

## 1.4 GERMAN MILITARY AND INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING

### ? FOCUS QUESTION:

- Should countries that have started international conflicts in the past be allowed to have strong militaries?

**STANDARD #2** TIME, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE.

**STANDARD #6** POWER, AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE.

### LESSON OVERVIEW:

This learning experience actually combines several related topics: conscription and civilian service and Germany's role in international peacekeeping, such as in Afghanistan, the Lebanese Sea border and other military interventions. Students will research and debate in class these relevant issues regarding Germany's role as a major player in international relations.

### TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

For centuries, emphasis on military prowess formed the core of much of Germany's identity. Prussia, the kingdom that eventually unified the myriad of German states into a single country in 1871, was a modern Sparta. As the French writer Voltaire observed, "Where some states have an army, the Prussian army has a state." In the twentieth century, Germany's defeat in two major wars has changed the mindset among the Germans. Up until 2011, The Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany stated that men were obliged to serve either in the military, which they could refuse and instead do alternative civilian service (*Zivildienst*). In the end, the length of military or civilian service was six months. However, contemporary Germans are much less militaristic than their predecessors. In 2010, the German government led by Chancellor Angela Merkel proposed the suspension of military conscription (and the companion civilian service), and the reduction of German troop numbers by a third, down to about 170,000 soldiers. The Chancellor's proposal became law in May 2011. How different the political climate in Germany is when contrasted with the period of the 1930's and 1940's, when the Allied powers after World War I (in the Treaty of Versailles) forced Germany to accept an armed forces of about 100,000; the demilitarization of Germany contributed to a right-wing backlash that birthed the Nazi Party. Today, the change to volunteer armed forces raises the question of Germany's role in international peacekeeping. Many of the NATO allies were concerned, for example, with Germany's non-involvement in actions related to the 2011 Arab Spring in Libya.



Source: Agence France-Presse. *Guttenberg Unveils Plans to Cut German Army Size*, Retrieved August 23, 2010, from <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20100823/DEFSECT02/8230303/Guttenberg-Unveils-Plans-Cut-German-Army-Size>

### 🕒 TIME:

(2) 45 minute class periods

## INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES:

- German Military and International Peacekeeping Articles (**Handout 1.4.1 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany (**Handout 1.4.2 on Instructional Resource Disc**)

## PROCEDURE:



### DAY 1 :

**ANTICIPATORY SET:** The teacher should ask the students whether they believe that nations with a history of belligerence should be able to remilitarize and become part of the international peace-keeping force that often is expected in today's volatile world. The teacher may want to use the example of Japan's renunciation of war in its Constitution of 1949 and its self-restriction to maintaining "Self-Defense Forces" rather than armed forces. The teacher may want to use the example of NATO's decision to become militarily involved in the revolution in Libya in the spring of 2011.

For homework the students should have read 3 of the 7 articles included in the German Military and International Peacekeeping Articles (**Handout 1.4.1 on Instructional Resource Disc**) in addition to the Military Conscription excerpt in the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany Handout (**Handout 1.4.2 on Instructional Resource Disc**).

Before the first day of this lesson, the teacher should divide the class into two groups for the simulation that is planned. The two groups will prepare to debate on whether or not Germany should have a strong military which can become involved in peace-keeping initiatives. Connected to this topic is the future of the German military.

The students will copy the following question from the board and quietly answer in their notes:

"Should countries that have started international conflicts in the past be allowed to have strong militaries?"

The teacher should facilitate a class discussion of this "Do Now" question. Answers will vary and the teacher should make a "T" chart on the board reflecting the various arguments.

Upon arriving in class, students will be divided into two groups. The teacher should instruct them that they are to assume the roles of members of the *Bundestag* and will need to convince the Chancellor (the teacher) that their side is the one that has the plan that is in the best interest of Germany and the world. The resolution they will be debating is:

### SHOULD MODERN GERMANY HAVE A STRONG MILITARY INVOLVED IN INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING AND MILITARY INTERVENTION MISSIONS?

One side will argue for the increased German military presence in international "hot-spots" such as Bosnia or Kosovo, while the other half of the class will support the idea that Germany should not be a part of any multi-national fighting force. Tangential, but critical to the question is the future of the German military; that is, whether it should be a conscripted army or a volunteer one. Each side will have time to work together for the duration of the period to prepare their arguments based upon their readings and the earlier class discussion.

### DAY 2 (THE DEBATE):

The Teacher, in the role of Chancellor, will act as moderator for the debate, calling on students from alternating sides of the issue. Students may volunteer or can be called on at random by the teacher.

Some questions to be considered during the debate:

1. Why is it good for Germany to send troops to international "hot-spots," such as Bosnia or Kosovo?
2. Should modern Germany be held responsible for actions committed by an earlier generation of German leaders?
3. How should the world view modern Germany: by its history or by its future actions?
4. What has been the impact of the elimination of conscription on both the military and civilian service?

**WHOLE GROUP REFLECTION:**

- At the end of class, students will vote on the resolution, based on the debate and not on their own personal beliefs. The teacher should facilitate a discussion based upon the results of the debate.

**MODIFICATION:**

- Rather than combine the issue of volunteer military with Germany's role as international peacekeeper, the teacher may want to use this as a separate topic for discussion or debate.

**EXTENSION:**

- The teacher might assign an essay as a culmination to the debate on either the topic of a volunteer army or Germany's role in international peacekeeping, or Germany and Japan: the difference in military involvement since World War II.

**Source:**

*This lesson was adapted from the work of 2009 TOP Fellow Seth Altman.*