https://doi.org/10.20378/irbo-52829

5 The Bundeswehr and Public Opinion

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I INTRODUCTION

The concern of public opinion in the Federal Republic with national security affairs seems to have exhibited dramatic swings over the years. Up to the dual-track decision by NATO of December 1979 it had become a standard lament that the attentive sectors of public opinion were largely restricted to the military itself, to selected political decision-makers, and to a few academics and journalists, while the public at large did not care about these things a great deal.[1] In the early 1980s, the rise of the peace movement and its activities caused the opposite lament that public opinion might pose a severe threat to the maintenance of a viable national security policy based upon the familiar combination of deterrence and defence.[2] At the same time, these developments were hailed as indicative of a long overdue 'democratization' of defence policy.[3] However, the rapid return of peace movement actions and media attention to more 'normal' levels following the onset of new INF deployment cast some shadow of doubt over both interpretations.

The events of the early 1980s had some positive and some negative effects. Increased sensitivity *vis-à-vis* public opinion on defence among political and military decision-makers and among scholars can be counted on the positive side. It becomes a democratic political system well to realize that national security policy cannot be formulated and executed within a societal vacuum, and that it is faced with a task of finding some kind of consensus for its actions in this field, as is the case for all other policy arenas. On the negative side of the balance sheet, we have the familiar uses and abuses of data collected to describe public opinion. If people 'discover' public opinion surveys who are not familiar with this kind of material (as is the case for many members of national security communities, practitioners or academics) they tend to believe in crude figures and to take them at face value – on the assumption that they represent well-founded judgements by the public on the matters of their primary professional concern. When conflicting evidence becomes available – as is almost inevitable – arguments then begin over what the world *really* looks like. Such arguments become particularly fascinating if they are based upon isolated and incomparable survey results, and when they are waged not in order to clarify what the public believes but in order to influence

public beliefs. These problems are well known from other policy arenas; the only thing that is new for the Federal Republic is that they now also play a role in national security debates.

An important objective of this report on the Bundeswehr and public opinion, therefore, must be to avoid false (i.e. exaggerated) expectations. It does not aspire to tell authoritatively what the public *really* thinks about the Bundeswehr. Instead, its claim is more limited and more far reaching at the same time. We will present an overview of available public opinion data and attempt to clarify what can and what cannot be concluded from this empirical basis with an acceptable degree of reliability. One has to realize, after all, that public opinion data are produced in a strange kind of situation. Respondents are asked for their views on matters about which many might know very little, about which many care very little, and which for them personally might be of rather low salience. Still, people give responses to such questions, for a variety of reasons. Thus, public opinion surveys invariably yield not only genuine attitudes (i.e. firmly based views and convictions that could even be defended against counter-arguments) but also so-called 'non-attitudes'.[4] There are grounds to suspect that the share of such 'non-attitudes' concerning national security issues is more than negligible. We should, consequently, not be surprised if public opinion on these matters frequently exhibits inconsistencies and contradictions. These, however, should not provoke a debate about which polling agency and which question *correctly* assesses public opinion; rather, they can serve as indications for how deep seated these opinions are and as useful hints for interpreting the structure and dynamics of public opinion on national security.

A final introductory note is in order: if it tried to keep strictly in line with the delimination of this project and the title of this book, this contribution should be restricted to attitudes towards the Bundeswehr as an institution. Even though this could be done, the result would probably not be very exciting. The Bundeswehr has now been around for over thirty years, millions of men have gone through it as conscripts, and the money spent on the military is one of the largest slices of the federal budget (second in size only to the budget of the Ministry for Social and Labour Affairs). Thus, to a certain extent the Bundeswehr simply has to be accepted and taken for granted by the public, just like the police, customs, the public system of education, or local government and administration. Of course, there always is general grudging about the cost of the military, but the same is true for almost everything government spends money on. Moreover, most citizens get into direct contact with the Bundeswehr much less frequently than with other government agencies; it is fairly remote from most people's everyday life. Males of draft age are the only major exception, for the vast majority of the public traffic jams due to manoeuvres or low-flying military aircraft are the main personal nuisances. Therefore, we can safely predict

the general tendency of public opinion towards the Bundeswehr as an institution. Standing military forces have existed almost always and everywhere, so the majority of people, who cannot readily conceive things to be different, will accept them as inevitable (but not necessarily welcome) fact of life. This does not imply enthusiasm, however, especially if personal sacrifice or spending public money without immediately visible personal benefits is involved. This attitude pattern is not exceptional at all, but rather will be found for many government institutions in many different nations.

If public opinion on the Bundeswehr by itself is not that exciting, what will then be the focus of this article? Two alternatives are available, at the microlevel and at the macrolevel, so to speak. At the microlevel one could focus on public opinion on the internal structure and development of the Bundeswehr, on details of conscription, on deployment and organization of forces, on weaponry, procurement, etc. However, this would quickly lead to very specific problems over which the concept of public opinion would have to evaporate, because due to the absence of pertinent information there simply could be no such thing. Rare exceptions would only occur in case of personal involvement (e.g. duration of service of conscripts) or of agenda setting by the media (e.g. dramatic cost-overruns for a weapon system, or the attention to Pershing IAs in the summer of 1987). Especially the latter case, however, is not exactly what we have in mind when we talk about public opinion on national security, because generally most people are not even marginally aware of the facts – which are disputed later – before the debate starts. Therefore, this contribution will mainly focus on attitudes in the Federal Republic towards national security at the macrolevel. The Bundeswehr is one of the key instruments of national security policy, and public opinion on this instrument should be assessed in the framework of beliefs on broader aspects of national security. Among these are fundamental goals of national security policy, the general security environment of the Federal Republic, alliance relationships, trade-offs between military and non-military aspects of security, concepts of strategy and of arms control, etc. As the Bundeswehr is a mere instrument, logically attitudes on this tool should be derived from attitudes on these goals and on conditions of its operation. If this should not always prove to be so, this could be more important for interpreting public opinion on the Bundeswehr than a multitude of data on attitudes towards this institution itself and towards its internal design and activities.

II ATTITUDES ON THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

This section will focus on evaluations of the military balance, of the military threat, of the danger of war, and of the feasibility and acceptance

Table 5.1 Perceptions of the military balance (percentages excluding don't know = DK and no answer = NA)

	Number of surveys	*Who is superior? The West*	*Both equal*	*The East*
1960s	6	34	42	24
1970s	14	15	41	44
1980s	5	11	41	48

Source: Hans Rattinger and Petra Heinlein, *Sicherheitspolitik in der oeffentlichen Meinung: Umfrageergebnisse fuer die Bundesrepublik Deutschland bis zum 'heissen Herbst' 1983* (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Autoren-Verlag, 1986), table 4; updated with unpublished material from *Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Mannheim, Politbarometer*, 1985, 1986.

of military defence. Perceptions of the military balance between the East and the West in the Federal Republic have changed more from the 1960s to the 1970s than from the 1970s to the 1980s (Table 5.1). The smallest change is visible in the percentage of people (about 40) who held both blocs (NATO and Warsaw Pact) to be equally strong, but from the 1960s to the 1970s a substantial share of perceptions of Western superiority has been reversed with lasting effect: in the 1970s and 1980s the numerical relation between those perceiving Eastern and Western superiority, respectively, was between three and four to one, whereas in the 1960s about one-third had perceived Western, and one-fourth Eastern superiority. If one looks at these data on a year-to- year basis, it is obvious that there is no secular or irreversible trend of perceptions shifting in favour of Eastern military superiority. Over the 1980s, perceptions of Western superiority have remained roughly the same, but those of Eastern superiority have declined somewhat in favour of perceptions of parity of both sides. A parallel development of evaluations was obtained regarding the superpower military balance: whereas in the late 1970s and early 1980s about three times as many respondents believed the USSR to be stronger than the USA as believed the reverse, by the mid-1980s this gap had almost disappeared.[5] Possibly this is in part a reaction to the policies of the new Soviet leadership.

In view of the fact that military power is a very complex phenomenon we have to ask, of course, what it is that people are evaluating when they respond to questions about the East–West military balance. Unfortunately, no recent pertinent data that go into details are available. However, there are good reasons to believe that things have not changed dramatically since 1979 or 1980. For those two years Zoll reported that Eastern superiority was seen as strongest in numbers of military personnel and weapons; majorities viewed both sides to be equal in terms of morale and combat readiness of soldiers, defence willingness of populations, and

Table 5.2 Perceptions of a threat from the East (percentages excluding DK and NA)

	Number of surveys	*Is there a military threat from the East?*	
		Yes	*No*
1950s	4	71	29
1960s	5	53	47
1970s	6	52	48
1980s	17	58	42

Source: Rattinger and Heinlein, op. cit., table 6; updated with unpublished material from *Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Mannheim, Politbarometer*, 1985 and 1986, and from *Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Bundeswehr*, Munich.

training of troops; the primary advantage of NATO was perceived in the quality of weapons.[6] This analysis demonstrates that global evaluations of the military balance (as in Table 5.1) predominantly reflect perceptions of numerical conventional force ratios.

Table 5.2 shows that the increase in perceptions of Eastern superiority has not been paralleled by rising perceptions of a military threat from the East. The major shift here occurred from the 1950s to the 1960s; for the past two and a half decades, consistently somewhat over one half of the samples have said that they perceive such a threat. This high stability is also found in a time-series on threat perception since 1962 by EMNID. On a scale from one (no serious threat) to four (very high threat), the mean score in twenty-two surveys from 1962 to 1986 was 2.47 (with a standard deviation of only .18), the mean for the 1960s was 2.55, for the 1970s 2.46, and for the 1980s 2.43.[7] For all practical purposes, threat perception in the Federal Republic has remained roughly the same for the past twenty-five years. Those fluctuations that have occurred are either random, or mostly can be explained by spectacular events (e.g. Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan).

With mean threat perception in the EMNID time-series at the middle of the scale, the data in Table 5.2 have to conceal that many out of the majority who see a military threat by the East have to regard this threat as not very serious. That this is actually so is demonstrated (for the 1980s) in Table 5.3. If respondents are offered a qualification of perceived threat as high or low, instead of a categorical 'threat *v.* no threat' format, 'low threat' becomes a very popular response, not only for those who in the categorical format say that there is a threat from the East, but also for those who say there is no such threat. A further differentiation of threat perception is available in unpublished material from Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Bundeswehr for 1984 and 1986. Respondents were presented with two statements on the nature of the threat, one describing it in

Table 5.3 Perceptions of the extent of the threat from the East (in brackets: percentages without DK and NA)

	High threat	*Low threat*	*No threat*	*DK, NA*
1979	10 (12)	41 (48)	35 (41)	14
1980	14 (16)	42 (47)	33 (37)	11
1984	34 (39)	40 (46)	13 (15)	14
1986	23 (26)	43 (49)	21 (24)	14

Source: Ralf Zoll, 'Sicherheitspolitik und Streitkraefte im Spiegel oeffentlicher Meinungen in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: eine vergleichende Analyse', in Ralf Zoll (ed.), *Sicherheit und Militaer* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1982); updated with unpublished material from Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Bundeswehr, Munich.

Table 5.4 Perceptions of the danger of war in Europe (in brackets: percentages without DK and NA)

	High danger	*Low danger*	*DK, NA*
1977	11 (13)	74 (87)	15
1979	9 (11)	73 (89)	18
1980	14 (16)	72 (84)	14
1984	26 (31)	58 (69)	17
1986	15 (19)	65 (81)	20

Source: Zoll, op. cit.; updated with unpublished material from Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Bundeswehr, Munich.

traditional terms as due to Soviet aggressiveness and ideological expansionism, the second describing it in terms of insecurity due to the accumulation of nuclear overkill stockpiles on both sides. In both years about 60 per cent agreed that the first statement was an adequate description of the world, while more than 70 percent agreed with the second statement. Thus, we can conclude that in spite of the increased awareness of Eastern superiority there has been little change in threat perception in the Federal Republic over the past twenty-five years, that a majority of those who say that there is a threat regard it as not a very serious one, and that threat perceptions are at least as much due to a general fear of nuclear holocaust as to fear of direct Soviet aggression.

Against this background, it is not surprising that the fear of a war breaking out in Europe has been rather limited in the Federal Republic over the past ten years (Table 5.4).[8] The same is true for the fear of total destruction in a nuclear war; whereas in the mid-1980s about 30 per cent of respondents believed this to be 'likely' or 'certain', the vast majority held

Table 5.5 Fear of total destruction by nuclear war (percentages excluding DK and NA)

	How likely is it that the world will perish in a nuclear war?			
	Certainly not	*Probably not*	*Probably*	*Certainly*
1984	23	43	22	11
1986	26	48	20	7

Source: Unpublished material from Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Bundeswehr, Munich.

Table 5.6 Expectations about use of nuclear weapons in case of war in Europe (percentages excluding DK and NA)

	Nuclear weapons would be used			
	By neither side	*Only by the East*	*Only by NATO*	*By both sides*
1984	41	5	2	52
1986	49	8	8	36

Source: Unpublished material from Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Bundeswehr, Munich.

the opposite view (Table 5.5). At the same time, public opinion in the Federal Republic was split over the issue of whether war in Europe – provided it should occur, regardless of the probability of such an event – would become nuclear or not (Table 5.6). With only two points of measurement it is impossible to talk about trends, but Table 5.6 shows a striking reversal of the majority view between 1984 and 1986. While in the earlier survey over half the respondents predicted that both blocs would use nuclear weapons, this view was held by only slightly over one-third of the sample two years later. Over the same period, the percentages of those who predicted only one side or no side to go nuclear went up by about the same amount. This combination of results is hard to interpret, though. On the one hand, one could argue that public opinion in the Federal Republic is gradually adjusting in its notions about war scenarios to the debate about the need to increase the conventional emphasis of Western defence. On the other hand, however, many people could have difficulties in commenting on scenarios for an event that appears unlikely in the first place, so we would have to expect a lot of random variation. All we can say for certain is that, like threat perceptions, the fear of war (in general or nuclear) in the Federal Republic is rather limited and has in no way paralleled the growing awareness of Eastern military superiority. This does not have to reflect logical inconsistency – provided the Eastern military build-up is not seen as necessarily aggressive.[9]

Table 5.7 Perceptions of the feasibility of military defence (percentages excluding DK and NA)

	Number of surveys	*FRG could be defended against aggression*	
		No	*Yes*
1960s	5	56	44
1970s	13	52	48
1980s	5	50	50

Source: Rattinger and Heinlein, op. cit., table 23.

The incongruence between Tables 5.1 and 5.7 is not that easily accounted for. While the sense of Eastern military superiority in the Federal Republic has grown since the 1960s, so has the notion that the Federal Republic could be defended against aggression by the East. In Table 5.7 this increase is only mild, but a similar question by EMNID almost exhibits a secular trend of predictions that NATO would be strong enough to defend itself against Eastern aggression, rising from about 35 per cent in the early 1960s to over 50 per cent in the early 1980s.[10] This trend is closely paralleled by an EMNID time-series on whether the armaments and equipment of the Bundeswehr are sufficiently strong or not. Again, perceptions of 'sufficient' armaments of the Bundeswehr have increased significantly (up to over 70 per cent in the 1980s), while the opposite view and response insecurity have gone down considerably.[11] The question now becomes, of course, how to make sense of this obvious contradiction between growing perceptions of Western military inferiority and, at the same time, of the feasibility of military defence of the West. The answer probably has to be at least twofold. First, the data in Table 5.7 and similar compilations express more public confidence in Western defensive capacities than is actually there. If respondents are offered an intermediate category in between that successful defence would be possible or not (e.g. that this would be 'doubtful'), this is a very popular response, and estimates that NATO could repel an Eastern aggression come down substantially.[12] Second, this contradiction has to be judged in conjunction with the low probability of war. If this is seen as generally low, the linkage between the military balance and the feasibility of defence becomes less relevant than the linkage between the feasibility of defence and the country's military effort, and here we have the unpleasant logical conclusion that insufficient forces would have to be augmented by stepping up the effort. Thus, as an extreme interpretation one could state that the low perceived probability of conflict allows people to refuse adequately perceiving unpleasant segments of reality in order not to have to draw the conclusions, which would mean sacrifice (to which we will return later). A third interpretation, which is not to be pursued further, is that some (or

even many) people, when they respond to questions about the feasibility of Western defence, actually have in mind the capacity of NATO to deter successfully. If they proceed from some vague MAD-notion of deterrence, NATO's capacity to 'defend' itself could then be viewed favourably and as largely decoupled from the military balance.

Whether or not the Federal Republic *could* be defended against aggression is not the same issue as whether defence *should* be attempted in such a case and how one would personally behave. The latter issue is extremely hypothetical, of course. Still, it deserves noting that, following a low in the mid-1970s, the willingness to participate personally in resistance against armed attack has again fluctuated in the 1980s around 60 per cent, of which one-third were willing to fight and two-thirds 'somehow' to resist, while somewhat less than 40 per cent said they would personally reject resistance.[13] Not surprisingly, the share of people who believe that the Federal Republic *should* be defended militarily against attack is usually higher than the percentage of those who think she *could* be defended or of those who say they would participate in defence (upper third of Table 5.8). This is not surprising because the notion of (military) self-defence in view of the concentration of troops in Central Europe and especially in the Federal Republic is almost obvious. However, the lower two-thirds of Table 5.8 show that this apparently wide acceptance of the principle of military self-defence is haunted by strong insecurity. As soon as people are reminded in the question that defence against an Eastern aggression would largely take place 'at home', support for this maxim drops considerably, and if they are reminded that it might imply the use of nuclear weapons on the territory of the Federal Republic, opposition against military defence is even stronger than the support found in general terms. These findings are very similar for all the five years in which these questions have been asked.

Of course, you cannot, at the same time, have 80 per cent endorsement *and* rejection by public opinion of military defence of the Federal Republic. Elsewhere it has been argued that there are various interpretations for this pattern, and that a very simple one should be preferred.[14] After all, NATO strategy has been calling for the possibility of nuclear first-use for a long time, and that German territory, either Western or Eastern, would be involved in such first-use and/or Eastern responses is obvious to those who have at least rudimentary knowledge of these things. If the acceptance of Western defence none the less varies so widely, this has to be due to the fact that the various question formats differ in the extent to which they force respondents to face unpleasant details of military strategy which they otherwise are unaware of or able to avoid. Table 5.8 thus reveals an astonishing lack of information and/or an astonishing reluctance to think about the prerequisites of Western security. If we assume that those who reject defence in the top third of Table 5.8 are completely contained among those who reject it in the bottom third, and that those who endorse

Table 5.8 Acceptance of military defence of the Federal Republic under different scenarios (in brackets: percentages without DK and NA)

	Federal Republic should be defended against Eastern aggression				
	Yes		*No*		*DK, NA*
			In general		
1977	58	(73)	22	(27)	21
1979	57	(74)	20	(26)	23
1980	64	(77)	19	(23)	17
1984	66	(80)	17	(20)	17
1986	53	(75)	18	(25)	29
Mean 1977–86	60	(76)	19	(24)	21
	If fighting would mainly occur on West German territory				
1977	57	(59)	39	(41)	5
1979	50	(63)	29	(37)	21
1980	53	(63)	31	(37)	16
1984	54	(66)	28	(34)	18
1986	43	(62)	26	(38)	31
Mean 1977–86	51	(63)	31	(37)	18
	If nuclear weapons had to be used on West German territory				
1977	19	(24)	61	(76)	20
1979	15	(19)	66	(81)	20
1980	15	(17)	71	(83)	14
1984	16	(19)	67	(81)	17
1986	14	(18)	62	(82)	20
Mean 1977–86	16	(19)	65	(81)	18

Source: Zoll, op. cit., table 15; updated with unpublished material from Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Bundeswehr, Munich.

defence in the bottom third are a proper subset of those who endorse it in the upper third, in the average about 45 per cent of samples have changed their mind as the question varied. In addition, about 20 per cent do not reply at all, so we have to conclude that in total almost two-thirds of samples have either been unable (or unwilling) to comment on their acceptance of military defence of the Federal Republic or do not hold consistent views, but rather sway with the flavour of the question.

III ATTITUDES ON THE BUNDESWEHR

Let us now turn from questions that focus more on the national security environment of the Bundeswehr to items that directly deal with the Bundeswehr as an institution. In the past, samples have repeatedly been asked how important they evaluate the Bundeswehr to be for the Federal Republic. In the 1970s and 1980s the share of respondents who have

described it as 'unimportant', 'superfluous', 'dangerous', etc. has seldom exceeded 10 per cent, while usually between 70 and 80 per cent have called it 'important' or 'very important'.[15] However, it is well known that questions of this kind that do not force rank-orders or trade-offs (e.g. in spending) exhibit a certain positivity bias in that every problem and institution is easily called at least 'important'. To make sense out of this kind of data one has to look at how responses are distributed between 'very important' and 'important' (which for many means 'not *that* important'). In the case of the Bundeswehr, responses are heavily concentrated in the 'important' category, with 'very important' seldom exceeding 25 per cent of samples. Compared with genuine public opinion 'hits' (like efficient social services or securing jobs, that easily score 80 per cent and more 'very important') this implies that the Bundeswehr is clearly accepted as an institution, but that it is by no means regarded as of utmost importance for the Federal Republic (which is in line, of course, with perceptions of a low probability of war).

Public opinion on the organization and on the effects of the existence of the Bundeswehr is predominantly positive. Since 1974 EMNID has annually asked respondents whether they believed training and leadership in the Bundeswehr to be good or sufficient on the one hand, or lacking in quality or even insufficient on the other hand. From the 1970s to the 1980s the percentage of negative responses has remained the same at around only 15 per cent, while the share of refusals has declined considerably, and the proportion of positive responses has grown from about two-thirds in the 1970s to about 80 per cent in the 1980s.[16] In response to the question whether the existence of the Bundeswehr presented an obstacle to a policy of coming to terms with the East and thus a danger for peace or whether it made peace more secure, almost 90 per cent of samples since the late 1970s chose the latter description as adequate.[17] That the Bundeswehr as an institution is regarded as moderately important and as well equipped and trained, and that it is seen as contributing to the stability of peace does not imply, however, that national security policy is evaluated as a very high priority policy arena. This is obvious from open-ended questions on which problem areas (up to three or five) are the most important ones for the Federal Republic (Table 5.9). The percentages of responses that refer to national security, NATO, or to the Bundeswehr have consistently been very close to zero since the 1960s. Even if one counts the preservation of peace as a pertinent response, such evaluations are still greatly outnumbered by responses citing economic issues and internal German politics (i.e. mainly social policy) as the most important political problems, particularly so in the 1970s and 1980s.

Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that military spending is viewed by public opinion with considerable scepticism, even if no trade-offs with other policy arenas are required (Table 5.10). Of course, the statement

Table 5.9 Importance of political problems for the Federal Republic (percentages of total nominations in response to open-ended questions)

	1960s	*1970s*	*1980s*
Number of surveys	3	12	4
Economic issues	37	51	50
Internal German politics	14	28	32
'German question', reunification	26	12	3
Preservation of peace	12	4	8
Foreign policy in general	1	2	5
European integration	2	1	0
National security, NATO, Bundeswehr	1	0	0
Others	7	3	2

Source: Rattinger and Heinlein, op. cit., table 1.

Table 5.10 Attitudes on defence spending (percentages excluding DK and NA)

	Number of surveys	*Defence expenditures of the Federal Republic are*		
		Too high	*About right*	*Too low*
1960s	3	40	44	16
1970s	8	37	51	12
1980s	3	35	55	10

Source: Rattinger and Heinlein, op. cit., table 28, 29.

that military spending levels are about 'adequate' is a very prominent one, and it is in fact usually chosen by the largest (and a growing) share of respondents. That defence expenditures are too low is a minority view that has declined over the years to about one-tenth of samples, while the opposite view, that they are too high, has also declined a little, but is generally held by more than one-third of samples.[18] This scepticism about military expenditures is also visible from several isolated survey items that are not available as quasi time-series. In 1979, only about 10 per cent declared their willingness to pay a special tax for improving the equipment of the Bundeswehr, and in the same year only foreign aid was accepted by more than half of respondents as an area where cuts of government spending could be made for that purpose. If people are asked where savings of government expenditures should occur, foreign aid, the Bundeswehr, and the salaries of public employees invariably top the list.[19]

As conscription is the standard set by the Federal Constitution (Article 12a) and as there have been almost no serious proposals to replace it by an all-volunteer force, little opinion polling has been done on this alternative. To assess attitudes on military service one therefore has to rely on data that

compare this kind of service to its alternative, i.e. service in social agencies as a conscientious objector (*Ersatzdienst*). EMNID has annually since 1980 collected evaluations of those who do voluntary military service (as *Zeitsoldat*) and of draft resisters on a ten-point scale (1 for very positive, ten for very negative). These data show a mean average evaluation of those who serve voluntarily at 3.6., i.e. mildly positive, with very little variation over time. The mean average evaluation of draft resisters, on the other hand, stood at 5.6 (which is almost the midpoint of the scale), so that positive and negative feelings have balanced each other. The trend here, however, is that attitudes towards draft resisters have become slightly more positive (6.0 in 1980, 5.1 in 1986). Asked for perceived motivations of conscientious objectors, growing proportions of these samples referred to humanistic and religious considerations (54 per cent of total responses in 1986) as opposed to political or personal ones.[20]

Over the past years the consequences of current demographic trends for recruitment of manpower for the Bundeswehr have been debated extensively in the Federal Republic. In 1986, the prospect that the Bundeswehr could eventually not meet its obligations to NATO due to a shortage of manpower was regarded as 'bad' or 'very bad' by 54 per cent of respondents. When those who said that this was not so bad were asked (in an open-ended format) why they thought so, a whole range of explanations was offered, only one-fifth of which were clearly anti-military. The most frequent arguments were that the Bundeswehr would still be large enough (27 per cent), or that it could compensate lower birth rates by a variety of measures (20 per cent), from relying more on weapons technology to drafting women.[21] This latter idea of allowing women into the Bundeswehr (although not in combat roles) has in fact been debated in the Federal Republic for quite some time now.[22] In August 1984, about 55 per cent were in favour of allowing women into the Bundeswehr on a voluntary basis, while the rest rejected even voluntary service. Not surprisingly, the majority in favour was somewhat stronger among men than among women (59 *v.* 52 per cent), but it may not be so trivial that opposition tended to grow steadily with age (34 per cent opposed below 25 years, 56 per cent for 60 years and older).[23]

IV ATTITUDES ON NATO

During the debates following the dual-track decision of NATO it was often asserted that the public opinion basis for continued membership of the Federal Republic in NATO was about to erode. The annual data collected by EMNID for the Federal Ministry of Defence show no trend of this sort whatsoever. If one omits refusals, the average proportion of responses in

Table 5.11 Attitudes on German membership in NATO (percentages excluding DK and NA)

	Number of surveys	*Federal Republic should*	
		Stay in NATO	*Become neutral*
1960s	3	53	47
1970s	3	54	46
1980s	8	73	27

Source: Rattinger and Heinlein, op. cit., table 17; updated with unpublished material from *Basis Research Frankfurt, Trend-Monitor*, 1984, 1985, 1986.

favour of remaining in NATO or in an even 'strengthened' NATO was 91 per cent from 1968 to 1986 (92 per cent for 1968 – 1979, 88 per cent for the 1980s), while only 9 per cent favoured leaving NATO altogether or loosening cooperation among its members.[24] From these surveys one could conclude that support for German NATO membership has been extraordinarily high and stable, but they conceal an important qualification of this support as well as of its development over time. The EMNID question only leaves respondents with a choice between staying in NATO and getting out, so an overwhelming majority chooses continuing the policy of the past. Table 5.11 shows that things look a little different when NATO is set against an 'attractive' alternative, i.e. when *neutrality* is expressly mentioned. But faced with the choice between continued NATO membership and neutrality, this latter option – though in the aggregate being more popular than simply getting out of NATO – has clearly lost ground in public opinion in the 1980s, contrary to many claims to the opposite.

Due to the Austrian, Swedish and Swiss examples, neutrality carries some positive connotations in the Federal Republic, but the willingness to accept this model is very limited, and it has decreased. Neutrality is viewed a little more positively if it refers to all of Western Europe, instead of to the Federal Republic alone: In the mid-1980s only about 12 per cent of samples completely agreed that the Federal Republic should abandon NATO and become neutral, while 20 per cent completely agreed that peace would be preserved if Western Europe would become neutral between the superpowers.[25] The reason that NATO is preferred over neutrality is at least twofold: first, even though such questions leave many people undecided (one-third or more), those who see advantages for the Federal Republic associated with NATO membership greatly outnumber (by four to one or more) those who perceive disadvantages for the Federal Republic.[26] Second, NATO is regarded by many as the vehicle to tie the USA to the security of Europe and of the Federal Republic. For the late 1970s it has been demonstrated that attitudes about the reliability of NATO and of the USA in case of conflict cannot be meaningfully

Table 5.12 Perceptions of US–German relations (percentages excluding DK and NA)

	Compared to a year ago (1981 and 1982: since President Reagan took office), US–German relations have		
	Improved	*Remained the same*	*Deteriorated*
1981	9	49	42
1982	5	52	43
1984	23	62	5
1985	25	59	15
1986	26	63	11

Source: Rattinger and Heinlein, op. cit., table 10; updated with unpublished material from *Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Mannheim, Politbarometer*, 1985 and 1986.

distinguished.[27] In the mid-1980s the notion that a European alliance without the USA would be better suited than NATO to provide security for the Federal Republic was accepted completely by only about 17 per cent of respondents.[28] Thus, for a considerable majority of West German public opinion the attractions of neutrality are transcended by the realization that NATO is, besides everything else, an alliance involving the USA, and is therefore very useful for the Federal Republic itself.

High endorsement of German NATO membership, however, does not imply great willingness to subordinate to American leadership. In 1985 and 1986, close to 30 per cent expressed complete and about 40 per cent partial agreement with the statement that the Federal Republic should adopt a more independent position from the USA within NATO.[29] In the same two years, about 85 per cent responded that the Federal Republic should behave according to its own interests instead of following the US position if the two countries should disagree over important political issues.[30] Such attitudes clearly are not anti-NATO, but they demonstrate that mass support for NATO has to coexist with the notion that the alliance should not be a hierarchical bloc but should somehow allow for the accommodation of the interests of all participating nations.

V ATTITUDES ON THE USA AND THE US MILITARY PRESENCE

In the early 1980s, many observers were alarmed by the fact that relations between the Federal Republic and the USA were seen as deteriorating by sizable segments of West German public opinion. Table 5.12 shows two things, first, that this was a transient phenomenon that probably mainly reflected the debates about the implementation of the dual-track decision

Table 5.13 Attitudes on US troops in the Federal Republic (percentages excluding DK and NA)

	Number of surveys	*If the US would withdraw their troops, would you welcome or regret that?*	
		Welcome	*Regret*
1950s	3	57	43
1960s	2	20	80
1970s	5	25	75
1980s	3	25	75

Source: Rattinger and Heinlein, op. cit., table 12.

and irritation about some more exotic, but highly publicized, interpretations of American military strategy. By the mid-1980s, evaluations of these relations were quite positive, with about 60 per cent believing they had remained of the same quality, and many more believing they had improved than that they that deteriorated. This table also shows the extent to which such evaluations are sensitive to minor variations of question wording; when political leaders are mentioned in the time-frame for comparison, this appears to be a very strong clue.

A cornerstone of US–German relations since the Federal Republic came into existence has been the presence of US troops. When concern over German neutralism and anti-Americanism swept many Western nations in the early 1980s, one could be afraid that this would also extend to these troops. Table 5.13 demonstrates that this has clearly not been the case. With between one-fourth and one-third of samples without opinion, those who would regret the withdrawal of US troops have established themselves as a strong majority since the 1960s, and there was virtually no change from the 1970s to the 1980s. The same finding emerges from the annual EMNID data collected for the Ministry of Defence: the average percentage against US withdrawal was 77 in the 1970s, and 78 for 1980–6.[31] When within this series of surveys it was asked for the first time in 1986 how people evaluated relations between US troops in the Federal Republic and German citizens, 7 per cent called them 'very good', 50 per cent 'good', 37 per cent 'in between', and only 6 per cent 'bad'.

This high reputation of US troops in Germany is due, first, to the predominant perception that their presence makes peace more secure. In response to an annual EMNID-question whether US troops in the Federal Republic increased the stability of peace or rather brought it into danger, refusals dropped from 25 per cent in the 1970s to 4 per cent in the 1980s, of those who chose one of these two options, 87 per cent selected the first one (89 per cent in 1970–9, 84 per cent in 1980–6).[32] To an open-ended follow-up question on *why* they thought so, a vast majority in 1986 referred to

American protection of the Federal Republic or to deterrence of the Soviet Union by the USA. A second reason for this high reputation is the degree of awareness in public opinion that these troops also serve the interests of the Federal Republic. In the annual EMNID surveys there is very little variation over time in the following distribution of opinions: from 1970 to 1986 about 5 per cent have said that US troops in the Federal Republic serve neither side, 15 per cent named the USA as the main beneficiary, but 24 per cent believed that West Germany would benefit most, and 56 per cent said both nations had equal advantages, so that about 80 per cent admit that the Federal Republic draws at least equal, if not primary, benefits from the presence of American troops.[33] This is also evident from results of the question of how important the presence of US troops was for the security of the Federal Republic. Since 1970 responses of 'indispensable' or 'very important' have fluctuated around 80 per cent, while those of 'not so important' or 'unimportant/detrimental' have been around 10 per cent, respectively.[34]

A third, and related, reason is that confidence in the possibility of defending the Federal Republic after an American withdrawal is not very high. While in Table 5.7 we have seen that judgements on the feasibility of military defence (including *all* of NATO) were about evenly split in the 1970s and 1980s, the percentage that believed that this could be achieved *without* US troops was only 29 (28 in the 1970s, 31 in the 1980s), while the rest believed that the Federal Republic would be overwhelmed under such conditions.[35] In that sense, US troops in Germany might also have contributed to the decline of threat perception reported earlier. Presence of US forces thus is a vital ingredient of the credibility of the option of Western military defence not only *vis-à-vis* the potential adversaries, but likewise for large segments of the public in the Federal Republic. Many people not only believe that US forces in Germany make a decisive difference in terms of defensive capabilities, but they are also willing to express confidence in the reliability of American pledges to join in the defence of the Federal Republic, should this prove necessary: in the late 1970s and early 1980s usually less than 10 per cent said they did not trust American security guarantees at all, while at most one-third of samples recorded only low confidence, and clear majorities said that they believed the Federal Republic could rely on the USA very much or completely.[36]

VI ATTITUDES ON STRATEGIC CONCEPTS

Due to the complexity and the technicalities of the subject matter, public opinion on military strategy is very hard to assess, as has already been seen above regarding the acceptance of military defence of the Federal Republic under different scenarios (Table 5.8). It simply has to make a great

difference whether attitudes on deterrence and defence as general principles or on their specific implications are polled, whether these concepts are tied to the presence and usability of nuclear weapons, and whether they are to be evaluated as effective for the past or for the future. Available data show that from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s the notion that an attack from the East could best be prevented by deterrence has enjoyed comparatively wide support: about one-fourth of respondents were undecided, and of the rest between 60 and 70 per cent expressed a belief in deterrence.[37] However, if the notion of deterrence is not explained to respondents at least in elementary terms, as is usually done, it has to remain unclear whether they evaluate deterrence as effective against aggression in terms of nuclear escalation and threats of punishment, of nuclear war-fighting capabilities, or in terms of a conventional posture sufficient to deny success to an aggressor.

However, we have at least some hints as to what many people have in mind when they evaluate deterrence. If we remember the low endorsement of the use of nuclear weapons for the defence of the Federal Republic and the degree of scepticism about the feasibility of military defence, it seems very likely that many out of the majority who accept the view that Eastern aggression can be prevented by deterrence interpret this term not as implying conventional and/or nuclear war-fighting capabilities, but as fear of the possibility of nuclear holocaust. This conclusion is supported by recent EMNID data polled for the Federal Ministry of Defence. In 1984–6, respondents were annually presented with two views on nuclear weapons: first, that their use would be so terrible that they should be abolished immediately; and second, that they had not been used in the past three decades because the consequences would have been so terrible, so that mutual fear of their use had prevented military engagements between East and West – thus, without deterrence through nuclear weapons the danger of a conventional war in Europe would be much higher. The second statement clearly describes an idea of 'pure' and 'extended' deterrence: the fear of mutual assured destruction due to the existence of nuclear arms is able to reduce significantly the danger of any kind of military conflict. About 60 per cent of samples in all three years have agreed with this second statement (and thus implicitly voted against the immediate abolition of these weapons). However, this attitude *vis-à-vis* deterrence by nuclear weapons only accepts them as 'political' weapons in the role of preventing *any* military conflict through mutual fear. Scenarios for their concrete military use meet very high resistance in public opinion, and the events of the early 1980s have shown that anything related to specific nuclear weapon systems, particularly in Europe, or to enhancing the credibility of their use will provoke considerable public antagonism.[38] Nuclear deterrence only receives majority support in the Federal Republic if these weapons can be seen as remote, purely 'political' in their effects, as

never having to be used because of their mere existence, and as almost perfectly getting rid of the danger of any war in Europe, thus throwing unpleasant war-fighting scenarios into obsolescence.

That quite favourable attitudes towards the idea of nuclear deterrence do not have to go along with equally favourable opinions about nuclear weapons, particularly about new weapons or about West German involvement in such armament programmes, is clearly visible in recent public opinion on a possible participation of the Federal Republic in SDI. In three surveys in 1985, about 20 per cent had never heard about SDI or had no opinion on German participation, among the others 40 per cent were in favour of, and 60 per cent were opposed to, participation of the Federal Republic.[39] This is in line with the fact that new weapons and increases of arms levels are usually much less popular than arms control and disarmament, or than at least leaving things as they are. This has been shown with abundant clarity with respect to the two aspects (deployment of new INF *v.* arms control) of the NATO dual-track decision, and it is also evident from a more general question (in 1984), whether to avoid a war the Federal Republic should increase its military power, disarm, or maintain the present status. Not surprisingly, 55 per cent chose the latter option, while 5 per cent picked the first one, but a sizable 39 per cent called for disarmament, even though this response was not presented in the framework of *mutual* arms restraint.[40] From the reflections of the INF-debate in West German public opinion, it is clear that if arms control and disarmament are described as designed to bind both sides, these concepts are at least as popular as nuclear deterrence by the fear of mutual assured extinction, and much more popular than programmes to enhance Western military capabilities and options.

It is precisely over this balance between maintaining deterrence and defence on the one hand, and pursuing *détente*, arms control, and disarmament on the other, that public opinion in the Federal Republic *vis-à-vis* the USA as the leading ally has shifted in recent years. Substantial majorities of the public in West Germany want both, and there is little doubt that the US firmly stands for the first strategy. But there is considerable insecurity as to whether the USA takes the second strategy as equally serious, or even as seriously as the Soviet Union. This can be concluded from several data collected over the past couple of years. When asked whether the USA sought a military balance or military superiority *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union, or was ready to accept inferiority, in the average of 1982–6 only 3 per cent held the latter view, 50 per cent said the USA was aiming at a military balance, but 45 per cent believed that superiority was their goal. At the same time, perceptions that the Soviet Union would abuse Western willingness to pursue *détente* dropped from 55 per cent in 1982 to 37 per cent in 1986, while the view that the Soviet Union itself was seriously pursuing *détente* increased from 41 to 61 per cent.[41] A similar trend was obtained

with the question whether in the Geneva negotiations both superpowers were serious about going for arms control. About 20 per cent in 1985 and 1986 said that both were serious, and 10 per cent said this about the USA alone. The perception that neither side really wanted an arms control agreement dropped from 1985 to 1986 from above 60 to about 50 per cent, but the share of samples that attributed a serious arms control intention to the Soviet Union alone grew from 5 to 16 per cent, so that in late 1986 the Soviet Union was seen by more as seriously engaged in arms control than was the USA.[42] Such findings, by the way, closely parallel those about evaluations of the leaders of the two superpowers, where Mr Gorbachev clearly pushed ahead in the 'popularity contest' with Mr Reagan.[43] Thus, public opinion in the Federal Republic seems to be increasingly worried that the reliability, credibility and effectiveness of Western deterrence and defence is not matched by equally credible efforts to pursue *détente* and arms control, which are also regarded as indispensable for security.

VII ATTITUDES ON NATIONAL SECURITY BY PARTISAN PREFERENCE AND AGE

So far these attitudes have been described in the aggregate without any breakdowns for subgroups. In the past it has often been argued that recent major changes in public opinion on national security in the Federal Republic have to a significant degree been due to generational replacement.[44] Many of the longitudinal data described so far do not go along very well with this explanation, because they have exhibited remarkable stability in spite of the fact that a time-span of fifteen or twenty years involves a considerable degree of demographic turnover. Still, as a final step we will now have a look at the distributions of attitudes by age (which is the most potent social structural variable in the Federal Republic for differentiating national security views, more potent even than education) in the 1986 EMNID-survey of opinions on defence,[45] and we will compare them to distributions by partisan affiliation, since a rival explanation would hold that such affiliations should be at least as strong in shaping such attitudes as common political socialization of cohorts. To simplify the presentation, Table 5.14 does not list complete response distributions, but only percentages of pro-defence, pro-NATO, pro-Bundeswehr, etc. responses and their polarization by age and by party. Maximum polarization by age is presented by setting the extreme age group above 29 years against the age group with extreme views (in the opposite direction) below 30 years. Distances of opinion by partisan preference are reported between those who intended to vote for the CDU/CSU, the SPD, and for the Green Party, respectively. Adherents of the liberal FDP are omitted from this

table; usually their views are somewhere in between those of followers of the major two parties.

Table 5.14 shows that the total 'successor generation' of younger voters in 1986 clearly differed from older West Germans in their opinions on national security. On all twenty-one items the extreme value for younger people shows them to be more anti-military, anti-US, and anti-NATO. However, with an overall mean of 14.5 percentage points most of these differences are far from being dramatic, especially if one considers the way they were computed, i.e. searching for the *maximum* polarization between any younger and any older cohort, instead of, say, computing averages above and below the age of 30. Moreover, only for five items is the majority reversed: on whether deterrence prevents a war, on the severity of the manpower problems the Bundeswehr might face, on the size of the defence budget, on relations between German citizens and US troops, and on whether the US is aiming for a military balance instead of superiority. On all other items, majorities of the extreme pro-defence age group above 29 and of the extreme anti-defence group below 30 are in agreement! The only thing that sets them apart, of course, is the size of these majorities. Thus, it is undoubtedly true that most anti-military and anti-US activists of recent years have been younger people, but the conclusion, that the young overwhelmingly tend to be anti-military and anti-US, simply is not supported by these data. Even in the most sceptical age group (usually 25–29 years), majorities support continued German membership in NATO and presence of US troops, say they would resist aggression somehow, and endorse the views that the existence of the Bundeswehr and the presence of US troops make peace more secure, that these troops are very important for West German security, and that without them defence would no longer be possible.

Let us now look at the attitudinal distances between partisan groups, first between CDU/CSU and Green voters. On every single item public opinion here was polarized much more strongly along partisan lines than along age. With an average difference of 41.2 percentage points between sympathizers of the Christian Democrats and of the Green Party, the latter conform much more closely to the notions often advanced about the 'successor generation' as a whole. Polarization along both criteria is least dissimilar for perceptions of the defensive capabilities of NATO and of the Bundeswehr, and, at the other extreme, it is much stronger by party than by age for attitudes on defence spending, on membership in NATO, on the presence of US troops, and on the contribution of the Bundeswehr to make peace more secure. For fourteen out of the twenty-one items the majority is reversed between adherents of both these parties, and the mean polarization for these items is over 47 percentage points, so that comparatively small minorities within one group correspond to outspoken majorities within the other group, and vice versa.

Table 5.14 Polarization of 1986 attitudes on national security, the Bundeswehr, and on the alliance by partisan sympathy and age (percentages holding 'pro-defence', etc. views)

Item	*Total*	*Followers of*			*Differences between parties*			*Extreme age group*		*Difference by age*
		CDU/CSU	*SPD*	*Green Party*	*CDU/CSU–Green*	*CDU/CSU–SPD*	*SPD–Green*	*over 29 years*	*under 30 years*	
1	20	24	19	8	16	5	11	22 D	20 B	2
2	29	36	24	9	27	12	15	31 C	24 B	7
3	37	53	25	7	46	28	18	40 D	33 B	7
4	40	43	39	33	10	4	6	45 D	37 A	8
5	35	49	28	9	40	21	19	40 D	28 B	12
6	58	70	55	25	45	15	30	64 E	47 B	17
Mean difference items 1–6					30.7	14.2	16.5			8.8
7	16	19	15	8	11	4	7	18 D	11 B	7
8	60	69	55	28	41	14	27	70 C	60 B	10
9	87	95	85	40	55	10	45	91 D	78 B	13
10	56	69	50	14	55	19	36	63 D	48 B	15
11	84	89	82	61	28	7	21	87 C	71 B	16
12	55	65	53	10	55	12	43	65 D	46 B	19
13	66	81	60	25	56	21	35	78 D	50 A	28
Mean difference items 7–13					43.0	12.4	30.6			15.4
14	25	30	22	6	24	8	16	26 D	19 B	7
15	74	87	69	26	61	18	43	81 D	65 B	16
16	62	70	57	36	34	13	21	69 D	51 B	18
17	57	65	50	25	40	15	25	67 D	48 A	19
18	48	60	42	15	45	18	27	60 D	40 A	20
19	81	93	77	39	54	16	38	88 D	68 B	20
20	77	88	72	27	61	16	45	85 E	65 B	20
21	75	86	70	25	61	16	45	83 E	59 B	24
Mean difference items 14–21					47.5	15.0	32.5			18.0
Mean difference all items					41.2	13.9	27.3			14.5

Source: EMNID, 'Meinungsbild zur wehrpolitischen Lage – Herbst 1986, Bielefeld, 1986.

Items

Attitudes on the national security environment

1 USSR is stronger than US in military terms.
2 The East is stronger than the West in military terms.
3 Moscow abuses Western willingness to cooperate.
4 NATO is not strong enough for defence.

5 The threat from the East is high/very high.
6 Deterrence prevents a war in Europe.

Attitudes on the Bundeswehr
7 Equipment of the Bundeswehr is insufficient.
8 Respondent would somehow resist military aggression.
9 The existence of the Bundeswehr makes peace more secure.
10 Defence expenditures are about right or too low.
11 Training and leadership of the Bundeswehr are good/sufficient.
12 Recruitment problems of the Bundeswehr are serious/very serious.
13 Positive evaluations of enlisted soldiers (1 to 4 on ten-point scale).

Attitudes on the alliance
14 US military presence mainly benefits the Federal Republic.
15 Respondent opposed to withdrawal of US forces.
16 NATO would not be strong enough without US military presence.
17 Relations between Germans and US troops are good/very good.
18 US want military balance (instead of superiority).
19 US military presence makes peace more secure.
20 US military presence is important/indispensable for security of the Federal Republic.
21 The Federal Republic should continue its membership in NATO.

In the two columns for age groups capital letters A to E denote in which group extreme attitudes occur:
A 16–24 years
B 25–29 years
C 30–49 years
D 50–64 years
E 65 years and older

Without exception, the opinions of SPD voters fall between those of adherents of the CDU/CSU and of the Green party, but generally they are much closer to those of Christian Democratic identifiers. On average, the attitudinal distance between SPD and CDU/CSU sympathizers is only half as wide as between SPD and Green voters (13.9 *v.* 27.3 percentage points of difference). In relative terms, SPD followers are farthest away from CDU/CSU voters (and thus closest to the Greens) in their views on the national security environment, and closest to them in their opinions on the Bundeswehr and on the Western alliance. For only two items (3 and 18) are majorities among adherents of the major two parties not in agreement, whereas comparing SPD to Green voters one finds majorities disagreeing on 12 out of the 21 items. SPD identifiers are closer to Green sympathizers than to CDU/CSU voters for only two items (3 and 5), so that we see attitudes of the adherents of the major two parties deviating most sharply over the extent of an Eastern threat and over Soviet trustworthiness. An average partisan disparity of national security attitudes of 13.9 percentage points is more than trivial, of course, but interpreting its political significance is a little like having to adjudicate whether the famous glass of water

is half full or half empty. At least to this author this degree of disagreement is not dramatic, especially when compared to how far supporters of the Greens on average are away from voters of both major parties. Even though this is not at all true at the level of party leaderships and activists, at the level of *mass* attitudes among their constituencies there still seems to be a fairly consensual basis for a 'great coalition' over security issues.

Polarizations by partisan affiliations and by age have been treated separately here, even though in reality they are related, of course. It would be very useful now to investigate the association between partisan choice and security opinions *controlling* for age, and maybe additionally for education. However, since the results of the 1986-EMNID study were only available as bivariate breakdowns while the original data set was not accessible, this is impossible. We cannot, therefore, empirically demonstrate within this data-set the well-known fact that attitudes opposed to the Bundeswehr, to NATO, etc. are even much more highly concentrated than is visible in Table 5.14 if one focuses on young subgroups with high education among the Green and also the SPD electorate. This does not hurt the argument too much, however, as such findings about the selective recruitment of protesters and activists are special neither to the 1980s nor to the Federal Republic, just as this article deliberately deals with *mass* and not with élite opinions.

But even without the original data set we can take an important step towards solving the problem as to whether the effect of partisan identifications we have found here on the polarization of these mass opinions is not to a large extent an artifact of their polarization by age. We can perform a little intellectual experiment by assuming that in comparing two groups of partisans all adherents of the more 'conservative' party belong to the most 'pro-defence' age group over 29 years, while all voters of the second party can be found in the most 'anti-defence' age group under 30 years. Under such circumstances we could simply subtract the maximum difference of security attitudes by age (reported in Table 5.14) from this distance by party in order to arrive at the 'net' effect of partisan affiliations. In the average of all twenty-one items in Table 5.14, this simple procedure for the pair of CDU/CSU and SPD yields a 'net' difference of $-.6$ percentage points, for SPD and Greens of 12.8, and for CDU/CSU and Greens of 26.7 percentage points. This would suggest that 'controlling' for age there is virtually no distinction between CDU/CSU and SPD voters, while the 'net' distances between Green sympathizers, on the one hand, and CDU/CSU and SPD supporters, on the other hand, that genuinely are due to partisan affiliation, are only about two-thirds and half as strong, respectively, as appears in Table 5.14. We know, however, that our assumption of a neat separation of the voters for two different parties by age is patently wrong. In the 1987 federal elections the CDU/CSU received 16.7 per cent of its votes from voters below age 30, the corresponding

figures for the SPD and the Greens are 20.9 and 44.9, respectively.[46] Thus, the distance in defence opinions between identifiers of the two major parties can not all be due to differences in their age composition. As to the Green voters, their mean attitudinal distances from CDU/CSU followers of 41.2 and from SPD adherents of 27.3 percentage points to some extent certainly do reflect age differences, and thus are somewhat inflated. But since even here we are far away from a perfect partisan bisection along the 30-year watershed, it is safe to conclude that the true 'net' effect of partisan identifications is still well over 30 percentage points for the attitudinal differences between CDU/CSU and Green, and well over 20 percentage points for SPD and Green voters.

The question now is, of course, what these findings signify in terms of a 'successor generation' hypothesis. For the sake of fairness it has to be conceded that many who use this term intend it to refer to the élite level, describing the young and well educated instead of whole age cohorts. However, since this is an analysis of *mass* attitudes on security, we loosely use it as a shorthand for all kinds of generational explanations of changes in public opinion on security matters, granting that important differences might exist between such changes in social élites and in the public at large. With these caveats, it is obvious, first, that the sweeping departure from previously prevalent attitude patterns regarding national security issues is not typical of youth as a whole, but mostly of those younger people who sympathize with the Green Party. In the 1987 Bundestag elections the Green vote in the 18–30 age bracket was about 17 per cent, so even equating the Green electorate with the better educated sections of the younger cohorts would be a gross exaggeration. And even the Green electorate itself with its strong bias towards youth is quite far from being a monolithically anti-military, anti-NATO, anti-US bloc, as Table 5.14 shows. Younger people *outside* the Green electorate show little resemblance with a 'successor generation' stereotype.

Second, the fact that the covariation of national security opinions is so much stronger with party preference than with age forces us to ponder the problem of causality. Between partisan preferences and attitudes on specific political issues a variety of causal patterns is conceivable. At the one extreme there are those who intend to vote for a particular party because it is closest to them on the issues that they judge most salient. At the other extreme are those who like a particular party best for a diversity of other reasons and for the sake of consistency accept this party's positions in areas that are less salient for them. Regarding different political problems, one and the same individual can easily fall into both groups. In the Federal Republic there is, of course, another political issue area that heavily, if not primarily, mobilizes Green support, i.e. environmental problems. The fact that even the comparatively strongly mobilized Green electorate is far from monolithic in its defence policy opinions demonstrates

that it is possible for Green voters to disagree with 'their' party in this issue area. It is therefore equally possible that some of those who toe the party line in these opinions do not do so because these are the attitudes that tie them to this party, but simply because they support its proclaimed stand in most ongoing political debates, even if they do not centre around the issues that have established the initial allegiance.

Such an interpretation of élite–mass interactions is much broader than a 'successor generation' hypothesis, indeed comprises it as a special case. It is possible that societal conflict and élite political debates are brought about by the polarization of mass attitudes due to generational replacement, but it is equally possible that polarization at the mass level in part *results* from polarization of élite conflict over particular issues. The attitudes of SPD identifiers on security matters illustrate this latter kind of development particularly well. In Table 5.14 they were seen to be not dramatically, but visibly, different from those of CDU/CSU voters in 1986. This is the outcome of a process that could be clearly observed over the 1980s, when the SPD leadership redefined many of its positions on national security in the wake of the NATO decision of 1979, slowly at first, but then quite quickly after the overthrow of the Schmidt government in late 1982. What we now observe in data as in Table 5.14 is much less the outcome of generational replacement within the SPD electorate than of its adaptation to the redirection of the party's policies as defined by its leadership.[47] In the short run, both such processes of élites following the changing demands of changing electorates, or of electorates following the policy changes of élites, might look very similar at the aggregate level, but they should differ considerably in terms of long-run consequences. Generational replacement is a slow historical process that can only be slowly counteracted by lifecycle effects. Polarization along party lines both at the élite and at the mass level, on the other hand, can come about quite quickly, with the issues of the day, relevant issue publics, and dividing lines more or less fluent. From the data analyzed here it seems safe to infer that for West German mass public opinion on national security the 'successor generation' hypothesis can hardly be pronounced as the most adequate explanatory approach.

VIII CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Bundeswehr as an institution does not face a major problem in terms of its acceptance by West German public opinion. There are few people that would want to see it liquidated regardless of the availability of alternative solutions to the security predicament. On the other hand, there is also little outright enthusiasm about the Bundeswehr and especially about the burden of defence. It is not regarded as a highly valued symbol of sovereignty or of national pride, but rather as a 'necessary load'. This

makes it important to study popular attitudes on those attributes of the national security environment of the Federal Republic that might let the Bundeswehr appear as 'necessary' to the public, as has been done in this contribution.

Here we encounter some attitude patterns that are vexatious, some that are reassuring. Some contradictions in public opinion are discomforting because they betray a certain predilection for wishful thinking, such as the parallel growth of awareness of Eastern military superiority and of the belief that the West could successfully defend against aggression. Other such contradictions are the coexistence of the endorsement of military defence with opposition to any schemes to strengthen Western military capabilities, or the considerable insecurity about the role of nuclear weapons in the strategy to deter military incursions against Western Europe and the Federal Republic. One could contend, however, that the implications of such findings should not be exaggerated, because they might not reflect unwillingness to maintain capabilities for deterrence and defence, but rather low levels of personal importance of, and thus of information about, national security affairs. We have not been able to address these issues at any length, and there is a conspicuous lack of appropriate data, but it appears safe to say that for sizable portions of the population at large we simply should not expect very coherent sets of attitudes on such specific security issues.

As to the reassuring findings, it is important, first, to point out that the fears, shared by many in the early 1980s, about growing popular neutralism and anti-Americanism in the Federal Republic have proved to have little basis. Of course, there are those in West Germany (as in many other Western nations) who would like to see the country going for neutrality and severing defence ties with the USA. In terms both of social structure and political background they are concentrated where adherents of protest movements have almost always been since the Federal Republic was founded. However, these are fringe views that arouse little support from the general public. A second point that has to be noticed here is that much of what has been said over the past years about generational cleavages in West German public opinion on defence was exaggerated, and confused the concentration of peace movement activists and protestors in the well-educated segment of younger age groups with the views of these cohorts in total. This is not to deny that some age effects are discernible in defence-related public opinion, but (as has been briefly demonstrated) the impact of normal partisan strife on aligning mass attitudes on these matters is much stronger.

As has also been shown, the only really strong change in public opinion on national security in the Federal Republic in the 1980s occurred with respect to the perceived credibility of US willingness to cooperate peacefully and pursue arms control with the East, while the Soviet image in this

field has improved considerably. This has not immediately eroded support for the Western alliance; such scepticism about the foreign policy of the American administration has so far been able to coexist with a strong belief in the utility of continuing with established security arrangements. However, there can be little doubt that this was a potentially very dangerous development. Fortunately, policies can change, or at least be modified. The INF-agreement signed in Washington, in December 1987, in that respect was a very important evolution. In its wake it will most likely prove that the deterioration of West German public opinion on the US commitment to arms control does not have to be irreversible, especially if strategic arms control will be pursued as announced and SDI will (in rhetoric and practice) be shifted into lower gear.

It has been argued here that the cleavages in West German public opinion on national security have to a significant degree been determined by the political disputes over these issues. If that is so, the recent arms control agreement could have a strong impact on these cleavages as well. If it is ratified and implemented as planned, and if progress in the field of strategic arms control is forthcoming, the West German peace movement, that drew its vigor from the decision to deploy new INF and from the revival of Cold War rhetoric in superpower relations, will face dire times. Of course, some of its proponents will persist with similar arguments as before, but much of their rallying power will be gone when these weapons are in the process of being extracted. As far as the confrontation between the major parties is concerned, there will also be abated incentive to centre it around national security issues. The Social Democrats have had to imbibe the lesson of the campaign for the 1983 federal elections that (even at that time!) they did not get much electoral mileage out of the missile issue. A government that can assert to have removed a major impediment to the INF accord by relinquishing West German Pershing Is does not present a very opportune target, and neither does a US administration that has signed a treaty conforming exactly to the wildest dreams of some SPD leaders in the early 1980s and that wants to slice strategic arsenals by 50 per cent. Predictions are perilous, but it appears likely that many peace movement activists will switch back in their primary concern to environmental issues, and that the SPD will find it more lucrative to challenge the government on economic and social issues, of which there are many that are close to home for voters. One development that would definitely invalidate this prediction, of course, would be a massive drive within NATO to increase conventional arms and/or short-range INF or to offset the recently signed treaty by some other military means.

Does all this relate to public opinion in the Federal Republic on the Bundeswehr? Very much so, because these attitudes do not exist in isolation, but rather are embedded in beliefs about the national security environment. Large portions of the public in the Federal Republic seem to

be sold on the two pillars of the Harmel Report of twenty years ago (many without knowing about this document, of course) in taking deterrence and defence, on the one hand, and cooperation and *détente*, on the other hand, as equally serious and essential. If the next few years attest that the Western alliance and its leading power seriously do the same, this could only reinforce the judgement that this is a coalition of nations worth belonging to. Under such conditions the Bundeswehr has a fair chance of continuing its present level of general popular acceptance, grumbling about the cost of defence notwithstanding.

Notes

1. See e.g. Christian Potyka, 'Die vernachlaessigte Oeffentlichkeit', in Klaus-Dieter Schwarz (ed.), *Sicherheitspolitik*, 2nd ed. (Bad Honnef: Osang, 1976), pp. 381–96.
2. See Christoph Bertram, 'Introduction', in International Institute for Strategic Studies (ed.), 'Defense and Consensus: The Domestic Aspects of Western Security', Part I, *Adelphi Papers*, no. 182 (London, 1983), pp. 1–5.
3. See several contributions in W. R. Vogt (ed.), *Sicherheitspolitik und Streitkraefte in der Legitimitaetskrise* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1983).
4. See Philip E. Converse, 'Attitudes and Non-attitudes', in Edward R. Tufte (ed.), *The Quantitative Analysis of Social Problems* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1970), pp. 168–89.
5. EMNID, 'Meinungsbild zur wehrpolitischen Lage – Herbst 1986' (Bielefeld. 1986) pp. 6, 46.
6. Ralf Zoll, 'Sicherheitspolitik und Streitkraefte im Spiegel oeffentlicher Meinungen in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Eine vergleichende Analyse', in Ralf Zoll (ed.), *Sicherheit und Militaer* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1982) p. 53.
7. EMNID, 'Meinungsbild zur wehrpolitischen Lage – Herbst 1986', p. 10.
8. For earlier results see Hans Rattinger, 'The Federal Republic of Germany: Much Ado About (Almost) Nothing', in Gregory Flynn, Hans Rattinger (eds.), *The Public and Atlantic Defense* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1985), table 4.9; Hans Rattinger and Petra Heinlein, *Sicherheitspolitik in der oeffentlichen Meinung: Umfrageergebnisse fuer die Bundesrepublik Deutschland bis zum 'heissen Herbst' 1983* (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Autoren-Verlag, 1986), table 20.
9. There is evidence to that effect; see Rattinger, 'The Federal Republic of Germany', p. 117.
10. EMNID, 'Meinungsbild zur wehrpolitischen Lage – Herbst-1986', p. 8; see also Hans Rattinger, 'Change vs. Continuity in West German Attitudes on National Security and Nuclear Weapons', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1987, figure 4.
11. EMNID, 'Meinungsbild zur wehrpolitischen Lage – Herbst-1986', p. 16.
12. See Rattinger and Heinlein, *Sicherheitspolitik in der oeffentlichen Meinung*, table 23.
13. EMNID, 'Meinungsbild zur wehrpolitischen Lage – Herbst-1986', p. 19.
14. Rattinger, 'The Federal Republic of Germany', p. 126f.

15. Rattinger and Heinlein, *Sicherheitspolitik in der oeffentlichen Meinung*, table 30.
16. EMNID, 'Meinungsbild zur wehrpolitischen Lage – Herbst 1986', p. 17.
17. Ibid., p. 44.
18. Similar results on attitudes on defence spending since 1967 are reported in EMNID, ibid., p. 22.
19. See Rattinger, 'The Federal Republic of Germany', p. 127f.
20. EMNID, 'Meinungsbild zur wehrpolitischen Lage – Herbst 1986', pp. 24–7.
21. EMNID, ibid., p. 30f.
22. See e.g. Ekkehard Lippert and Tjarck Roessler, *Maedchen unter Waffen?* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1980).
23. *Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Mannheim, Politbarometer*, August 1984.
24. EMNID, 'Meinungsbild zur wehrpolitischen Lage – Herbst 1986', p. 13.
25. *Basis Research Frankfurt, Trend-Monitor*, September 1985, 1986.
26. Rattinger, 'The Federal Republic of Germany', p. 143.
27. Zoll, 'Sicherheitspolitik und Streitkraefte', p. 55f.
28. *Basis Research* (see note 25).
29. Ibid.
30. *Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Mannheim, Politbarometer*, April 1985, and November 1986; see also Rattinger, 'The Federal Republic of Germany', p. 146.
31. EMNID, 'Meinungsbild zur wehrpolitischen Lage – Herbst 1986', p. 39.
32. Ibid., p. 36.
33. Ibid., p. 43.
34. Ibid., p. 38.
35. Ibid., p. 42.
36. See Rattinger and Heinlein, *Sicherheitspolitik in der oeffentlichen Meinung*, pp. 109–11.
37. Ibid., p. 123.
38. Ibid., chapter 4.
39. *Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Mannheim, Politbarometer*, April, October, and December 1985.
40. *Basis Research Frankfurt, Trend-Monitor*, September 1984.
41. EMNID, 'Meinungsbild zur wehrpolitischen Lage – Herbst 1986', pp. 47–9.
42. *Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Mannheim, Politbarometer*, April and October 1985, November 1986.
43. See *Der Spiegel*, 2 November 1987, p. 44, and 9 November 1987, p. 91.
44. See e.g. Stephen F. Szabo, 'West Germany: Generations and Changing Security Perspectives, in Stephen F. Szabo (ed.), *The Successor Generation: International Perspectives of Postwar Europeans* (London: Butterworths, 1983), pp. 43–75; see also Harald Mueller and Thomas Risse-Kappen, 'Origins of Estrangement: The Peace Movement and the Changed Image of America in West Germany', *International Security*, 1987, vol. 12, pp. 52–88. This latter article, however, falls prey to the temptation in its conclusions to confuse the high share of younger people within well-educated circles of peace movement activists and/or adherents of the Green Party with the effects of generational replacement on *mass* public opinion on security.
45. See note 5.
46. *Statistisches Bundesamt, Wahl zum 11. Deutschen Bundestag am 25 January 1987*, Heft 4: Wahlbeteiligung und Stimmabgabe der Maenner und Frauen nach dem Alter (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1987), p. 14.
47. See Rattinger 'Change vs. Continuity in West German Attitudes on National Security and Nuclear Weapons'.