ETHICS AND ARMED FORCES

Vulnerability and Resilience During the Corona Pandemic

SPECIAL

The German Armed Forces in Crisis Mode

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VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE DURING THE CORONA PANDEMIC

SPECIAL: THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES IN CRISIS MODE

EDITORIAL

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called the corona pandemic the greatest crisis of our age. It is the biggest challenge the world has faced since the United Nations was established 75 years ago. This is not only about containing the virus, but also a matter of basic human solidarity, of helping people to cope with the economic consequences. Guterres speaks of a choice: When the crisis is eventually over, we can either go back to how things were before, or we can resolutely set about changing the things that make the world vulnerable to pandemics.

Rarely in recent history has the global community felt as exposed, as vulnerable as it does today. The virus has spread globally, causing the deaths of more than one million people, and placing serious constraints on economic activity, education, culture and religious life. It is directly impacting on the lives of everybody, in Germany and around the world. Containing the coronavirus demands tough decisions. A balance must constantly be struck between different goods and values such as health, liberty and human dignity, the needs of the economy, global solidarity, and responsibility.

Governments have reacted differently to the crisis, which in turn has weakened the basis for international cooperation, for example in the WHO or EU. The result is a confused situation, with still no end in sight even after almost a year. So what does this mean for international relations? Will the economic impact of the pandemic make global inequality worse? Will this lead to new violent conflicts, humanitarian emergencies and refugee movements? Can the corona pandemic, from a geopolitical perspective, be seen as a catalytic process from which new orders will emerge? What are the ethical dimensions for policymakers and their armed forces, in combating a virus that is spreading in democracies and authoritarian regimes alike? How is the *Bundeswehr* dealing with the challenges of the corona pandemic?

The authors of this edition of "Ethics and Armed Forces" discuss these and similar questions from ethical, theological and security policy standpoints – in the midst of the pandemic. A year ago, the first cases of COVID-19 became known, and reflecting on the pandemic is in full swing, although it is not yet possible to draw a final conclusion in view of a still dynamic development.

The past months of the corona period have given new cause for reflection on life, lifestyles and the question of what is essential. Markus Vogt, one of the authors in this edition, believes this holds great potential to permanently strengthen the "social immune system" against future crises. In an article for zebis, he continues: "Solidarity is one of the most important resources for a resilient society. Cultural and religious traditions can help to define basic attitudes and patterns of thinking that are needed to seek solutions from a perspective of solidarity, and to mature in crises."

Just a few weeks after his encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis addressed an urgent appeal to Europe: "I dream of a Europe that is inclusive and generous" – one which reflects on its founding values and is less influenced by national unilateralism.

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"CORONA" (COVID-19) AND THE ETHICS OF GLOBAL SOLIDARY CHARITY

Author: Cardinal Peter Turkson

Abstract

In the globally networked world, the corona pandemic is the biggest challenge facing humanity since World War II. For the capitalist Western industrialized nations with their highly developed health care systems, it has created a situation in which unprecedented decisions have to be taken concerning civil rights and freedoms. Free democratic societies in the modern era regard the state as the servant of the individual citizen and his or her pursuit of happiness. But when it comes to the fundamental purpose behind individual freedom, this creates a vacuum that must be filled – as for example in Germany with the reference to human dignity in Article 1 of the Basic Law. Pope Benedict XVI pointed out that mankind has a responsibility not to accept crises with resignation, but to act in hope to change their course. If we transfer this principle to the corona pandemic, the role of the state is not limited to balancing competing rights of freedom. Particularly in a social market economy like Germany's, the crisis has promoted reflection on the importance of solidarity, the resulting order of individual freedoms, and the distribution of resources for the common good. This applies not only in the health sector but also, for example, to efficient and effective climate protection. An awareness of one's own vulnerability can therefore grow into a global diakonia in the spirit of the recent encyclical from Pope Francis.

The Corona crisis brings together, like a convex lens, a series of initially only loosely connected perspectives from various social, cultural and scientific disciplines and points of view in a way that could hardly have been imagined. This is especially true of the extent to which COVID-19 has caused far-reaching changes to human co-existence, heightened the primacy of need for the best possible health care and optimized survival insurance, and awakened a renewed discussion of the sense of global *common good*. In this sense, the Corona pandemic reveals the necessity of a new understanding of global solidarity and global care for every human person; and the question that arises is one of responsibility and competence: *who, in society, is best equipped to take charge of such "global solidarity", depending on how it is defined?*

Without a doubt, the eruption of the Corona crisis (COVID-19 pandemic) represents the most massive disruptive force in human life and history since the outbreak of the Second World War. This is mainly due to two factors:

Firstly, a new worldwide economic and tourist globalization is accelerating the spread of what would otherwise be only a local or a regional epidemic. A similar experience in the past was the devastating Spanish flu of 1918-1920. It was called "Spanish" because Spanish newspapers were the first to report it in that country, which was neutral during the First World War.[1] It was subsequently diagnosed in the USA and did spread throughout the world, claiming the lives of about 50 million people: more than the entire First World War. Thus, what began in the Fall of 2019 as a Chinese national public health issue has in just six months become a pandemic with an aggressively intrusive effect on all structures of life.

Secondly this pandemic coincides with the *medicalization* of at least Western society, and with an experience of capitalism that has been emerging since Adam Smith (1723-1790) and which is now typical of modernity.[2] These raise the issue of costs and the *economics of healthcare* in the treatment of COVID-19.

It is true that since its emergence, the COVID-19 pandemic has often been presented and talked about in the media using military language. There is talk about an *outbreak* of a pandemic*, which causes *casualties,* which is a *public enemy,* which needs to be *fought/combatted* against and which requires a *strategic plan.* Thus, the corona crisis is said to have heightened awareness about an unprecedented *conflict* over different types of trade-offs and impact assessments which include the concrete and real evaluation of scarce resources in the health care sector: in hospital care and also in intensive care, vis-à-vis patients' health histories and their recovery prognoses. Ultimately, the COVID-19 pandemic has generated the unpleasant situation of doctors having to decide on the rights and freedoms of patients to live and to survive. This dramatic situation also includes the evaluation of the health interest and the chances of survival of patients over 60 years of age, giving preference to younger people who are less affected by the risk of viral infection and have greater potential to serve the interests of the economy, especially small and medium-sized enterprises and the skilled trades.

If all of these dramatic and challenging experiences take place in healthcare institutions, then the question that bubbles up is about the meaning, scope and extent of the State's intervention in the individual rights of citizens in these institutions and in the name of maintaining public health and health care. Here, clearly, various rights of freedom compete directly with each other, such as, the right to health, the right to freedom of movement (e.g. to go on a vacation and even to walk one's dog!), as well as the right to exercise a profession and to earn a living.

According to an enlightened modern view, the State's power is at the service of the individual, the human person and his pursuit of happiness, as, for example, in the United States Declaration of Independence: „We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." Such State power exercised in the service of the person (as an individual and a social being) is, according to modern interpretation, always democratically regulated and channelled; and that means, everyone is allowed to ask anyone a question, except the all-important question "*What do you need it for? For what purpose and goal are you existing?*". This question, however, is literally a taboo, and its respondent is sacrosanct, although, according to St. Augustine *(De civitate Dei),* this question is the basis of every human society since Cain and Abel. For, it is the question

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that underlies all use and exercise of *human freedom,* and therefore, its motivation and its intention.

Accordingly, the impossibility or the inability or the irrelevance of asking this question either betrays the purposelessness of human dignity and freedom in a State/Republic, or, as in Germany, the *Constitution* provides an answer: "Human dignity shall be inviolable" (Article 1 of German Basic Law); and this is affirmed by the people, "conscious of their responsibility before God and man …"[3]. A commentary on the Article reads: "I consider this sentence central because it shapes the spirit of the Basic Law and thus of the Federal Republic of Germany. At the same time, it goes far beyond any legal text; it forms the basis for peaceful coexistence in general, in other parts of the world as well as here." On this basis, of course, everything can and must be questioned, questioned and discussed in a republican and democratic manner on the basis of unconditioned human dignity, as the first condition of peace and peaceful living together, especially in a secular age![4]

Sociologically and economically, nothing, indeed, will be the same after the corona pandemic, whenever that time will come. Reflecting on the COVID-19 crisis, Pope Francis believes that nobody emerges from a crisis the same way. A crisis brings challenges; but it also brings opportunities! That is also why Pope Benedict XVI, reflecting on the financial crisis of his day also observed that the crisis "presents us with choices that cannot be postponed concerning … the destiny of man, …"[5] He observed further: "The complexity and gravity of the present economic situation rightly cause us concern, but we must adopt a realistic attitude as we take up with confidence and hope the new responsibilities to which we are called by the prospect of a world in need of profound cultural

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renewal, a world that needs to rediscover fundamental values on which to build a better future. The current crisis obliges us to re-plan our journey, to set ourselves new rules and to discover new forms of commitment, to build on positive experiences and to reject negative ones. The crisis thus becomes *an opportunity for discernment, in which to shape a new vision for the future.* In this spirit, with confidence rather than resignation, it is

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appropriate to address the difficulties of the present time."[6]

As an opportunity for discernment, the covid-19 crisis sets us on a search not only for the merger of freedoms to promote the dignity of every person in an inclusive experience of the common good, but also the task of the State to ensure and to promote the common good in a crisis situation, like this pandemic.

This makes us want to revisit Heinz Bude's representation of solidarity: a new understanding of solidarity, which, in a situation like the present pandemic, calls on the State to organise such a solidarity for the benefit of vulnerable members of society and to provide, in the future, much more freedom and protection for each other.[7] There is no doubt that, in a social-market system of governance *(soziale Marktwirtschaft)*[8] that Germany is, the Corona crisis has accelerated this future and has fashioned a new understanding of State and market based solidarity at a desirable pace.

The state will have to gain new strength to order individual freedoms and gains in freedom, to commit profits and assets to the common good, not least in favour of efficient and effective climate protection, but to protect completely new endangered risk groups in a society of individuals living in solidarity, who see themselves as persons, namely, as morally obliged to each other. This is increasingly true in the field of health and care, not least with regard to adequate payment for people working in care and the protection of their increased health risks, but also in the field of globalization, in the field of investments and employment and integral human development, also in the field of financial risk protection, which would not be possible at all in times of a pandemic without state protection. And this unfolds a new global facet of the social market economy in the direction of a preventive and forward-looking solidarity of social and political actors who are clearly aware of their own vulnerability and thus of the necessary solidarity of all. Such renewed and deepened solidarity is called solidary Charity or, according to the new encyclical *Fratelli tutti,* fraternal love.

1 Cf. Spinney, Laura (2017): *Pale Rider. The Spanish Flu of 1918 and how it changed the world.* London.

2 Cf. Conrad, Peter (2007): *The Medicalization of Society: On the Transformation of Human Conditions into Treatable Disorders.* Baltimore.

3 Cf. Dreier, Horst (2018): *Staat ohne Gott. Religion in der säkularen Moderne.* Munich, pp. 171–188.

4 Cf. Taylor, Charles (2007): *A Secular Age.* Cambridge/Massachusetts; cf. Lebrun, David (2017): „La sécularisation selon Charles Taylor." In: Van Reeth, Jan und Pottier, Bernard (eds.): *Secularisation & Europe.* 's-Hertogenbosch, pp. 93–100.

5 *Caritas in veritate,* 21. http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html (accessed: November 25, 2020)

6 Idem (author's emphasis).

7 Cf. Bude, Heinz (2019): *Solidarität. Die Zukunft einer großen Idee.* Munich.

8 Cf. Franco, Giuseppe (2018*): Da Salamanca a Friburgo: Joseph Höffner e l'economia sociale di mercato.* Città del Vaticano.

ON THE REFUSAL TO CAPITULATE TO SUFFERING

Author: **Katharina Klöcker**

Now they are calling it a once-in-a-century pandemic. But who knows how pandemic this relatively young century will become yet? Worldwide, more than 60 million people have been infected with Covid-19, and 1.4 million have died as a result. Between the time of writing this text and its publication, these figures will have faded from memory, giving way to higher numbers. We are living in dark times. It is an undeniable fact that the coronavirus is bringing suffering to almost all corners of the earth. Worldwide, people will emerge from this crisis marked – physically and psychologically, with their livelihoods under threat. Exhaustion and reluctance to comply are spreading. So far, few people have protested against the restriction of civil liberties aimed at preventing tragic triage situations in intensive care units. But here too, developments are fast-paced. Many societies could soon be put to a critical test if anti-democratic groups spreading conspiracy theories continue to gain ground. In some places there is already talk of "pandemic populism".[1]

How well the crisis can ultimately be overcome will undeniably depend on our response to the respective infection situation, and, in particular, on pooling our strengths in the medical and nursing fields. The *Bundeswehr* is also making an important contribution in this respect. Thousands of military personnel have now been deployed, and for example are helping overburdened health authorities track infection chains. This focus on what needs to be decided in the here and now of the acute emergency situation is necessary. But it is also in danger of turning into a destructive short-sightedness – if the population stops accepting the sometimes painful restrictions, which many anti-corona measures undoubtedly are. Any such acceptance, especially when it has far-reaching consequences for many people, more than anything else demands good reasons. It seems far more necessary than before to promote a broad discourse in civil society as an effective means against the spread of the virus. This discourse should constructively address con-

Abstract

The corona pandemic is causing deep suffering worldwide, and continues to develop at a fast pace. Apart from medical crisis management, one of the most important social tasks is to maintain and promote a broad, constructive discourse on the necessary containment measures. This is the only way to stop acceptance waning and to prevent the spread of anti-democratic ideas. Precisely because of its anti-resignatory attitude, theology should intervene in this discourse and seek to answer questions of justice which have been neglected so far. If it does not want to suffer a (further) loss of social relevance, it must engage with the acute problems of the times in a visible, serious manner, and offer more than just ready-made answers.

In this crisis, the alleged negative correlation between fear (of infection, illness and death) and solidarity is repeatedly referred to. The great helpfulness of the past months demonstrated that fear does not per se promote selfish behavior. However, especially in times of pandemics, there is a danger that solidarity will turn into hostility. Christianity also knows these dangers of desolidarization out of fear. It therefore calls upon trust in God as a way to overcome fear. But this remains an ideal that many people cannot attain. Another way how fear and solidarity can be put into relation from a Christian perspective is shown by the "unbelieving" disciple Thomas in the Gospel of John. Only in the symbolic confrontation with the wounds of Jesus does he recognize that God is alive. The refusal to capitulate to the suffering of the world could thus become a way of encountering God.

troversies, without provoking polarization or vilifying those who hold differing opinions. Another feature of this discourse would be that because of the fast-paced developments, admitting mistakes would be a sign of strength, not weakness.

In the face of the current pandemic, but also prompted by climate change and political upheavals, previously neglected questions of justice are becoming more pressing. I believe that the most important task for theologians at present is to demonstrate the extent to which, in regard to these global and epochal challenges, Christian theology can be considered not merely a provider of simple answers, but also a companion for reflection. Yet some people will ask, in surprise or irritation: Why should theology, a discipline whose social relevance seems to be on a permanent downward trajectory, have something to say? And why now of all times?

Probably the shortest answer is that theology, in talking about God, implies a refusal to accept things as they are. At present, in a way that has not been seen for a long time and which in this intensity is completely new to the younger generations, people in Germany are confronted with this question: How should the world change so that everyone can live well in it now, but also in the future? This question may not be as harmless as it sounds. Theology is in danger of either not letting itself be touched by this question, or of giving the impression that it always has the answers to hand. But a theology that is not seen to grapple with the questions of the time is one that discredits itself. It is by no means clear whether theology can raise its core concerns in such a way that it plays a valid and helpful role with regard to the urgent questions of the present. But one thing is certain: If theology fails this test, the crisis will undermine it and further erode its perception as a socially relevant force, as well as its influence on contemporary discourse. Let us for a moment imagine sand dunes, and picture how small plants prevent their erosion by taking root, holding the soil in place, and providing protection from the wind. In a similar way, with its words, this essay aims to do the same for theology.

In March of this year, during the first corona wave, Europe was paralyzed by grief and fear. In Italy, even the crematoria ran out of space because so many people died in such a short time. The image of a military convoy in Lombardy transporting hundreds of coffins – the dead of one day – made a deep impression on the iconographic memory of Europe. At the time, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben complained that the Italians were ready to sacrifice anything out of fear of infection – their normal life, social relationships and friendships, their feelings and political and religious beliefs. His compatriots' only goal, as Agamben saw it, was to survive. His further remarks are of interest here simply because of one particular sentence which leads us to think about solidarity in the crisis: "The struggle for life and the fear of losing it," Agamben wrote, "is not something that unites people but something that divides them and makes them blind."[2] In other words, when their own lives are at risk, people no longer think and act in solidarity.

Anyone who begins to reflect on the much-used concept of solidarity will be unable to avoid the initial question of whether Agamben might actually be right. Is it true that fear of infection undermines people's solidarity with and for one another? Do they become blind to the concerns of others when they fear for their own lives? The first question therefore is whether Agamben's claim turns out to be true. To answer this, we have to look to the findings of disaster sociology and disaster psychology.

Surveys show that the fears triggered by the pandemic change depending on the infection situation.[3] In a Germany-wide representative survey conducted in October 2020 – at a time when the number of infections was rising very rapidly – 11 percent of respondents described their level of fear of catching Covid-19 as "very high" while 26 percent described it as "high". (38 percent "not so high" and 24 percent "low").[4] In some people, the fear is very great and may even lead them to extremes of behavior. They find it difficult to escape the dictates of their fear, and become trapped in painful self-isolation. At the other end of the

fear scale are those who ignore or suppress their fear, who may even think they are invulnerable and feel no fear; or who do not want to admit this to themselves and instead wish to demonstrate their apparent lack of fear as visibly as possible. Think, for example, of those people who refuse to wear a mask, or who deliberately break rules on social contact that are designed to protect others and prevent the spread of the virus. It seems obvious that both excessive fear and denied or non-existent fear tend to encourage selfish rather than altruistic behavior. However, psychologists point to much more complex relationships between feelings of fear, selfishness, altruism, reciprocity and empathy.

Fears – this much can be said – do not *necessarily* lead to selfish behavior. They can also

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cause people to show greater solidarity for each other. But researchers of fear also note that research still needs to be done on the question of when fear tends to promote solidarity, and when the opposite is the case.[5] At any rate, the corona crisis has given rise to civil society engagement in an impressive way and shaped solidarity in different contexts. Rarely

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before has such a distinct and creative, such a vibrant willingness to help been seen as in the first months of the crisis. The willingness to temporarily forgo civil liberties or provide concrete help to protect at-risk groups has been high. Here the fear of infection – which always has a life-preserving element within it, since it prevents recklessness – seems to have assumed a function of not only reducing solidarity, but actually promoting it.

At the same time, however, the sociology of disaster points out that especially in a pandemic, where the threat comes from other people (as opposed to natural disasters, for example), there is a danger of solidarity turning into hostility. In this view, people have been showing an extreme urge ultimately to ensure only their own survival.

In the Judeo-Christian context, the connection between altruism and egoism is fundamentally expressed in the commandment to love oneself and one's neighbor: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" says the Book of Leviticus, which Jesus quotes later on. For a long time, loving thy neighbor was primarily interpreted as being about unconditionally sacrificing oneself for others. But theology in the context of today's discourses on care ethics faces the task of redefining the dialectic of love of one's self, love of one's neighbor, and love of one's enemy. This is a task that can only be mentioned here, not pursued further. In view of the considerations above, we should instead turn to the question of the significance of fear in the relationship between altruism and egoism.

"Fear not!" – this exhortation is one of the central biblical imperatives. It extends across the whole life of Jesus. In the Christmas story, an angel in the field says this to the shepherds (Luke 2:10); and at the grave of Jesus, to the women (Matthew 28:5). In numerous encounters witnessed in the Bible, this imperative is recalled again and again. Fear is to be overcome by trusting in God and his promise of salvation for mankind. Pope Francis wrote in *Evangelii gaudium:* "The Christian ideal will always be a summons to overcome suspicion, habitual mistrust, fear of losing our privacy, all the defensive attitudes which

today's world imposes on us."[6] From a deep relationship of trust in God, this seems possible. In other words, faith *can* free the believer from fear for himself – as people of all eras have impressively demonstrated.

But if there were actually an inherent freedom from fear for oneself in all Christians, then many of those who have demonstrated this freedom from fear would not be venerated as saints. It is not for nothing that Pope Francis speaks of an ideal. Fear remains an open wound, a gateway to the loss of solidarity – even for Christians. "The storm reveals our weakness," Pope Francis said in a deserted St. Peter's Square, at the end of March 2020, about the world facing Covid-19. He referred to the frightened disciples in the boat who are caught out by the storm and called upon to help each other. Thus vulnerability comes into focus as a fundamental anthropological dimension, which people in the pandemic are confronted with on a daily basis. Christianity in a sense represents a single large exercise in the perception of vulnerability. In Jesus, "the experiences of suffering of the biblical tradition" are combined with "physical mistreatment to the point of brutal destruction, psychological fear and social isolation, doubts about one's own ability to maintain one's identity in this suffering (Mark 14-15), and panicky fear that this painful shattering of his life is a terrible encounter with a furious God."[7]

Now the all-important clue as to what this suffering shows – and this includes first and foremost also the suffering of fear – is owed to, of all people, the one who did not (any longer) feel he belonged unconditionally to the flock of disciples. He who doubted and therefore was often chastised in the history of reception of Christian texts as an "unbeliever". Thomas, as is told in the Gospel of John, asks to see Jesus' wounds (John 20:24-29). Only after he has seen the wounds does this doubting apostle declare in all clarity to the Risen One: "My Lord and my God". One could say that Thomas is a "figure by means of whom the narrator in John attempts to convey to the reader – and indirectly, to us – the path from unbelief to paschal faith"[8].

But what happens on this path from unbelief to faith? As the Czech theologian Tomáš Halík puts it in his interpretation of the story of Thomas, only he who sees and touches the wounds of Jesus and in them the wounds of the world, and does not "capitulate to the fire of suffering" will recognize that God is alive.[9] From the perception of fear and suffering, from being deeply touched despite all necessary physical distance, an exuberant solidarity has grown in the past months – not everywhere, but nevertheless in many places. This refusal to capitulate before the fire of suffering was and is the glimmer of hope in this time. Thus in a tangible and credible way, in the midst of the corona crisis, it would also be possible to talk of the aliveness of God.

1 This is the title of a study on Facebook posts of alternative news media relating to Covid-19: https://arxiv.org/abs/2004.02566 (accessed November 13, 2020).
2 Agamben, Giorgio (2020): "Nach Corona: Wir sind nurmehr das nackte Leben": Gastkommentar. In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung,* March 18, 2020.
3 Cf. e.g. https://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/ethnologie/forschung/arbeitsstellen/katastrophenforschung/publikationen/Schulze_et_al_2020_Vera_nderte_Wahrnehmung_der_COVID-19_Lage_von_Ma_z_bis_April_2020.pdf (accessed November 13, 2020).
4 https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/1096524/umfrage/umfrage-zur-angst-vor-ansteckung-mit-dem-coronavirus-in-deutschland/ (accessed November 13, 2020).
5 Cf. "Angst ist ansteckend." Interview with Jürgen Margraf, available online at: https://taz.de/Psychologe-ueber-das-Coronavirus/!5665965/ (accessed November 13, 2020).
6 Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* of the Holy Father Francis to the bishops, clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful on the proclamation of the gospel in today's world. Available online at http://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.pdf (accessed November 24, 2020).
7 Zenger, Erich (1980): "Leiden, IV. Biblische Perspektiven." In: Brantschen, Johannes B. et al. (eds.): *Leiden. Gesundheit – Krankheit – Heilung. Sterben – Sterbebeistand. Trauer und Trost.* Freiburg (Christlicher Glaube in moderner Gesellschaft 10) pp.27-36, p. 27.
8 Frey, Jörg (2011): "Der 'zweifelnde' Thomas (Joh 20,24-29) im Spiegel seiner Rezeptionsgeschichte." In: *Hermeneutische Blätter,* pp. 5-32, p. 24.
9 Cf. Halík, Tomáš (2013): *Berühre die Wunden. Über Leid, Vertrauen und die Kunst der Verwandlung.* Freiburg, p. 22.

CORONA AS A SECURITY RISK
ON THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN AN INSECURE SOCIETY

Authors: **Markus Vogt and Rolf Husmann**

In Germany, the relationship between the military and society is precarious and tense. In this context, the assistance provided by military personnel during the corona crisis is an opportunity to positively influence the image of the German armed forces *(Bundeswehr).* Yet the current situation is also an occasion for deeper reflection on the role of the military in civilian society, as well as the changing attitude toward risk. At the beginning of the corona pandemic in March 2020, the Federal Defense Minister, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, made a statement that could suggest a new model for the relationship between civilian society and the military: "When states and communities, the economy, the police, the Technical Relief Agency and all other institutions reach their limits, of course the *Bundeswehr* will be there to help."[1]

There was great longing for a helper in the time of need. As an experience of crisis, the corona pandemic has shaken communities like an earthquake. A sense of supposed security which existed before this rupture has given way to feelings of insecurity and risk. How a community can be stabilized even under extreme conditions such as these, and under the weight of unforeseeable and uncontrollable risks, is a question of resilience. Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer described the German armed forces as an "essential and dependable pillar of our community",[2] and therefore as a kind of backup resilience resource for its stabilization.

What form this contribution of the German armed forces might take and what the boundaries of their involvement ought to be are discussed below. However beneficial it may be to establish this new model in which the *Bundeswehr* plays a constructive role with regard to civilian society, it is equally important to consider the boundaries of military involvement in our society. The civilian community should enjoy an inalienable freedom which consists precisely in its distance from the state. The *Bundeswehr's* free democratic guiding principle of the "citizen in

Abstract

The Bundeswehr is getting to grips with a new role. An important aspect of this self-image is the relationship between the military and civilian society. During the corona crisis, the armed forces have assumed the function of a backup resource, which has increased the resilience of society. This article examines the ways in which the military can contribute to society, as well as the limits to such engagement in a liberal democracy. It begins by explaining the concept of resilience, which addresses the ability of individuals and societies to adapt and develop, and asks what potentials exist for solving unforeseen problems and crises. From this perspective, contingent events are viewed not as disruptive factors, but as a spur for development. This is followed by an outline of the various forms of support and assistance provided by the Bundeswehr and other national armed forces during the corona pandemic. These increase the state's capacity for action, support the public's trust in the government, and therefore can also contribute to a positive image of the military. Nevertheless, it is also important for politicians and civil society to keep their expectations of assistance from the Bundeswehr within the limits prescribed by the German Basic Law, instead of reflexively attempting to eliminate risk at the expense of freedom. The article argues for a complementary "risk maturity" and a balance – which has to be constantly maintained – between freedom, risk, resilience and safety.

uniform" should also take this into account. Therefore, this article will firstly examine the contribution of the German armed forces to resilience, before discussing the relationship between freedom and risk in a liberal democracy. Questions arise as to the limits the principle of freedom places on the *Bundeswehr's* involvement, and how a community can responsibly deal with the necessary complements of freedom: risk and contingency.

The military, and the resilience of society

The collapse of societies has often been brought about as a result of people continuing to live as before, despite the obvious existence of fundamental problems. They failed to adapt to changing conditions.[3] These communities therefore lacked a certain elasticity, or resilience. At the same time, there are also positive examples of adaptability: far less dramatic changes than the corona pandemic today have challenged our society to activate adaptive and regenerative capacities. Now, in the corona pandemic, every individual is required to adapt their behavior to the situation. If society had carried on as before without making any changes, the situation would have worsened, making a catastrophic outcome seem all but inevitable. Yet also with regard to other rapid changes in our society, the question of adaptability and resilience has been the subject of widespread debate.

Resilience, meaning a characteristic of systems and societies that makes them robust in the face of unforeseen changes, has become a subject of research in the social sciences. In the attempt to understand this phenomenon, complex system processes are modeled in social theory. In these models, resilience is a process-related criterion that is complementary to substantive concepts. In other words, it is these concepts, based on a normatively determined goal definition, which address the purpose of societal development. Resilience, meanwhile, considers processes not from the point of view of desirable ideals, but in terms of hazards, risks and unforeseen difficulties. The resilience concept attempts to identify characteristics and processes which enable robust adaptation and development of society, even under adverse conditions.

An approach is sought which can be applied to situations where the environment is rapidly changing and these changes are not foreseeable. Resilience includes response strategies, i.e. basic competences for coping with the unforeseen, disruptions and structural breaks, and responding appropriately to situations characterized by contingency, chance and ignorance. Strengthening resilience is a way of preparing for second-order problems, i.e. problems that cause particular difficulties because they are unforeseeable and their substance is unknown.[4] Resilience requires more than just optimizing efficien-

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cy, because efficiency by definition always relates to known problems or circumstances. Resilience, by contrast, relates to unknown problems whose development is hard to control. The ability to improvise, and openness to surprises, become the guiding virtues of an ethics suitable for dealing with contingency.[5] The point is to creatively shape change, and not just suffer it. Resilience refers to a "not clearly controllable process characterized by uncertainty, and knowledge that still has to be gained".[6]

In addition, potential for problem-solving can also be found in personal, social, cultural, economic and ecological resources. The central questions, therefore, are how people cope with crises, and how we can design institutions or systems so that they are less susceptible to disruption. Resilience concepts ask about problem-solving potential in terms of actors, actions and resources. This is definitely not about optimism in regard to progress and planning, as some have supposed; rather this is systematically relativized. The idea that a preventive solution can be found

to all problems that arise is replaced by the "uncertainty paradigm". Resilience strategies expect the unexpected, the "black swans" (Taleb). This is why it is assumed in resilience concepts that uncertainty and surprises are by no means always bad. Just as an immune system only develops and becomes active when it has to fight off germs, so social systems and mental processes always need challenges in order to develop their potential. Resilience depends on strengthening the personal-psychological and societal-social immune systems.[7] It sees crises as "disruptions that create incentives for greater com-

Resilience is different than resistance in the sense of mere persistence, and different than a transformation that leads to a break of identity followed by a transition into a completely different state

plexity".[8] Resilience research is interested in processes for dealing with disruptions, and regards such activities as the key feature of complex living or social systems. Their identity therefore cannot be defined statically, but rather as the capacity to react, act and interpret – or even as "antifragility".[9]

Antifragility could be confused with stability or rigidity, but that is not what is meant by the term. Instead of stability, it is better to talk about constancy or consistency: something remains constant, something else has to change. Sometimes parts and individual properties of the system have to change so that the system as a whole can be preserved. Thus resilience is different than resistance in the sense of mere persistence, and different than a transformation that leads to a break of identity followed by a transition into a completely different state. Resilience aims at the dynamic self-preservation of an actor, an institution or a system in respect of its identity-giving functions and core characteristics.

In summary, resilience is a coping strategy for a society that is able to learn from crisis experiences. Now we shall see in the specific case how the military has contributed and can contribute to this strategy.

The military contribution around the world

The corona crisis is a severe test for society. As it has clearly shown, there is a real possibility that social institutions could become overwhelmed and collapse. In many countries, the military has provided valuable assistance in the form of logistics, personnel or services. All of these at first glance simple forms of assistance are extremely important for the functioning and survival of our society. Especially under the burdens of the pandemic, with extraordinarily high demand for protective equipment and medical personnel, a reserve of personnel and logistical capacities are essential to prevent bottlenecks and ensure there is no overloading of the personnel and equipment provided under normal conditions. In this very practical sense, assistance from the military can make a decisive contribution to the resilience of society because it can prevent overloading and collapse. We have observed this worldwide.

In France, the military provided additional medical personnel and organized patient transports. In Switzerland, the military took over logistical tasks, but also cared for the sick and transported patients. In Italy, trucks were made available for transportation, and medical materials were produced by the military. In Poland, the military cared for and also offered a psychological counselling helpline for people in quarantine. As the burdened (social) security systems (health, care, etc.) reached the limits of their capabilities, their overloading was effectively prevented in this way.

The contributions of the military – for the most part – met with a positive reception.[10] They demonstrated to the public that the state is capable of acting despite the crisis, and has reserves of resilience that protect it from any loss of control or even anarchic conditions. Taking on this helping role makes the *Bundeswehr* appear as a reliable, competent partner of civilian society. However, here too it is important to maintain the right balance. While relief activities and efforts to compen-

sate for the absence of government staff and officials (e.g. due to infection) are undoubtedly welcome measures, this can become questionable if the military is used only to increase the control density and influence of the state. A free civilian society in a liberal democracy must maintain a reserve of distance from the state. For this reason, it should be important to the *Bundeswehr* – for the sake of its self-image – precisely not to give the impression that it wants to interfere in this freedom, but rather that it aims to protect and preserve it in the face of external threats. Thus, in essence, a balance must be struck between constancy (through resilience) and freedom (with acceptance of risks). Freedom, it is important to note, requires a certain tolerance of risk on the part of individuals and society. Yet we find a widespread aversion to any risk. This aversion can only be overcome if it is shown that the "insurance mentality" often encountered today is one-sided. It is vital to recognize, additionally, that freedom and risk are closely interdependent.

Freedom and risk

Our understanding of risk has changed. Nowadays, you can insure yourself against risks. The destruction of a house by lightning and fire is no longer a fate that has to be accepted. It can be averted with a lightning conductor, and residential building insurance will compensate for any loss. Much of what used to be fate is now taken into calculation; our actions are based on calculated risks. The expansion of knowledge and the ability to influence events enlarges the radius of responsibility. It transforms fate that once had to be accepted into risk which is taken into account in the decision-making processes of individuals and communities. This change of perspective has brought about considerable shifts in personal perception and the status of uncertainty in social theory. Risk in many cases is now seen as a negative component that can be influenced and needs to be minimized.

Herrmann Lübbe criticizes this almost omnipresent communication of risk. He regards it as a pattern of thinking in which the concept of risk one-sidedly dominates. This generates a tendency for excessively high safety expectations, as well as a moralism which often takes the form of accusations.[11] It drives politicians into a "declamatory responsibility overload",[12] since they get elected by promising an ability to manage risk that goes far beyond their capacity to act.[13] The understandable call to minimize risks is a phenomenon that is intimately linked to the primordial human emotion of fear and the desire for security.

The concept of risk often arouses negative associations which prevent us from seeing how closely risk and freedom are related. If you want freedom, you have to learn to live with risks. Any freedom that encompasses only those alternatives for action which are without risk is a hollow freedom. Manytimes such action alternatives do not exist, or differ in purely banal aspects. Whether driving a car, barbecuing outdoors, setting off fireworks or keeping animals – many of our actions involve a (permitted) risk for others. Of course it would theoretically be possible to stop people driving cars or ban fireworks to eliminate certain risks, but these are individual decisions concerning the social question of which specific risks we accept and put up with as a society, and which not.

To believe in the utopian idea that risk can be completely eliminated is a fatal error, even though this belief springs from and feeds people's need for security

The fundamental question of balancing risk minimization against freedom remains with us, as the issue is sure to surface again elsewhere (e.g. self-driving cars). To believe in the utopian idea that risk can be completely eliminated is a fatal error, even though this belief springs from and feeds people's need for security. Ultimately there are boundaries that a free and democratic society must not cross. One very obvious case is censorship, where even the question of what books we

read has been seen as a risk to society – not for the first time under the National Socialist and communist dictatorships – and met with harsh censorship. But well before we get to this obviously anti-democratic example, we will find boundaries where a liberal order demands the courage to accept risk.

We can also see these boundaries in the fundamental decision of the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) on the deployment of the German armed forces within Germany, and in an examination of the arguments used to criticize militarism – not in a merely aesthetic sense, but in a sociological, theory-of-state sense.

Militarization of society?

Article 87a (2) of the Basic Law formulates a constitutional proviso for the deployment of the armed forces as a "means of executive power in a context of intervention".[14,15] This proviso does not cover every use of military resources: it covers every use in which the armed forces' potential to threaten and intimidate unfolds. A possible use of the armed forces that is expressly provided for can be found in Article 35 (2) sentence 2, (3) of the Basic Law. High requirements are placed on official assistance by the *Bundeswehr:* "In order to respond to a grave accident or a natural disaster..."[16] In the words of the Federal Constitutional Court, these must be "events of catastrophic proportions".[17] The constitution therefore sets high hurdles for the deploy-

ment of the armed forces inside Germany. Behind such provisions, a certain reservation about the power of military institutions may rightly be suspected. The explanatory memorandum to the draft legislation to amend the Basic Law with the above provisions states that "the freedom and wellbeing" of citizens is to be protected precisely by the separation of powers and through further decentralization and division of power.[18] Thus there is a general reservation with regard to overly strong central state power inside Germany, which could significantly curtail the freedom of a civilian society. Especially given the history of National Socialism, this freedom has a special meaning in Germany.

The criticism that resides under the heading of "militarization of society" can be understood in a similar vein. A purely historical reference to Prussian militarism, which some authors see as the root of the fragility of the Weimar Republic, would be too brief a summary of this line of argument. The point being made is precisely that a civilian society should not be fully integrated into the hierarchical construct of the state, and not every area of society should be accessible to this hierarchy and its structure of command and obedience.

With these concerns in mind, the boundary applicable to military involvement can be formulated as follows: the *Bundeswehr* should primarily take on assistance activities, but its involvement should not mean an increase of state power. It should only compensate for a weakening of the state due to the current crisis. If we remain within these boundaries, any involvement of the military is based on respect for the sanctuary of civilian society, and the *Bundeswehr* is a strong partner in the face of overwhelming crises.

But it is not enough only to demand this restraint from the *Bundeswehr,* which in any case must be strictly observed according to the provisions of the Basic Law. In addition, other political actors and civilian society should not call for assistance from the *Bundeswehr* beyond what is necessary. Civilian society should instead actively engage with the questions of risk and contingency,

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and develop strategies for dealing with risks and contingency individually, without reflexively demanding safety at the expense of freedom.

Contingency management as an individual challenge

Religion and religious ethics can also make an important contribution. According to Niklas Luhmann, the central task of religion is "contingency management", which means keeping alive an awareness of unresolvable uncertainties and paradoxes. Particularly in view of current questions of risk in the context of the corona pandemic as well as ecological and political destabilization, this seems fundamental. Religion can help on the level of individual coping.

But the individual, just like society as a whole, has to develop "risk maturity" – the term that Wolfgang Kersting uses to describe a responsible approach to uncertainty.

"Thinking in terms of probabilities, weighing up multiple possibilities, forms part of the cognitive infrastructure of the modern era, for the modern era is the age of only relative, certainty-free rationality. [...] Hence in technical and moral respects we should become risk-mature and develop a system of managing uncertainties".[19]

Risk maturity is the ability to take justified and responsible decisions even in situations characterized by high complexity and uncertainty. In a free society, risk is a constant companion. But uncertainty and insecurity also stem from an increasingly complex society and discourse environment. Insecurity is fueled by sometimes uncertain consequences of actions, by different standards of judgment held by those affected – on which consensus is rarely found – and by the pressure to act, which arises from the fact that passivity could also be highly dangerous.

Uncertainties abound in complex systems, as has become increasingly apparent during corona times. Therefore a priority of risk minimization – consistently applied – would result in complete paralysis of the capacity to act. Strict avoidance of any risk results in a resigned loss of innovation. It could therefore ultimately turn out to be a strategy that blocks potential for action and so creates more risks than it avoids. "Risk maturity" does not aim to absolutely minimize all risk, but to avoid a critical threshold of risks and increase flexible problem-solving potentials.

A social compromise on these thresholds has to be found, which every rational individual can potentially support. "Yet precisely because the perception of risk is not shaped by the grammar of absolute rationality, but is instead embedded in a plural perceptual behavior which balances different value perspectives, it should remain embedded in *participatory decision-making models* of risk management".[20] To the extent that many

Uncertainties abound in complex systems, as has become increasingly apparent during corona times

situations involving complex interrelationships are particularly context-sensitive, the judgment of those who are directly acting and affected acquires an essential importance over that of external experts. Particularly in the context of the corona crisis, risk maturity requires democratic processes that ceaselessly reflect on the decision-relevant limits of knowledge, with the representative involvement of the persons affected and various specialist expertise.

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Risk maturity on the part of individuals and society is therefore complementary to the resilience resources that our society also draws from the involvement of the German armed forces. The path that Germany has taken so far is leading in the right direction, i.e. toward a just balance of freedom, risk, safety and

The corona pandemic has shown that risks can occur which had not been considered in social discourse

stability. A perfect mix cannot be formulated as a recipe to suit all times and all communities; it is instead a subject of discussion which must be constantly democratically renegotiated in a pluralistic society.

The corona pandemic has shown that risks can occur which had not been considered in social discourse. It is therefore all the more reassuring that the *Bundeswehr* is making an active but at the same time subsidiary and restrained contribution to the resilience of our community. Under the weight of serious problems, and in the face of unforeseeable events, democratic processes can necessarily sometimes present only incomplete solutions. The involvement of the German armed forces helps to ensure that these processes do not collapse and are not swept aside because of crises, but instead are resilient. This enables our society to deal with crises – even such serious ones as this – in freedom.

1 (Translated from German.) Kramp-Karrenbauer, Annegret (2020): *Statement*, press conference of March 19, 2020.

2 (Translated from German.) Kramp-Karrenbauer, Annegret (2020): *Statement*, press conference of March 19, 2020.

3 Cf. Diamond, Jared (2005): *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed.* New York.

4 Vogt, Markus / Schneider, Martin (2017): "Selbsterhaltung, Kontrolle, Lernen. Zu den normativen Dimensionen von Resilienz." In: Karidi, Maria et al. (eds.): *Resilienz. Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven zu Wandel und Transformation.* Wiesbaden, pp. 103-123.

5 On this point cf. Vogt, Markus (2014): "Handeln unter der unsicheren Bedingung." In: Neuner, Peter (ed.): *Zufall als Quelle von Unsicherheit.* Freiburg im Breisgau / Munich, pp. 229-232.

6 (Translated from German.) Endreß, Martin / Rampp, Benjamin (2015): *Resilienz als Perspektive auf gesellschaftliche Prozesse. Auf dem Weg zu einer soziologischen Theorie.* In: Endreß, Martin and Maurer, Andrea (eds.): *Resilienz im Sozialen.* Wiesbaden, pp. 33-55.

7 On this point cf. Sloterdijk, Peter (2013): *You Must Change Your Life. On Anthropotechnics.* Cambridge, Malden, pp. 442 ff.

8 (Translated from German.) Horx, Matthias (2011): *Das Megatrendprinzip. Wie die Welt von morgen entsteht.* Munich, p. 306.

9 Taleb, Nassim (2012): *Antifragile. Things that Gain from Disorder.* London.

10 For example: Möhle, Holger (2020): "Einsatz ohne Beispiel, Kommentar zur Bundeswehr als Helfer in der Viruskrise." In: *Westfalenblatt* (March 20, 2020), https://www.westfalen-blatt.de/Ueberregional/Meinung/4173846-Kommentar-zur-Bundeswehr-als-Helfer-in-der-Viruskrise-Einsatz-ohne-Beispiel (accessed October 29, 2020). Generally more critical, but clearly defending the use of the military against anti-militarism: Müller-Neuhof, Jost (2020): "Da kann die Verteidigungsministerin dem Linksdrall mal einen einschenken." In: Der Tagesspiegel (October 2, 2020), https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/widerstand-gegen-bundeswehr-im-corona-einsatz-da-kann-die-verteidigungsministerin-dem-linksdrall-mal-einen-einschenken/26235826.html (accessed October 29, 2020).

11 Lübbe, Hermann (1994): "Moralismus oder fingierte Handlungssubjektivität in komplexen historischen Prozessen". In: Lübbe, Weyma (ed.): *Kausalität und Zurechnung. Über Verantwortung in komplexen kulturellen Prozessen.* Berlin / New York, pp. 289-301, p. 297. He defines moralism as the attempt to solve urgent problems of civilization via appeals to the collective of unorganized involved individuals; cf. ibid., p. 298.

12 Cf. Lübbe, Hermann (1994): "Moralismus oder fingierte Handlungssubjektivität in komplexen historischen Prozessen". In: Lübbe, Weyma (ed.): *Kausalität und Zurechnung. Über Verantwortung in komplexen kulturellen Prozessen.* Berlin / New York, pp. 293-297.

13 Ulrich Beck analyzes the "risk society" and its globalization as the "world risk society" in light of fundamental deficits of political controllability and the illusion of promised but unfulfillable responsibility; cf. Beck, Ulrich (1992): *Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity.* London; Beck, Ulrich (2008): *World Risk Society.* Cambridge, Malden.

14 (Translated from German.) BVerfG NVwZ 2012, 1239 (1244).

15 When it comes to the details, the definition of deployment is disputed. On the state of opinion cf. Epping, Volker (2020): "Art. 87a GG". In: Epping, Volker and Hillgruber, Christian (eds.): *Beck'scher Online-Kommentar zum Grundgesetz.* 44th edition, margin no. 18.

16 (Translated from German.)

17 (Translated from German.) BVerfGE 115, 118 (143).

18 (Translated from German.) Deutscher Bundestag (1967): Drucksache V/1879, p. 6.

19 (Translated from German.) Kersting, Wolfgang (2005): *Kritik der Gleichheit. Über die Grenzen der Gerechtigkeit und der Moral.* Weilerswist, p. 317; on risk maturity see the whole section on pp. 317-320.

20 (Translated from German.) Kersting, Wolfgang (2005): *Kritik der Gleichheit. Über die Grenzen der Gerechtigkeit und der Moral.* Weilerswist, p. 318.

VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE IN TIMES OF THE CORONA PANDEMIC

A GEOPOLITICAL APPROACH

Author: **Herfried Münkler**

Introduction

The corona pandemic: from the spread of the virus to the different kinds of government response, it is many things to many people. It is a challenge for virologists and epidemiologists, a bonanza for social scientists – who can observe societies in a state of emergency – and not least it is an invitation to theorists of geopolitics and strategic action to carefully revise their models and suggestions in the light of recent experiences. While epidemiologists were immediately called upon to provide their expertise essentially from one day to the next, social scientists could take a little more time before presenting the first studies. Strategic thinkers and geopolitical theorists were and still are under the least time pressure – which explains why the debate on the consequences of the pandemic for security policy in a globally networked world has only just begun.[1] This is understandable, since it is difficult to substantially evaluate and (possibly) revise the assumptions made so far, before we know how the pandemic will progress. But on the other hand, this waiting is not without risk either. Fundamental changes in strategic and geopolitical constellations have already taken place, and whoever understands them first will probably gain the greatest advantage from them. The following reflections are intended as a preliminary appraisal of the consequences of the pandemic from a security policy perspective, with notes on a prospective reformatting of central geopolitical assumptions.

The onset of uncertainty

Modern societies rely on longer-term planning to meet their citizens' expectations with regard to the provisions that will be put in place for their welfare. This in turn requires reliable anticipations of the future, for which purpose legions of experts are employed – in fields ranging from economics and demographics to ecology and meteorology. The earlier you know what will stay the same and what will change, the better you are able to prepare

Abstract

How are the pandemic and the measures taken to contain it affecting the international order, geopolitical structures, and strategic thinking? To investigate this, the author focuses on the vulnerability and resilience of societies. Modern societies are vulnerable to pandemics because they are dependent on global supply chains and their populations have a certainty-oriented mentality. The resilience corresponding to this specific vulnerability is a combination of self-sufficiency, resources for the economic revitalization of shrunken economies, and social cohesion to counteract increased centrifugal forces. Meeting this threefold requirement is likely beyond the capabilities of (European) nation states, and is only possible in an economically interdependent and politically integrated "greater region". This leads to the thesis that the pandemic will slow the trend for globalization and promote the emergence of regional orders. Furthermore, three broad models can be filtered out from all the various forms of government action to contain the pandemic. These can be regarded as the main strategic alternatives: the Chinese-East Asian, the Anglo-American, and the West European-German model. They compete with each other in terms of effectiveness and the role they play for others as a model and role model. This competition between different models is all about limiting vulnerability and increasing resilience. It is likely to encourage the emergence of regional orders with their own values and norms, guiding ideas and rules – at least if the pandemic threat does not remain just a passing episode but occupies a central place on the political agenda in the future.

for it. Incidentally, this applies not only to societies, but also to personal life choices. Yet planned-out visions of the future are contingency-averse: wherever possible, chance is eliminated from the equation with the aid of large amounts of data. Even the disaster scenarios of apocalyptic alternatives are based on data, with the present extended into the future. Contingency is the Achilles' heel of modern societies. Accordingly, society's first and foremost expectation of science is that it will reduce uncertainty and eliminate contingency.

The outbreak of the corona pandemic during the late winter of 2019 and spring of 2020 marked – among other things – an onset of uncertainty in a planned-out and well calculated world. The onset began with the realization that the virus could not be regionally contained. It did not remain an epidemic in the greater Wuhan area, but began to spread – first in the global North, then in the global South. Moreover, it was not possible to say when medicines to treat it would become available, or what they would be. Now it continues, with the unanswered question of when we will be able to return to our old ways of life, or whether that is even possible. The effect of the pandemic was to throw a blanket of uncertainty over everything that had been considered solid and secure. Societies suffered and are suffering the most profound shock: the pandemic has upset not only their administrative order, but also their state of mind.

Looking back over the first half of 2020, three main response patterns can be identified. These are: 1) urgently asking what "the" science says; 2) using war narratives to create analogies; and finally, 3) conspiracy theories in their various forms. They all pursue an imperative, which is to repress or eliminate the uncertain. The shock of uncertainty led to expectations of "the" science that were based on a fundamental misunderstanding. Definitive answers were expected, i.e. "truths", but what science and medicine could offer were interim results of an ongoing research process. The fact that researchers in one and the same field arrived at different results and conclusions is part of how science normally operates. Yet

under the pressure of expectations of certainty, this was perceived as a confusion of communication. As a result, a growing number of voices claimed that the experts knew nothing. This, in turn, led to the conclusion that their recommendations need not be followed. Others feared the emergence of a form of "rule by experts" that would override democracy and the constitution. "The" science at any rate could not provide a return to the familiar culture of certainty.

War rhetoric served a similar function, and was frequently heard during the first weeks of the pandemic experience. It is true that war and epidemics often occur together – as illustrated in the striking image of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, for example, in

Societies suffered and are suffering the most profound shock: the pandemic has upset not only their administrative order, but also their state of mind

which war, pestilence, famine and death befall humankind together. Throughout most of history, wars have resulted in outbreaks of epidemic diseases, whether during sieges, or due to poor hygiene conditions among troops, or also because pathogens were used deliberately against the enemy. But war was something that was started and also ended, and with the end of the war, the epidemics usually subsided again. The narrative patterns of war and pestilence are similar, and the idea of an external threat that must be fended off is rooted in this similarity. Even setting aside the war rhetoric, it is hard to avoid talking about lines of resistance, defense, breaches and so forth. Associated with such language is the idea of the defeatability of the external enemy, and this offers an island of certainty in a sea of uncertainty. But then it turned out that the heroic pose did little to help against the virus. Being brave was more likely to get you infected than fend it off. The refusal to wear a mask is a symbolic remnant of the heroic attitude.

Both patterns of response – the exaggerated expectations of science and the warlike se-

mantics – illustrate the vulnerability of modern societies to uncertainty and contingency. But science said it needed some time before it could create new certainties, and the war narratives were misleading. This became an opportunity for pandemic deniers and conspiracy theorists. Pandemic deniers and conspiracy theorists both exploit the vulnerability of modern societies in the face of uncertainty, with greater success the more forcefully they state their case. According to them, everything is just an invention of power-hungry elites, via

Pandemic deniers and conspiracy theorists both exploit the vulnerability of modern societies in the face of uncertainty, with greater success the more forcefully they state their case

which they are putting their sinister intentions into practice. Or the pandemic exists, but is the work of secret services or malevolent individuals, so you can find out exactly who and what is behind it – if you only want to know.

Usually, however, disasters are alleviated by the adoption of an increasingly indifferent attitude – and the adoption of moody indifference is one of the most important self-assertion mechanisms in modern societies. Many people react to the endless stream of alarm messages with a shrug of the shoulders. The brief phase of excitement is compensated by times filled with a mixture of ironic distance and bored looking-away. This is the preferred form of resilience which post-heroic societies[2] employ to deal with their continuing vulnerability. Ironic distancing also helped in dealing with Covid-19; but bored looking-away was not possible – if only because the careful use of masks and sanitizers as well maintaining social distance requires constant attention. This is probably also why the mask has become symbolic of attitudes towards the pandemic and the measures to contain it.

Global supply chains and social centrifugal forces

The pandemic has turned global supply chains into an element of vulnerability for economic regions. In Germany, for example, many factories had to shut down long before the borders closed, because some of their global suppliers had halted production. Yet precisely this global economic interdependence had been considered a tried-and-tested way of preventing supply bottlenecks and production stoppages, since it was possible to look for alternatives worldwide and quickly implement logistical changes. Trusting in this possibility, factories cut their inventories and implemented just-in-time manufacturing, with huge cost savings. Inventory is one of the items where significant savings can be made. The situation worsened as masks and ventilators became in short supply and states competed for scarce resources. At times, something of a stockpiling hysteria prevailed – from households to the nation state. Trust in the anytime availability of anything that is needed had created a new vulnerability. From corporate management to public administration, more attention will be paid from now on to the stockpiling of strategic resources and goods, to ensure the survival – at least in the medium term – of businesses and the politico-social fabric as a whole.

But at what level does the political-economic entity properly reside, whose resilience we are discussing? At the level of the nation state, as was the case in Europe at the height of the crisis, with recourse to historical knowledge? Or better at the level of the EU, the eurozone, or the Schengen Area? At any rate the question of costs speaks in favor of the EU area, where an appropriate stockpiling policy can be applied more broadly and comprehensively than at nation-state level. In addition, deficits in research and production identified in the context of the corona pandemic can be compensated more quickly and effectively by pooling capabilities than at national level. Admittedly, the issue then is who makes the decisions, and whether there is enough trust in Europe to prevent populist resentments arising. It is well known that such resentment

quickly appears when the people of an EU country gain the impression they are being unfairly disadvantaged. Clear decision-making competence without protracted negotiations and arduous compromises is essential here. So too are generally comprehensible guidelines for making such decisions. This is Europe's vulnerability, which causes it to seek refuge in the nation state.

All in all, there is more to be said for than against developing the resilience area at the European level. Firstly, there are the cross-border economic ties of the Schengen Area, which would be severed by a nationally organized regime. This problem had an extremely unfavorable effect on the European economy in the spring of 2020. Other points to consider are the sustainability of this area in the event of prolonged isolation from global passenger and goods traffic, as well as its ability to assert itself against other competing resilience areas. The European nation states – even the large ones – clearly have a limited ability to compete on their own against the United States and China, whereas the EU can be a serious global player.

Resilience in this case means placing a *cordon sanitaire* around the area in question to seal it off from global traffic. This is based on the assumption that restricting the movement of goods and people will also limit, or at least slow down, the spread of the virus, thus gaining time in which to put one's own precautionary measures in place.[3] It can be expected that other global economic actors will take similar steps, so global trade will grind to a halt anyway. In this sense, resilience can be understood as a *tendency toward self-sufficiency*. Since the pandemic will be at the top of the agenda as a security policy challenge after the experiences with Covid-19, the preparations for "switching" to such resilience areas are likely to be so extensive that the structures of "greater economic regions"[4] which tend to be capable of isolation will form beneath the global economy. The expectation of resilience that has hitherto been associated with a globalized economic area is likely to shift to large areas of regional economic integration.

Resilience, however, involves not only the tendency for areas to become self-sufficient,

but also the ability to *get the economy moving again* and limit the social consequences of a temporary lockdown. This too should be much easier at European level than at the level of nation states. It is obvious to everyone that many nation states are unable to cope not only with the consequences of a government-imposed lockdown (mostly short-term), but especially with the changes in people's economic and social behavior (which are long-lasting). The greater the degree of economic and political integration within the greater regions mentioned above, the more resilient they are in dealing with the social repercussions of pandemics.

As a generalization, it can be said that pandemics which affect economic sectors and social groups in different ways increase the

Resilience in handling pandemics also means using centripetal force to counteract the centrifugal forces unleashed by a pandemic

centrifugal forces in a society. Appeals to social cohesion do nothing to change this. Although they may mobilize spur-of-the-moment solidarity, they are hardly adequate for accompanying a deep structural change in the economy. Thus resilience in handling pandemics also means using *centripetal force* to counteract the centrifugal forces unleashed by a pandemic. This dimension of resilience is likely to occupy Europeans for the longest time and in the most intensive way. It will also increase the global North-South divide and reverse much developmental progress of recent years. This will have direct security policy consequences, to the extent that the breakdown of societies in the global South leads to renewed migration pressure toward the global North.

Shifts in political attention

Like most crises, the corona crisis has paradoxical effects. As has been shown, a strategically well considered response to the challenges it poses implies increased cooperation in "greater regions" to ensure the effectiveness

and financial feasibility of countermeasures. But at the same time, a retreat into national egoisms has developed at the level of political mentalities, fostering small-scale thinking and action. Furthermore, under the impact of the pandemic, the political planning perspective has increasingly shifted from the long to the short term. This has widened the gap between rational action and emotionally charged thinking. The different courses of infection in the countries, the various countermeasures and, not least, the temporary competition for scarce masks, ventilators and drugs boosted the nation-state orientation and made the EU look like a weak actor. This has weakened the EU, and therefore, if the considerations above are correct, it has ultimately increased the vulnerability of the member states. Dealing with this collection of paradoxes is the starting point for new strategic thinking in Europe.

The focus of attention has shifted from external challenges and, in the narrower sense, security policy issues, to security against in-

In the course of the pandemic, new trouble spots have emerged, carrying a high risk of military confrontation, while at the same time the international community has stopped addressing old trouble spots

fection and the provision of masks and medicines. Some national governments have exploited this shift to assert their power-politics and economic interests by breaking international rules and acting aggressively. In the course of the pandemic, new trouble spots have emerged, carrying a high risk of military confrontation, while at the same time the international community has stopped addressing old trouble spots. When exploited for power-politics, pandemics increase the vulnerability of the international order as the enforcement of rules falls down the agenda of the relevant political actors. Because the "guardians of order"[5] have other concerns, saboteurs of this order can act with impunity.

Conflicting greater regions instead of rules-based globality

After the collapse of the Soviet empire and the end of the bipolar world order, a new idea emerged in the 1990s: a world order that was to be characterized by global cooperation, where zero-sum games would be replaced by win-win arrangements, the economy would play a more important role than the military, international cooperation would consist of commitments to multilateral rules, and the internal affairs of states would also be subject to a certain degree of normative regulation. The idea was that war as a mode of conflict resolution should disappear for good, to be replaced by police activities to enforce basic human rights. It would not be possible to achieve all of this with a single large treaty, but the world would move gradually toward this goal – and it was foreseen that it would proceed along this path for a long time to come.

Belief in this path as the only one that made sense was so great that no further thought was given to the conditions necessary for its existence. Instead, people were busy associating ever new and farther-reaching goals with it: banning nuclear weapons, ending all forms of discrimination, protecting the environment and preserving biodiversity, climate protection and limiting global warming. This was driven forward by non-governmental organizations, who saw themselves as global community entrepreneurs. What was overlooked was that for such an order to exist globally, *all* major actors had to cede some of their sovereignty and would need to grant the international community insights into their capabilities and domestic politics. Russia and China, however, insisted on their sovereignty and "non-interference in internal affairs". In the case of the United States, it was not at all clear to what extent it would allow the world community to influence its actions. Another question regarding the United States was whether it was willing and able to play the role of a "guardian" of this order. The guardian role implies an *investment in common goods,* i.e. investing in ways that tend to benefit everyone. This involves not only the notorious free-rider problem, but also the willingness of a

clear majority of U.S. citizens to commit themselves to the global common good, and so set aside national self-interest. Donald Trump's slogan "America first" was a definitive rejection of this project.

To many observers, it was clear even before the pandemic began that the project of a global order based on standards and rules had failed. Even a stronger European commitment to this order could not change this; Europeans were too weak and too divided to take on the role of the United States. The course of the pandemic then made it clear that a system of independently operating greater regions had long since emerged. They not only pursued their own interests, but also claimed their own values and norms. It was also evident that the old "West" no longer existed, as Europe and the U.S. had increasingly grown apart.

If we look into the various forms of government action to contain the pandemic, lines of tradition become visible. They show that political action was not dependent solely on the respective government, as strong links to the political culture of the country concerned can also be seen. It is possible to distinguish three broad models of government action.

First, we find government action in which the state is equipped with limitless power and authority; its orders are not subject to review by independent courts, and there is no civil society opposition. To contain the spread of the virus, the government can place entire cities under quarantine, but it is also able to provide essentials to the population confined to their homes. Control of the economy and a tightly organized state apparatus give it the means to do this. It does not reject scientific advice, but treats it as arcane knowledge. This means that it does not allow contradictory expert opinions to circulate among the public, and also prohibits any debate about them in society. This kind of government action is paternalistic and legitimizes itself by its results, which are often exaggerated. Let us call this the *Chinese-East Asian model.* It benefits from a traditionally disciplined population. The specific vulnerability of this model lies in its output legitimation: if successes fail to materialize or doubts grow that official reports of success do not reflect the

actual situation, people's trust in the government can quickly disappear. Then the omnipotence of paternalism becomes its Achilles' heel. Unconditional trust turns into general distrust.

This contrasts with a type of government action that feigns all-encompassing knowledge and ability, but is actually limited to the image and attitude of the president or head of government. War semantics, which otherwise have fallen out of use, play a key role here. The

> *To many observers, it was clear even before the pandemic began that the project of a global order based on standards and rules had failed*

trouble with this model is that the government has neither the competences nor the capabilities required for a paternalistic model. Consequently, a gap opens between the president's showmanship and the actual measures to care for infected persons and combat the virus. It becomes publicly apparent how the man at the top (empirically it could also be a woman, however currently it is not) brushes aside scientific expertise, making the fight against the virus a matter of courage and determination. In one case, the result is a zigzag course (Boris Johnson). In the other, it is showmanship following the narrative of the Western, where the hero takes on numerous villains alone, yet triumphs over his adversaries in the end. Let us call this the *Anglo-American model.* It is highly vulnerable due to its overall poor results, because it generates trust only among those who fully subscribe to the narrative, but not among those who look at the results.

And then there is another type of government action, tentative and cautious, and which is understood to be reversible, depending on the infection situation and the state of research. In the initial situation, however, the government has only limited competences and capabilities, though it can certainly expand them. Yet if it does so, it can count on objections from the courts and resistance from sections of civil society. It must therefore justify its decisions in a way that will stand up in court and, at the same

time, it must constantly solicit the public's support. The government also draws on scientific expertise, which is not regarded as arcane knowledge to be withheld from the public, but instead is circulated and debated publicly. Experts' different assessments of the situation are discussed, as are the sometimes contradictory recommendations for action, for example

The three types of government action serve as a paradigm model. They are evaluated by the "rest of the world" in terms of their compatibility, and this evaluation could become a major (re)distribution channel for soft power

by virologists, economists and psychologists. A high degree of transparency with regard to the rate of infection, and the consequences of the measures taken to reduce it, allows for a constant evaluation of successes and failures. Meanwhile, these are not solely dependent on the government's actions, but also on the behavior of the population, which plays a decisive role. In this respect, responsibility is shared. Let us call this the *European-German model;* it is practiced in most of Western Europe, and is most distinct in Germany. Its vulnerabilities are also its strengths: the openly communicated reversibility of measures, the strong involvement of civil society, and public debate about scientific expertise. With this model, trust in government action must be constantly earned. It is the only model that seeks to develop tolerance for contingency, and to this extent it is oriented toward strengthening resilience.

Each of these three models has its own security policy effects. In conjunction with the respective resiliencies, these could become an identity marker of regional orders. This further promotes the process of political and cultural segmentation of the world order, albeit not with the religious underpinning assumed by Samuel Huntington[6] and, in contrast to his model, also not as a globally encompassing structure. Instead, the three types of government action serve as a paradigm model. They are evaluated by the "rest of the world" in terms of their compatibility, and this evaluation could become a major (re)distribution channel for *soft power:* the Anglo-American model is the easiest to copy, and therefore is particularly attractive to populist political cultures, but it could lose out in the evaluation because of its low resilience. The European-German and the Chinese-East Asian model are much more difficult to copy, because they are based on conditions that in most cases are not present. Thus they have more of a prospective relevance; the competition between these two models could become decisive for the distribution of power and influence in a newly emerging world order. For this reason, dealing with the pandemic is of far more than just internal importance; it may become an accelerator in the formation of a new world order.

The Author

Herfried Münkler, born in 1951, is an emeritus professor of political science at the Humboldt University of Berlin. Many of his books are considered standard works, such as "Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen" (2009, awarded the Leipzig Book Fair Prize), as well as "Der große Krieg" (2013), "Die neuen Deutschen" (2016) and "Der Dreißigjährige Krieg" (2017), all of which were on the bestseller list for months. Herfried Münkler has received numerous awards, including the Aby Warburg Foundation's Science Award and the Carl Friedrich von Siemens Fellowship.

1 See currently the articles by Osterhammel, Hofman, Rüland and al-Bagdadi in Kortmann, Bernd and Schulze, Günther G. (eds.) (2020): *Jenseits von Corona.* Bielefeld, pp. 255-293.
2 On the concept of the post-heroic society, cf. Münkler, Herfried (2015): *Kriegssplitter. Die Evolution der Gewalt im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert.* Berlin, pp. 169-187.
3 On knowledge in this regard, cf. Harrison, Mark (2012): *Contagion. How Commerce Has Spread Disease.* New Haven; on the development of state counteraction, cf. Baldwin, Peter (1999): *Contagion and the State in Europe, 1830-1930.* Cambridge.
4 The concept of the *Großraum* ("greater region") goes back to Carl Schmitt, which makes certain reservations about its use understandable. However, it is well suited to conceptualizing the described developments.
5 On the concept of a "guardian of order", which is more comprehensive than that of the "global policeman", since in addition to sanctions it also includes rewards, cf. Münkler, Herfried and Borgolte, Michael (2019): *Ordnung – Ein politisch umkämpfter Begriff.* Berlin, pp. 11 f.
6 Huntington, Samuel (1996): *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.* London, pp. 155-174.

"FOLLOW THE SCIENCE"

THE WAR ON COVID-19, STRATEGIC IGNORANCE AND THE MONOPOLIES ON "THE SCIENCE" AND "TRUTH"

Author: **Anna Roessing**

"We are following the science" – this has, by now, become a familiar refrain. The constant references to scientific expertise in the response to the coronavirus appear to be a major component of the UK government's public messaging strategy. The Chief Scientific Adviser, Patrick Vallance, and the Chief Medical Officer, Chris Witty, are guiding the political leadership through this pandemic – at least according to the prevailing narrative.

A similar scenario has developed in Germany: Scientists have become the darlings of the political establishment. As trustworthy advisors, they navigate governments through the crisis. With their frequent appearence on political talk shows and their regular consultation in the daily newspapers and radio shows, scientific assessments and comments have significantly shaped the public's reaction to the pandemic. In addition, as researchers, they're closely entangled with the production of knowledge about the virus and any possible preventative and protective measures. In recognition of this central role in the response to the pandemic, scientists such as the virologist Christian Drosten received several awards, including the Federal Cross of Merit.

And yet, despite *the science's* apparent central role in the United Kingdom's *battle* against the pandemic, the UK government faces an apparent paradox that it sadly leads the sadly leads the list of European countries with the highest COVID-19 fatalities. Especially the effects of the pandemic on the UK's black and poor population have been hugely disproportionate.[1] This failure seems peculiar given the commitments of the British agenda for *global* health[2] that emphasises the entanglement of health with poverty. While this well-researched nexus between socio-economic conditions and health is stressed, especially towards the countries of the 'global south', in the domestic strategy and mobilisation against the pandemic expertise testifying on these matters is conspiciously underrepresented in scientific advisory bodies and in the reporting on the coronavirus. Against the experience of the in-

Abstract

Both the UK and German governments claim to "follow the science" in their response to the corona pandemic. But which scientific findings of which disciplines and which persons are taken into account, which are not? This remains a genuine political decision. Furthermore, the notion of what constitutes the right knowledge also implies the notion of what forms of governance are appropriate and what are not. In this respect, claiming to base government action on "objective" findings serves to conceal responsibilities, to undermine democratic control and even to misuse knowledge in a discourse charged with war vocabulary. Moreover, dissent as a constitutive characteristic of democratic societies is often disregarded by politicians and experts, and the spectrum of discussion is inadmissibly narrowed to only one "reasonable alternative". This also maintains elitist, racist and sexist structures.

In particular, talking of an inevitable war constructs a context in which those who wage it are absolved of responsibilty. The perception of the virus as an "enemy" fits into the growing tendency to interpret health issues as issues of national and international security.

The corona pandemic shows how the liberal democratic order is gradually being replaced by a depoliticised state of emergency. This deterministic understanding has to be countered by a repoliticising view: The extrajudicial state of exception comes into existence only through the political measures that refer to it.

effectiveness of the UK leadership's approach that had publicly justified its action (and inaction) through the sciences, the continous progression of the pandemic did not seem to discredit either its past or present invocations of scientific objectivity.

Strangely enough, the British government has been met with moderate criticism of the circumstances and decisions that led to the disproportionate distribution of new infections and deaths along ethnic and socio-economic lines. The role of structural racism so far has been dismissed with reference to the scientific expertise that led government action for the last months. While Germany is widely acknowledged as a positive example of good governance and effective response to the pandemic, the significant regional variation in case rates across its territory demonstrates that translating scientific advice into political action is not straightforward Process.

At this juncture, the pandemic not only highlights that following the science – or which scientific advice to follow – ultimately remains a political decision. A closer look also reveals the politics of expertise itself and challenges purely meritocratic notions for the sexist and racist motives that are largely at work. The rhetoric of war and the state of emergency which accompanies the political response to the pandemic has further exacerbated existing inequalities and intensified politics around the truth. In an anecdotal comparison of the German and British engagement with expertise and *the science's* infallible and objective truths, this essay reveals how both the weaponisation of knowledge and the politics of expertise potently obfuscate the political decisions and responsibility in the response to the pandemic.

The Uses and Abuses of Science…

"Scientific advice" is entertained as the central cornerstone of national responses to the coronavirus pandemic around the globe. It suggests that in following scientific advice, government action is based on the objective truths of science –. While the narrative of *science* and *politics* as opposites seems outmoded, the political showcasing of science-led government action suggests that good governance is not only informed but actually measured by its compliance with scientific expertise.

In the *Financial Times* Tony Barber identifies the national emergency as an opportunity for the revival of expertise, and spots "unmistakable signs that the British public, mystified and alarmed by the government's incoherent handling of the pandemic's early phase, craves the advice of specialists — and even politicians — who know what they are talking about."[3]

And the Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Patrick Vallance, states: "during one of the

> "Scientific advice" is entertained as the central cornerstone of national responses to the coronavirus pandemic around the globe

most serious pandemics in our recorded history, people are understandably concerned and worried about what the future holds and are looking to the science for answers."[4]

In contrast to the German use of the word *Wissenschaft,* "the science" is the prerogative of the natural sciences. The UK Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies' (SAGE) reliance on a predominantly natural scientific and medical disciplinary set-up of experts for its advice to government illustrates this difference in approach.

Situated within a regime of pandemic preparedness and response, which is simultaneously informatic, epistemic, and political, SAGE follows a vision of viral surveillance that aspires to anticipate and detect outbreaks through the potency of data and (data) science – and has emerged as a central element in the agenda of health security.

The sequence of information collection as the foundation for knowledge about (the sources of) pandemic risk, and the subsequent catalysation of political intervention and policy to (adequately) manage the risk,

follow the demands of an evidence-based or "science-led" governance of pandemic risk.

However, as Benjamin Hurlbut argues, what might appear the "rational" approach of information-led management of such security risks is predicated on a political order that sees the world as governable through information, and normatively commits to producing it.

In his study of the political norms and relationships associated with the governance of pandemic risks, Hurlbut observes that notions of what are the right forms of global governance are coproduced by concepts of

A recent report commissioned by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation finds that women's voices have been "worryingly marginalised" in reporting of the coronavirus

what constitutes the *right* knowledge. In his words "epistemic authority (…) is also jurisdictional authority: science claims the authority to 'speak the law' by declaring what forms of legal and political order are necessary to know and govern global risk, and what regimes are inappropriate."[5]

Within the agenda of health security – and also for other fields such as climate policy – visions of the right knowledge privilege the institutional forms of scientific authority[6], further sustaining science's claim to be the guardian of truth in society[7]. Whilst this understanding has been increasingly criticised for the way it orders both knowledge and socio-political systems[8], it is still a powerful trope in the responses to the pandemic. Both the UK government's 'science-led' response to COVID and the German government's reliance on public health authorities and virologists follow a vision of pandemic governance that is not only information-led, but allows scientific expertise to constitute the norms, political relationships, and forms of authority that are seen as legitimate and appropriate in response to the pandemic.

The German Chancellor Angela Merkel addresses the German public, stating that "everything" she presents "derives from

consultations with experts from the Robert Koch Institute and other scientists and virologists."[9] Germany's political journalism paints a similar picture as to whom they consider the experts tasked with answering the pressing issues of the COVID pandemic. In the political talk shows of Anne Will and Maybrit Illner the position of the "expert" and the guardian of the "facts" is filled either by virologists/medical doctors, or economists. This set-up has not changed since the peak of the pandemic in March: expertise on COVID appears the prerogative of the medical sciences and virology. Furthermore, these experts are usually male and white. Christian Drosten, the Director of the Institute of Virology at the Charité Hospital in Berlin, has almost become a cult figure in the wake of the pandemic. The British *Guardian* calls Christian Drosten "Germany's Covid-19 expert"[10]; his "Coronavirus-Update" podcast has won the Grimme Online award twice, and he has received further awards and recognition from the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (German Research Foundation, DFG) among others.

It remains a challenge for the science-led political response to know what the science can and cannot tell. The pandemic has illustrated that who is an expert and which expertise will be relevant expertise is neither necessarily knowable a priori nor is it static or does it fit disciplinary archetypes. COVID-19 has never been merely a phenomenon of the microbiological sciences or the medical sciences. Yet, in practice we see that what counts as expertise is worryingly one-dimensional, elitist, and sexist. A recent report commissioned by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation finds that women's voices have been "worryingly marginalised" in reporting of the coronavirus. Analysing stories across six countries, the study finds that only 19% of experts quoted in highly ranked coronavirus stories were women. The *Guardian's* Karen McVeigh summarises "the women given a voice in the pandemic are rarely portrayed as authoritative experts, or empowered individuals, but as victims or people affected by the disease, or sources of personal opinion."[11]

This "drowning out" of female voices forms part of a wider environment in which women struggle to be acknowledged as authoritative experts and political decision makers. In the United Kingdom, the daily COVID-19 experts' meeting is 100% male.

The *Guardian's* report adds that marginalisation is further exacerbated by "the warlike framing" of the pandemic which invokes troublesome antiquated ideas that men are better equipped to deal with an emergency. With this "strong men" attitude, another concerning development, challenging the legitimacy of critique of "science-led" political decision making or expert advice, comes to the fore.

A recent interview by the *Augsburger Allgemeine* with the Federal Minister of Health Jens Spahn stresses this point. When asked about critics who assert that the current political reaction to COVID does not allow for (the discussion of) alternatives, Spahn almost ridicules such concern responding that "of course there are alternatives – one being to do nothing and let the virus spread."[12]

It is easy for Spahn not to engage (seriously) with any criticism considering the rise of Sinophobic 5G conspiracies and the radical political position of protesters portrayed in the headlines of German newspapers as the opponents of COVID policy. However, in approaching the question about existing concerns and resistance to the current political response to COVID as necessarily related to such political views, Spahn also reduces opposition to these extreme positions. In a similar vein, when asked in an interview in April about the next steps after lifting the lockdown in Germany, Christian Drosten narrowed the spectrum of political debate in Germany to a homogenous assemblage of positions he calls the "prevention paradox". That is "[p]eople are claiming we over-reacted, there is political and economic pressure to return to normal"[13].

Such an understanding depoliticises the agenda of the exception and emergency that yet potently has framed the response to the pandemic. It also feeds into a general view that seems to be taking hold in the reporting and commentaries of the political elite, including political journalism, which caution against the dangers of political "particularism" to the "order" needed to face the pandemic threat.

"We are not at war with a virus." – Cas Mudde

For most of the months of February and March, the government-friendly British tabloid press invoked the *Blitz Spirit*, comparing Boris Johnson's "battle" against the virus to the nation's challenges during the second World War. The Prime Minister, seeking to unite national efforts to resist this "invisible killer", told the public in his *Address to the Nation* on 23 March that "the coronavirus is the biggest threat this country has faced for decades." The *Telegraph* predicted that this would be an extraordinary opportunity for Johnson to become a 21st century version of his hero Churchill, leading the nation to defeat the enemy virus[14].

The German *Politiktalk* landscapes similarly invoke a rhetoric of war. In March, Anne Will brought together guests from across the po-

The war rhetoric invokes
an understanding of
both inevitability and cruelty

litical landscape, virologists, medical doctors, and the Chairman of the Federation of the German Detective Officers to discuss the "state of emergency – will we win the fight against the coronavirus?" The two following shows focused on the "Corona emergency" and Germany's battle plan: where we stand and our next steps in the fight against the virus.

The narratives of war invoked in the response to the coronavirus serve a peculiar dual purpose. The war rhetoric invokes an understanding of both its inevitability and cruelty. This accomplishes two things: first, the participants in this war are absolved of responsibility and blame for the sacrifices (and casualties) of this war. Second, and

drawing on Hannah Arendt's concept of infallible prediction, by invoking the inevitability of war, we create the reality that asserts our righteousness in waging war. Arendt presents this idea to explain how (totalitarian) leaders have the power to create certain realities. She argues that predictions such as the "inevitability of war" are in fact statements of intent. However, intentions framed as predictions provide a shield against responsibility and blame. These narratives evoke war as though it were a natural force, effectively concealing the political decisions behind the act of warfare. In a similar vein, framing the pandemic as a war obscures the political actions (or inactions) in a move to depoliticise and rationalise the crisis.

Yet in the so-called fight or "war" against COVID, who is the victor and what constitutes a victory when the enemy is a virus? While there is no winning nation, societies sense there are already losers who cannot compete

The martial characterisation of the virus itself as the enemy has played into the narrated state of exception in media discourse and governmental response to "the catastrophic" consequences of the pandemic

in the battle of technological solutioneering of a vaccine or a biomedical treatment for COVID (Hernandez-Morales, 2020)[15]. A recent editorial in the Wall Street Journal showed how racism in innovation policy[16], together with the international competition for access to a vaccine, make a possible way out of the pandemic subject to economic and political interests.

Cynically, for example, those who have been the target of the xenophobic Brexit politics and rhetoric in recent years are now elevated to "essential" workers and new heroes in the fight against the virus. Working at the 'front line', the bus drivers, nurses, service employees are now also expected to make the necessary "sacrifices" as a consequence of lacking protective equipment.

The martial characterisation of the virus itself as the enemy has played into the narrat-

ed state of exception in media discourse and governmental response to "the catastrophic" consequences of the pandemic. It is a continuation of developments in which health has been increasingly seen as a matter of national and international security. In 2001, the United Nations Security Council added the HIV pandemic to its agenda as the first non-traditional security topic. The SARS epidemic in 2003 and the Ebola epidemic in 2014/15 subsequently demanded international attention to the dangers of infectious diseases, especially in an increasingly connected and globalised world. In 2017, Bill Gates spoke at the Munich Security Conference[17], warning of the catastrophic consequences of a pandemic, and the millions of deaths one might cause. At the time, it seemed a dystopian scenario – the worst case – that would bring the world and its order to the brink.

The national lockdown measures that came into effect in the UK on 23 March 2020 have evoked different reactions. On the one hand, government response has been seen as half-hearted and far too late in addressing and stopping the progress of the pandemic. Much of the government's response until then was built on a public information campaign surrounding handwashing featuring sassy slogans – "catch it, bin it, kill it"[18] – as though reminding the public of kindergarten lessons in hygiene. This *laissez-faire* approach, epitomising the idea of "build[ing] […] some kind of herd immunity"[19], cynically turned an entire population into a scientific experiment no-one was asked to participate in.

On the other hand, the curtailment of civic rights was accompanied by calls for scrutiny into both the appropriateness and the effectiveness of measures. The political scientist and *The Guardian* columnist, Cas Mudde, cautions in a commentary on what the war rhetoric and securitisation of the pandemic mean for the liberal democratic order: "state-of-emergency measures are necessary in a real crisis (…) but they can be taken without the use of 'war' language. They also should be strictly related to the crisis at hand and proportional to the threat. But many pol-

iticians have gone much further, trying to use the health crisis to push through dubious repressive legislation."[20]

The concept of the state of exception derives from the work of far right-wing legal and political theorist Carl Schmitt. It refers to an investment of constitutional power granted to a sovereign authority within a crisis, or state of emergency. With reference to the state of emergency, the British government initiated the "Coronavirus Bill (HC Bill 122)"[21] to establish emergency powers beyond the bounds of rational crisis management. In particular, the speed with which these extensive powers were driven through Parliament was viewed with concern by commentators.. According to a new memorandum of understanding issued by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the National Police Chiefs' Council, the British Police will be provided with access to the NHS Test and Trace data for people in England who have been told to self-isolate.[22] At the peak of the pandemic, the UK government furthermore announced that its Public Health England would be radically re-organised. According to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, PHE will be combined with NHS Test and Trace to form the National Institute for Health Protection. This is further under a new leadership structure headed by the Conservative Baroness Dido Harding as interim CEO.[23] Whilst these developments come amidst calls not to 'politicise' the crisis, the UK government has since masked its political decisions behind recourse to scientific objectivity and inevitability.

There is a fundamental problem with an understanding of the exception that is defined (or demarcated) by a given, inevitable, and inalienable point as it re-inscribes the state of exception as the new normal. It exempts the political, its actors and actions, from the crisis, its unfolding, and management. Yet if, as for the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, exceptional sovereign power has a structural ontology and is an inevitable product of the structural limits of politics, then the exception and its extra-judicial acts and policies are incontestable.

Modi et al point to the writings of Judith Butler to overcome this deterministic impasse that Agamben suggests. For Butler, the exception has no structural ontology but is enacted.[24] Deployed as a "tactic", as the instrumentalisations of practices aimed

There is a fundamental problem with an understanding of the exception that is defined (or demarcated) by a given, inevitable, and inalienable point as it re-inscribes the state of exception as the new normal

at invoking and sustaining exceptional policies as the norm, repeated extra-judicial acts or policies "serve to performatively constitute exceptionalism as a legitimate and normalised form of government."[25] While justified on the grounds of exceptional circumstance, extra-judicial acts do not themselves become exceptions, the exception is a discursively formulated, contingent and socially-constructed state existent-in-practice. Butler uses her concept of performativity to relocate the problem of exceptionalism away from the deterministic and transcendental towards the actions of the powerful.

This revised and contingent understanding of the "state of exception" becomes especially important (and empowering) during the current pandemic state of emergency. It provides a different lens to challenge the UK government's attempt to dismiss criticism and failings in its response based on the limits of scientific knowledge. Tom Hobson observes that playing with the limits of knowledge and militarisation of the response resemble the language of precision in the Middle East bombings and the strategic ambiguity in response to questions on how many victims this "precision" violence has caused over the years.[26]

When confronted with the rising numbers of confirmed cases in mid-April and their comparison with lower trajectories in mainland Europe, the UK government officials brought forward ambiguous claims questioning the possibility of reliable statistics at this point in the pandemic. Other countries

were challenged for their methodology in counting cases, casting doubt on the appropriateness and credibility of any critical studies analysing the effectiveness of the UK's response. Similarly, government officials speculated that the data showing the dispro-

Whilst the UK government's action and inaction in response to the pandemic is repeatedly framed as being governed by data, science, and objectivity, the government has leaned into the apparent limits and ambiguity of this data in order to discredit criticism

portionate effect of the pandemic on its population was too incomplete, that the possible causes *simply couldn't be known.*

Ignorance, then, is the preferred *modus operandi* when it comes to counting the dead or explaining their death. Whilst the UK government's action and inaction in response to the pandemic is repeatedly framed as being governed by data, science, and objectivity, the government has leaned into the apparent limits and ambiguity of this data in order to discredit criticism. Kaajal Modi et al astutely remarks that this position, "at best, hides the political and material realities of systemic inequality and racism from their consequences in COVID-19 mortality disparities. At worst, this strategic ignorance (re)produces a specious bio-essentialist argument, implying that BAME – as a politically neat categorisation that flattens

non-white to homogenous – people are inherently predisposed and vulnerable to the virus due to some yet undiscovered (genetic) particularities."[27]

By removing the political, we are presented with the unchangeable biological that washes away all political responsibility. In both instances, the objective is to evade accountability, and further to do so by also concealing the political or subjective reality of their own central role in shaping events.

Conclusion

The global spread of the coronavirus imposed a common agenda for all governments: a response to the pandemic. While the approaches and effectiveness vary across the national and regional governments, there seems to be a repetitive pattern of instrumentalising science to justify political decisions.

The UK and German governments' continued references to *the science* illustrate efforts to deliberately obscure the political choices and judgments in its response. Together with the forceful appeal to necessary actions and emergency politics in response to the pandemic, citing of scientific objectivity, and the reliance on *an infallible techno-science* prove a continuation of the de-politicisation of the crisis and the exception. In light of science-led policy, political authorities around the globe can claim that all they did to respond to the (inter)national security threat of the pandemic was necessary.

The revised understanding of the "state of exception" Judith Butler presents opens the interrogation of these practical implementations of the exception as being constructed in discourse and practice. If the state of exception is no longer seen as an inevitable condition, a *repoliticisation* of the exception can challenge the kind of discourses of which it is a product, one that is underwritten *by a particular politics*, which has covered its tracks behind science.

In 2001, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US, Wiebe Bijker, one of the pioneers of Science and Technology Studies, called upon the academic community to scrutinise in

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their works the interdependencies between our techno-scientific cultures and their importance for developing democratic politics. Bijker's statement was driven by concerns over the repercussions a terrorist attack with the most mundane of technologies on the heavily technological culture of the United States would have for democratic capabilities around the world. He reminded his audience that "all aspects of modern culture are infused with science and technology, that science and technology do play key roles in keeping society together, and that they are equally central in all events that threaten its stability"[28].

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"AT FIRST, THE TENSION WAS PALPABLE"

The corona pandemic also changes the operating conditions and the service in the German Armed Forces – in some cases considerably. The editors of "Ethics and Armed Forces" wanted to know how soldiers deal with the developments and the resulting difficulties. Among others, we had the opportunity to ask the Catholic military chaplain Torsten Stemmer. He accompanied the crew of the frigate "Hamburg" which patrolles the Mediterrean as part of the EU Mission IRINI to control the arms embargo in the Libyan civil war.

Military Chaplain Torsten Stemmer, Military Chaplaincy Wilhelmshaven I

Mr. Stemmer, your deployment on the "Hamburg" as part of the EU IRINI mission was not your first deployment on a ship. How was it for you? Did you and the crew feel it was a "special situation"?

It was certainly a special situation. We weren't able to take normal shore leave during port calls. And it was much more difficult to exchange personnel during the mission. But still, a lot of things were the same as usual. Seafaring itself has not changed because of Covid-19 – the pandemic makes no difference to the wind and the waves. From that point of view, the time at sea was much the same as before Covid.

Were you and the crew specially prepared for this mission?

There is always preparation before any deployment. What was special about this mission was the isolation. Embarking extra personnel (military police, shipboard helicopters, boarding teams, medical specialists, staff etc.) also brings its own unique challenges. Special preparation relating to Covid-19 mainly concerned hygiene and distancing rules.

What protective measures were put in place? Did they increase the sense of confinement, of being locked up on the ship?

The crew as a whole forms a cohort on the ship. As soon as we set sail, everyone aboard was tested, and then again after 14 days. Fortunately, none of these tests indicated an infection. After these two rounds of tests at the start of the voyage, of course you then have to avoid all outside contact to prevent any possibility of infecting the crew. The usual distancing rules cannot be observed on board so the virus would be able to spread fast and wide.

From the outset, it was clear there would be no "normal" shore leave during the entire voyage. This caused some uncertainty, simply because it was a completely new and unfamiliar situation for all crew members. But in the course of time, we found that it was still possible to relax and switch off while in port.

What mood(s) did you notice among the crew: tension, composure, "we'll get through this"...?

Especially at first, the tension was palpable: "What will it be like to be at sea for four months without going ashore?" – "How will the pandemic develop? Globally, but especially at home?"

All in all, however, there was also a sense of relief once the second test was "out of the way" without any positives. Knowing that we were corona-free on board meant we could behave fairly normally.

But of course the restrictions during port calls and the question of what was happening back home were always on our mind.

Do you talk about the pandemic in the discussions you lead? If so, what aspects were service members particularly preoccupied with, and how can you support them?

In some ways, Covid-19 has increased the need to talk. Perhaps also because there are no opportunities for conversations and meetings with friends right now. At the same time, many people are worried about family back home.

And the lack of opportunities to literally get away from the ship and each other somehow creates a feeling of confinement. That leads to conflicts between people from time to time.

A conversation where you can just "get it off your chest" is sometimes all it takes to start feeling a bit better. Sorting through and organizing feelings and thoughts together can be very helpful too.

Did you have any special tasks for this mission, because of the corona pandemic?

As military chaplains, it is always our task to be there for the members of the armed forces, both at home and on deployment, and they can talk to us about whatever is troubling them. Of course that includes everything to do with Covid-19. So in that respect the task of the military chaplaincy has not essentially changed. However, awareness of the need for "support" has noticeably increased among officers and at senior levels. For this reason, great importance is attached to the continuous presence of the military chaplains on the seagoing units on deployment.

What are your main activities on the ship? Do you conduct religious services? Do you give ethics classes as part of character guidance training?

As a military chaplain, in addition to holding religious services on board, I am there for the spiritual and mental well-being of the crew. I am available for talks, for example. Crew members can simply speak to me when I am walking around the ship, in my stateroom (that is the room where I live on the ship), or when I visit the sea watch stations. So sometimes I am a sympathetic ear, or a mediator, or an advisor.

Character guidance training is provided if service personnel request it, including on deployment. But there was no time for it during IRINI because the schedule was full and there were often rapid changes due to the changing external situation.

If you had to sum up this mission, what would you say? Are there any special moments or insights that will stay with you? Do you view your work differently after this mission and your experiences?

Of course, I cannot draw an overall conclusion about the mission of the frigate Hamburg because the ship will remain at sea until December 20. For the time I spent on board, however, I can say the following: It was a challenge for the crew to start into the uncertainty of

Awareness of the need for "support" has noticeably increased among officers and at senior levels

the mission. In addition to the restrictions already mentioned, there was also uncertainty about the course of the mission. There were big question marks over the actual operation and its benefit.

After the crew had quickly found good possibilities to keep themselves busy and also to relax while in port, the initial tension could be slowly released. Fortunately, it was also possible to establish facts quite quickly with regard to the course of the operation. The fear that it was "only" a political mission without operational deployment was quickly refuted. These experiences have also had a decisive influence on my work as a military chaplain on board.

Especially during the time on board it became clear that crew members repeatedly approached me as military chaplain. From my experience, I would say that there was a greater need for conversation during this mission as usual. For me that means that we have to be present where people are, especially in difficult situations. These can be, for example, foreign assignments, stressful situations at home, trainings that involve a great deal of privation, activities at the domestic base or even a pandemic situation. Wherever we can be contacted (i.e. not just anonymously via telephone or e-mail, but as a concrete, familiar person, our service is noticed and requested, and further demand arises, for example for additional workshops and care services.

"A CITIZEN IN UNIFORM WILL ALWAYS HELP THE POPULATION"

The medical service of the German Armed Forces is also strongly challenged in the corona pandemic and supports the civil health sector. What insight have been gained from the first wave in spring, what motivates doctors and nursing staff, what helps them to cope with their experiences? How do physicians view developments in society, and what would they say to corona skeptics? Two doctors from the Bundeswehr central hospital in Koblenz have reflected on these and other topics for "Ethics and Armed Forces".

Oberfeldarzt Dr. Dennis Matthias Ritter

Oberstarzt Dr. Willi Schmidbauer

From an intensive care point of view, the current preparations are essentially no different than those made in February during the first wave. What was planned back then proved effective in practice: we had capacity at all times, and never felt unable to provide treatment of any kind. Then and now, the key point was and is to ensure sufficient capacity in intensive care units. This time around, it is less a question of equipment like ventilators, and more about personnel. However, this applies not only to nurses but also to doctors. This point is somewhat overlooked at present in public perceptions.

The question of motivation almost answers itself. In such an all-encompassing and extremely threatening situation as this, as a doctor or a nurse it goes without saying that you do everything you can – and we really mean everything – to help alleviate suffering, and ideally provide treatment. Closely linked to this, however, is the possibility of failure – by not living up to this expectation, or only partially living up to it. Probably everyone who bears medical responsibility in the various roles and management levels at least respects, if not fears this possibility. It is an uncomfortable feeling that is surely experi-

enced to differing degrees by different people, and it should certainly be addressed. We should be clear that this is not weakness or even cowardice. It is simply an understandable reaction to an enormous challenge. Being aware of one's own fallibility as well as the limited possibilities in regard to one's own actions can help us to cope better with the stresses of the crisis, and not collapse under the burden of responsibility. But success too can have a positive, strengthening effect. This is why it proved very helpful to see during the first wave that the chosen structure and associated processes worked almost perfectly, and really every single patient could be treated. Just the feeling of having been there to play a part in taking on this challenging situation gave strength and motivation to many members of the medical service. Successful emergency response is always a great motivator! Of course, this success is diminished by every patient who dies despite receiving optimal treatment. So dealing with such situations necessarily involves examining these supposed failures, to see whether there is a need for optimization, and whether anything can be learned from them.

The quest for continuous improvement also includes exploiting scientific successes. Over the course of time, we have gained an ever better understanding of the disease. Old treatment methods have been abandoned and new ones successfully evaluated and implemented in clinical practice. As a result, the prospects of successful treatment have increased overall, which provides additional motivation and helps us to handle the situation. This motivation is urgently needed, because corona is not only a medical threat but also has an impact on social coexistence. By this we mean not only the continual discussions about appropriate protective measures, but also how the virus is influencing our thoughts and experiences. This includes, for example, the increased perception of our own vulnerability. It has become clear to everyone just how suddenly we can lose the ability to control our own fate. Of course we do not have complete control over our lives, not even under normal conditions – illness, inju-

ry and death are just too unpredictable and down to fate. But in normal times it is much easier to ignore this fact, at least as long as you are not affected by it yourself. The virus is currently making this convenient ignorance impossible to maintain. Comparable events in the past were the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear reactor accident, or the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. What these two events have in common is that they were a kind of time-stamp, and had a determining influence on world events for years afterwards. It could be similar with the corona epidemic.

So it was all the more important that the *Bundeswehr*, just like in 1986 and 2001, has functioned and continues to function perfectly. The *Bundeswehr* was on hand in the corona situation, acting as a stabilizing force and helping the public. They were fast, responsive to people's needs, and direct. We can assume that large sections of the public see things this way. Trust in the German armed forces has therefore received a lasting boost. The *Bundeswehr* is and will remain a part of the state and will never be or become a state within a state. A citizen in uniform will always help the population and not look away when help is needed. This fundamental difference from the *Reichswehr* of the Weimar Republic is in the *Bundeswehr's* DNA. For the *Bundeswehr* as a whole, dealing with the corona crisis is not really a new experience. It is more of a confirmation of its original purpose. For every individual member of the armed forces as well as for the many civilian employees, this means experiencing – for the first time or once again, depending on length of service – what it means to take responsibility for the people.

Skeptics in this regard are difficult to argue with, as there are plenty of rational and in particular scientifically based explanations of Covid and how to deal with it. But it is part of the essence of this new skepticism not to acknowledge reason and science, but instead to deny them. Nevertheless, there is no other way with even a minimal hope of success than to attempt a serious discussion. Whenever the opportunity arises, skeptics must be resolutely opposed. This applies all the

more to those who are actively involved in fighting against the coronavirus. They should share their experiences and describe corona as it is: an absolutely deadly threat that can only be overcome if everyone pulls together. But we have to be aware that it is only possible to get through to a few, at best. And of these few, hardly any will change their point of view. But the simple fact that it might be possible to convince them should be motivation enough to try to do just that. After all,

Corona is not only a medical threat but also has an impact on social coexistence

discussing with intransigent skeptics means attempting to defend reason against unreason. Any reason that tires of discussion will no longer be taken seriously, because this will be seen as an admission of its supposed weakness. And precisely this must not be allowed to happen!

COVID AND THE *BUNDESWEHR*
FROM A TACTICAL TO A STRATEGIC POINT OF VIEW

Keeping your distance, wearing a face mask, protecting yourself and others from infection: This also poses a number of new problems for the army. In addition, at the time of publication of this issue, thousands of Bundeswehr soldiers were working in health offices and elsewhere as part of the official assistance to the civil sector. In his report, an officer of I. Armored Division looks back on the beginning of the pandemic and describes the numerous tasks that have to be taken into account in crisis management.

Hauptmann Philipp Wolf, Adjutant to the Commander of I. Armored Division

The pandemic has hit Germany as well as the rest of the world hard. High infection rates, unprecedented mortality rates and healthcare systems that are at the brink of exhaustion. Nearly our entire way of life as we know it has changed. Masks, social distancing and lockdowns dominate our news today. And yet the missions, tasks and especially the deployments of the army remain intact. Furthermore we support our healthcare system with additional forces wherever and whenever we can. Currently thousands of soldiers are employed throughout Germany.

I personally witnessed the pandemic in a twofold manner: At the beginning of 2020 I served within a reconnaissance company in Northern Germany. There I experienced the beginning of the crisis. We were in the middle of a two-week training exercise. Limited TV and mobile service led to an information gap between us and the rest of the world. Just before a live firing exercise we had to stop and return to our post immediately. We were shocked, confused and anxious about the events to come. The initial measures aimed to prevent the virus from spreading while there was still very limited knowledge about cause and effect. Within days we switched from the training exercise in Eastern Germany to a shift system at home. We were forced to send more than 70% of our soldier's home to their families which also had to deal with the crisis. While we tried to do our best we encountered several issues. First of all, we could not send everyone home. Especially commanders and leaders needed to stay so that we were able to act. In addition, the civilian sector began to ask for help. So we needed to enable our forces to react within a short notice to move. There were a lot of questions about how we could solve all these issues. At the same time, the deployments to Mali, Afghanistan or Iraq were not stopped. Several of our soldiers still had to go through pre-deployment training. They were about to go into a hazardous environment and we needed to ensure that they get the best training possible. Over time we established the so-called A-H-A rules (derived from *Abstand, Hygiene, Alltagsmaske;* distance, hygiene and face mask) and enabled more soldiers to work from home. Laptops and systems didn't didn't fall from the sky but after a few weeks we were able to establish the "new normal". Home office, shift systems and a distance of 1.50 metres were now to be accepted and ordered. Every aspect of our planned training for the rest of the year had to be evaluated and planned again. It was not our lack of equipment that became the limiting factor: it was the maximum number of personnel in the same area in order to minimize the risk of an infection.

During this time I was selected to serve as the Adjutant of the Commander of I. Armored Division. This position is similar to what an executive assistant would do. I switched from the company to the division level – from a unit with 200 soldiers in Schleswig-Holstein to one with 20.000 soldiers from the Netherlands to Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

Thereby I gained a new perspective on the issues and challenges that we as military leaders had to solve. On a divisional level it became clear that Covid impacted every unit throughout Northern Germany. Beginning in June 2020 our civilian counterparts needed more and more help and I. Armored Division

acted quickly. But ongoing deployments and planned training put a burden onto the thousands of soldiers. Today the division is deployed throughout the world while simultaneously supporting hundreds of civilian organizations. As long as infections rise, so will the civilian missions. With news about an effective vaccine in both Germany and the United States of America hope remains that this situation will ease throughout the next year. Nevertheless, I believe we will need to continue to support our health care system in the near future. Personally I experienced the restrictions this disease put onto the force firsthand. Together the commander and I visited several units both on pre-deployment training as well as Covid help. It was astounding to see how positively our soldiers were perceived. We helped where we could. It became clear to me that without the support of these soldiers, we could not sustain our high-performance healthcare system. The consequences would have been even worse than they are today. While the new normal was difficult at the beginning, today I believe that everyone has gotten used to it. Our soldiers quickly adapted to it. Today, keeping a distance of 1.50 metres and wearing a face mask has become customary for everyone. This will continue as long as the pandemic exists. But I am optimistic that we will prevail and that the virus will ultimately lose.

Until then we as soldiers will be ready and eager to help – whether it be in a deployment, a flood or in the public health office in Bad Oldesloe. Covid has given us a new understanding of the *Bundeswehr's* slogan *Wir. Dienen.Deutschland* (We serve Germany).

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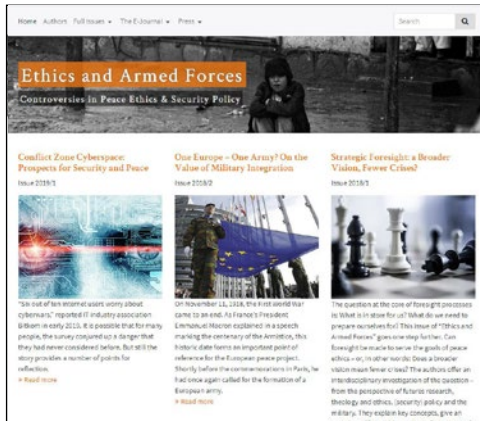
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Climate Change as a Security Risk

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