

# 2019/3/1 (EN): The Deutsche Bundeswehr and the war in Afghanistan

## The Deutsche Bundeswehr and the war in Afghanistan

A view on how inner leadership stands the test

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This essay deals with the Afghanistan-mission of the Deutsche Bundeswehr and its effects on the self-image and the management culture in the armed forces. At first the general challenges, which one has to explain concerning the New Wars, are depicted. Then follows a short insight into the experiences of the German armed forces in the framework of „International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)“ with the question, to what extent inner leadership with its overall concept of the citizen in uniform could stand the test and where they were thwarted. These considerations are substantially characterised by observations and experiences in the course of the author's own deployment in the North-Afghan province of Kunduz. From these personal circumstances resulted both a very subjective perception and the special perspective of this essay. A view on how inner leadership stands the test in the course of the ISAF-mission does not yield any clear results. Sweepingly conferring the pledge of an unexampled story of success is an unrighteous exaltation, and may lead to mere lip service. So in an overall view one at least has to conclude that a debate on the corporate identity and the inner status of the Bundeswehr is required. This ought to be conducted in an open-ended way without excluding alternative models, which could be oriented towards the conceptions of allied armed forces. One can detect successful areas of inner leadership, so that a discourse on the enhancement or the reorganisation of the conception as well as its adaptation to the changed social, political and military parameters will be worthwhile. With a culture of honesty and candour, mistakes which happened during the Afghanistan-mission could hopefully be prevented. If one looks into the future one will find out that a large-scale mission such as the ISAF-mission is unlikely in the long run, because the moral, political and financial consequences would be serious. According to the consensual statements of the Federal President, the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Defence during the Munich Security Conference of 2014, however, it has become clear that in future Germany will play a major part in solving global crises and conflicts and a more active part in both foreign and security policy. In any case the participation of the German Bundeswehr in the missions in Mali, in Sudan and on the coast of Somalia is only a harbinger of what is waiting for its female and male soldiers on the African continent and elsewhere in the years to come. Again they will be confronted with enemies fighting stubbornly and perfidiously, and will have to die in these regions sooner or later as well. These prognoses given, it would be a serious neglect to let the lessons from ISAF fall into oblivion.

