

**"Germans" and "Austrians" in  
World War II:  
Military History and  
National Identity**

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The concept of Austrian nationhood played a central role in the public discourse of postwar Austria. Unlike its interwar predecessor, which was characterized by doubts about its purpose and viability and by persistent calls for closer affiliation with Germany, Austria's Second Republic rested in itself and emphasized its distinction from its northwestern neighbor. Increasingly, this distinction was formulated in explicitly national terms: Austrian national identity was to be based on a unique national tradition.

Whereas the existence of an Austrian national identity soon became widely accepted, there arose a lively debate about its origins.<sup>1</sup> Some authors traced Austrian distinctiveness back to the *privilegium minus* in 1156; others proposed more recent events, such as the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 or the German Confederation in 1866.<sup>2</sup> Scholars and publicists debated whether the Austrians had once been part of a wider German political structure or had always formed a separate entity with only peripheral ties to other German-speaking regions.<sup>3</sup> Much of this discussion centered on the nature of the Holy Roman Empire, whose highly decentralized nature differed in fundamental respects from the conditions found in such Western European kingdoms as England and France.

This diversity of opinion with regard to earlier periods of history did not extend to the interpretation of World War II, however. For much of the postwar era, the wartime identity—and consequently, the wartime experience—of the Austrians was seen as clearly demarcated from the general German pattern. In the immediate aftermath of the war, this differentiation relied predominately on long-term images. References to Austrian resistance against German domination during World War II were commonplace, but they were rooted in an *a priori* standpoint: since the Austrians had never been Germans, or had ceased to be Germans long ago, they naturally rejected incorporation into Germany and resisted this foreign rule to the best of their ability.<sup>4</sup>

With the passage of time, the history of World War II itself assumed a larger role in the intellectual genesis of Austro-nationalism. Several prominent historians designated Austria's resistance to German occupation as *the* crucial element of Austrian nation-formation. Felix

Kreissler developed a theory of Austrian national self-realization out of an analysis of Austrian behavior during World War II.<sup>5</sup> Karl Stadler introduced his study of wartime internal security reports with the assessment that the war years brought increasing hostility against the “German foreigners” and concluded:

In that sense, the struggle of the Austrian worker against the exploiter, of the Austrian farmer against the enemies of religion, and of the bourgeoisie against the usurpers from the Reich also represented a *national war of liberation*.<sup>6</sup>

In recent years, however, the historical image presented in these studies has come under increasing scrutiny. Following the election of Kurt Waldheim to the Austrian presidency, in particular, international observers began to suggest that Austrian interpretations of the country’s wartime history had not always backed up their firm conclusions with equally persuasive empirical evidence.<sup>7</sup>

In this essay, the thesis that the conduct of the Austrian population during World War II demonstrates their national distinctiveness will be put to the test. The essay does not attempt a comprehensive examination of the war years, but focuses on select numerically verifiable aspects. As its principal measure, it relies on the largest quantifiable population sample available—the approximately 1.2 million Austrians who served in the German armed forces. To assess the relative commitment to the German national state and its war effort, the study then contrasts the conduct of German military personal from Germany proper, from Austria, and from select regions outside Germany that had come under German control during the war, such as Alsace and Luxembourg. The similarities and contrasts in military conduct that can be discerned between these groups represent valuable indicators of relative commitment to the German nation-state and its war effort.

### “Austrian” and “German” in Postwar Historiography

The debate about Austrian identity during World War II forms part of the larger debate about the nature and the origins of Austrian national identity. When the Republic of Austria was reestablished from the ruins of the Third Reich in the final days of World War II, its new political

leadership immediately began to stress the country's long tradition of cultural and political autonomy.<sup>8</sup> The scholarly examination of Austrian national identity, by contrast, had a slower start. It must be remembered that Austrian historiography had been in the forefront of Germanist sentiment, and the historians of interwar Austria had seen their preeminent task in documenting Austria's contribution to the history and development of the wider German nation.<sup>9</sup>

During the 1950s and 1960s, a number of popular histories of Austrian national identity appeared, and academics examined the issue in a series of essays.<sup>10</sup> It took several decades, however, before Austrian scholars began to interpret Austria's national identity in major monographs. Some of the central works appeared within a fairly brief period in the early 1980s.<sup>11</sup>

In 1980, the native Austrian Felix Kreissler, professor of history in Rouen, France, published his *La prise de conscience de la nation autrichienne, 1938-1945-1978*.<sup>12</sup> In this study, Kreissler traced the development of an Austrian nation back to the proclamation of the Austrian Empire in 1804, but especially emphasized the time period between 1938 and 1945. Through resistance to German occupation, Austrian national consciousness became complete. In this assessment, Kreissler is in agreement with the thesis put forward by the Anglo-Austrian historian Karl Stadler, who as early as 1966 had referred to a national struggle for liberation that had taken place in wartime Austria.<sup>13</sup>

In a very personally engaged contribution, the cultural historian Friedrich Heer synthesized his lifelong research on Austrian intellectual traditions in his monumental *Der Kampf um die österreichische Identität*.<sup>14</sup> Hardly incidentally, the title echoed the prewar liberal historian—and journalist—Heinrich Friedjung's influential *Der Kampf um die Vorherrschaft in Deutschland*, which had described Austria's ultimately unsuccessful struggle for predominance in nineteenth-century Germany from a distinctly Germanist perspective.<sup>15</sup> Heer juxtaposed a baroque, Counter-Reformational Austrianist culture with its Protestant or anticlerical, German-oriented counterpart, which had its strongholds in areas that had withstood the Counter-Reformation to the largest degree. Heer portrayed Austrian identity as less secure than that of other European countries and reproached prior Austrian governments for not having worked harder on implanting a uniquely Austrian national consciousness.

In his two-volume work *Österreich Zweite Republik*, Georg Wagner, academic historian and director of the Austriaca collection at the Austrian National Library, presented extensive source material from both early and recent Austrian history to document the existence of a distinct Austrian nation.<sup>16</sup> Wagner saw Austrian continuities dating back 2000 years to the Celtic state of Noricum, but especially to the Habsburg hereditary lands as they developed in the eastern Alps around 1500. He interpreted Austria as a *Bundes-Nation* and defined this concept as situated halfway between a cultural nation and a political nation.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, the Viennese social historian Ernst Bruckmüller approached the topic from a more contemporary angle in his study *Nation Österreich*. Consistent with his own scholarly orientation, Bruckmüller developed a social history of Austrian nationhood. Although he traced elements of Austrian identity through modern history and stressed the role of the individual provinces in the creation of the Austrian sense of self, Bruckmüller saw popular participation in public affairs as the centerpiece of consciousness formation. This Austrian national consciousness based on popular participation arose after 1945:

In the case of Austria, it appears that the history since 1945 with the *success of reconstruction*, the achievement of the *State Treaty*, and a certain international renown of a number of Austrian top politicians...became the consciousness-forming phase of national participation.<sup>18</sup>

While clearly dominant in the Austrian debate, this national historiography has also encountered criticism. In 1978, the late doyen of West German historiography, Karl Dietrich Erdmann, sparked a lively discussion when he included twentieth-century Austrian history in the "Handbook of German History" and insisted that it would be fruitless to exclude Austria from the German historical context. Erdmann subsequently developed his views more extensively in his essay *Die Spur Österreichs in der deutschen Geschichte*, which traced out the contours of German historical development in light of its Austrian components.<sup>19</sup> He was immediately challenged by Austrian historians; the debate that ensued has been termed the Austrian *Historikerstreit*, borrowing a term

from the West German historical debate of the 1980s. Most prominent among Erdmann's critics was the Viennese historian Gerald Stourzh, best known for his research on the State Treaty of Vienna, who accused Erdmann of using the year 1938 as the norm for judging prior and subsequent historical developments.<sup>20</sup> Stourzh was supported by most of his Austrian colleagues; one of the few Austrian scholars who openly welcomed Erdmann's contributions was the respected Salzburg historian Fritz Fellner.<sup>21</sup> Fellner stressed that diversity, not homogeneity, had been the hallmark of German history and underscored the eminent analytical importance of Austrian developments in the understanding of this traditional German polycephality. In Fellner's view, this wider, more nuanced, concept of German history forms an alternative to the more restricted, state-centered definitions of both Prusso-German and Austro-nationalist historiography.<sup>22</sup> Although one school of contemporary Austrian historians, among whose foremost representatives Gerhard Botz and Ernst Hanisch might be mentioned, has become increasingly willing to question fundamental parameters of postwar Austrian historiography, the type of broad approach to Austrian history favored by Fellner and a number of international scholars remains controversial.<sup>23</sup>

Austrian attitudes during World War II represent a particularly important analytical aspect of this historical debate. After all, the conclusion that Austrians had never felt any affiliation with Germany or had separated from any remaining German connections in 1156, 1806, or 1866 would be less persuasive if they could be fully integrated into German political and military structures as late as the 1940s. As it immediately precedes the Second Republic, the time period of Austria's incorporation into Germany, and particularly Austrian popular response to it, also affects the assessment of earlier eras.

### **Austrians and the German State, 1938-1945: The Setting**

When German troops moved into Austria in March 1938, the concept of separate Austrian statehood seemed destined to become little more than a historic memory. In the eyes of much of the world, 1938 only appeared to fulfill what the Austrians had demanded in 1918. After the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy in the final stages of World War I, the German core of this multinational

power declared its accession to Germany. On November 12, 1918, its Provisional National Assembly proclaimed the Republic of German-Austria and resolved:

#### Article 1

German-Austria is a democratic republic. All public authority is derived from the people.

#### Article 2

German-Austria is a constituent part of the German Republic. Particular statutes determine the participation of German-Austria in the legislature and the administration of the German Republic as well as the extension of German laws and institutions into German-Austria.<sup>24</sup>

The Peace Treaty of Saint Germain obligated the Austrians to forego unification with Germany and to drop the modifier German from their country's territorial designation. It were Austro-German relations more than anything else that guided the formulation of Article 88:

#### Article 88

The independence of Austria is inalienable otherwise than with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations. Consequently Austria undertakes in the absence of the consent of the said Council to abstain from any act which might directly or indirectly or by any means whatever compromise her independence, particularly, and until her admission to membership of the League of Nations, by participation in the affairs of another Power.<sup>25</sup>

Similar to the arrangement established for the Free City of Danzig, Austria's relationship to Germany was placed under the supervision of the League of Nations. Initially, the democratic leaders of the First Republic continued to harbor hopes for an eventual unification with Germany. Hitler's rise to power created a fundamentally different political environment, however, and in 1938, Austria was not incorporated into democratic Weimar Germany but into a National Socialist one-party state. In spite of these altered circumstances, the *fait accompli* of March 1938 encountered little resistance at home or abroad.<sup>26</sup>

It took the international desire to weaken Germany following its expected defeat in World War II to return the Austrian question to the forum of international policy-making. Having largely

accepted Austria's incorporation into Germany at the time it occurred, the Western powers subsequently struggled to develop a program for Austria's postwar future. Initially, reestablishing the interwar republic held only limited appeal for Allied policy planners. The continued integration with a democratized Germany bereft of its Prussian eastern provinces, or, alternatively, an association with southern German states in a South German confederation or with select regions of the former Habsburg Empire in a Southeast European confederation remained serious policy options in Allied strategic planning. As Robert H. Keyserlingk has shown, the Moscow Declaration, which in 1943 proposed recreating an independent Austrian republic, was conceived by its authors predominately as an element of psychological warfare aimed at creating dissent within the German war effort by offering special incentives to the Austrians who participated in it.<sup>27</sup> The declaration failed to achieve its military goals, and it was not intended as an actual policy statement. In the context of the Cold War, however, it could subsequently strengthen Austrian demands for a withdrawal of the Allied forces of occupation.<sup>28</sup>

The Austrian perception of the country's World War II experience, particularly among postwar generations, was heavily influenced by the publication of personal memoirs and of German police reports that indicate the growth of discontent with the existing situation in the Austrian population.<sup>29</sup> Austrian wartime frustration was seen as a sign of national distinction from Germany. Basing his observations on the very same presuppositions about the mood in the Austrian populace, the Austro-British scholar Fred Parkinson, by contrast, draws the opposite conclusion:

The allegedly sinking morale of the Austrian civilian population during the last couple of years of the war has been interpreted as evidence of disillusionment with Nazi Germany. However, this argument lacks logic and ought to be turned on its head. If the Austrians were really getting disillusioned in that way, their morale should have been soaring at the prospect of an Allied victory. If, on the other hand, they were getting depressed at the prospect of a German military defeat, it must have been because, as before, they were still craving for a German victory but despairing of such hope ever materializing.<sup>30</sup>

In working toward their diametrically opposed interpretations, both postwar Austrianist historiography and Parkinson may depend too heavily on assumptions, because so far, there has been



no compelling evidence that allows a clear distinction between the popular mood in Austria and in Germany proper. Neither select personal recollections nor the generally impressionistic observation of popular dissatisfaction in the course of a prolonged and costly war provide a full substitute for quantifiable data that permit comparison with other regions and states.<sup>31</sup> The basic weakness of most studies that tie the origin of Austrian national identity to the struggle against National Socialist Germany lies in their linear presentation of individual acts of resistance without a comprehensive German and European comparison; too often, they also lack quantitative data that establish the relative significance of these activities within Austria. This form of presentation does not devalue such studies as documentations of individual resistance efforts, but it does limit their relevance for the debate surrounding prevalent wartime behavior and national identity.

The more cautious assessment of the Austrian resistance by many scholars outside the Austrianist historiographical tradition should not be used to deny the existence of such a resistance movement or to downplay the personal dedication of its members. It does, however, preclude characterizing this resistance as a national movement of liberation comparable to such movements in non-German countries. Parkinson quotes the dissatisfied assessment in the Soviet journal *Voyna i Rabochy Klass*, which would be inclined to exaggerate the successes of Soviet allies in order to strengthen domestic morale, that as late as November 1943 "the real underground, nationwide sabotage against the enslavers, which the Austrian Freedom Front proclaimed, is still lacking...the freedom movement in Austria lags far behind that of other European countries."<sup>32</sup>

The fact that popular frustration in some Austrian provinces took on anti-Prussian overtones finds parallels in other regions, whereas such sentiments remained considerably rarer in many parts of western and southern Austria.<sup>33</sup> Personal rivalries and misunderstandings commonly develop between local populations and political and bureaucratic officials from different regions assuming authority in their new environment; developments of this kind can be observed in the provinces of the former German Democratic Republic in the 1990s as well as in post-Anschluss Austria. As evidenced by the current East German situation, these resentments need not be based on ethnic or national sentiments. Even the description of a 1943 conversation with the German trade union

leader and resistance envoy Wilhelm Leuschner in the memoirs of the postwar Austrian president Adolf Schärf, which has a prominent place in many studies of Austrian national identity, leaves a number of questions if quoted in its full context:

I interrupted my visitor unheralded and said: "The Anschluss is dead. The Austrians have been cured of their love of Germany...."

Leuschner was surprised and shaken. He told me that he had talked to other men in Vienna, and no one had presented him with such an impression of the mood in Austria. I regained control of myself, so to speak, and initially could not understand how I had arrived at such an answer. I stuck to it, however, and declared that my political friends could only participate in the overthrow of the Hitler government, not in the preservation of the Anschluss.

Leuschner was disappointed.<sup>34</sup>

The significance of this report as evidence of Austrian nation-formation is somewhat diminished by the fact that it was formulated in 1955, when the concept of an independent Austrian Nation already dominated the Austrian debate. The report is, moreover, more complex than it is frequently portrayed.<sup>35</sup> Considering the late stage of the war, Schärf's thoughts display a fair degree of ambivalence, and Leuschner's response indicates that not all the dissidents with whom he had met as the emissary of the German resistance movement shared Schärf's assessment of future Austro-German relations. If Leuschner encountered diverse viewpoints concerning Austria's role in a democratic postwar Germany, Schärf's memoirs suggest that even members of the Austrian opposition must have held *großdeutsch* sentiments as late as 1943. The German resistance historian Erich Kosthorst reinforces this impression. He expressed his reservations

about underestimating the importance of the extraordinarily tight Austrian contacts with the German resistance for a continuous sense of national community. Drawing on interviews from his research on [the Catholic German resistance leader] Jakob Kaiser, Kosthorst maintained that the accounts of the German participants in these resistance contacts (which could, however, not be examined for their veracity, either) did not confirm that their Austrian partners had definitely "bid farewell to Germany" by 1943/44.<sup>36</sup>

But personal recollections are too subjective to constitute sufficiently authoritative evidence on their own. There exists a more conclusive measurement for the mood among the Austrian populace: the behavior of Austrian soldiers in the German armed forces.

### Austrians and the German state, 1938-1945: Examining the Military Data

In 1938, the Austrian federal army was integrated into the German military. The German general staff to some extent merged previously Austrian and German units in the course of logistic homogenization, but the two military commands created for the Austrian regions essentially

Table 1. German Males Employed in Industry, Trade, Agriculture, and Forestry on September 30, 1944 by Age Cohort

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Age Cohort	Number in Thousands
1870-1878	391
1879-1900	7454
1901-1922	4220
1923-1926	45
1927-1930	1816
Total	13926

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Source: Burkhart Müller-Hillebrand, *Das Heer 1933-1945* (Frankfurt, 1969), III:252.

followed the pre-Anschluss borders. The military district *Wehrkreis XVII* comprised Vienna, Upper and Lower Austria with the northern segment of the Burgenland, and subsequently the German-speaking areas of southern Bohemia and Moravia. The headquarters of military district XVII was located in Vienna. *Wehrkreis XVIII* consisted of Tyrol and Vorarlberg, Salzburg, Styria and southern Burgenland, and Carinthia and was supplemented by parts of northern Slovenia after the defeat of Yugoslavia. Its headquarters was in the city of Salzburg.

Since Austrians were treated as ordinary German citizens, they were drafted according to the same standards as Germans from within the borders of 1937. Out of the approximately 18 million men that were inducted into the German military (including non-citizens), a proportionate share of 1.2 million were Austrians.<sup>37</sup> These 18 million inductees can be contrasted with an overall number of not quite 25 million male citizens between the ages of 15 and 65 who lived in Germany at the outbreak of World War II.<sup>38</sup> The largest segment of the non-inducted males worked in occupations considered essential for the wartime economy. Within this group, there were noticeable differences among the age groups.

Conscription was the norm for healthy adult males and strictly enforced during World War II. The largest segment of the non-inducted males worked in occupations considered essential for the wartime economy. Within this group, there were noticeable differences among the age groups; among 18-21 year olds, non-military employment was negligible. Due to the sizable fluctuation between military and civilian employment, a considerable percentage of the male civilian employees had also seen front-line service. Thus, wartime inductees were, in both social and regional terms, a very representative sample of the general (male) population, and the analysis of their conduct can shed much light on attitudes in the population at large.<sup>39</sup>

The Austrian units formed an integral part of the German military. Austrians were represented in all branches of the armed forces and followed the same rules for front-line and support employment as troops from other regions. Seven mountain and infantry divisions, two tank divisions, and three garrison divisions consisted predominantly of soldiers of Austrian background; on the Arctic Front and in the Balkans, a particularly high percentage of the German forces was composed of Austrians.<sup>40</sup> 207 Austrians held the rank of General in the German armed forces and 326 Austrians were awarded the Knights' Cross, among them the first soldier to receive this high military decoration.<sup>41</sup>

Austrian troops did not have a reputation for unreliability; on the contrary, units from the Alpine provinces were frequently viewed as elite units. The Finnish scholar Tuomo Polvinen concurs with

Hitler's assessment of the troops that the latter put under the command of the Austrian general Lothar Rendulic in 1944:

"In the Mountain Army you are taking charge of the best army which I have at my disposition....You will find a lot of your countrymen there."<sup>42</sup>

A key indicator of national identification can be found in desertion ratios. This does not mean that desertion numbers provide a full picture of the overall mood within the military. They cannot reliably express government acceptance, because many political opponents of National Socialism still felt obligated to contribute to what they subjectively viewed as the military defense of the German nation-state.<sup>43</sup> For individual soldiers, the decision whether or not to desert can also reflect a rational calculation regarding comparative survival chances.<sup>44</sup> The large-scale destruction of records on desertion in the final phases of World War II has in all likelihood made it impossible to account fully for the extent and, above all, the overall social or regional distribution of desertion in the German armed forces of that war.<sup>45</sup> If one examines the German military history of World War II, however, the connection between regional background and desertion numbers becomes unmistakable, which allows a *relative* comparison of different subgroups. Ethnic German draftees from Poland and Western borderlands such as Alsace-Lorraine displayed disproportionately high desertion rates; as a consequence, German military commanders resorted to distributing these soldiers among more reliable units and to setting upper limits for the percentage of select groups of ethnic Germans per unit. In January 1944, the Supreme Commander Southwest (Heeresgruppe C) summarized the most significant previous orders regarding the employment of ethnic German troops from Poland, Alsace-Lorraine, Luxembourg, and Belgium as follows:

- a. The percentage of ethnic Germans must not exceed 8 percent in any unit.
- b. It is prohibited to unite these 8 percent into a closed detachment or to put them into action as a compact group.

c. The ethnic Germans who belong to class III of the ethnic roster [Volkliste III] can only be put into front line action after extensive observation and examination. As a rule, they will initially be used with baggage and supply units.<sup>46</sup>

Since there is no reason to assume that Austrians or Hessians were less interested in personal survival than Luxembourgers, the conspicuous deviation in the pattern of desertion among conscripts from select ethnic German groups as compared to their counterparts from Austria and pre-Anschluss Germany points to the presence of broader political considerations.<sup>47</sup> The experience of ethnic German draftees from eastern and western borderlands establishes that the psychological attitude toward military service in the German armed forces had a tangible impact on the military value of draftees. The German military command had to take special precautionary measures against unreliable populations. Austrian draftees were not treated in such a manner. Striking evidence of the contrast between the assessment of Austrians and the ethnic German draftees in question by German military planners can be found in the correspondence of the 117th *Jäger* Division. In 1943, its newly appointed commanding general expressed alarm at one specific aspect of the unit's regional composition: it contained almost five percent Alsatians. The fact that the bulk of his division consisted of Austrians, on the other hand, did not cause the general any concern.<sup>48</sup>

Due to the possible influence of numerous outside variables, casualty rates constitute a more elusive indicator of military behavior.<sup>49</sup> The multifarious casualty computations of World War II converge on the estimate that between three and a half and four million soldiers from Germany proper and approximately 250,000 soldiers from Austria did not survive their service in the German military.<sup>50</sup> Although most estimates put the percentage of Austrians among the German military war dead close to the population ratio, the issue has not been explored fully.<sup>51</sup> Regional differences in German casualties can be found, because the special conditions on the Eastern Front put soldiers from the Prussian northeast at increased risk, particularly toward the end of the war.<sup>52</sup> At the very least, however, the Austrian casualty figures further reinforce the impression of a substantial participation of Austrians in the German military effort. The high price paid by Austrian soldiers in the German armed forces during World War II can be understood most clearly from the fact that

the absolute number of Austrian military casualties came close to that of Great Britain and lay at more than half that of the United States, although the former's population (without colonies) was seven times and the latter's almost twenty times that of Austria.<sup>53</sup>

Beside the data for the general draft-age male population one can place the numbers for particularly committed subgroups. It could be seen as a coincidence that two Austrians were among the twelve fighter pilots who received the second highest military decoration available to active air force members, the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves, Swords, and Diamonds (the highest decoration was only awarded to one pilot). Yet the apparent overrepresentation of Austrians vis-à-vis pre-Anschluss Germans in the largely volunteer Waffen SS, generally considered the most committed branch of the German military during World War II, cannot but reflect on the level of Austrian involvement in the German war effort.<sup>54</sup>

A judicious analysis of Austrian military conduct during World War II does not reveal a general pattern of idiosyncrasy. Rather, the large sample of quantifiable behavior from the period of World War II provided by the members of the German armed forces indicates that the dominant feature of any comparison between Austrians and their contemporaries from Germany proper is one of similarity, not of difference. These findings do not support the argument that the bulk of the Austrian population had developed a separate national identity prior to 1945.

### **Conclusion**

If one wants to understand the state of Austrian nationhood by the early 1940s, few indicators are as valuable as the simultaneous conduct of German-speakers who lacked a distinctly German sense of self. As culturally German populations who had gradually departed from their historical German context, Alsatians and Luxembourgers provide excellent comparisons. These groups had reached a level of detachment from Germany equivalent to separate nationhood; their conduct projects how the members of a distinctly Austrian nation might have responded to World War II.<sup>55</sup> Considering this point of reference, one should expect several hundred thousand Austrian men to

have eluded German military service by evading conscription or deserting to the Allies. In wartime Austria, there was no such response.

The study of World War II reveals an interconnection between national consciousness and military conduct. The more limited identification with the German nation among select German-descended populations outside Germany resulted in drastically higher desertion rates and severely limited the operational usefulness of draftees from those regions for German military planners. From the lack of a comparable development among Austrians, one cannot conclude that the Austrians uniformly supported the political system that governed them; nor can one conclude that there did not exist Austrians who considered the German army a foreign institution. The Austrian conditions do not disallow the supposition that resistance elites began to envision their opposition to the National Socialist government in national terms.<sup>56</sup> They do show, however, that most Austrians had not yet developed a separate national identity and that the tension between national and political considerations resulted in patterns of behavior that resembled those in Germany proper and differed fundamentally from those in Alsace or Luxembourg, not to mention those in Serbia or Norway. The Austrians became increasingly disillusioned with a union experience that brought so many hardships, and this disillusionment could express itself in regional animosities. Ultimately, however, Austrians still identified with the German nation to an extent unthinkable among the inhabitants of the Franco-German zone of transition. The formation of a distinctly Austrian national consciousness among wider segments of the Austrian population belongs to a later period of history.

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## NOTES

1. The mass psychology of this nation-building process, which advanced considerably but also encountered resistance, falls outside the scope of this essay. It is examined in my ongoing research project tentatively titled "The Ambivalence of Identity."

2. See, *inter alia*, Ernst Görlich, *Handbuch des Österreichers* (Vienna, 1949), advancing the *privilegium minus*; Felix Kreissler, *Der Österreicher und seine Nation* (Vienna, 1984), stressing 1806. The prominent Viennese historian Erika Weinzierl argued that "the time when Austrian history also was German history ended, at the latest, with the defeat at Königgrätz and Austria's departure from the German Confederation." Erika Weinzierl, "Österreichische Nation und österreichisches Nationalbewußtsein," *Zeitgeschichte* 17 (Oct. 1989), 46.

3. The demarcation from German history was particularly strong in the early years of the Second Republic and in popular historiography; one might want to compare early popular contributions such as Wilhelm Böhm's *Ein Wort für Österreich* (Vienna, 1950) with Ernst Bruckmüller's much more differentiating *Nation Österreich*, 2d ed. (Vienna, 1996).

4. This view was official public policy from the very beginning of the Second Republic; it had a prominent place in the country's Declaration of Independence. *Proklamation über die Selbständigkeit Österreichs*, *Staatsgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich 1945*, Stück 1, Nr. 1.

5. Felix Kreissler, *Der Österreicher und seine Nation* (Vienna, 1984). The study first appeared in French as *La prise de conscience de la nation autrichienne 1938 - 1945 - 1978* (Paris, 1980).

6. Karl Stadler, *Österreich 1938-1945* (Vienna, 1966), 14.

7. See, among others, Evan Burr Bukey, "Nazi Rule in Germany," *Austrian History Yearbook XXIII* (1992): 207; and Harry Ritter "Austria and the Struggle for German Identity," *Working Papers in Austrian Studies* 92-8 (Oct. 1992), 2. In Austria, one might want to consult Gerhard Botz's, "Eine deutsche Geschichte 1938 bis 1945? Österreichische Geschichte zwischen Exil, Widerstand und Verstrickung," *Zeitgeschichte* 14:1 (1986): 19-38. An important discussion of the victim theory, which forms part of this debate, is Heidemarie Uhl's *Zwischen Versöhnung und Verstörung: Eine Kontroverse um Österreichs historische Identität fünfzig Jahre nach dem Anschluß* (Vienna, 1992).

7. See Hanns Haas, "Zur österreichischen Nation - Eine Spätlese," *Zeitgeschichte* 18 (1990/91): 305.

8. In this essay, the terms "Germanist" and "Austrianist" describe the two competing identity conceptions in Austria. The Germanist conception views Austrian identity as part of a larger German identity, however defined, whereas its Austrianist counterpart rejects the affiliation of Austrian with any form of German identity.

9. In the 1950s, one of the more engaged discussions of this topic occurred in the December 1955 issue of the Austrian journal *Forum*, in the 1960s, *Die Österreichische Nation: Zwischen zwei Nationalismen* collected the contributions of a number of dedicated Austrianists into a larger picture. Albert Massiczek, ed., *Die Österreichische Nation: Zwischen zwei Nationalismen* (Vienna, 1967).

10. This historiographical introduction focuses on major monographs written by postwar historians. There are numerous shorter contributions to the discussion, as well as a number of interesting book-length treatises by political scientists. The most significant ones are Peter Katzenstein's *Disjoined Partners: Austria and Germany since 1815* (Berkeley, 1976), and William Bluhm's *Building an Austrian Nation* (New Haven, Conn., 1973). The various contributions by the Austrian political scientist Albert Reiterer, particularly his essay "Die konservative Chance: Österreichbewußtsein im bürgerlichen Lager nach 1945," *Zeitgeschichte* 14 (1986/87): 379-397 and the edited volume *Nation und Nationalbewußtsein in Österreich* (Vienna, 1988) are indispensable reading as well. Interesting data can also be found in the recently published study *Identität und Nationalstolz der Österreicher*, ed. Max Haller (Vienna, 1996).

11. Felix Kreissler, *La prise de conscience de la nation autrichienne, 1938-1945-1978*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1980).

12. Karl Stadler, *Österreich 1938-1945* (Vienna, 1966).

13. Friedrich Heer, *Der Kampf um die österreichische Identität* (Vienna, 1981).

14. Heinrich Friedjung, *Der Kampf um die Vorherrschaft in Deutschland 1859-1866*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1897/98). An abbreviated English translation of Friedjung's work appeared in London in 1935 under the title *The Struggle for Supremacy in Germany 1859-1866*.

15. Georg Wagner, *Österreich Zweite Republik*, 2 vols. (Thaur/Tirol, Austria, 1983-87).

16. *Ibid.*, I:540.

17. Ernst Bruckmüller, *Nation Österreich* (Vienna, 1984), 221. Italics in the original. Bruckmüller's book was the last major contribution to the Austrian nation-building debate before the Waldheim presidency, which gave the international renown of Austrian politicians a somewhat different connotation. (A second, enlarged edition of *Nation Österreich* was published in 1996). Next to these large-scale monographs that examine Austrian identity in a broad fashion, there are, of course, more specialized studies that examine or illuminate certain aspects of this identity (and its relationship to other ones), such as Norbert Schausberger's *Der Griff nach Österreich: Der Anschluß* (Vienna, 1978). See also note 11 above.

18. Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *Die Spur Österreichs in der deutschen Geschichte* (Zürich, 1989).

19. Gerald Stourzh, *Vom Reich zur Republik* (Vienna, 1990), 54.

20. Fritz Fellner, "The Problem of the Austrian Nation after 1945," *The Journal of Modern History* 60 (June 1988): 264-289.

21. Erdmann's and Fellner's findings were subsequently taken up by the American historian Harry Ritter. [Harry Ritter, "Austria and the Struggle for German Identity," published in the *Working Papers in Austrian Studies* series as issue 92-8 (October, 1992) and in a special issue of the *German Studies Review* (Winter 1992).] In particular, Ritter saw their constructive value in their encouragement of systematic comparative studies of Central European history, in their challenge to a narrowly *kleindeutsch* interpretation of German history, and in their contribution to a self-critical and truthful assessment of Austrian history and identity. David Luft, from his standpoint as a cultural and intellectual historian, placed Austria firmly inside a polycentric German cultural realm as well. [David Luft, "Austria as a Region of German Culture: 1900-1938," *Austrian History Yearbook* XXIII (1992): 135-148.]

22. Botz addressed the issue head on in his important essay "Eine deutsche Geschichte 1938 bis 1945? Österreichische Geschichte zwischen Exil, Widerstand und Verstrickung," *Zeitgeschichte* 14:1 (1986): 19-38; Ernst Hanisch examined the topic in essays on provincial Austria during World War II and most recently again in segments of his study, *Der lange Schatten des Staates* (Vienna, 1994), a social history of twentieth-century Austria. As an indicator of the emotional sensibilities that surround this issue, one might want to consult the reaction to Harry Ritter's article "Austria and the Struggle for German Identity" that three younger Austrian scholars published in the *German Studies Review*. [Margarete Grandner, Gernot Heiss, and Oliver Rathkolb, "Österreich und seine deutsche Identität. Bemerkungen zu Harry Ritters Aufsatz "Austria and the Struggle for German Identity," *German Studies Review* 16:3 (October 1993): 515-520.]

23. Gesetz vom 12. November 1918 über die Staats- und Regierungsform von Deutschösterreich, Staatsgesetzblatt für den Staat Deutschösterreich 1918, Stück 1, Nummer 5.

24. Fred Israel, ed., *Major Peace Treaties of Modern History, 1648-1967* (New York, 1967), III:1567. The development of Allied opinion on the Anschluss question is an interesting story in itself. It was mainly French insistence that ultimately decided the matter. In 1918, the British Political Intelligence Department still assessed the situation created for the German Austrians by the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy in these terms:

"We cannot exterminate the Austrian Germans; we cannot make them cease to feel Germans [sic]. They are bound to be somewhere. Nothing would be gained by compelling them to lead an existence separate from that of Germany. Such enforced separation would merely stimulate German nationalism, but could not prevent cooperation between the two branches nor their final reunion. Lastly, the inclusion of German Austria in Germany is not altogether disadvantageous from our point of view; it would restore the balance between the Catholic south and the Protestant north, and help to check Prussianism in Germany.

The idea of preventing the Austrian Germans from joining Germany, even if both parties concerned wish it, has therefore to be dismissed both on grounds of principle and of expediency."

[F.L. Carsten, *The First Austrian Republic, 1918-1938* (Aldershot, England, 1986), 6.]

25. The history and prehistory of the Anschluss is not part of this essay. Among useful introductions to the topic, one might list Stanley Suval, *The Anschluss Question in the Weimar Era* (Baltimore, 1974); Norbert Schausberger, *Der Griff nach Österreich: Der Anschluß* (Vienna, 1978); Helmut Konrad, ed. *Sozialdemokratie und "Anschluß"* (Vienna, 1978); and Ernst Panzenböck, *Ein deutscher Traum* (Vienna, 1985).

26. Robert H. Keyserlingk, *Austria in World War II* (Kingston-Montreal, 1988).

27. This postwar role of the Moscow Declaration is explored in Günter Bischof, "Die Instrumentalisierung der Moskauer Erklärung nach dem 2. Weltkrieg," *Zeitgeschichte* 20 (1993): 345-66.

28. The memoirs of the later Austrian president Adolf Schärf play a central role; they are examined below. For the police reports, see Karl Stadler, *Österreich 1938-1945* (Vienna, 1966), 14-19. The general literature on resistance in Austria is much too extensive to be listed in detail here. In addition to the works cited in this essay, one should consult the series of regional studies published by the Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes. So far, the series contains the following volumes:

Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstands, ed. *Widerstand und Verfolgung in Wien, 1934-1945*. 3 vols. Vienna, 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Widerstand und Verfolgung im Burgenland, 1934-1945*. Vienna, 1979.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Widerstand und Verfolgung in Oberösterreich, 1934-1945*. 2 vols. Vienna, 1982.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Widerstand und Verfolgung in Tirol, 1934-1945*. 2 vols. Vienna, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Widerstand und Verfolgung in Niederösterreich, 1934-1945*. 3 vols. Vienna, 1987.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Widerstand und Verfolgung in Salzburg, 1934-1945*. 2 vols. Vienna, 1991.

An important monograph in English remains Radomir Luza, *The Resistance in Austria, 1938-1945* (Minneapolis, 1984).

29. F. Parkinson, "Epilogue," in *Conquering the Past: Austrian Nazism Yesterday & Today*, ed. F. Parkinson (Detroit, 1989), 320.

30. This caveat has become particularly pertinent after the publication of more detailed regional resistance studies from individual German regions, which uncovered many parallels to the Viennese situation.

31. Parkinson, *Conquering the Past*, 321.

32. A differentiating assessment of anti-German sentiments in wartime Austria can be found in Tim Kirk's *Nazism and the Working Class in Austria: Industrial Unrest and Political Dissent in the 'National Community'* (Cambridge, England, 1996). Kirk documents the existence of these sentiments (see particularly pages 121-134), but concludes nonetheless that the "national element in the resistance to Nazism, widespread also in the attitudes of foreign workers in Austria, was not generally to be found among the native Austrian population." [Ibid., 140] For the use of anti-Prussian arguments in various South and West German regions in the immediate aftermath of World War II, see Hans-Jürgen Wünschel, "Der Neoseparatismus in der Pfalz nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg," in *Landesgeschichte und Zeitgeschichte: Kriegsende 1945 und demokratischer Neubeginn am Oberrhein*, ed. Hansmartin Schwarzmaier (Karlsruhe, Germany, 1980), 283-299, and also Paul-Ludwig Weinacht, "Neugliederungsbestrebungen im deutschen Südwesten und die politischen Parteien (1945-1951)," in *ibid.*, 333-34 and 337-38.

33. Adolf Schärf, *Österreichs Erneuerung 1945-1955* (Vienna, 1955), 20f.

34. Frequently, the reference to Schärf's memoirs is restricted to his statement that "the Anschluss is dead," whereas Leuschner's reference to the views of other resistance members attracts less attention. See, for example, page 33 of the important *Das neue Österreich: Geschichte der Zweiten Republik*, ed. Erika Weinzierl and Kurt Skalik (Graz, Austria, 1975).

35. Josef Becker and Andreas Hillgruber, eds., *Die Deutsche Frage im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1983), 272. Further insight into the temporal and motivational background of Austrian national reorientation might be gained from Karl Renner's private letters. In November 1941, three and a half years after the Anschluss, Renner continued to use the designation "we Germans" even in his frequently highly critical correspondence with a fellow opponent of the current regime. [Karl Renner to Hans Löwenfeld-Ruß, 15 November 1941, printed in *Karl Renner in Dokumenten und Erinnerungen*, ed. Siegfried Nasko (Vienna, 1982), 142.] In the case

of Renner, at any rate, it does not seem to have been the mere abstract experience of Austro-German union or even of National Socialism that triggered his reorientation.

36. Statistisches Bundesamt, ed., *Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1960* (Stuttgart, 1960), 78; Karl Stuhlpfarrer, "Nazism, Austrians and the Military," in *Conquering the Past*, ed. F. Parkinson (Detroit, 1989), 200.

37. Burkhart Müller-Hillebrand, *Das Heer 1933-1945* (Frankfurt, 1969), III:249.

38. This view is widely shared by military historians. See also Martin van Creveld, *Fighting Power*, Contributions in Military History 52 (Westport, Conn., 1982), 65. To the knowledge of this author, it has not been argued/documentated that male Austrians differed in their national sentiments from females.

39. Lothar Höbelt, "Österreicher in der Deutschen Wehrmacht, 1938-1945," *Truppendienst* 5 (1989): 431.

40. Johann Allmeyer-Beck, "Die Österreicher im Zweiten Weltkrieg," in *Unser Heer* (Vienna, 1963), 359. If one includes the police forces, the number of Austrian generals rises to 220.

41. Tuomo Polvinen, *Between East and West: Finland in International Politics, 1944-1947*, ed. and translated by D. G. Kirby and Peter Herring (Minneapolis, 1986), 37. For a more impressionistic rendition of similar sentiments among former enemy soldiers, see James Lucas's programatically titled *Alpine Elite: German Mountain Troops of World War II* (London, 1980), particularly the introduction on pages seven to nine.

42. The personal dilemma involved is still visible in the discussions among the German officers who tried to assassinate Hitler in 1944.

43. The German Military Code (Militärstrafgesetzbuch) contained the following regulations for desertion:

§ 69

(1) Whoever leaves or stays away from his unit or agency with the intention to permanently evade service in the armed forces or discontinue his service status will be punished for desertion.

(2) It is to be treated as desertion if the delinquent leaves or stays away from his unit or agency with the intention to evade service in the armed forces in general or the mobilized units of the armed forces for the duration of a war, a military expedition, or internal disturbances.

§ 70

(as modified by the Kriegssonderstrafrechtsverordnung (KSSVO) of August 17, 1938)

Desertion is punishable by death or by a sentence of lifelong or temporal penal servitude.

[Fritz Wüllner, *Die NS-Militärjustiz und das Elend der Geschichtsschreibung* (Baden-Baden, Germany, 1991), 482.]

44. In particular, the destruction of the Heeresarchiv in Potsdam during an Allied air raid in April 1945 severely reduced the relevant documentary material. For further discussion, see Fritz Wüllner, *Die NS-Militärjustiz und das Elend der Geschichtsschreibung* (Baden-Baden, Germany, 1991), 129-152. The data that have been examined, however, give no indication that soldiers from Austria proved less reliable than other German citizens. [See, for example, Peter Katzenstein, *Disjoined Partners* (Berkeley, 1976), 172.] Due to their lack of completeness, these findings do not constitute absolute proof by themselves, but their basic indications are substantiated by other observations, such as casualty numbers and the internal assessment by the German military leadership.

45. Order by the Oberbefehlshaber Südwest (Oberkommando Heeresgruppe C) from January 21, 1944.

46. According to the Luxembourg historian Gilbert Trausch, no fewer than 3510 of the 10211 Luxembourgers inducted into the German armed forces deserted or managed to avoid military service by other means. [Gilbert Trausch, "Deutschland und Luxemburg vom Wiener Kongreß bis zum heutigen Tage: Die Geschichte einer Entfremdung," in *Die Deutsche Frage im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Josef Becker and Andreas Hillgruber (Munich, 1983), 219.] See also Gilbert Trausch, *Histoire du Luxembourg* (Paris, 1992), 172. Relying on French projections, the German historian Lothar Kettenacker maintained that approximately 20 percent of conscripts in Alsace-Lorraine evaded German military service by desertion or flight. [Lothar Kettenacker, *Nationalsozialistische Volkstumspolitik im Elsaß* (Stuttgart, Germany, 1973), 223.] See also Marie-Joseph Bopp, "L'enrôlement de force des Alsaciens dans la Wehrmacht et la SS," *Revue d'histoire de la deuxième*

*guerre mondiale* 5:20 (1955): 40. Even if one treats these calculations cautiously, they demarcate themselves strikingly from Austrian equivalents.

47. Walter Manoschek and Hans Safrian, "Österreicher in der Wehrmacht," in *NS-Herrschaft in Österreich, 1938-1945*, ed. Emmerich Talos et al. (Vienna, 1988), 350.

48. To name just a few of the variables that impact the number of casualties per male citizen in a regional comparison: different age distribution based on regional differences in birth rate and on occupational mobility; different occupational structure--industrial areas had more health problems and more exemptions from conscription due to production necessities; different skills and proclivities--mountain units were more popular in Alpine regions, navy recruitment was higher in coastal areas.

49. Hans Adolf Jacobsen and Hans Dollinger, eds., *Der Zweite Weltkrieg in Bildern und Dokumenten*, vol. 3, *Sieg ohne Frieden* (Munich, 1963), 445, and many earlier publications report 3,000,000 German casualties, but the numbers have slowly been moving upward. For Austria, see Martin K. Sorge, *The Other Price of Hitler's War* (New York, 1986), 23, and Lothar Höbelt, "Österreicher in der Deutschen Wehrmacht, 1938-1945," *Truppendienst* 5 (1989): 432. See also the subsequent notes.

50. For estimates, see, for example, Peter Katzenstein, *Disjoined Partners* (Berkeley, 1976), 173; "Die Bevölkerungsverluste Österreichs während des Zweiten Weltkrieges," *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* 3 (1974): 219-20. Useful for Western Germany and Austria, but without factoring in the issues debated below, Statistisches Bundesamt, ed., *Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1960* (Wiesbaden, 1960) 78. In a recent research note, the German military researcher Rüdiger Overmans projected a lower percentage of casualties for Austria than for Germany. [Rüdiger Overmans, "German and Austrian Losses in World War II," in *Austrian Historical Memory and National Identity*, Contemporary Austrian Studies 5, ed. Günter Bischof and Anton Pelinka (New Brunswick, N.J., 1997), 293-301.] The brief research note is too cursory and unfortunately contains too many problem areas to supply much new information about the Austrian aspect of this question, however. Most fundamental is the problem that Overmans's basic conclusions premise an Austrian share of eligible males of ten percent of the German numbers. Overmans arrives at this ratio by looking at 1939 German census figures that include Southern Bohemia and Moravia in the Austrian numbers. The noticeably higher percentage of people living within but born outside of the borders of the Republic of Austria as compared to the equivalent numbers for Weimar Germany further alters the results of statistics that measure eligible population by residence, but casualties by birth place. Finally, the larger share of residents of Jewish background, who were excluded from military service, in Austria in 1938/39 also has to be factored in to arrive at the relevant casualty rates per male resident actually subject to conscription. Measured by these standards, the Austrian casualty rate corresponds largely to that of western Germany, whereas Germany's eastern regions suffered higher losses than western Germany and Austria. [For the reasons for these differences, see also the subsequent note.] It should be stressed again, however, that a field dominated by estimates cannot provide final answers.

51. Burkhart Müller-Hillebrand, *Das Heer 1933-1945* (Frankfurt, 1969), III:263; Karl Schwarz, "Gesamtüberblick der Bevölkerungsentwicklung 1939-1946-1955," *Wirtschaft und Statistik* 8 (1956): 495.

52. For a comparison of World War II casualties, see Martin K. Sorge, *The Other Price of Hitler's War* (New York, 1986), XVII, and John Ellis, *World War II: A Statistical Survey* (New York, 1993), 253f.

53. Of the approximately 950,000 soldiers that served in the Waffen SS, slightly more than 500,000 were recruited from outside Germany; that number includes members of German minorities abroad and foreign volunteers. This limits the number of German citizens (including Austrians) in the Waffen SS to somewhat below 450,000; proportionally, about 35,000 of these should have been Austrians. But according to the available estimates, approximately 67,000 Austrians served in the Waffen SS, which would result in an Austrian share of almost twice their proportional representation. For the numbers involved, see Lothar Höbelt, "Österreicher in der Deutschen Wehrmacht, 1938-1945," *Truppendienst* 5 (1989): 429; George Stein, *The Waffen SS* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1966), 138 and 281; Ermenhild Neusüss-Hunkel, *Die SS* (Hannover, Germany, 1956), 104.

54. The exact nature of this national identity falls outside the scope of the current study and will not be answered the same way for Alsatians and Luxembourgers.

55. Indeed, the literature on the Austrian resistance provides many examples that such notions did exist.

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