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To cite this article: Cecilia Åse (2020): Rationalizing military death: the politics of the new military monuments in Berlin and Stockholm, *Critical Military Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/23337486.2020.1730126

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2020.1730126>



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Published online: 24 Feb 2020.



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Rationalizing military death: the politics of the new military monuments in Berlin and Stockholm

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ABSTRACT

How do state monuments secure public consent to war efforts? This article examines the official military monuments constructed in Berlin in 2009 and Stockholm in 2013 in reaction to Germany's and Sweden's participation in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan (2001–2014). Monuments express powerful truth claims and participate in the reproduction and transformation of war-justificatory narratives. By comparing the Berlin and Stockholm monuments, the article demonstrates their engagement with national identities and historical experience and their management of gendered military ideals. The Swedish monument *Restare* by sculptor Monica Dennis Larsen is white and human-sized, has an organic shape and sits in a pastoral setting, while architect Andreas Meck's massive and austere German *Ehrenmal der Bundeswehr* is strictly rectangular and placed near military buildings. The article's comparative analysis foregrounds the *planning, names and dedications, locations, and designs* of the monuments and the specific ways that they *address individual death*. A central conclusion is that these monuments repress gendered war histories and the masculinization of the armed forces. *Restare* disallows Sweden's historical experience of gendered militarization and bolsters the country's peace identity so that contemporary military violence appears publicly acceptable. The Bundeswehr monument forestalls linkages between Germany's contemporary military identity and the country's history of authoritarian regimes. By invoking neither military masculinity nor the feminized homeland, the monument orchestrates the separation of contemporary military activity from that in the German past.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 12 August 2019
Accepted 12 February 2020

KEYWORDS

Military monuments; gender; justification of war; International Security Assistance Force; war commemoration

Introduction

The official honouring of military death becomes particularly charged and problematic when waging war collides with national self-understanding. In Germany and Sweden, contemporary national identity and strategic culture rest on peace narratives and non-aggressiveness, making military losses and the use of martial violence difficult to integrate into the national 'we'. For these nations, participation in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan (2001–2014) developed into a challenging and

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increasingly violent involvement. More aggressive violence was allowed than in previous UN missions, and many soldiers were killed and wounded. How did state authorities justify these sacrifices? By what means did official remembrance initiatives rationalize military death?

The justification of military losses necessarily relates to the public meaning given to the war that caused the deaths (Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper 2000, 54). The argumentation motivating the ISAF included safeguarding international security, building democracy in Afghanistan, and strengthening human rights and women's equality (De Graaf, Dimitriu, and Ringsmose 2015). So called 'wars of choice' aimed at fostering democratic development or defending universal values in another country cannot straightforwardly invoke the defence of national territory or sovereignty. Moreover, such wars are not supported by the gender norms wherein men's willingness to die for a feminized 'home front' is seen as necessary for state and national survival (Tickner 2001; Yuval-Davis 1997). Giving meaning to wars defending human rights and aiming to achieve democracy requires a reworking of these gender hierarchies.

This article examines how states officially articulate national history, identities and values in connection with the construction of monuments commemorating military deeds and sacrifice in contemporary wars. I analyse two military monuments constructed explicitly in response to ISAF participation – one inaugurated in Berlin in 2009 and the other in Stockholm in 2013 – and explicate the way these monuments engage with national identities and gendered war histories to support states' war-making abroad. Despite Germany's and Sweden's very different twentieth-century war experiences, these countries share a historical reluctance to partake in international missions that are not peace-building operations (Baumann and Hellman 2001; Sandman 2019; Zehfuss 2007). The long-standing institution of male conscription was recently abandoned in both nations, and a large territorial defence staffed by 'citizen soldiers' was replaced by smaller, professional forces authorized to use more violence than before (Agrell 2013; Hilpert 2014). Consequently, to reflect national self-understandings, authorities in both Germany and Sweden needed to create monuments less associated with military masculinities and more strongly signalling peacefulness and military non-aggressiveness at a time when these countries were in fact more involved in forceful military engagements, including both the use of and exposure to martial military violence.

In terms of architecture and design, architect Andreas Meck's German *Ehrenmal der Bundeswehr* and the Swedish monument *Restare* by sculptor Monica Larsen Dennis are strikingly different (see Figures 1 and 2). *Restare* is white and just slightly larger than human-sized; it has an organic shape and sits in a pastoral setting. In contrast, the massive and austere *Ehrenmal* is strictly rectangular and placed near military buildings. My perspective is that these monuments participate robustly in the reproduction and transformation of war-justificatory narratives. Each structure attempts tangibly and spatially to manifest ideas and representations that, at the time of its construction and in its particular national context, shoulder military death and soldiers' sacrifices. Both monuments reflect the political authorities' ambition to incorporate these deaths into the national community and its history and to set aside their international context.

In Europe, official monuments have historically served as settings for rituals that enable the public recognition and sharing of individual suffering, but have also authorized war efforts. Top-down war tributes and remembrance initiatives contribute to framing state wars as legitimate and reinforcing state authority. Critical war and security



Figure 1. *Ehrenmal der Bundeswehr*. The Bundeswehr Memorial in Berlin. Photo by Joar Vestergren.



Figure 2. *Restare*. The Memorial for Veterans in Stockholm. Photo by Cecilia Åse.

studies highlight that official war remembrance conceals how the modern state relies on war-making, violence and insecurity while claiming to provide protection and security (Danilova 2015; Edkins 2003; Heath Kelly 2017; Öberg 2016). In Charlotte Heath Kelly's

(2017) analysis, a central function of the honouring of victims of terrorism is to assure the public that the 'resilient state' can and will deliver security. When the rupturing experiences of death and trauma are written into a 'linear narrative of national heroism', the state rationalizes the violence that it has produced (Edkins 2003, xv; cf. Haakonsen 2014).

In the official commemoration and monumentalization of war, the justification of death on the battlefield was historically premised on gender norms and women's and men's different obligations to the state. War monuments typically honour masculine soldier-victims. In Europe's twentieth-century wars, male soldiers defended and died for their country as anonymous members of the nation. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier powerfully captures this ideological construction, and similar monuments were built in many European capitals after the armistice in 1918 (Anderson 1983; Sharp 1996). In the context of post-World War I France, the celebration of masculinity has been pointed out as a common strand in erected monuments, regardless of their architectural appearance (Sherman 1996). This 'cult of the fallen' (Mosse 1990) reinforced strong gender hierarchies designating men as national protectors and women as symbolic national bodies and reproducers of future generations of the 'national family'.

Feminist scholars have observed that war remembrance casts women in a symbolic role, often related to motherhood, and disregards them as agents in war situations; they have also noted the gender-specific consequences that the waging of war has for women (Acton 2007; Jacobs 2017; Noakes 2009). Even today, official war tributes privilege masculinities and involve notions of gender difference and normative heterosexuality (Repo 2008; Szitanyi 2014; Wendt 2019; Ware 2019). Gender archetypes that emphasize men as protectors and women as protected are part of many of the official activities through which European states attempt to legitimize violence and manufacture public consent to war efforts (Åse and Wendt 2017; Koobak 2019; Wendt 2019).

Raising monuments remains a privileged strategy for European states' official rationalization of war. Between 2001 and 2014, authorities in many European countries constructed military monuments in response to their participation in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (Ware 2019). Initiatives included the transportation of soldiers' makeshift monuments from military camps back to Europe, as well as the politically initiated high-profile production of new national monuments with clear artistic ambitions, such as *Restare* and *Ehrenmal der Bundeswehr*. A small body of scholarly literature examines these new monuments' political genesis and the controversies regarding their construction (Dahl Martinsen 2013; Ekman 2014; Leonhard 2011; Refslund Sørensen 2017; Ware 2019; Wendt and Åse 2018). Asking how design and architecture orchestrate collective memory, Mattias Ekman (2014) analyses the 2011 *Monument for Denmark's International Effort*. He shows how the monument becomes a place to link individual soldiers' deaths to the logics of war and the wider historical context and national and political community. Reflecting this perspective, Vron Ware (2019) discusses how the newly instigated monuments in the United Kingdom and Italy reflect national myths-capes and reinforce norms regarding men's and women's different roles in armed conflict. She contends that invoking gender, in combination with a monument's specific location – how it 'talks' to its immediate surroundings – and its particular artistic design, contributes to how public war art justifies military action and can soothe political anxieties regarding the state's war-making (Ware 2019). The possibility of specific symbols, designs and materials 'succeeding' in manifesting war-justificatory narratives

is particularly limited in countries such as Germany where considerable historical sensitiveness accompanies the commemoration of the military and traditional military values (Leonhard 2011).

In this article, I compare the Berlin and Stockholm monuments to draw out their engagement with national identities and particular historical experiences and understand their negotiations of gendered military ideals and values. The comparison is thematic and focuses on central aspects of the two monuments. Working cross-nationally in the analysis of the cultural and political justifications of war is rewarding because it highlights nationally taken-for-granted circumstances and consensuses that risk remaining unnoticed when the analysis is limited to a singular national context (Åse and Wendt 2019). The analysis presented here relies on a variety of source materials. I visited the sites and immediate surroundings of both monuments on several occasions and extensively documented these visits. Details of the monuments' architecture and designs as well as spatial, visual and tactile elements were recorded in field notes and photographs. Information materials available for visitors at the sites and web presentations were included amongst my sources, as were archival background information and brochures available from the relevant authorities. The public debate pertaining to the monuments was traced through online searches of political forums, media materials and social media outlets.

The analysis in this article reflects the ISAF chronology, and does not speak to more recent security developments. My viewpoint is that although ISAF participation gave impetus to the construction of the monuments, the far-reaching transformations of the national armed forces that followed the end of the Cold War provide the wider background against which the monuments' creation can be understood. A background section that describes Germany's and Sweden's strategic and cultural contexts in detail consequently precedes the comparative analysis. Thereafter, the succeeding sections foreground the monuments' *planning, names and dedications, locations, and designs* and the specific ways they *address individual death*. Following these four sections, I summarize the analysis and indicate the merits of examining and comparing military monuments and other forms of cultural artefacts to expand critical understandings of states' war-justificatory narratives.

Germany and Sweden: strategic and cultural contexts

As already noted, both Germany's and Sweden's contemporary national identities centre on military non-belligerence and peace narratives, notwithstanding the countries' different legacies of military violence. For Sweden, non-alignment and the foreign policy of neutrality were pillars of national identity throughout the Cold War era (Agius 2006; Stråth 2000). Neutrality was not only a security doctrine but also 'the hub around which Swedish politics was built' (Malmborg 2001, 164). While it ideologically signalled peacefulness and a reluctance to engage in military violence, this version of neutrality distanced itself firmly from pacifism. Indeed, it supported high military expenses and led to the deep militarization of society. Sweden's armed neutrality relied on the logic of deterrence: in order never to be used, a large 'people's army' based on universal male conscription and armed by a large domestic weapons industry was deemed necessary (Åselius 2005; Sundelius 1990). Military identity traditionally privileged a 'neutral warrior' ideal centred on national protection and the valuing of defensive military capabilities (Kronsell 2012).

Military expenditure decreased in the late 1990s and throughout the first decade of the 2000s, and the armed forces' primary assignment gradually moved away from territorial defence to a focus on participation in international missions (Berndtsson, Dandeker, and Ydén 2015; Strand 2018). This re-orientation involved a smaller, all-volunteer force taking the place of the 'people's army'. Male conscription was formally in effect until 2010, but beginning in the mid-1990s, only a narrow segment of possible recruits were obliged to serve (Kronberg 2014). Following increased geopolitical tension in the Baltic region, 2017 saw the reinstatement of conscription, now in a formally gender-neutral version.

Strong support for the UN remains an essential characteristic of Swedish strategic culture and a vital backdrop for numerous foreign policy decisions. Although the country has contributed to several UN missions, including the violent Congo intervention in the 1960s (Tullberg 2012), political narratives have consistently foregrounded military defensiveness and non-violence, reiterating the understanding that Sweden's military role is essentially defensive and does not involve substantial violence (Sandman 2019). The Swedish ISAF contribution amounts to Sweden's most extensive involvement in military activities abroad since the Congo intervention. When parliament discussed international security in December 2001, the decision to take part in a UN-backed mission in Afghanistan was unanimous (Martinek 2019). Even after the Swedish contribution grew and troops came under NATO command, strong opposition to and critical discussions of the country's participation in the war in Afghanistan were scarce (Wendt and Åse 2016). Over the years, nine thousand Swedish troops served in Afghanistan, with casualties including five soldiers killed and many more injured. Changing rules of engagement allowed the soldiers to use more offensive violence than was permitted in previous UN missions (Agrell 2013; Sandman 2019). Several researchers comment on the obfuscation of the escalation of allowed violence in political and media debates (Agrell 2013; Berndtsson, Dandeker, and Ydén 2015). The avoidance in public discourse of the term 'war' is significant. Dominant narratives described the war activities in terms of a Swedish 'presence' in Afghanistan. Although the military losses spurred extensive media coverage, critical perspectives and opposing voices were seldom heard (Hellman and Wagnsson 2015).

ISAF engagement not only involved the dispatching of troops to Afghanistan but also led state and military authorities to undertake a number of policy initiatives to support and honour soldiers taking part in missions abroad (Strand 2018; Wendt and Åse 2016). Parliament agreed upon a comprehensive veteran policy that included implementing family support programmes and establishing a new Veterans Day with ceremonial wreath-laying and the awarding of medals to express public support and appreciation for Swedish veterans. The *Restare* monument is a concrete outcome of the explicit political ambition to honour military sacrifices and increase veterans' visibility and social standing in Swedish society.

For postwar Germany, too, ISAF participation was unequalled in terms of the number of soldiers killed and wounded on a mission abroad; more than 50 Bundeswehr soldiers died in Afghanistan. This mission was also the first time since World War II that German soldiers faced actual combat situations and engaged in lethal violence (Tomforde 2016). Publicly referring to ISAF participation in terms of partaking in 'war' and accounting for the dead soldiers as 'fallen' spread considerable

political anxiety and occurred only in the last years of the mission (Dahl Martinsen 2013; Martinek 2019). During the first years of German involvement, soldiers' deaths and funerals remained un-reported in the media and generally unknown to society at large. One scholar states that during this time and in relation to the German public, the government 'denied' that the country was involved in a military mission equivalent to a war (Dahl Martinsen 2013, 67). The Kunduz incident in September 2009, in which almost 100 civilians were killed in an airstrike performed by American planes responding to a call from German forces on the ground, put a stop to war-denying narratives. For many Germans, the realization that the ISAF operation was not confined to civilian protection and reconstruction projects amounted to an 'Afghanistan shock' (von Bredow 2011, 2).

The marked public disquiet related to German participation in war efforts abroad reflects the national identity and strategic culture integration of the country's legacy of National Socialism and twentieth-century military aggression and expansionism. In Bernhard Giesen's (2004) analysis of the evolution of German national self-understanding in the postwar period, the claim is that after unification and de-stasification, the new German identity of the 1990s became that of 'the nation of perpetrators.' Commentators stress that although World War II and the Holocaust remain central in public memory, agreement is diminishing regarding what the perpetrator legacy should mean in terms of German politics and strategic thinking (Hilpert 2014; Kaiser 2008; cf Behnke 2012; Zehfuss 2007). Nonetheless, political narratives, public attitudes, and military strategic discourses have generally valorized peace building and expressed a profound hesitancy towards military violence. One researcher (von Bredow 2011) claims that Germany is a 'pacifist society at heart', and another scholar asserts that this country approaches a 'post-heroic society' that devalues sacrifice (Munkler quoted in Hilpert 2014, 163–164). Overall, pacifism remains a typical feature of contemporary representations of the unified German national identity (Martinek 2019).

The 'perpetrator-gone-pacifist' identity has had important consequences for Germany's strategic and foreign policy choices. The post-unification reluctance of the political elite to send soldiers abroad reflects a desire to ward off other European countries' possible fears of German expansionism (Behnke 2012; von Bredow 2011). The Bundeswehr – which was instituted in 1955 and after unification became the army of the united Germany – was introduced into the arena of international conflicts initially mainly to support humanitarian missions and then to help other armies by monitoring certain areas and engaging in supply and transport (Baumann and Hellman 2001). In 1994, the Federal Constitutional Court ruled that it was not against the constitution to deploy German troops outside the NATO zone. The gradual transformation of German postwar strategic culture eventually made it possible for the country to participate fully in warfare in Afghanistan. Nina Leonhard (2017, 10, italics in original) contends that 'the pursuit of foreign and security policy *interests* ("realistic arguments") can now be considered to have become generally accepted in Germany even if this entails resorting to military means.'

The idea of the 'citizen in uniform' and the representation of the Bundeswehr as an 'army of peace' have been central facets of German military identity during and beyond the Cold War. Conscription was introduced in 1956 and persisted until 2011. After

unification, former East German (GDR) soldiers were incorporated into the Bundeswehr after careful vetting and ideological de-programming (Leonhard 2008). Nina Leonhard (2017) explains the importance for the Bundeswehr of the concept of 'Innere Führung' (literally, inner guide or guidance), which signals a 'civil' military organization based on democratic values, diminishing the distance between civil society and the military and thereby avoiding the illegitimate use of violence. For soldiers, this ideal involves a willingness to protect the democratic values connected to the Bundeswehr but also allows them to refuse orders that go against their own conscience. Although 'Innere Führung' is closely associated with German postwar re-armament and the Cold War situation, Leonhard (2017, 9) underlines that because of its peace orientation, it could also support the country's participation in wars claiming to build democracy and protect human rights, such as the ISAF in Afghanistan.

The military reorientation occurring in both Sweden and Germany since the end of the Cold War has also had consequences for the incorporation of gender norms into the respective countries' armed forces. Through the policy of male conscription, masculinity became politically and practically ingrained both in the military as an institution and in the practices of military work. The maleness of the German 'citizen soldier' was taken as given. In Sweden, the neutral warrior was likewise a gendered identity incorporating a strong but fundamentally unaggressive and protective rather than action-oriented masculinity (Kronsell 2012; cf. Åse 2016). Germany's legacy of military aggression has important implications for the particular gendering of the armed forces and the socially privileged versions of masculinity. Renouncing the gender politics of National Socialism and its notions of military heroism and sacrifice as the height of masculine virtues, the immediate postwar years saw a reconstruction of German masculinity modelled on Western masculine and soldiering ideals: 'aggressive but not too aggressive' (Poiger 1998, 162). The gendered family rather than the military was the primary arena for the new masculinity, indicating that the private family, not the nation and its defenders, was the privileged arena for novel gender constructions and identities (Moeller 1998a, cf. 1998b). German military masculinity remains politically sensitive because of its historically close associations with both authoritarian Prussian ideals and Nazi ideology.

In Sweden, the end of the Cold War and of exclusive male conscription brought about a change in the gendering of the armed forces as well as in the ways military masculinity fit into the national self-understanding. Since 1989, all military professions in Sweden have been open to women. However, statistics from 2019 indicate that the percentage of women has not risen above 7% for officers and 11% for soldiers, and the military remains masculinized in its culture and work practices (Swedish Armed Forces 2019; Persson 2011). In Germany, it was not until after a ruling of the European Court of Justice in 2001 that combat military positions were opened to women. Additionally, the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and the associated spread and consolidation of gender equality as an objective of the ISAF resulted in a need for gender 'competence' within the participating armed forces (Egnell 2017). For Sweden, this development is in complete harmony with the country's national identity, which privileges gender equality as a central sign of 'Swedishness' (Eduards 2012; Martinsson, Griffin, and Nygren 2016). Gender equality and respect for LGBT identities are increasingly framed as 'our' national values that the armed forces have a duty to protect (Strand and Kehl 2018; cf. Agius and Edenborg 2019).

The post-Cold War changes in Germany's and Sweden's strategic culture, the shifts in the armed forces' incorporation of nationally specific gender ideals, and the emergence of new versions of military masculinities together provide important context for the thematic comparison of the Berlin and Stockholm monuments, to which I now turn.

The monuments' planning, names and dedications

Political authorities initiated both the German and the Swedish monuments, although in both contexts, military organizations and individual actors were at the time suggesting an increase in societal recognition for soldiers' deeds and sacrifices (Dahl Martinsen 2013; Wendt and Åse 2016). While visiting German troops in Afghanistan in 2005, defence minister Franz Josef Jung was touched by a memorial that the soldiers had constructed to honour their dead colleagues, and two years later, in 2007, he proposed the construction of a monument in Berlin (*Deutsche Welle* 2007). The monument's origin in an elite political and military context speaks to the wider German public's dis-acknowledging of the country's war effort in Afghanistan. In Sweden, the new veteran policy was explicitly designed to bolster public support and appreciation of veterans (Government Offices of Sweden 2008, 2014). A monument, together with a new military hymn, the upgrading of Veterans Day to a state ceremonial, and the introduction of new military medals were amongst the favoured measures to increase veterans' social status and visibility in society.

To determine the specific designs of the respective monuments, both German and Swedish authorities organized a competition, inviting architects and artists to participate. Although the respective governments established the conditions and appointed the juries, the political and military elites did not directly decide the appearance of the monuments; however, they did select the formal titles of the monuments and define the groups of people they honoured. In Sweden, the veteran policy, of which the monument initiative was part, was not politically controversial. Just as with the ISAF operation as a whole, the rule was political agreement (Wendt and Åse 2016). However, *Restare's* appearance met with some criticism, primarily from military and soldiers' organizations asserting that the monument did not adequately express soldiers' experiences (Sveriges Veteranförbund 2013). It was derogatively called a pine cone ('en kotte') by some journalists and on social media (Hildebrandt 2012; Swedish Armed Forces 2012).

In the German context, for historical reasons, extensive public attention and debates often follow the announcement of plans for public monuments: 'No one takes their monuments more seriously than the Germans,' notes James E. Young (1992, 268). This popular involvement in public art and buildings is possibly a reaction to the important role played by aesthetics and architecture in Nazi ideology (Cohen 1989). Today, counter-monument interventions that attempt to invert what a monument 'is' through varying aesthetic and spatial measures are noteworthy in this country, one widely discussed example being the subterranean Aschrott fountain in Kassel (Steven, Franck, and Fazakerley 2012; Young 2001). In the early stages, Germany saw ample criticism of the decision to construct a Bundeswehr monument in parliament, media debates and from individual protesters. The initial critique came from members of the 'Die Linke' (The Left Party) and focused both on the name of the monument – *Ehrenmal der Bundeswehr* – and that it commemorated only members of the armed forces. Arguing

that this new memorial was a sign of the militarization of German society, the critics also implied that a military memorial must include and honour all victims of war, not just military personnel (Dahl Martinsen 2013, 102–106). However, the Berlin monument's particular design and artistic expression did not attract public criticism. In 2018, the inauguration of a small information room adjacent to the monument took place. The room details Germany's postwar history and the creation of the Bundeswehr and its participation in missions abroad. Displays present the oaths and rituals of the armed forces and include the perspectives of soldiers and their families.

Although the dedications of both monuments definitely identify them as having a military cause, they do not exclusively honour military service-members or soldiers. The official title of the Swedish monument is 'Restare: The Swedish State's Memorial for Veterans and Other Expatriate Personnel.' The name *Restare* (from the Latin for 'to rest') was the artist's choice, but the wording of the full title was decided by the authorities. The monument honours both civilian and military veterans, defined as personnel who have taken part in missions abroad (Public Art Agency Sweden 2012a). While the term 'UN veteran' has historically referred to Swedes who have taken part in UN operations, those that served in the armed forces at home were traditionally not identified as veterans. Up until the end of mass conscription, the norm for young men was to spend 9–12 months in the armed forces, usually at the age of 19 or 20. 'Lumpen', the popular name for military service, was a normalized feature of male coming-of-age through the 1990s and did not make one a 'veteran'. Equally, the term 'fallen' was not used to describe soldiers killed in the Swedish armed forces, and except during the years of the two World Wars, the public's engagement with these deaths was marginal. Despite being largely unrecognized in broader society and Swedish forces not being engaged in combat activities, there were many incidents of death and injury. In the Cold War period, the air force in particular had a high death rate – more than 600 air force pilots and personnel died while in service (Eneroth 2014).

In light of this historical context, the dedication of the new monument to 'Veterans and Other Expatriate Personnel' contributes to the construction of a novel and outwardly gender-neutral military identity. This new 'veteran' identity obscures the history of deep militarization and male conscription and silences the existence of the 600 dead air force members, for example. The dedication illustrates Sanna Strand's (2018) claim that the various elements of Sweden's veteran policy constituted a desirable and attractive 'veteran identity' that was essential in achieving the transformation of the conscription-based armed forces into a socially respected all-volunteer force of professional soldiers. The *Restare* monument expresses this development, illustrating how state and military authorities use historical experiences and developments selectively in their normalizing of 'professional' military death and in selling military honour to the public.

Just as *Restare* does not honour only professionals from the Swedish armed forces, the German memorial credits both civilian and military personnel employed in the Bundeswehr. These circumstances indicate how both monuments evade exclusively military connotations by including civilian categories. In the Swedish context, including civilians ensures that the new veteran identity does not seem excessively militaristic. According to Nina Leonhard (2011), the decision to include military as well as civilian personnel amongst those that the *Ehrenmal der Bundeswehr* recognizes is contradictory: if the ambition is to honour those that have died in the service of the state, then why not

include other government agencies? If the ambition is to specifically honour military sacrifices – why include civilians? My analysis suggests that honouring only the military dead would permit the interpretation that the monument glorifies military sacrifice, which, in turn, would risk symbolically connecting it to the worshipping of death for the nation that was a central tenet of National Socialist ideology (Theweleit 1995). Thus, the inclusion of civilians serves as a buffer against that particular interpretation, as does the official timeline that the monument's dedication establishes. The year 1955 (the start of the Bundeswehr) demarcates the dead that it is politically possible to honour. It should be noted here that many former Wehrmacht soldiers joined the Bundeswehr, so the timeline is based solely on institutional conditions and ignores individuals' circumstances. This fact illustrates Maja Zehfuss's (2007) claim regarding the political uses of memory, namely, that in Germany in particular, and in relation to justifications of state-sponsored violence, concealing and forgetting the past are as important as explicitly addressing and remembering the country's history. The univocal institutional demarcation and the inclusion of civilians amongst those the monument honours demonstrate German authorities' crucial engagement with historical experience and the perpetrator identity. To successfully promote honourable military death and war-making to the German public requires that the setup of the monument pacify the political force historically associated with honouring military death and sacrifice in this country.

The monuments' locations

Moving on to the examination of the physical surroundings chosen for the monuments, it is noted that both are located in settings with a military history. *Restare* sits in the close vicinity of a large open area that from the 17th to the 19th centuries was used for drill exercises and where pitched battles were staged, often with large audiences. The area housed military barracks through the World Wars, but since 1945, no regular military activities have taken place there, and the area is de-militarized (Ericson Wolke 2018). Today, the area is part of Royal Djurgården, a large-scale park that contains various museums and national heritage institutions and is popular for outdoor activities and recreation. Close to *Restare* is a statue of Folke Bernadotte, who is famous for organizing the 'white bus' transports of war victims from Germany to Sweden in 1945. The pathway that leads up to the new monument also bears Bernadotte's name. A UN monument dedicated to Swedes who have died in the service of this organization is nearby. Indeed, this choice of location reinforces a peace narrative and represses a history of war and great power ambitions: Sweden as a peaceful and moral nation takes priority over identities from earlier periods.

In contrast to *Restare*'s pastoral surroundings, the Berlin monument has an urban setting. It is located in the so-called Bendlerblock, a massive military quarter planned and built at the beginning of the 20th century. The Wehrmacht army used the buildings, and this is the location where the 1944 execution of the high-ranking officers, including Claus von Stauffenberg, who conspired within the military to kill Hitler and overthrow the Nazi regime took place. Today, 'The Memorial to German Resistance' sits within the compound. The location of the *Ehrenmal der Bundeswehr* thus manages to associate this memorial with individual moral courage while also plainly acknowledging Germany's history of National Socialism and military aggression.

The precise geographic location of the monument, on the edge of the Benderblock and directly bordering the Hildebrandstrasse, reveals a position *between* the military and civilian domains of German society. Its structure further indicates a porous border between these spheres. The monument's outer perforated metal wall can be shifted, creating an opening that allows entry from the civilian side. However, even when the monument is 'closed', the see-through design makes visual access from outside possible, indicating the importance of civilian control of the armed forces. This careful representation of a permeable border between the military and civilian spheres can also be interpreted against the backdrop of criticism for placing the monument in a military – as opposed to a straightforwardly political and democratic – spatial context. Both when the government's decision to construct a military memorial was discussed in the German Parliament and at the memorial's inauguration in 2009, critical voices said that a more apt placement would be in the immediate vicinity of the Reichstag building (*Deutsche Welle* 2009). Critics argued that placing it adjacent to the Reichstag would materially manifest that the Bundeswehr operates under the orders of the German parliament and its democratically elected representatives. A brochure describing the monument published by the Federal Ministry of Defence (2009, 55) defines its key messages as openness and transparency and supports the chosen location, saying, 'The memorial is neither exposed on a prominent urban stage nor hidden in a backyard' (9).

While the Bundeswehr monument's location at a distance from political authority was a matter of some political uneasiness, the choice of a principally pastoral surrounding for *Restare*, away from political institutions and decision-makers, was fundamentally uncontroversial. In Sweden, placing the new monument in an explicitly political location close to Parliament or government agencies in downtown Stockholm could have accentuated the sending of soldiers to fight in wars abroad as a clearly political and potentially provocative issue. Such an emphasis would have been at odds with both a peace narrative and the national self-identification of a country that has not been to war for 200 years. Providing a context of nature, heritage, and recreation, Royal Djurgården resists politics and ideological controversy. This choice of location makes use of the capabilities of a natural and pastoral environment to seemingly transcend politics.

The monuments' designs

The Berlin and Stockholm monuments refrain from ennobling martial competences and masculine military honour. Reflecting the aesthetics of abstract art as non-ideological and devoid of political messages, both also have non-figurative designs. According to Ekman (2014), non-figurative elements generally give visitors more freedom to form and attach their own memories to monuments and public artwork. Moreover, neither of the two structures displays any religious features or presents references to homeland or nation, although the German monument bears the inscription, 'In memory of those of our Bundeswehr who died for peace, right and freedom.' Another similarity is that both memorials allow for private mourning as well as public rituals and military ceremonies.

In contrast to the German monument's dark colours, impressive structure and interior that can be entered, *Restare* is delimited and strikingly light in colour. Its comparably small size makes it possible visually to take in entirely, even when one is very close. The

structure is contained and graspable – it does not encircle or physically overwhelm visitors. The instructions for artists and architects wanting to participate in the contest stated that although designs should meet relatives' needs for secluded remembrance and private ceremonies, successful monuments should not bear any suggestion of a grave or burial place (Public Art Agency Sweden 2012a). In its explanation of the selection of the winner, the jury interpreted the government's political intentions for the monument and choice of location as indications that the role of humankind in international peace missions should be accentuated rather than specific conflicts (Public Art Agency Sweden 2012b). Contributions that employed the symbols of war rather than those of peace were disregarded by the jury, as were monuments that had death or funerary associations (Public Art Agency Sweden 2012b).

Sculptor Monika Dennis Larsen created the winning monument. It consists of a white marble cone with cavities the size of faces. The sculpture stands on a large, light-grey concrete plate interleaved with a mandala figure in stainless steel bands. A mandala is a circular pattern representing the universe in non-Western contexts. The jury interpreted the mandala to signify 'meetings between cultures, and circles closing' (Public Art Agency Sweden 2012b). The plate also supports three benches that bear inscriptions on the themes of democracy, peace and the fragility of human life. The Swedish Armed Forces gave members of groups such as UN Veterans, individual soldiers and their family members as well as the public the opportunity to propose suitable epigraphs, although the final decision on the inscriptions rested with the military authorities, in consultation with veteran organizations (Swedish Armed Forces 2013). One of the inscriptions speaks of human values and loss in a generic sense, but there is no mention of war or military identities.

The artist describes the central cone as 'a frozen bud in early stages'. She says that if you are distressed, the cavities offer a place where you can rest your face, receive solace, and be reminded that life continues (Dennis Larsen 2012). The monument sits on the ruins of an old house because, in her view, 'home is often the place where we feel most safe', and the surrounding trees create a 'natural room and give a feeling of protection'. Dennis Larsen wants the location to be a 'reminder of the human compassion that guides every soldier's desire to help.'

According to Western aesthetic conventions, an organic and budding form indicates nature's cyclicity, encouraging associations with birth and revival, which, in turn, connote womanhood and femininity. The roundness of the *Restare* marble cone is additionally feminized by the allusion to emotions, protection and home. In its style, the monument completely lacks allusions to aesthetic features traditionally associated with masculinity – straightness, angular lines, dark colours – and no architectural element indicates its military function. In my analysis, Dennis Larsen's monument carefully and convincingly stages Sweden's national narrative of peacefulness and military non-belligerence, avoiding military frameworks and their masculinization.

As stated in the guidelines for the competition, the monument should function in military ceremonies but also provide a place for quiet contemplation and individual remembrance. Remarking on a new Danish monument, Ekman (2014, 155) shows how its architecture 'structures the prescribed enactments of the cultural memory of the military.' For Sweden, this means that on Veterans Day, when the institution of the Swedish military is celebrated and individuals formally honoured for exceptional deeds

and sacrifices, these activities take place in surroundings that physically project the country's general commitment to peace and humanitarianism. Organized by the armed forces, the Veterans Day ceremony manifests a powerful nationalism through, for example, flag standards, acoustics/songs referencing national and military values, and the presence of male members of the royal family (Wendt and Åse 2016, 377–379). The script for the Veterans Day ritual – including participants' coordinated movements, salutes, clothes and other attire – expresses traditional military values that include the use of violence and foreground the historically masculine fellowship of the Swedish armed forces.

Although *Restare* does not reference the institution of the armed forces, it does not interrupt or object to the evident manifestations of military, martial and historically masculine values displayed at the Veterans Day ceremony. My conclusion is that the monument *neutralizes* the display of military identities, violence and masculinity and contributes to the military ceremony not being experienced as 'too much' – too militaristic, masculine, or extreme for Swedish self-identification.

When contrasting the architecture and design of the Stockholm monument with its Berlin counterpart, the architectural differences are overtly explicit: the 'innocent' Swedish history, manifested in the white organic form and the circular mandala, vis-à-vis the dark colours and straight lines of the much larger *Ehrenmal der Bundeswehr*. The structure's impressive size and austere atmosphere indicate the gravity and ethical weight associated with military matters in this country. It is possible to enter the Bundeswehr memorial, and the inner room (the 'cella') contains the names of more than 3000 dead, projected one by one in white LED light onto a dark wall. According to the information brochure, 'the cella is a monochrome, dark room in which the contours are blurred so that it seems dematerialized' (Federal Ministry of Defence 2009, 25). Daylight enters through the perforated roof. Upon entering, visitors face a blank, dark wall ending in a raised and slanting light-coloured floor panel. This tilted element interrupts the room's dark and strictly rectangular order. To see the sequence of the names of the killed, each fading in alphabetical order into the next, visitors have to turn around and face the exit. This placing of the names prevents the room from resembling an altar to the Bundeswehr dead – an easy association to make if the names were on the wall facing those entering. The political unease associated with the altar interpretation is also echoed in the decision to exclude the stone monolith originally placed within the cella (Leonhard 2011, 438). Moreover, as I will discuss in the next section, including the names of the dead was not part of the original design, and the decision to add this element was the subject of some controversy.

The see-through design of the perforated metal walls and roof of the monument speaks strongly of the political need to fasten military death to democratic ideals and institutions. Glass and architecture highlighting transparency are readily used in buildings that house democratic institutions and symbolize a country's democratic political order. This symbolism is particularly salient in Germany – the added glass dome of the Reichstag in Berlin being a case in point (Barnstone 2005). The public being able to literally see into institutions of democracy concretizes values such as openness, transparency and the demos' supreme control of elected representatives and political leadership. In the *Ehrenmal der Bundeswehr*, the form of the perforations in the walls and roof corresponds to the traditional metal identification tag that is broken in half when

a soldier dies. The distance between these openings forms a repetitive pattern of whole and half-oval tags that reflects a Morse code transformation of the oaths that different categories of personnel take to serve the constitutional order faithfully (Federal Ministry of Defence 2009). This carefully arranged design shows how architecture harnesses Germany's perpetrator history and its associated celebration of military death for the nation. The monument's foundational structures demonstrate the subjugation of the armed forces to the institutions of German democracy.

The monuments' honouring of individual sacrifice

How military monuments attend to the individual pain and suffering caused by military activities is, perhaps, their most pertinent aspect. Susan M Behuniak (2012) claims that war monuments, to various degrees, enable a presence characterized as 'that sense of awareness that the living have for the dead' (175). In this final section of the analysis, I will discuss the ways in which the Stockholm and Berlin monuments address and honour individual sacrifice and military death. In this connection, the politics of publicly referring to military operations such as the ISAF as acts of *war* come to the fore. As noted, in Sweden, the privileged wording was a Swedish 'presence' in Afghanistan (Martinek 2019; Sandman 2019). As was also mentioned above, there was unwillingness on the side of German authorities to recognize that Bundeswehr soldiers were both killing and being killed in Afghanistan, and the media's silence concerning the loss of German soldiers' lives persisted several years into the deployment (Dahl Martinsen 2013). For operations clearly and unambiguously identified as a (legitimate) war, less political work is required to justify soldiers' deaths. Being unable to explicitly refer to war-making makes the justification of military losses problematic. In Sweden, this dilemma is particularly salient. As already noted, *Restare* contains no references to war or military death. Nothing visual or material in the monument recognizes the death of Swedish soldiers in Afghanistan, even though participation in this war was what gave impetus to the building of the monument. It is perhaps telling that the information sign in English states that *Restare* honours Sweden's 'fallen', while the Swedish version omits the corresponding word ('fallna'). Of course, the monument does not display the names of dead soldiers, although there are several examples of memorials, also situated in Djurgården, that contain inscriptions in stone of the names of victims of accidents and disasters, including the monument for those that died in the 1994 Estonia ship disaster and the memorial for the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. Thus, it is not the public naming of dead persons per se that is troubling, but the military associations. *Restare* lets Sweden's peace identity eliminate military death and fits well with the narrative that Sweden was only 'present' in Afghanistan.

The naming of the dead Bundeswehr personnel was a debated feature of the German monument. The original design did not include any names. The addition of the LED light installation was the consequence of a media debate following the military authorities' unwillingness to publicly identify dead Bundeswehr soldiers. Kaare Dahl Martinsen (2013, 102–103) proposes that the German media's discovery that they could obtain all of the information concerning the names and ranks of killed Germans from US sources compromised the German Ministry of Defence's strategy of silence in relation to the particulars of individual soldiers' deaths. Wanting to withhold the names from the

memorial, the military authorities eventually said that it was up to the next of kin to decide, leading to the addition to the monument of the LED light installation (Dahl Martinsen 2013, 109). Today, the monument also includes a small bronze book containing inscriptions of the names of the dead by the year they died. The book can be found on the Hildebrandstrasse side of the monument.

In the cella, the projection of each individual name on the dark wall appears for five seconds; thus, the presentation of all of the names takes more than four hours. No rank, branch of the Bundeswehr or time of death is shown, nor what mission or activity the person was engaged in when he or she died. Disconnected and ephemeral, the individual names hang on the wall briefly and then fade away. They appear entirely without context or background: there is no reason given for these individual sacrifices, no explanation of what caused the death implied. My interpretation is that in the German context, military death cannot resemble a politically desirable solution, and this is what motivates the lack of acknowledgement of the particular political context and circumstances surrounding each individual death. Moreover, visually recognizing the individual deaths one by one avoids the impression of massive military death given by the customary inscriptions of soldiers' names and ranks on a wall of stone. It also avoids the impression of war deaths as inevitable that is given when monuments contain empty space to accommodate the names of those expected to die in wars to come.

Although the way the *Ehrenmal der Bundeswehr* identifies the dead certainly testifies to the inherent violence and cost in lives of activities associated with the institution of the military, the aesthetics of the naming prevents associations with military heroism and state-sanctioned martial violence. This prevention is necessary because in this national context, dead soldiers risk being associated with the National Socialist ideology in which death for the nation is seen in terms of masculine and national/Aryan rejuvenation. The monument determinedly shuns any celebration of military sacrifice.

Conclusion

This article's analysis of new military monuments exemplifies that war-making is 'productive' in the sense that it provokes cultural expressions and leads to intense and varied societal meaning-making (Barkawi 2011; Sylvester 2012). The implication is that gender and transdisciplinary perspectives and the engagement with empirical sources that are not generally used in international relations research or security studies, such as, for example, material culture and objects, visuals, ritual performances, as well as cultural expressions such as film, literature and artwork, expands and deepens the critical examination of war-making. Alterations in the state's security policy and the transformation of strategic culture require extensive societal meaning making, indicating the merit of including cultural expressions in the analysis of changes in states' national security and foreign policy. Gender norms and military masculinities come forth as crucial to understand how such changes are challenged and/or become accepted in the wider society.

The new military monuments in Berlin and Stockholm were constructed in direct response to these countries participation in the war in Afghanistan. The political considerations associated with these monuments' dedications, locations, architectural structures and designs demonstrate the extent to which the state relies on national narratives and self-identification to make the public accept wars of choice. My examination points

to the monuments' denial of the international context of these wars and the introduction of the national subject as the collective that shoulders military death. In the case of both Germany and Sweden, privileged historical narratives and collective understandings of 'our' national identity are important ideological resources for justifying the state's risking of soldiers' lives. The version of history required to rationalize military deaths and soldiers' sacrifices is undoubtedly selective. As shown, careful management shapes the way the monuments reference national history, war legacies and gender.

Importantly, neither of the two monuments explicitly refers to the nation, territory or homeland. Flags or other national historical and emotional symbols are not used. In this sense, the monuments lack obvious displays of national identity. Rather than overtly appealing to the nation, the monuments consistently *align with* national self-understanding and privileged historical narratives in their architecture, spatial arrangement and designs, as well as in their chosen locations, names and dedications. The monuments' alignment with the national subject and its history serve a purpose to support state authority and legitimize wars of choice. Because the monuments *perform* a carefully managed version of national identity and history, powerful emotional responses are made possible and opportunities for political conversation and discussion suppressed. In this sense, a 'successful' monument is similar to a ceremony or a ritual performed in the name of the nation: rituals *accomplish* emotions; when the nation is *felt*, it appears to stand above politics, making the way official authorities invoke the nation difficult to politically challenge and criticize (cf. Wendt 2019).

Gender is also fundamental to the war-justificatory ideological work performed by the monuments. But contrary to European war monuments honouring masculine soldiers and associated military values, both these structures repress the historically close associations between social constructions of masculinity, military violence and protection of the nation-state. *Restare* provides a spatial context cleansed from Sweden's history of deep militarization and masculine military norms, while *Ehrenmal der Bundeswehr* powerfully averts the invoking of a heroic masculinity attained through noble fighting and death for the nation. The avoidance of explicit references to military masculinities is an important characteristic of both monuments. *Restare's* central component – the white feminized marble cone – invokes revival, reproduction and protection/home. Sweden's peace identity and assumed innocence as a war-making country is reflected in the white colour and its suggestion of female sexual innocence. The effectiveness of this representation rests on the conflation of sexual innocence/virginity with lack of experience in warfare, demonstrating the pervasive coupling of war and military violence with gender and sexuality.

The Bundeswehr monument determinedly forestalls linkages between today's military identity and the country's history of totalitarianism and authoritarian military regimes. Gender is vital to achieving this dis-association. By invoking neither military masculinity nor the feminized homeland, the monument reveals the separation of contemporary military activity from that in the German past. Interestingly, and in contrast to the monument in Sweden, organic forms or references to a feminized home are not available as a war-justificatory theme in this context. The *Ehrenmal* firmly represses the gendered nationalist trope in which masculinity underpins military heroism and the feminized nation is what makes soldiers' sacrifices 'worth it'.

Examining new military monuments underlines the strength and impact of state authorities' attempts to manufacture consent to post-national wars. Official monuments are powerful truth claims and deliver strong political assertions. Through their locations, spatial arrangement and physical designs, these monuments can express the fundamentals of a state's war justifications. *Ehrenmal der Bundeswehr* recognizes Germany's perpetrator identity and history of National Socialism and military aggression and uses gender to establish contemporary state-sponsored wars as fundamentally different. Ignoring the country's history of deep militarization, *Restare* bolsters Sweden's peace identity so that contemporary military violence and death appear acceptable and even 'peaceful'. As conveyers of war-justificatory narratives, monuments are definitely politically persuasive.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Fredrik Krohn Andersson, Maria Wendt, the members of the Feminist and Critical Studies of Politics Group at Stockholm University, and the two anonymous reviewers for their friendly support and stimulating comments on a previous version of this article.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This work was supported by the Swedish Research Council [421-2014-1228].

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