

# Integral Leadership Review

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## Being German—New Pride in the Nation in Harmony with the Heart

### A Representative Study of Germans' Identity and Its Integral Placement

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“I am proud of being a German” is something that few if any Germans would have said only a few years ago, so discredited by the burdens of the past was any positive connotation of their national identity. Sixty years after the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany, however, the Germans seem to have come round to a new national self understanding that while remaining aware of the historical burden articulates a new self-awareness. The Identity Foundation, a non-profit philosophy foundation based in Düsseldorf, last year probed the Germans' identity in a representative survey that revealed exciting insights. Today, 60% of Germans say they are proud of their national roots once more, while 70% claim to feel a heartfelt bond with the nation and 80% associate this upbeat identity relationship with a clear commitment to democracy.

### The “Blue Dilemma”—Objectively Conveyed Identity as a Catalyst

If the Germans' identity placement is viewed from an integral perspective, it is clear that this caesura made a fundamental mark on the evolution of their national identity. While many other nations nurtured their collective system of values continuously for centuries and charged it positively, the Germans found themselves thrown back to zero at the end of World War II. In Germany the blue mem qualities that other nations have found to be constructive and formative and to convey hold and meaning (references to the different value levels relate to the spiral dynamics model developed by Don Beck and Christopher C. Cowan on the basis of the works of Clare W. Graves) had been compromised by the authoritarian regime. The attempt to resolve this “blue dilemma” led to a temporary departure from an emotional, internal relationship with being German so that national self-understanding in the post-war period was geared mainly to the outer quadrants. Reconstruction and the economic miracle thus became important, mainly objectively conveyed anchors of German identity, whereas the internal perspective or emotional identification at the personal and collective level was largely blanked out for many years. The reawakening of German self-awareness was thereby able to find expression in pride in the welfare state deutsche and so to heal its “blue wounds” to some extent, although emotional scars continued to characterise the internal perspective.

## **Orange-Green Evolution—The Rediscovery of Internal Identification**

As a world champion exporter with an international reputation for technological innovation and a “Made in Germany” seal of quality, the country established new identity benchmarks based on orange mem. As this level of development is in any case more individual than collective in orientation, German identity was ostensibly geared to personal achievement and to the material, external sphere. A new collective moment of self-placement eventually emerged in the form of elements of green mem that entered into the national debate. Be it the ecological movement, a growing insight into the challenges of immigration and of Germany’s mediatory role in world affairs, the connective force of green value criteria that initially found expression mainly in the outer quadrants at an objective level led in the longer term to the Germans’ inner identification with their national identity regaining shape.

## **Integrate and Transcend—German Identity as a Successful Synthesis**

Entirely in line with Ken Wilber’s philosophy of integrating and transcending, the Germans have thus succeeded over the decades in giving their national roots an ultimate ground once more in the course of an evolutionary development. Healthy blue mem elements such as order, security and reliability now form part of how the Germans see themselves just as much as a constructive progress perspective and world-centred habitus do. The worldwide goodwill that came the way of the German hosts of the 2006 soccer World Cup was a liberating moment that today enables the Germans to express their deep sense of a bond with their nation emotionally once more and thereby to bring the inner quadrants back into the public debate. In view of this development the Germans’ identity, as will be seen from a number of the survey’s findings, is today based on a healthy pluralism that is aware of its historic responsibility but no longer rejects creative inner growth.

GfK Market Research, Nuremberg, undertook the representative survey of German identity in autumn 2008 and March 2009 for the Identity Foundation. A random sample of 2,000 men and women aged 14 and over from all over Germany was interviewed.

## **Being German—A Deliberate Choice in Harmony with the Heart**

How much the Germans affirm their national identity today can be seen from how they respond to being offered alternative points of reference. If they were able to choose their nationality freely within Europe, 78.2% of the respondents would very likely or most definitely opt for German nationality. Nationality exercises its full identificatory pull among Germans aged 60 and above. Among people aged 50 to 59, 49.1% feel very strong ties with the nation, while the figure for Germans aged 60 to 69 is 58.9%.

The explanation for this trend is that institutional ties generally grow with age and that national sentiment also grows stronger as people grow older. At this stage in life there is a growing desire for familiarity and regulatory constants with the result that the resulting stronger institutional orientation is also reflected in a more intensive national sentiment. In view of demographic change and the trend toward an aging of the German population, national sentiment can be expected to become even more important for Germans in the future.

What is more, the bedrock of being Germany is based on strong emotional impulses. The perception that one’s heart is attached to Germany is for 70.4% of Germans a major impulse that prompts them to feel strong ties with their country.

## **Blue, Orange, Green—Regaining Multidimensional Identity Benchmarks**

As outlined above, German identity has undergone an evolutionary recovery in recent decades by integrating several levels of development into its national self-understanding and has prevented stagnation in the “blue

dilemma” by means of varying quadrant references. Virtue and tradition and proverbial German reliability are important anchors of German identity once more. The Germans’ sense of identity today is based on both points of reference in the past and aspects with a bearing on the present. In this way German identity patterns take shape at the personal level that weight and vary motifs of the collective repertoire of identity individually and are thereby alive and contemporary.

Today 63.5% of Germans associate their bond with the country with virtue and character once more. For 62.6% of the population, German traditions and customs enable them to establish strong ties with their fatherland. This finding illustrates that the valuable aspects of blue mem have long been a constructive part of German identity once more. More functional blue points of reference that once upon a time made a virtue out of necessity are in contrast declining in importance. For many years Germans were especially proud of their functioning state, their unique social welfare system and their typical German preoccupation with order. Today only 51.8% of the population feel they have strong or very strong ties with Germany because “everything works reliably and well here”.

### **National Self-Awareness Still Articulates Itself with Restraint in Public**

Despite this inner identification that has been regained, the Germans continue to be quite modest when it comes to articulating their new self-esteem in public. 60.9% of the population may feel it is good for Germans to fly the German flag on special occasions, but only 31.2% say of themselves that they have ever sung the national anthem or waved a German flag when, for instance, the German national soccer team plays an international fixture. Yet a growing number of Germans now feel that this is taking restraint too far, with 42% of respondents agreeing that Germans are given to making themselves out to be worse than they are, while 72.9% agree with the statement that “Germans ought to show more self-esteem with regard their national and cultural identity”.

This discrepancy between self-image and self-portrayal is due in part to the fact that in Germany, as opposed to other countries, national sentiment is still articulated very unobtrusively in public. That is why a majority of Germans feels there is a lack of inspiring visions of German identity in the public sphere. For example, 53.1% of the population is of the opinion that schools, politics and media far too infrequently convey a positive image of being German. 72.9% of Germans share a desire for a stronger sense of national identity and 36% of the population have no reservations about a willing commitment to their fatherland.

### **German Identity—Vital Pluralism across All Quadrants and Value Levels**

Sixty years after the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany the Germans have not only gained fresh political strength internationally but also developed vital scenarios of German identity once more. While other nations frequently focus their feeling of national identity on a few crystallisation points that they celebrate in all their grandeur, being German manifests itself in a plurality that is firmly anchored in the collective consciousness with its multidimensional benchmarks yet without needing to be overly demonstrated.

With regard to coming to terms with their historic guilt the Germans have regained a breathing space. The present has emerged as a space that is open for new and unburdened perspectives of being German. Only 24.1% of Germans now feel that being untroubled by being German will never be possible again on account of the past. A 54.6% majority of respondents distance themselves strongly to very strongly from this irrevocable prospect. Yet even though the Germans are slowly leaving behind the burdens of their twentieth-century history they want to be sure that no further military mischief emanates from Germany. That is why 62.6%, a clear majority of the population, continues to be strongly to strictly opposed to the Germans taking on any greater military responsibility in the international community in the future.

Against this backdrop a clear majority of the population feels able once more to express a desire for a greater degree of national self-portrayal. 74.6% of Germans now feel that “in spite of our history we ought to be able to be proud to be Germans once more”. By the same token, only 7.3% of the population now feel that we must still be ashamed of being German. This commitment is the clearest in the entire survey, given that 83.6% of Germans no longer believe that they should be ashamed.

### **About the Author**

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### **About the Identity Foundation**

The Identity Foundation is a non-profit foundation for philosophy and the promotion of science with a focus on research into how people, groups and institutions see themselves. It concentrates on individual projects in different social, societal and economic contexts, including conferences and symposiums, empirical research and research projects, the promotion of media coverage of fundamental or current identity issues and participation in aesthetic or spiritual projects with a special bearing on identity creation and development.

Since 2001 the Foundation has awarded the Meister Eckhart Prize, worth €50,000, every other year. It was set up by the Identity Foundation to promote discussion of identity issues by the opinion-forming public. The prize is awarded to people who deal with existential issues of personal, social and intercultural identity in their work and thereby enliven an extensive public and international debate. Prizewinners to date have been the US philosopher Richard Rorty (2001), the French ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (2003), the German philosopher Ernst Tugendhat (2005) who is considered to be one of the foremost representatives of linguistic analytical philosophy in Germany, the Indian economist, philosopher and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen (2007) and the US sociologist Amitai Etzioni (2009).

The Identity Foundation was set up in 1998 by the founder of the communication agency Kohtes Klewes (now Ketchum Pleon), Paul J. Kohtes, and his wife Margret.

[www.identityfoundation.de](http://www.identityfoundation.de), [www.meister-eckhart-preis.de](http://www.meister-eckhart-preis.de)