



EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

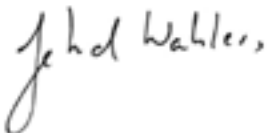
The First World War broke out 100 years ago in August 1914. Europe became a theater of war on an unprecedented scale. It was to be more than four years before the fighting finally ceased. By then, almost ten million soldiers had been killed, twice that number wounded and there were an estimated seven million civilian victims. The repercussions of the war changed the face of the continent and world affairs profoundly. Individual societies had to face the challenge of reintegrating returning soldiers into civilian life, dealing with those who had been injured and traumatised and looking after the dependents of those who had been killed. None of these issues are any less relevant today. When we look back at the outbreak of war in 1914, it is impossible not to think about today's hotspots – Ukraine, Afghanistan, the Middle East, South Sudan and the Central African Republic. Media coverage of these conflicts often pays too little attention to the pressures faced by societies that are directly affected by war. And the issues faced by countries whose armed forces are involved in international missions should also not be ignored. To what extent are people interested in soldiers who are deployed abroad? How is society reflected in its armed forces, and vice versa?

In Germany the principle of "citizens in uniform" ensures that society is also reflected in its armed forces. Yet soldiers are rarely seen in day-to-day life, and the current round of Bundeswehr reform has reduced their presence still further. Reductions in personnel, the suspension of compulsory military service and the closure of military facilities have all resulted in a much smaller geographical presence. Fewer people now come into contact with the military. They only become aware of the Bundeswehr when it is called upon to deal with a national catastrophe. It is often forgotten that the Bundeswehr is a constitutional body that forms part of Germany's value-based foreign policy with 4,400 soldiers currently involved in 16 international missions.

In other countries the gap between military and civil areas of society is much less pronounced. In this issue, Elmar Sulk investigates the importance of the military in the

United States and explains: "the American people have generally always supported their soldiers, who volunteer to take up arms and make great sacrifices in the service of their country". But at the same time, the American people and media are vocal in their criticism when military misconduct and scandals become public. The Israeli army is even more closely entwined with society than the American military, as Evelyn Gaiser reveals in her article. From its founding in 1948 right up to the present day, the Israeli Defense Forces guarantee the survival of the Jewish state. But certain rifts are becoming more apparent, such as the tensions between strictly religious and secular Jewish Israelis. They are increasingly being reflected in the army and threatening its status as "The People's Army". Steffen Krüger and Diana Hund turn to a different kind of threat to social cohesion. They highlight the problem of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where between 1996 to 2003, over 30,000 minors were involved in conflicts between various warring parties. In their study, the authors state: "Demobilisation and thus the first step out of rebel groups is not the only complicated process that faces a multitude of obstacles; permanent reintegration of child soldiers into society is only rarely successful."

As part of its international cooperation activities, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung conducts a dialogue with members of the security forces and civil society in many different countries. We discuss the position of the army within a democratic system and subject to the primacy of politics, as well as the legal, ethical and moral challenges presented by military conflict. We are convinced a strong defensive army is vital for a free and secure society. It cannot be stressed enough that soldiers provide a service to society and have a place in its very center.



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