, he personified the regime and its guiding principles. Despite recent critiques by researchers and commentators of his rule and decisions, his memory continues to influence the institutions of the country to this day.\textsuperscript{50} His death at the relatively young

\textsuperscript{49} Hz. M-D, “Polen—Nationalstaat oder Völkerstaat?” DW, 28 July 1939, 542-543.

\textsuperscript{50} For a succinct and objective assessment of Atatürk’s role in the emergence of modern Turkey see, Erik Jan Zürcher, \textit{Turkey: A Modern History} (London: I. B. Tauris, 1993), 192.
age of fifty-seven shocked the public, and the genuine outpouring of grief during the
funeral and a period of national mourning reflected the mood of the country. Afterwards,
a brief power struggle ended with the naming of İsmet İnönü, a close comrade and an
accomplished soldier and diplomat, as the next president. There had been a cool period
between the two after 1937 when İnönü was removed from his post as Prime Minister
due to disagreements over foreign and economic policy, but attempts by some members
of Atatürk’s close circle to bypass him had been fruitless, and the decision to choose
İnönü as president had the full backing of the country’s top military officer Chief of Staff,
Marshal Fevzi Çakmak. By late 1938, İnönü would become Milli Sef (National Leader)
in the party parlance, while Atatürk would be immortalized as Ebedi Sef (Eternal
Leader).\footnote{Ibid., 193. On the role of the president in the single party era and the impact of these titles see Cemil
Koçak, “Tek Parti Yönetimi, Kemalizm ve Seflik Sistemi: Ebedi Sef/Milli Sef,” in Ahmet Insel (ed.),
Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce. Cilt 2: Kemalizm (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), 119-137.}

The impact of the death of Atatürk had echoes in the defense press as well.
\textit{Askeri Mecmua} (AsMe) had a special section in its December 1938 issue, in which a
message of condolence by the new president and a reply to the message by the Chief of Staff were published. The journal’s own appeal to the military in the same issue appeared in a black-bordered box. Editors of the journal emphasized “the painful mourning” caused for the army by the loss of its “Greatest Leader.” They continued that the Leader might have left his nation and military, but “his source of heroism had entered us as a spirit.” The editors finally pointed out that the modern Turkish military, “the invincible monument of the Republic,” would continue performing its duty as “the
eternal protector of the Republic” under its new leader. The cult of personality built around the leader would live on after his death and would be used as a tool of legitimization for the role of the military in the state.

German journals printed obituaries for Atatürk as well. For many German officers he was a former ally and a representative of the Turkish martial tradition. Moreover, he was a symbol of the rejection of the Versailles System by the nations defeated in the First World War. At the same time, Germany’s hope of keeping Turkey within a group of favorably disposed states that would be isolated from the Anglo-French zone of influence must have played a role behind such coverage. In on such piece, after offering the usual clichés about replacement of the “Sick Man of Europe” with a purposeful and strong nation, the author reviewed several recent books in German about the new Turkey and its leader. His verdict was that any observer who tried to measure Atatürk’s achievements with European standards would be wrong; here were the best qualities of “Asiatic spirit and soul” at play, bringing to fore such historic names as Temujin and Tamerlane. A leader who played with the rules of the West yet tried to obtain the most for his nation in a dangerous environment was the image that prevailed in this review. In a final note, the author evoked the German example, that of a disciplined nation that overcame its difficulties under a strong leader, as a parallel to the Turkish in order to depict its significance.53

In another obituary, the author remarked that while Atatürk died young, it should in no way be surmised that he left the nation with work unfinished. The achievements of

52 “Türk Ordusu!” (Turkish Military), AsMe, December 1938.

53 Heinz Manthe, “Atatürk,” DW, 17 November 1938, 792.
the regime, its economic, social, and cultural policies were mentioned as a great success. And as a German, the author reminded his readers about the role of Atatürk in the Dardanelles campaign, a victory for Germany’s wartime ally. Finally, he mourned the passing of a great leader of a friendly nation whose spirit would live on in modern Turkey. 54 Here, and in other such pieces, one sees a mixed picture of Turkey, at once Asian and European, a former ally and a fiercely independent actor in the international arena. But appearances and wishful thinking could be mistaken for one another. Germany would have liked to see Turkey as an ally again, or at least as a benevolent neutral. As the struggle for alliances continued, Turkey’s policies during this period kept many foreign observers looking for signs of commitment for the coming conflict.

As for the second theme of looking for alliances, despite the blow dealt by the illness and death of Atatürk, the confidence of the nation, according to its press and military, was high as the country entered the difficult last year before the outbreak of the war. In the coverage of the official celebrations for the anniversary of the victory against the Greek armies in 1922, both the regular and defense presses showcased the achievements of the military. In the hands of the defense editors, the victory became a legendary success of a righteous nation that defended its honor within its own borders and wrote a new page in the annals of great military victories under the peerless leadership of Atatürk. 55 In the daily press, on the other hand, the Prime Minister, Celal Bayar, was quoted as stating that “the great nation [was] great in being proud of its military and to trusting it,” while a columnist claimed that the 30 August 1922 victory


55 AsMe, September 1938, 1-2.
“had bathed in light not only Turkey, but also the whole East.”\textsuperscript{56} The anti-imperialist nature of the nationalist struggle often was the central theme in these celebrations; but in 1938 it would have to mean more, as Turkish public opinion, like many in Europe, was aware the search for defensive alliances in an era of predatory and revisionist regimes. The civilians and the soldiers in the opinion-shaping venues made sure to mark the rightful nature of the 1919-1922 struggle for the Turks and the international meaning of that victory for other “oppressed nations.” In time of heightened tensions at the end of the 1930s, the message was both to one’s own population to have the resolve to repeat that success and to the outside world as a warning.

This reaffirmation of status came at a time when the state was finally consolidating its power against domestic challenges. During the same week, newspapers reported the end of the mopping-up operations in the Eastern region of the country against Kurdish rebels.\textsuperscript{57} The Dersim rebellion, which had been going on since 1937, had finally been suppressed by the military at great cost to the local population and the troops. The new coverage combined the defeat of the rebels with the parades in the Elazığ province that marked the end of the operations; to showcase the military’s present day successes with its past glories was too good a chance to miss for the press.

Even with these contemporary achievements, domestic problems appeared secondary to the international position of the state. In this way a famous editor-in-chief put into context the international meaning of the 1922 victory. Yunus Nadi suggested

\textsuperscript{56} Cumhuriyet, 30 August 1938. The Prime Minister’s quote was on the front page, while columnist Abidin Daver’s comment appeared on page 9.

\textsuperscript{57} Cumhuriyet, 31 August-1 September 1938.
that the success of the Turkish military and the nation not only brought independence but also contributed to the world peace, so much so that, sixteen years after that victory and fifteen years after the founding of the Republic, Turkey was “friends with both the Soviet Union and England.”

But how true was that statement? As far as international relations were concerned, the interwar era for Turkey was a period of “relative autonomy.”

However, the claim of a balance between the opposite ends of the anti-German flank of European international relations was a fantasy. Anglo-Turkish relations had moved into an era of cooperation especially after 1938, eventually leading to the Anglo-Turkish Agreement of 1939. But this development caused a further rift with the Soviet Union, increasingly after the Montreux Conference in 1936, which allowed Turkey to remilitarize the Straits and established control over the passage of international shipping through them. Soviet diplomats’ wish to secure an additional treaty with Turkey toward warding off a common threat met with a rejection, fueling Soviet suspicions that Turkey was being led by Britain and France into an alliance, and the latter two were channeling German aggression toward the Soviet Union. Under these circumstances, a balanced approach toward both the Western Allies and the Soviet Union was more wishful thinking than sober analysis. Germany’s position in this puzzle would be one of the most problematic conditions of Turkey’s relative autonomy. But while Germany closely

58 Cumhuriyet, 30 August 1938, 7.


60 İlhan Uzgel and Omer Kurkuoğlu, “İngiltere’yle İlişkiler,” in Oran, Türk Dis Politikasi, 258-277, especially 272-277.

61 Erel T Tellal, “SSCB’yle İlişkiler,” in Oran, Türk Dis Politikasi, 314-324, especially 321-324.
observed these developments and tried to gain influence with the Turkish government by, for example, winning the controller position in the remilitarization of the Straits (the actual bid for the remilitarization went to Britain as a reward for close cooperation at Montreux), at no time in the 1930s did Turkey considered “a security pact with, rather than against, Germany.” An alliance with Britain and France in tandem with a security pact with the Soviet Union were the hope of Turkish leadership.\(^6\) As the defense press must have also been aware, the achievement of this difficult task would consume great energy on the part of the diplomats and key politicians of the early Republic.

The international situation could not be forced; the changes in that arena were beyond the initiative of military officers, even in Turkey. But the morale and the psychological well-being of the nation for the purposes of defense could benefit from strategic planning. The defense press in Turkey contributed to this topic in a way that paralleled the developments in the West. Spiritual force and the role of race in military preparation came to the fore. In one such example, the author extolled the virtues of the “Turkish race” and its connection with the army. According to this view, army was “the core of the nation, . . . ready for the most sacred duty.” Culture and love of duty were united with the trust in one’s own national history. These points came packaged in a language that emphasized the need for a unified doctrine to achieve victory.\(^6\)

Along the same lines, the awareness of the deficit in technological and industrial preparation, as well as equipment disparity, moved some commentators to underline the


importance of spiritual strength in success on the battlefield. In this view, material support was secondary to the martial qualities of the individual soldier or commander. Military planners had to be warned about the flaws of character that could be intensified under battle conditions. Such analyses also took into consideration the role of propaganda and information warfare in the preparation for success. These opinions were standard in many militaries, but such strong emphasis on non-material factors belied the worries of the officer corps, as well as their ideological interests.

In making such claims about the role of non-material factors at war, some of these Turkish commentators were taking their examples directly from recent history, sometimes with shocking parallels to the radical Right in Europe. Thus, in an article that would not be out of place in a German defense journal, a staff officer claimed, while noting that psychological warfare was the second most important legacy of the First World War after tanks, that a strong country like Germany was defeated at home in that war. Old enough to remember the events of late 1938, this author seemed to have accepted the conservative and Nazi interpretation of the events, while representing a homegrown version of the mistrust of the socialists and civilians in general. But the bulk of his article was about the importance of non-military factors such as domestic and international politics, finance, economics, and propaganda. In “passive defense” against such “wars of ideas,” including radio propaganda, the author insisted that trust in the regime had to be instilled in the population; the benefits of a statist economy had to be dissected and the population encouraged to save; the “national ideal” needed to be

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64 For example, Lt. Col. Osman Güray, “Harp ve Muharebeye Ait Bazı Ruhi ve Manevi Tahliller” (Some psychological and spiritual analyses on warfare and battle), AsMe, June 1938, 462-475.
supported among the population, and the current situation of the country should be compared with the more tragic and sadder periods of the past; the notion that the members of the military were performing some of the most difficult tasks in the country, and therefore, their (probably preferential) treatment by the state was not a privilege had to be emphasized; respect and trust in the leadership had to be fostered; and the principle that the military was “the defender of the regime and the strongest guardian of the homeland,” and that “every Turk should be proud of that fact” had to be inculcated in the population.\(^6\) Three points emerge from a reading of such a source. First, in the eyes of such commentators, the military and the nation were mentioned together as targets of friendly propaganda by the state, because it was assumed that the enemy would target both at the same time. But this possibility also meant that the members of the military (we can probably guess that the conscripts were meant here) were not immune to such dangers, and they were not unique. Secondly, the suspicion that some of the population could still view the current state of the country as being no different from the late Ottoman era existed; if this claim was true, the regime’s self-image was not as assured as later generations predicted. Finally, despite their vaunted position in the society, the members of the military could be resented for their privileges, and this suggestion was a cause of worry for the Republican elite who wanted to foster an image of the country as a nation with a seamless unity. Regardless of the technical language, the issues and concerns presented in this essay were both a sign of how attuned some members of the

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\(^6\) Lt. Col. Rüştü Erdehun, “Fikir Harpleri” (Wars of Ideas), AsMe, December 1938, 904-908. One should note that Erdehun (1894-1983) was the Chief of Staff when the 27 May 1960 coup took place. He was resented and disliked by the younger generation of officers that toppled the Menders government, and as a result, he was tried and sentenced to death in the show trials that prosecuted the members of the former administration. He later received a commuted sentence.
defense press were to the perceived weaknesses of the country and an indicator that their thoughts often paralleled western, especially German, views on these matters.

The defense of the nation against foreign destabilization through propaganda was a common theme for those who worried about the penetrating power of non-military factors in international conflict. Under the subheading of “the preparation of the nation for war,” a contributor conceded in his article that due to its geographic location it was normal for Turkey to be open to “anarchist, fascist, Marxist, pro-caliphate, and internationalist political sects and ideological movements.” A nation that wanted to protect its existence had to strengthen: “patriotism; union of language, blood, culture; loyalty to a shared past; and a knowledge of having a common hope, having created common achievements, and overcome common difficulties.” Accordingly, a nation’s martial strength had its origins in “its national and social situation; its culture; its robustness and vigor; its moral qualities and character; its history; and its population.”

A combination of psychological and political readiness for war was at the core of this type of approach to the building of a “national community.” Unity of purpose and heritage, coupled with vigorous bolstering of patriotic education, were to be the guiding lights of military preparation.

The editors and authors of the defense press did not overlook the physical dimension of this process. Race and martial quality had to be strengthened through intense physical activity and sports. The perceived success of sports and clubs in the national German resistance to Versailles was just one of the examples taken from various

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authoritarian regimes that the Turkish defense press used in order to support this argument.\footnote{See for example, Halit Özgüc, “Memleket müdafaasında sporun kıymeti” (The Value of Sports in the Defense of the Country), AsMe, September 1938, 827-834.} Along these lines, notable Turkish military commentators recommended the adoption of the German pentathlon (\textit{Fünfkampf}) training for the Turkish military, hoping that Turkish military athletes too one day would win laurels in international sports.\footnote{Maj. Asım Eren, “Harp Sporu: Bessavas” (Combat Sports: Pentathlon), AsMe, December 1938, 1123-1136.} The fascination with both the Italian and German use of sports in the formation of a military-friendly youth was a common topic in the defense press of the interwar era. National rejuvenation and the creation of a healthy youth ready for combat through sport and discipline were connected in military planning.\footnote{For the early Republican interest in Italian and German sports education see, Yigit Akın, \textit{Gürbüz ve Yavuz Evlatlar: Erken Cumhuriyet\textquotesingle te Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor} (Istanbul: İletişim, 2004), 148-150.}

The interest in German approaches to youth and physical culture was only a part of Turkish military’s fascination with the training, tradition, and tactics of the German military in the interwar era, especially after 1933. Despite unwillingness of the regime to formally ally itself with Germany, the older ties between Turkish and German officers that went back to the late Ottoman era were hard to replace. There was also the longer lasting mistrust of the British and French designs in the region, even while the government tried to formalize a viable defense alliance with those two powers. Under these circumstances, it is safe to suggest that the sympathies of many Turkish officers lay with the German approach to national and military preparation, even if they did not necessarily agree with the details of the Nazi ideology.
In a study of military doctrine, a Turkish contributor emphasized the connection between national quality, race, and the military doctrine chosen for a military. H claimed that the Germans were a good example of this idea, because, for instance, Schlieffen’s clearest quality was that he established a strategy “most proper for the German race.” The Schlieffen Plan became, in this view, an offensive strategy especially designed for, and suited to the needs and qualities of the German “race.”

Another commentator went even further by praising the position of the military in “new” Germany, especially the clear command structure leading up to Hitler as the Oberbefehlshaber. According to this view, which was published in the same month as the German takeover of Bohemia and Moravia, German army under Hitler was a “people’s army,” a unifying force between nation and the state. A disparaging assessment of the Versailles Treaty and the reiteration of the belief that the German army had returned unconquered from the battlefield completed this glowingly positive analysis of the German military.

Major Eren, who previously wrote about the virtues of German military athletics, also contributed to this discussion about the positive qualities of German military organization. As a staff officer who spent a training period in Potsdam with the German army, Eren seemed to have returned to Turkey as a believer in German methods of training and education in the army. The message of Eren’s article was that Turkey should “learn from Germans that managed to undo the chains of Versailles.”

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while in the late 1920s and early 1930s Germans commentators looked at Turkey as a successful country that undo the system that was imposed on the loser of the First World War by the victors, by the end of the 1930s the tables were turned; now the members of the Turkish military saw Germany as a possible role model and observed in the position and training of its military useful lessons to be learned by the Turkish military.

By the end of the 1930s, both German and Turkish military establishments were aware of the fact that they were at a turning point. For the Germans, their long push for a regime that would undertake the plans and policies that they saw as absolutely vital for Germany had ended. However, even in the heady days of 1936-1939, it must have been clear to at least some military observers, especially after the Blomberg-Fritsch affair, the regime to which they swore allegiance might exact a higher moral and professional cost from them than they had expected. As the officer corps and the defense press gave a resounding applause to every action from Rhineland to Bohemia, the hopes of gaining just another cheap and bloodless territorial victory against Poland showed how dangerous that game could be. While the mood was hard to gauge based on the reactions to the declaration of war by Britain and France, the title of an article in one German journal that called the war against Poland as “the defensive war of 1939” must strike present-day readers as a case of hubris of colossal proportions.73

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72 Maj. Asım Eren, “Alman ordusunda talim ve terbiye usulleri ve kendi usullerimizle mukayesesi” (Training and Education Methods in the German Army, and their Comparison with Our Methods), AsMe, December 1939, 1039-1066. Eren later wrote a manual on intelligence, counterintelligence, and propaganda.

73 Wetzell, “Der Abwehrkrieg von 1939,” MW, 8 September 1939, 669-670. The closing words of this article were “Long live Holy Germany, our proud Wehrmacht, and our Führer!”
For the Turkish military, the events of 1938-1939 created a conundrum. It was clear that the military was in no position to undertake either defensive or offensive campaigns. Regional security schemes in the Balkans and the Middle East were rendered useless by the ruthless manipulation of the weaknesses of the international community by Italy and Germany. At the same time, ideological and political considerations created an atmosphere in which sympathy for authoritarian rightwing regimes was rampant among the middle levels of the officer corps. This situation would become critical in the difficult years of 1941-1944, during which pressure from both the Axis and the Allies to join the war on their side colored the ideological arguments pro or contra Germany and engendered a wave of racist, anti-semitic, and anti-communist activities especially in the universities. But the insistence of the government to forge a defensive alliance with the Western Allies, while keeping the Soviet Union happy and Germany and Italy at arm’s length, circumvented pro-German feelings in the officer corps, some of whom had close connections with the civilian leadership. Turkey’s difficult, controversial, but ultimately successful course to stay out of the Second World War is beyond the scope of this work.

But the stark realization that the conditions of neutrality and non-revisionist stance of the interwar era were changing rapidly did not escape the defense press. Hence was the heavy reliance on articles and analyses that extolled the virtues of moral and psychological qualities in the absence of sufficient military equipment and economic wherewithal. The course of the war would bring even heavier pressure for the officer corps in both countries; one would find itself prepared and asked to commit acts that
went far beyond any imagination, while the other would observe uncertainly a new world that was forming, in which their country would have to reposition itself.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In modern democracies, we expect our military officers to keep silent. To refrain from political commentary is one of the signs of a military that is firmly within civilian control and under parliamentary oversight. The degree of control and its reception among the public may change based on the historical development of democracy in each country, but the general guiding principles tend to be similar. Recent examples from countries with as different approaches to civil-military relations as Spain and the United States show how strong the democratic reaction in the public space can be when high ranking members of the military overstep the limits of permissible discourse.¹

Interwar Europe, on the other hand, seems worlds apart from this notion of a democratically controlled military. It has been the aim of this work to show that, radicalized by the experience of the First World War and the requirements of the preparation for the next Total War, the officer corps of Germany and Turkey interpreted the conditions of the Europe of 1920s and 1930s with fateful results. It is a story of

institutional change amid socioeconomic and cultural distress, of response to outer and inner factors in a time when overwhelming material and psychological barriers had to be negotiated.

The concept of an “apolitical” or “beyond-politics” military was the cherished myth behind the self-perception of the officer corps both in Germany and Turkey. The cool attitude toward the actual making of politics and those who partake in it was clear. Politics was both necessary and “unfortunate.” In comparison to what the civilians did, soldiers believed that they operated in the clear-cut world of duty, responsibility, and virtue to serve the nation and the state. In both countries, soldiers emerged out of an era when loyalty to a monarchy, constitutional or otherwise, was the norm. In the post-1918 world, they found themselves in a rapidly changing political and socioeconomic environment to which they had to adapt. The convergence zone of technology and ideology, of modernity applied to the needs of the nation-state, transformed these officer corps in ways that their imperial forebears could not imagine.

In Germany, the officer corps entered the interwar era serving a government they did not respect or consider legitimate. More importantly, they feared that the regime could not provide the will to defend the country against a series of old and new adversaries. Germany had the technical expertise from the First World War; it also had the industrial powerbase. But did it have the will to channel national resolve for military defense in the age of Total War? The answer was “No!” Therefore, Weimar had to be opposed, as the defense press did vigorously. In the Nazi movement, the German officer corps thought that it found the will to overturn the Versailles system. The revision of the
restrictions imposed on Germany by Hitler at first made them think that they finally had
the regime they deserved. However, after the Blomberg-Fritsch affair, and especially
after the outbreak of the next war, many would realize they got more than they could
handle.

In the Turkish case, identifying with the regime was not a problem. The founders
of the Republic, especially its first president, were insiders to the officer corps. Under the
leadership of Mustafa Kemal, the military saw itself as an integral part of the system and
was thoroughly integrated within the set of reforms that established and secured the
regime in the late 1920s and early 1930s. For the Turks, the will was available; missing
was the material support and economic resources. By the end of the 1930s, after the
regime had consolidated itself, the stark shortages of weapons and equipment as well as a
reliable network of alliances heightened the officer corps’ emphasis on non-material
factors in martial ability and the building up of national community.

The focus on race, ideology, and the “purification” of the nation from possible
dangers in time of peace to prepare for war was common in both cases. In addition, both
officer corps shared the notion that each was supporting a regime that was avoiding the
problem of liberal economics and politics and forging a system that was markedly
improved in comparison to both the Western democracies and the Soviet Union.
However, in one of the contrasts between the two case studies, the renunciation of
liberalism in its political and economic forms was more easily found in the German
military journals; for Turks, this job was for the civilian outlets of official ideology, such
as the short-lived Kadro movement. Clearly, the German example was much more
radical; eventually, it led the military establishment to become accomplice to the most murderous regime in history. But while Turkey managed to remain out of the Second World War, the mentality of its officer corps shared many common ideas with Germany’s. The development of such ideas and worldviews could be extended to most of the interwar military establishments from Central Europe to the Balkans, leading to general patterns and policies based on the reaction to the effects of the First World War. The two crucial areas of technology and economy in the age of Total War (and how they featured in the defense press) will be dealt with in the extended and revised version of this study.

No study of the mentality of military officers in Germany and Turkey can avoid the extension of the comparison to the post-1945 Europe. After all, the history of the Bundeswehr down to today’s reunified Germany is a success story as far as democratic control of armed forces is concerned. On the other hand, the problematic relationship between the Turkish armed forces and civilian governments that led to four military interventions since 1960 continues to fuel debates on the absorption of democratic ideals in the society. There are questions that repeatedly arise in Germany about the constitutionality and imagery of various overseas deployments; such international engagements would have been unthinkable twenty years ago. In Turkey, the long story

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of the country’s possible accession to the European Union is often twinned with worries
over the curtailment of the armed forces’ political influence.\(^5\)

The question at this juncture is: how did two countries that showed parallels in the
worldview of their military officers until the Second World War develop so differently in
the postwar era? The factors behind democratization, especially of mentality, must
concern any researcher willing to extend the comparison along those lines. The danger of
glorifying the seemingly smooth path of the German military since the late 1950s exists.
Similarly, the tendency to overlook the challenging domestic conditions in which the
Turkish military operates also is a common one, especially in the Western press.
However, the role of the Second World War and the impact of total defeat cannot be
minimized. The latter point does not necessarily lead to the premise that democratization
of the military can only be imposed by outside forces. But due to a lack of a successful
challenge to the formula of civil-military relations established by the country’s elites, any
questioning of that system, regardless of the signs that point toward an urgency for its
thorough rethinking, is still blocked in Turkey.

Military officers in Germany and Turkey, as seen through their defense presses,
were products of the era of Total War. They responded to the changes imposed on every
military establishment by the experience of the First World War and the stark realities of
the interwar era. The results of these challenges created a mentality that was integrated to

\(^4\) One well-publicized case was of German troops in Afghanistan posing with skulls. See “Bundeswehr

\(^5\) For the coverage of the most recent claims of coup planning in Turkey, code named *Ergenekon*, see a
series of articles published in the Turkish daily *Sabah*, starting from 8 July 2008.
the nation-state ideal. Unforgiving of the weaknesses of civilian decision making, impatient of challenge and criticism, and intolerant toward any thought or group of people that might effect negatively the military potential of the nation in a future conflict, the officer corps in Germany and Turkey evolved into institutions that were thoroughly politicized, regardless of their own propaganda about it. The end result of this radicalization, on the eve of the Second World War, was beyond the imagination of any survivor of the First World War.
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