ETHICS AND ARMED FORCES

Innere Führung and Military Ethos Under Discussion

SPECIAL

Practicing Values, Serving Values

zebis

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SPECIAL: PRACTICING VALUES, SERVING VALUES

EDITORIAL

Between aspiration and reality – Where does *Innere Führung* stand? Can the familiar model of the "citizen in uniform" still maintain its claim to validity, or is it in need of readjustment or even re-evaluation and change? That was the opening question in a panel discussion hosted by the German Commission for Justice and Peace and zebis on October 19, 2021, at the Katholische Akademie in Berlin.

In this latest edition of "Ethics and Armed Forces", we aim to delve deeper into the debate. For it has become apparent, following the withdrawal from Afghanistan, that there is a considerable need for discussion not only within the *Bundeswehr* but also among the wider public about the role of our armed forces and their leadership principles.

Essentially, Germany can be proud of the *Bundeswehr's* leadership culture, which has been firmly anchored in the organization since the Center for Leadership Development and Civic Education (*Zentrum Innere Führung,* ZInFü) was established 65 years ago. As an educational center, it is responsible for teaching the guiding principle of the "citizen in uniform", which ties the decisions and actions of military personnel to the values and principles of our Basic Law: human dignity, justice, freedom, peace, solidarity and democracy. The special feature of this system, in contrast to many other armies in the world, is that soldiers are ultimately bound not by the principle of command and obedience, but by their own conscience. This means they also bear individual responsibility for their military actions. *Innere Führung* serves to promote the development of a soldierly self-image that can fulfill this expectation.

Nevertheless, despite constant adjustments to the concept, which dates back to the 1950s, the question arises as to whether it is still fit for the times. After all, the *Bundeswehr* has undergone major changes: a territorial defense army has become an international task force; and it has transformed from a conscript army into a volunteer and professional army. Moreover, for more than twenty years now, military careers have also been open to women – a new development in the previously all-male armed forces. Yet at the same time, the *Bundeswehr's* military purpose is often overlooked in the public perception. Even politicians would often rather think of female and male soldiers as "social workers in uniform" than as trained fighters who, when it comes to it, put their lives on the line for the fundamental values of our state.

In this context, Professor Dr. Sönke Neitzel's provocative book *Deutsche Krieger* (German Warriors) has reignited the discussion surrounding *Innere Führung*. He argues that the degree to which soldiers identify with their respective political system is overestimated; instead, more consideration should be given to the motivation that comes from military professionalism, associated values, and "tribal cultures" in the different branches of the armed forces. No less a figure than Wolfgang Schäuble spoke at the launch of the book, calling for an "uncomfortable" and "unpopular" public debate on Germans' relationship with the military.

We would like to respond to this call, and are very pleased that Sönke Neitzel has expanded on his thoughts here in an essay. The highly engaging contributions by the other authors in this edition also show how necessary and productive the current examination of Innere Führung is, encompassing the self-image of soldiers and their defining values. They cover key aspects such as moral courage, chivalry, masculinity and power, through to the question of what the military chaplaincy can contribute to the discourse on Innere Führung and a soldierly ethos.

The words of adult educationalist Heinrich Dickerhoff (page 60) struck a chord with me: "We must not only appeal to the mind, but also reach the soul."

I wish you an enjoyable read!

Dr. Veronika Bock
Director of zebis

TRIBAL CULTURES AND *INNERE FÜHRUNG* – A CONTRADICTION?

Author: **Sönke Neitzel**

Effective in a roundabout way: *Innere Führung*

Abstract

In view of Germany's military history, there can be no doubt that the core ideas of Innere Führung make sense – just as there can be no doubt about their concrete implementation, for example in the complaints system or in the parliamentary reservation. Critical, however, is its overloading as a theoretical edifice. The thesis is put forward here that the concept, which has been controversial from the outset, is of less importance for the motivation of many Bundeswehr soldiers – as well as for the development of democratic consciousness and sense of justice in the armed forces – than many of its advocates would like to admit.

Military sociological findings on factors for motivation and cohesion cannot be ignored for the Bundeswehr either. The article focuses primarily on the concept of tribes. It was coined in analogy to warlike tribal cultures for powerful cultural entities in the armed forces. In the Bundeswehr, it can be applied to the service branches, which are distinguished by their colors and – especially in the combat troops – specific characteristics and behaviors that are shaped by their respective missions and ideally link horizontal and vertical cohesion.

Such tribal cultures, which are also characterized by a fighter's Habitus, are unjustly suspected in parts of the political and military leadership of promoting and consolidating a special ethos that is remote from the state and the constitution. The fact that, together with other factors, they can lead to increasing dissociation from society and the Bundeswehr as a superordinate higher-level institution – even to a retreat into pre-democratic or even right-wing extremist attitudes, as has happened in parts of the Special Forces Command (KSK), for example – must of course be taken seriously. In order to counter this danger, a more honest discussion of widespread tradition and role models, among other things, would be required. Those tribal cultures may be difficult to reconcile with the idea of a "model military" that rather acts as a mediator. However, anyone who demonizes them across the board as a counter-image to the ideals of Innere Führung fails to recognize their overall stabilizing and bonding effect.

No aspect of the Bundeswehr has had as much written about it as *Innere Führung* (IF, literally "inner guidance" or "inner leadership," officially translated as "leadership development and civic education"). Discussions about these leadership and guidance principles are as old as the institution itself, and the debate shows no signs of letting up anytime soon. But why is this actually the case? At core, its content is not controversial: no-one can have anything against good leadership, and applying the values and norms of the German Basic Law to the armed forces of the Federal Republic really requires no further justification. How could it be otherwise, especially after the experiences with the *Reichswehr and Wehrmacht*?

Instead, the discussion is about what these principles should mean in practice. During the founding period of the *Bundeswehr,* this was the subject of particularly heated debate. Intense disagreement between Wolf Graf von Baudissin and his former colleague Heinz Karst spilled over into the public arena. And this was despite the fact that all protagonists in the early debates supported the basic principles of IF, backed the Basic Law and, for example, also accepted the Plot of July 20, 1944 as a historical reference point for the tradition and self-image of the new *Bundeswehr.* In essence, the argument revolved around the degree to which the new army should be geared toward war. To what extent did the culture or *Habitus* of the new armed forces – the set of characteristics encompassing their appearance and bearing, attitude and conduct – have to be civilized in order to motivate young soldiers to take up arms and give them guidance in the conflict of systems with the Eastern Bloc? Baudissin's demands went too far for many, including the first commander of the Center for Leadership, Development and Civic Education of the German Armed Forces *(Zentrum für Innere Führung),* Arthur Weber. He demonstratively opposed his former patron by writing ten open letters in 1969.[1] But even some

of the most influential figures of the founding generation did not consider Baudissin's pure doctrine to be practical – such as Adolf Heusinger, Johann Adolph von Kielmansegg, Hans Speidel and Ulrich de Maizière. Since everyone placed a slightly different emphasis, a compromise eventually emerged. The IF regulations were typical products of a ministerial apparatus, where no draft is ever returned as it has left the desk of a department head. The result is clearly seen in the IF manual *(Handbuch Innere Führung)* from 1957.[2] It certainly did not go far enough for Baudissin, while for others it was already too much of a good thing. In the struggle to find a middle ground, several revisions followed. Then came the Joint Service Regulations *(Zentrale Dienstvorschriften),* which always sought to adapt themselves to current discourse in society and the armed forces. Admittedly, the manual is still the official document in which the *Bundeswehr* addresses *Innere Führung* most thoroughly and extensively – which is why it is still worth reading.[3]

From the very beginning, *Innere Führung* was a central component of the *Bundeswehr's* institutional frame of reference. As such, it was not designed to have only an internal effect. It also served as an argumentation aid toward the outside world, as proof of the integration of the armed forces into the state and society, that lessons had been learned from history and that the *Bundeswehr* had distanced itself from the *Reichswehr* and *Wehrmacht*. When scandals or crises emerged, IF served as a useful argument to ward off overly sweeping condemnations. Its significance therefore went far beyond the brief statements in the Army Leadership Code, for example, which suffice the British Army.[4]

Over the past 60 years, the IF regulations have been revised time and again, most recently in 2017. Yet for many military personnel, the manuals and regulations remained too abstract. They were soon being described as *"Inneres Gewürge"* ("inner choking"), as pure "theology", "incantations", or as mere lip service.[5] Although frequently unthinking, such harsh judgments are nevertheless understandable. A simple, concrete, generally comprehensible definition applicable to military practice has still not been presented. Instead, the participant observer sees superiors talking about IF using template speeches, or reads academic works penned by officers who always, somehow, ultimately "prove" that IF is a good thing. True to the phrase: *quod erat demonstrandum.* Evidently the main problem with *Innere Führung* is not the core of its content, but its communication, and overexpectations.

In the history of the *Bundeswehr,* the tendency has been to expect too much of IF in terms of motivating soldiers. Certainly, in contrast to the predecessor armies, in the *Bundeswehr* one could refuse to carry out an order, one could lodge a complaint, there was a Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed

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Forces, and the *Bundeswehr* was under parliamentary control. These were all extremely important achievements that created a different environment than in the *Wehrmacht* or *Reichswehr.* But whether this helped to motivate the mass of soldiers – because as a result democracy could be experienced in the army as well – seems more than questionable. The constitutional patriotism at which the pure doctrine of IF is aimed presupposes a politically conscious soldier. Such a thing existed among the professional soldiers, especially among the staff officers, who in the early days of the *Bundeswehr* had, after all, experienced National Socialism themselves and were able to judge the value of the new laws and regulations. But this was certainly not the case with the great mass of conscripts. At least from the end of the 1960s onward, they perceived military service in no small part to be meaningless compulsory service – despite all the democratic achievements of the Federal Republic and its army.

At all times, the importance in terms of motivation of soldiers' identification with their

respective political system has probably been overestimated. Neither were all soldiers loyal to the Kaiser in 1914, nor were all soldiers National Socialists in 1939. And in the Federal Republic, the attitude of the majority of conscripts to the Basic Law was probably rather indifferent.

This does not mean, of course, that the political framework and thus also the IF relating to it had no effect at all. However, democratic consciousness developed less through political instruction and dry-as-dust regulations than through the normative force of social life. For the Federal Republic, this meant that school, work, the parental home and leisure time imparted to soldiers an understanding of values and norms that they were probably only rarely aware of, but which were nonethe-

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less present. The vast majority of soldiers had a clear concept of right and wrong, of what you do and what you don't do, that owed little or nothing to tedious lectures. And this frame of reference certainly differed from earlier times and arguably from other militaries too. In 2010, there were company commanders caught in the firefight in Char Dara who had no clear idea of the content of IF. And yet they knew how to motivate their soldiers and effectively advocate against savagery and moral depravity. The democratic footprint found its way into the *Bundeswehr* mainly along an indirect route, via social conditioning. I would actually suggest that the overall result would not have been significantly different if the many manuals and regulations on IF had never been written, and instead the *Bundeswehr,* like other armed forces, had merely been reminded of the values of the republic in a few concise words.

Tribal cultures as cohesion factors

So the pleasing conclusion is that the vast majority of *Bundeswehr* personnel acted in accordance with the principles of *Innere Führung,* even though they may not have been aware of it. However, this also means that other reference points must have existed in their social praxis. Military sociology has convincingly identified the sources of soldiers' motivation. In a vertical plane, the perception of the armed forces as an institution is relevant, as is the relationship to state and society. For example, is the political and military leadership perceived as being competent, fair and truthful? Furthermore, the reason for a deployment, its objective, and its prospects of success are important. Together with that, on a horizontal plane, the relevance of primary groups was pointed out long ago, meaning those groups of people with whom the closest social contact exists. In the military, these can range from units up to the size of a company.[6]

In the conjunction of the horizontal and vertical planes, the different branches of service play a significant role in the cohesion of the armed forces. Within the *Bundeswehr,* these constitute specific communities, form their own distinctive cultures and characteristics, and create their own traditions and rites. This further differentiates the culture of the armed forces.

In the *Bundeswehr,* the most visible feature of the military branch of service or *Truppengattung* is the *Waffenfarbe* or "corps color", which has always been particularly significant in distinguishing the different branches and therefore in establishing their identity. With the introduction of the field-gray uniform in 1909, the branches of the German armed forces could only be identified by their shoulder marks, gorget (collar) patches and rank insignia. To this day, the term *"Fehlfarbe"* – meaning someone who belongs to a different corps, as distinguished by the color – is familiar to everyone in the *Bundeswehr.* In addition, the insignias and colors of the berets, which were introduced in 1971, are particularly significant and usually not identical to the corps color.

I recently referred to the service branch cultures as "tribal cultures", because in some respects they are like different tribes, although they are nevertheless all parts of an organizational entity. The term tribe is used in anthropology and ethnology to describe the culture of, for example, American First Nations. Of course one cannot equate the *Fallschirmjäger* (paratroopers), *Panzergrenadiere* (mechanized infantry) or *Artilleristen* (artillerymen) with the tribal groups of Native Americans, particularly since their internal social organization was very different and the terms nation, tribe, band or clan are not used in a clear-cut way. Parallels do exist, however, inasmuch as some indigenous peoples divided themselves into subgroups that differed in their ways of life, dialects, and social composition, and were also outwardly distinguishable from one another. Nevertheless, they went to war together, and sometimes even switched groups, which were bound together in a kind of friendly rivalry. But they were all conscious of belonging to the same community, or nation.

The term tribal cultures was first used to describe the cultures of British regiments, which play a more distinctive role in the land forces of the United Kingdom than the branches of service *(Truppengattungen)* do in the German *Bundeswehr.* So if we understand the term tribe to refer to powerful cultural entities, then in an international comparison it means very different things. In the context of German military history, the different branches of service each constituted an independent system of interpretation. Their potency should not be underestimated, and their significance for the *Bundeswehr* as a whole should be taken seriously. On a vertical plane, they linked the cohesion of companies and platoons – the so-called primary groups – with the organization as a whole. Even the top representatives of the armed forces – the generals and admirals – aligned themselves, sometimes quite demonstratively, with a *Truppengattung.* As a result, they were recognized by soldiers of the various tribes as being one of their own. Thus the tribal cultures extended from the smallest units far into the upper echelons, and therefore formed a kind of transmission belt between "above" and "below".

All branches and service areas of the Bundeswehr have a tribal culture, but it varies in intensity. It is perhaps a bit less in the *Luftwaffe* (the German air force), because there the idea of the team that spans the service areas is more important. In the navy and especially the army, the tribal cultures are likely to be much more distinct, although comparative studies are lacking so far.

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among the *Heeresaufklärer* (army reconnaissance), the *Jägertruppe* (light, motorized infantry) and the *Fallschirmjäger* (paratroopers). The latter in particular can usually be recognized by their outward appearance, which is distinguished by their haircuts and physical fitness. For them, the airborne landing and the special combat situation it creates are culture-defining. The culture of these troops is characterized by surprise, improvisation, and also the compulsion to win a battle once it has begun, because there is usually no possibility of retreat. Parachuting has never had any real operational value in the *Bundeswehr.* Nevertheless, it has shaped the culture of this branch of the military – as it has for the special forces. "Non-jumpers" can only be part of the community to a limited extent, and every newly transferred commander would do well to jump out of a plane as soon as possible after taking up his position, if he wants to earn the respect of his soldiers. It is not the military significance of this act that matters. In military practice, it is completely irrelevant whether a commander knows how to parachute or not. Even in the highly unlikely event that he would actually have to do so in an emergency, there would be the possibility of a tandem jump nowadays. The cultural significance far exceeds the practical significance.

Since their formation in 1955, the *Fallschirmjäger* have maintained an elite mindset and cultivated their tribal culture with a particular devotion. This is facilitated by the fact that this branch of the military has always been limited in terms of numbers. Within the *Bundeswehr,* this culture has certainly been viewed critically, especially since some observers considered the military value of the airborne brigades to be extremely limited and thought there was no justification for any kind of elite attitude. Some also mocked the *Fallschirmjäger,* referring to them as "fallen fruit", or using the derisory term *Aufklatscher* ("belly floppers"). Nevertheless, their reputation for being a special unit seems to have had an effect. It is notable that even during periods of widespread social protest against the military – for example in 1968 or at

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the time of the NATO Double-Track Decision – the paratroopers never had any recruitment problems. And today, many a general proudly and demonstratively sports the bordeaux beret, even though he only joined the force at an advanced age, in some ways as an "alien species". Only a few set themselves apart as visibly as Generalleutnant Jörg Vollmer, for example. As Inspector of the Army, he made a point of wearing his green *Panzergrenadier* beret again, giving a clear signal as to which tribal culture he feels he belongs to.

Bonding and detachment tendencies in the German armed forces today

Is there a conflict between the *Habitus* – the distinctive characteristics and conduct – of the fighter, as cultivated in some branches of the armed forces, and *Innere Führung?* Some *Bundeswehr* officials and officers think there

is. Particularly in the Afghanistan generation, they see a tendency to reduce the armed forces to the will to fight, and to a combative attitude and manner that is valid for all time, i.e. without regard to any specific time or circumstances. They believe that a foundation of virtue is being advocated that is not compatible with the canon of democratic and civic values. Thus the *miles bellicus* is worlds apart from the citizen in uniform, since the latter is supposed to be guided by the deep conviction that, as a soldier, he is standing up for democratic values such as human dignity, freedom and justice. The more a military special ethos forms, the more the *Bundeswehr* distances itself from the post-heroic majority society, so the argument goes. Politicians and military leaders must therefore prevent outdated concepts of war from gaining any great significance in the construction of soldiers' professional identities.[7]

Certainly all those who see soldiers primarily as mediators, cultural brokers and social workers, those for whom the *Bundeswehr* is mainly a domestic political project, have a problem with the *Habitus* of the combat troops. Some currently see a network of sinister reactions at work, since there is increasing talk of fitness for war and the will to victory in the army, and recently even in the navy.

Nevertheless, *Innere Führung* and the tribal cultures of even the combat troops are not mutually exclusive. Their representatives would also vehemently reject such an assertion. Good leadership is in any case constitutive for the cohesion of the corps. Nobody is proud of his beret if he associates it with nothing but harassment. And fighting for *this* republic, to feel a sense of belonging toward its values and norms, and to regard them as defining for the armed forces, does not exclude even a rustic *Habitus,* as is sometimes cultivated among the combat troops. This rusticality does not result from an opposition to *Innere Führung,* but from the combat mission. IF was not conceived by its founding fathers as a soft approach, but as a constitutive component of armed forces capable and willing to fight. To be sure, anyone who sees the *Bundeswehr* only as a domestic political project whose main task is to prove the military compatible with democracy, anyone who thinks that combat is an "out-

dated" task, is making a mockery of the purpose of combat troops.

Tribal cultures undoubtedly foster their own dynamics, because – where they are intensely manifested – they provide protected spaces for alternative interpretations and practices. In such spaces, rituals can flourish that violate human dignity, or a view of history can be preserved that stands in opposition to a changing republic.

As a structurally conservative organization, the *Bundeswehr* has always lagged behind social developments. It has never been a champion of social reform, and has therefore often been criticized by the social vanguard. However, the *Bundeswehr* has also often struggled to find a convincing middle ground between preservation and change. The debate over whether the history and tradition of the *Wehrmacht* deserved to be honored was essentially a rearguard action conducted by the armed forces and German Ministry of Defense without the necessary intellectual depth. While the names of barracks that had attracted public criticism were changed, the problem was not fundamentally addressed. To date, there has been no honest appraisal of how many *Bundeswehr* soldiers seek out role models from the pre-1945 era and, above all, why they do so and what conclusions are to be drawn from this. A number of prohibitions were imposed, which for most external critics did not go far enough, and had the internal effect of prompting many soldiers to retreat defiantly into the world of tribal cultures, or even further into primary groups, where they could indulge in their cherished narratives. Here it was sometimes difficult for the official offerings of tradition to reach them. If we stay with the example of the paratroopers, it is striking how much they struggled with the social debate surrounding the *Wehrmacht* in the 1990s, and that they were not really interested in developing their idea of their tradition. The higher officer corps in particular lacked appropriate leadership and education in this respect.

More generally, it is certainly problematic if only the tribal culture remains as a way to identify the soldiers, where in the worst case neither the constitutional bodies nor perhaps even the *Bundeswehr* as a higher-level institution still play an important role. If one believes

the official investigation reports, such tendencies existed in parts of the Special Forces Command (*Kommando Spezialkräfte,* KSK). Today, its culture is sometimes associated in the public discourse with right-wing radicalism. This is certainly a gross oversimplification. It is undisputed, however, based on all that can be

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learned, that the combination of the tribal culture of the special forces with the extraordinarily tightly knit primary groups led to undesirable developments that were tolerated for too long.

To what extent the special forces, but also the paratroopers, attracted more right-wing radicals than other branches of service cannot yet be answered with certainty. The publicly available information does not tell us, and even in internal discussions with the Military Counterintelligence Service (*Militärischer Abschirmdienst,* MAD), nothing could be found out about this. Nevertheless, based on the strong camaraderie, a rustic fighter culture, and a glorification of the *Wehrmacht* that lasted well into the 1990s, a close relationship does seem plausible. Oberst Friedrich Jeschonnek, the then commander of the Airborne Operations and Air Transport School in Altenstadt, at least saw it that way and said in 1998 that the paratroopers seemed to attract radical right-wing forces.[8]

Tribal cultures thus harbor the danger of a kind of isolationism, with the result that in the worst case soldiers see only their own world and separate themselves from the rest of the armed forces, but also from society. To counter such tendencies in the Special Forces Command, Ansgar Meyer was deliberately chosen as their new commander. He is an officer who, as a tank man, HR person and "non-jumper", is completely above suspicion. His remit is to ensure stronger integration of the unit into the overall *Bundeswehr* system.

On the one hand, tribal cultures had the potential to strain the institutional structure of armed forces through their countervailing interpretations. But they were also able to stabilize the vertical cohesion of the armed forces, because they provided an emotional home for soldiers. They formulated comprehensible interpretation offerings, which a political and military leadership that was sometimes detached from security policy reality was obviously unable to offer. In the 1990s, when everyone was talking about peace and many a lecturer at the higher educational institutions of the *Bundeswehr* took delight in redefining soldiers as social workers, some of the combat troops retained an awareness that they were not primarily cultural brokers, mediators or development aid workers, but ultimately combatants. Only

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as such was it possible for the troops in any way to fulfill their missions in Afghanistan between 2009 and 2011. When the Inspector General forbade himself from issuing overly critical situation reports, and ministers stuck to a denial of reality, the official narrative had little bonding force. Faced with unfulfillable missions on the ground and hearing no answers to their questions from the political or military leadership, many soldiers withdrew into their own worlds. It was important that the tribal cultures then provided a place of retreat that remained

connected to the institution, at least in the vast majority of cases.

Whether this detachment had at the same time a political dimension, which in extreme cases could lead to radicalization, also depended very much on the superiors. It was mostly up to them to set limits. In Afghanistan, there were patches that were certainly not in line with the values and norms of the Basic Law, and there were also rustic discourses about the country and its people that were hardly in accordance with the official tone. Some officers tolerated this because they saw themselves as part of a community at war, to whom different standards applied than during peacetime. It should of course be asked what the consequences of this development were. Certainly the human skulls scandal of 2006 comes to mind. However, no incidents even coming close to war crimes were reported involving the *Bundeswehr.* Thus an alienation from society's frame of reference does seem to have been present, but overall it was limited. A certain degree of "useful illegality" (Stefan Kühl) was accepted, but not allowed to get out of hand. Admittedly, this only worked because the extent of the fighting remained limited in the years 2009 to 2011, and the soldiers experienced skirmishes, but no extended battles.

In the long history of the *Bundeswehr,* tribal cultures in the different branches of service have mainly been a stabilizing factor in the cohesive fabric of the armed forces, despite some inappropriate developments. As a subsidiary system, they reflected the specific features of the very different soldierly cultures, which the organization as a whole was hardly able to do. As a result, they were closer to the soldiers' social praxis, and strengthened the soldiers' bonds with the *Bundeswehr* through special customs and traditions, but also through a language that was "species-appropriate". In view of the constant overburdening of troops, militarily often senseless deployments, and a notable dysfunctionality of the organizational structures, it is thanks in considerable part to the tribal cultures that any missions have been fulfilled at all over the past 30 years. This conclusion is particularly true of the much-maligned special forces.

The Author

Sönke Neitzel was appointed Professor of Military History/Cultural History of Violence at the University of Potsdam in 2015. Previously, he taught and conducted research at Mainz, Bern, Saarbrücken and Glasgow universities, as well as at the London School of Economics (LSE). Recent publications: "Deutsche Krieger. Vom Kaiserreich zur Berliner Republik. Eine Militärgeschichte" (2020) and together with Bastian Matteo Scianna: "Blutige Enthaltung. Deutschlands Rolle im Syrienkrieg" (2021).

1 Recorded in BArch-MA, N 666/72.

2 For a detailed account, see Nägler, Frank (2010): Der gewollte Soldat und sein Wandel. Personelle Rüstung und Innere Führung in den Aufbaujahren der Bundeswehr 1956 bis 1964/65. Munich.

3 For a detailed recent discussion see Holz, Nicolas (2021): Zurück in die Zukunft. Empfehlungen zur Wiederentdeckung und Weiterentwicklung der Inneren Führung. Berlin.

4 The British Army names six values – courage, discipline, respect for others, integrity, loyalty and selfless commitment – which are briefly described in the guidance documents. https://www.army.mod.uk/media/2698/ac72021_the_army_leadership_code_an_introductory_guide.pdf
Cf. also https://www.army.mod.uk/media/5219/20180910-values_standards_2018_final.pdf (accessed November 21, 2021).

5 Documented in Neitzel, Sönke (2020): Deutsche Krieger. Vom Kaiserreich zur Berliner Republik. Eine Militärgeschichte. 5th ed. Berlin, p. 357.

6 On this point, see Biehl, Heiko (2010): Kampfmoral und Kohäsion als Forschungsgegenstand. In: Apelt, Maja (ed.): Forschungsthema: Militär. Militärische Organisationen im Spannungsfeld von Krieg, Gesellschaft und soldatischen Subjekten. Wiesbaden, pp. 139–162; Neitzel (2020), pp. 16f.

7 Cf. in particular Wiesendahl, Elmar (2010): Athen oder Sparta – Bundeswehr quo vadis? Bremen.

8 Observation visit 28/98 at Luftlande-/Lufttransportschule Altenstadt on April 22/23, 1998, BArch-MA 2/31927.

"CITIZENS IN UNIFORM" OR "GERMAN WARRIORS"
INNERE FÜHRUNG PUT TO THE TEST?

Author: **Reinhold Janke**

Innere Führung as a contribution to consolidating the crisis mode

Abstract

The Bundeswehr's deployment in Afghanistan has not only high-lighted the importance of intrinsic motivation and an overriding sense of purpose, in short the "why". The experiences of the soldiers also pose questions for politics, society and military leadership about the soldierly self-image and the relevance of Innere Führung, which inherently defines itself as a dynamic concept. Within a broader historical framework, Sönke Neitzel's latest book, "Deutsche Krieger" (German Warriors), critically examines Innere Führung at various levels. He is right in concluding that politics and military leadership have failed to communicate the legitimacy and meaningfulness of the mission – a core objective of Innere Führung. If the primacy of politics is rightly emphasized, it must also live up to its responsibility for the Bundeswehr.

Neitzel's account is based on the juxtaposition of two spheres: the military and civilian. In his view, the soldier's profession leads to the formation of a world with its own values and norms, in which "tribal cultures" within the troop genera are more effective for horizontal and vertical cohesion than loyalty to abstract values. This finding falls somewhat short of the mark: the reduction to the comradeship and shared humanity experienced in the heat of deployment and fulfilling the mission does not, per se, contradict the constitution's unshakeable foundation of values – one "why" level should not deny the other. For a serious discussion with soldiers, however, neither of the two must be ignored.

In conclusion, five points are formulated for further conceptual and concrete engagement with Innere Führung, including a return to its core ideas, a willingness to accept constructive criticism and consistent personality development. In general, more seriousness rather than complacency is called for in dealing with the concept, which is as demanding as it is valuable.

In an interview, General (ret.) Hans-Lothar Domröse, most recently Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum and Chief of Staff of ISAF in Kabul from 2008 to 2009, described the end of the military engagement in Afghanistan with the admission "… we're facing a shambles." Domröse emphasized the major investment made in terms of time, money, material, weapons, personnel, advice and training, but also named reasons that led to the failure: on the one hand, the breakdown and flight of the Afghan state and military leadership, and on the other, the resulting collapse of all fighting morale, defense readiness and resistance by the Afghan armed and security forces. Domröse self-critically stated: "There was a lack of 'what are you fighting for', and we obviously didn't train that."[1] Despite ambitious training, consultation and support, it has not been possible to break down the mentality patterns of the ethnocentric tribal culture, which is remote from the state. Afghanistan is therefore also a lesson in the importance of legitimacy, conveying meaning and leadership culture as important factors for building systemic and individual resilience. Soldiers obviously need role models and a "why" that's worth fighting for. As the *Bundeswehr's* leadership culture, *Innere Führung*, which literally means "inner guidance" or "inner leadership," and is officially translated as "leadership development and civic education", can provide good answers to this question. The special role and relevance of *Innere Führung* is already evident in the fact that it often has to serve, almost reflexively, as a frame of reference and justification rationale for all kinds of crises. On the one hand, this can be lamented as a misjudgment of its scope and an overestimation of its reach. On the other, this claim shows that in times of dynamism and uncertainty, *Innere Führung* is sought as a source of expertise: it serves as a useful explanatory piece, conceptual corrective or robust cognitive model that offers discussable answers even to complex questions.

From the very beginning, *Innere Führung* was conceived and designed as a dynamic concept with a relatively static foundation of values. This combination does not represent a contradiction, but rather – like steel rebars in concrete – provides reinforcement that ensures a resilient combination of stability and flexibility. The set of values laid down by Germany's Basic Law and the ethical foundations derived from them form the unchanging core of *Innere Führung.* In addition to these constants, however, *Innere Führung* also needs the necessary variables to be able to respond to changes. The constants form a fixed pole of rest, while the variables act as flexible alternating parameters, comparable to the aesthetic compositional principle established by *contrapposto,* where the engaged leg and the relaxed leg provide tension and balance. This is because mental steadfastness is not based on dogmatic rigidity, but arises from reflected agility. This agility also prevents any tendencies of exhaustion and thus contributes to the aforementioned building of resilience. However, this also means that the concept constantly requires a needs analysis and critical evaluation regarding the necessity for further development, updating and adaptation to new circumstances and requirements. This is especially true when disruptive changes and hybrid threat scenarios lead to uncertainties that, in turn, provide gateways for indoctrination, manipulation and counter-factual opinion-making. Today, we are faced with challenges whose contingency signatures can only be inadequately explained and controlled with previous continuity certainties. The example of Afghanistan points like a portent to future scenarios. Which answers can and do politics, society, the military leadership and also *Innere Führung* want to give to their soldiers, but especially to those among them who have been deployed in Afghanistan and elsewhere, who have served, suffered and fought there, who have borne injuries and wounds to their souls, minds and bodies, and who have also lost comrades? Do such impactful experiences change one's own self-image as a soldier? Can the familiar model of the citizen in uniform continue to maintain its claim to validity, or is it in need of readjustment or even re-evaluation and change?

From "citizen in uniform" back to "German warrior"?

In 2020, Professor Dr. Sönke Neitzel, holder of the Chair of Military History and Cultural History of Violence in Potsdam, which is unique in Germany, wrote a book on German military history that has rightly received considerable attention and has been discussed intensively, sometimes even heatedly, in numerous reviews; he gave it the programmatic title *German Warriors*.[2] Neitzel directs the focus of his historical account to the army, as it most clearly reflects the question of soldierly self-image as a whole in terms of its role relevance and continuity of tradition:

"So it's not surprising that the major debates in the Federal Republic about the tradition and identity of the armed forces almost always started from the Army. In the end, it was always about how the *Bundeswehr* felt about fighting, killing and dying – a question that concerned the land forces in particular. The book title 'Deutsche Krieger' (German Warriors) describes this archaic side of being a soldier."[3]

With the keyword "archaic", Neitzel is recognizably alluding to the "archaic fighter" that, in 2004, the then Army Inspector Hans-Otto Budde had called for as the future type of soldier for the *Bundeswehr*. This robust requirement profile is still strongly criticized today, especially since the attribute "archaic" tends to evoke associations with movie images of human fighting machines from heroic mythology. However, Budde formulated his demand in a more differentiated way, saying that in addition to the archaic fighter, he also needed the modern, technology-savvy specialist: "We need the archaic fighter and the one who can fight the high-tech war."[4] These descriptions no longer had much to do with the cherished image of the well-behaved "citizen in uniform" from the earlier times of compulsory military service as part of a training army primarily aimed at national and alliance defense. The *Bundeswehr's* deployments abroad had already opened up new horizons of experience and questions that expected adequate answers. Neitzel's book places these questions in a broad historical and comparative framework. His central thesis is that the "German warriors" are, so to speak, part of an intergenerational tradition

network that – despite all efforts at demarcation through tradition decrees with corresponding exclusion clauses – lines up combatants along a common line of continuity that stretches from the "wars of unification of the empire" (1864 to 1871) and frontline fighters in the First World War to members of the *Reichswehr, Wehrmacht* soldiers and ultimately today's *Bundeswehr* soldiers (with deployment experience). Neitzel's observations and critical assessments regarding *Innere Führung* are of particular importance in presenting soldierly identities in a historical context. First of all, Neitzel states that *Bundeswehr* soldiers also have a *sui generis* claim, which he justifies through the special ethical and sociological status of a fighter's existence. This, according to his assessment, relies more or less consciously on *Wehrmacht* role models in the soldiery self-perception and, in the bias of their own military microcosm, at least partially hides the framework-forming macrocosm of state and society with its relativization mechanisms:

"This attitude becomes more understandable if one understands the military as a world with its own values and norms, which is shaped by society and politics, but still forms a special social cosmos. The real or potential experience

The primacy of politics is not so much a political privilege but a special responsibility towards the Bundeswehr

of fighting, killing and dying fundamentally distinguishes the armed forces from other social groups. (…) Those who place fighting at the center of their professional identity look for special role models."[5]

The concept of *Innere Führung* always emphasizes the primacy of politics as the "pre-eminence of the democratically legitimized political will"[6] over the military. This pre-eminence is not so much a political privilege but a special responsibility towards the *Bundeswehr* as an executive organ of the Federal Republic of Germany. It carries out deployments mandated by parliament, and therefore particularly legitimized, as part of the national security provision. Article 87 of the Basic Law establishes the constitutional mission of the *Bundeswehr*. According to this un-

derstanding, it is referred to as a parliamentary army. Legitimizing the fulfillment of this mission is defined as an objective of *Innere Führung* with the intention of "answering the question as to the meaningfulness of serving, i.e. convey ethical, legal, political and social justifications for soldierly action and, in doing so, make the meaning of the military mission, especially in foreign deployments such as Afghanistan, understandable and comprehensible".[7] Neitzel considers this constant task of justifying, making sense of and conveying the meaning of military action to be insufficiently met by politics and the military leadership, especially for foreign deployments:

"The practice of *Innere Führung*, in which so much pride was taken, suffered massive harm because serving out of insight was hardly possible when the government, Bundestag and military leadership were unwilling to formulate realistic tasks and goals, instead taking refuge in empty words and sending the soldiers into action with a perceived legitimacy deficit. Were they really defending the values and norms of the Basic Law in the Hindu Kush, while at the same time supporting a corrupt government, cooperating with criminals and securing their drug deals? Cabinet and parliament have not answered these questions."[8]

The "perceived legitimacy deficit" referred to by Neitzel is confirmed time and again by soldiers with deployment experience. Even members of the Bundestag who visit the deployment area apparently ask the troops on the ground what they are there for and what their mission is. Who would ask a previously hired handyman why he's crouched under the sink in the bathroom with a pipe wrench in his hand? Insiders know that some MPs have not come close to grasping the substance of what they have sometimes voted on at very late hours when mandating deployments. But if even political decision-makers cannot or do not want to explain the rationale behind a particular deployment, it is once again the military leaders who have to give answers to the soldiers entrusted to their care. This is hardly conducive to instilling a sense of trust in politics, parliament and the military leadership. Neitzel also addresses the problem of conveying and implementing *Innere Führung*, which already existed during the time of the conscript army. His

line of argumentation, however, is not cohesive and, in its sweeping exaggeration, does not quite do justice to the complex situation:

"The reality of the troops was by no means identical with the image conveyed to the outside world. It is true that the concepts of the citizen in uniform and *Innere Führung* described a desirable ideal state of the politically mature soldier and were by no means in opposition to combat-ready armed forces. However, in everyday life, these overly intellectual concepts were primarily the concern of staff officers. The soldiers as a whole did not really know where to begin with them. The piles of well-meaning concept papers about the *Bundeswehr* as a democratic institution could not change the fact that increasingly fewer young men were willing to defend democracy with a weapon in their hands."[9]

That concept and reality, just like theory and practice, tend to diverge is a truism that applies to all areas of life. And the aloofness and supposed incomprehensibility of the concept of *Innere Führung* is still complained about today. This accusation, by the way, is mostly made by those who have obviously not yet seriously engaged with *Innere Führung*. The constructive question remains how much reduction in complexity is possible without risking too much loss of substance. The problem of conveying and accepting the concept of *Innere Führung* thus remains, especially since the attention spans of today's recipients are increasingly narrowing into tiny slits of perception. Neitzel's assessment that the increasing paper deluge of official pronouncements could not have changed the decreasing willingness to enlist misses the point, since prospective recruits were only first confronted with the topic of *Innere Führung* during their basic training. The demonstrative rejection of compulsory military service cannot be explained in a monocausal manner anyway, but had backgrounds, motives and aspects that have been dealt with in several research anthologies.[10]

Legitimacy and loyalty: The question of the "why"

Further historical derivations and references to *Innere Führung* in Neitzel's book on military history can be found especially in those parts where he illuminates the so-called "internal structure" of the armed forces and repeatedly focuses on what he calls the "tribal cultures" of the troop genera – with their cohesion and transmission functions in horizontal and vertical orientations.[11] In the rationale for the establishment of new German armed forces at the beginning of the Cold War, "in practice it necessarily came down to a compromise between internal military logic and domestic political reservations".[12] Although Neitzel does not mention *Innere Führung* here *expressis verbis*, he does describe it as a compromise model for mediating between two spheres, namely society and the military, which had become profoundly estranged with the German catastrophe after 1945 and were to be reunited through an aligning concept. This attempt was quite successfully undertaken with the "Himmeroder Denkschrift" from October 1950. As the core task of *Innere Führung*, which is embodied in the model of the citizen in uniform, and as it was understood in particular by Wolf Graf von Baudissin, Neitzel describes the nurturing of constitutional loyalty as a kind of surrogate for the disavowed, old-style patriotism:

"Since the Germans' national sentiment remained wounded by partition, defeat and crime, the constitutional state offered a kind of substitute fatherland for Baudissin. He thus anticipated constitutional patriotism, which was first coined as a concept in 1970 by the political scientist Dolf Sternberger and established fifteen years later by the philosopher Jürgen Habermas as an unconditional alternative to national sentiment."[13]

Heinz Karst, Baudissin's colleague and later antipode, rightly doubted the attractiveness of this loyalty model. When constitutional patriotism is absolutized, it is perceived as an anemic, intellectual construct that at best reaches the cerebral ventricle, but misses the ventricle of the heart – perhaps the more decisive place for military motivation and fighting morale. Karst considered a thoroughly considered love of one's country and a healthy sense of comradeship to be more substantial motives, and closely linked them to an uninhibited concept of tradition that can counteract the threat of lost meaning and increasing weakness of symbols.[14] When it really comes down to it, the question of the "why" is not answered primarily with the Basic Law and

constitutional patriotism, but rather with comradeship experienced as a "small fighting community" and as a community of fate in existential probation. Solidarity with your fellow human beings and taking responsibility for your comrades seem a thousand times more authentic than the noblest postulate derived from an abstract idea of humanity. This statement is not a rejection of the foundation of values, but rather an explanation of

> *A conceptually equivalent counter-model does not exist and will not exist in future, as long as Innere Führung remains meaningful in its intellectual stringency and design dynamics*

its very meaning. Especially in combat units and among soldiers with operational experience and a pronounced practical orientation, even well-intentioned derivations on a higher level of abstraction and self-referential reflections can often only achieve the opposite of what was intended: we do not speak to the people themselves, but merely of them, about them or past them. Today, politics, the media, churches, associations, academia, schools and also the *Bundeswehr*, to a comparable extent, are all faced with this communication challenge and authenticity problem.

The further development of *Innere Führung*

In his statements and assessments regarding *Innere Führung*, Neitzel once again proves that this concept has not abdicated, but continues to develop dynamism. As expected, the manifold criticisms of the concept itself remain unchanged, as well as of its textualization and communication. However, the disparity, inconsistency and

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under-complexity of some critics' voices, which often display very little knowledge of the textual basis, make it difficult to engage in a constructive discourse on the notions, foundations, goals and features underpinning the concept. Suggestions for improvement are often limited to commonplaces and individual positions. A conceptually equivalent counter-model does not exist, and will not exist in future, as long as *Innere Führung* remains meaningful – and thus competitive – in its intellectual stringency and design dynamics. In the further development of *Innere Führung*, a number of considerations and recommendations arise for its conception, textualization, communication and implementation:

First: We should return to the core idea and essential objective of *Innere Führung*: integration of the *Bundeswehr* into the state and society as well as operational readiness on a common basis of values in order to be able to convincingly answer the question as to the "why". Further development can also consist of avoiding aimless byways, backtracking when going astray, returning to the main path and firmly setting one's sights on the actual goal again: *Innere Führung* must first and foremost serve the *Bundeswehr*'s operational readiness. Everything else must be subordinated to this goal. It is therefore not a comfort zone for saturated defense officials nor a cozy corner for niche existences. It is definitely not an instrument to enforce excessive minority demands, nor a vehicle to promote particular interests. As soon as *Innere Führung* engages in patronage politics on demand, it loses substance, contour and authenticity; it becomes arbitrary and interchangeable. Questionable external demands on *Innere Führung* impair its conceptual and applicational distinctiveness and, in addition, also regularly lead to a further overloading of training and teaching.

Second: We must not let opponents of *Innere Führung* drive us into a corner but should confidently point out the advantages and merits of our leadership culture. We must engage in a more productive dialog with constructive critics, accept justified points of criticism and look for joint improvements and solutions. This presupposes, of course, that our own knowledge of the concept, including the personal willingness to help shape *Innere Führung* as an exemplary leadership cul-

ture, are present to a convincing degree. As soon as theory and practice diverge, credibility suffers. Moreover, *Innere Führung* does not begin in the troops, but already applies to the ministerial leadership level. A leadership practice that demands horizontal implementation of conceptual goals and objectives, without ensuring vertical penetration from top to bottom, does not create a shared leadership culture, but a loss of trust.

Third: The constant demand for the "bite-sized" preparation and communication of *Innere Führung* is essentially justified, but distracts from the willingness to make one's own contribution to understanding *Innere Führung*. This begins with the mere reading of the regulation and culminates in the educational claim of a job profile that defines its executives as "intellectual leaders". Right from the beginning, *Innere Führung* has been a political educational concept based on an ethical and legal foundation. We should therefore finally give personality development with its essential facets the status it deserves in the *Bundeswehr's* training system.[15] In this context, the *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* (character guidance training) of the military chaplaincy does not represent a competing concept, but rather an indispensable, complementary contribution to professional ethical training.

Fourth: The lessons learned from the military engagement in Afghanistan provide exemplary contributions to illustrate the effectiveness of *Innere Führung* in operations. However, this requires a comprehensive and honest reappraisal, analysis and evaluation by politics, society, academia and the military, starting with the rationale for deployment as a basis for legitimacy. The much-cited verdict by former German Minister of Defense Peter Struck, who stated that Germany's security was also being defended in the Hindu Kush, must be put to the test. General (ret.) Domröse commented as follows: "Right at the time – today, it no longer counts."[16] So Afghanistan is not a blueprint for future scenarios, especially since there has now been a clear return to national and alliance defense. In Afghanistan, the *Bundeswehr* fulfilled its mission in the best possible way with the means at its disposal. Clear criteria should apply for future deployments, in particular a precise identification of national interests, a concrete exit strategy and co-responsibility in the "networked approach", which, if necessary, have to be called for by setting supraministerial guidelines.

Fifth: Finally, current developments must also be taken into account, some of which are already being hotly debated. Examples of controversial issues include a shared *Bundeswehr* leadership culture and Europeanisation, digitalization and drone technology, artificial intelligence and human enhancement as challenges to the human image of *Innere Führung*. But this is yet another topic in its own right.

1 Interview in "heute journal up:date" broadcast by the German national public television network, ZDF, on 16 August 2021 (from approx. 6:50 minute), https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/heute-journal-update/heute-journal-update-vom-16-08-2021-100.html (accessed 15 November 2021). Translation from German.
2 Neitzel, Sönke (2020): Deutsche Krieger. Vom Kaiserreich zur Berliner Republik – eine Militärgeschichte. Berlin.
3 Ibid., p. 20 f. Translation from German.
4 cf. Winkel, Wolfgang (2004): Bundeswehr braucht archaische Kämpfer. In: Welt am Sonntag, 29 February 2004. Translation from German.
5 Neitzel (2020), p. 12. Translation from German.
6 Zentrale Dienstvorschrift (ZDv) A-2600/1 "Innere Führung. Selbstverständnis und Führungskultur der Bundeswehr". Edited by the German Federal Ministry of defense – Armed Forces Joint Staff I 4 (now: FüSK III 3), Bonn 2008, para. 310). Translation from German.
7 ZDv A-2600/1 "Innere Führung", para 401 (first indent). Translation from German.
8 Neitzel (2020), p. 551. Translation from German.
9 Neitzel (2020), p. 590. Translation from German.
10 Three important publications are mentioned here which were not referred to by Sönke Neitzel:
Opitz, Eckardt and Rödiger, Frank S. (ed.) (1994): Allgemeine Wehrpflicht. Geschichte – Probleme – Perspektiven. Bremen.
Foerster, Roland G. (ed.) (1994): Die Wehrpflicht. Entstehung, Erscheinungsformen und politisch-militärische Wirkung. (Beiträge zur Militärgeschichte. Volume 43. Edited by the Military History Research Office of the Bundeswehr.) Munich.
Werkner, Ines-Jacqueline (ed.) (2004): Die Wehrpflicht und ihre Hintergründe. Sozialwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur aktuellen Debatte. (Publication series from the Social Science Institute of the German Armed Forces. Volume 2.) Wiesbaden.
11 Neitzel (2020), p. 17 and 19f. Translation from German.
12 Neitzel (2020), p. 15. Translation from German.
13 Neitzel (2020), p. 266. Translation from German.
14 Karst, Heinz (1964): Das Bild des Soldaten. Versuch eines Umrisses. Boppard am Rhein, p. 225 ff. as well as, for example (1994): Im Dienst am Vaterland. Beiträge aus vier Jahrzehnten. Edited in honor of the author by Klaus Hornung. Herford, Hamburg und Stuttgart.
15 cf. Janke, Reinhold (2020): Ethische Bildung in der Bundeswehr – ein neuer Baustein zur Persönlichkeitsbildung? In: Jahrbuch Innere Führung 2020. Edited by Uwe Hartmann, Reinhold Janke and Claus von Rosen. Berlin, pp. 304–321.
16 See endnote 1. Translation from German.

INNERE FÜHRUNG AS AN ATTEMPT TO ANSWER THE QUESTION OF (MILITARY) FORCE
THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL REMARKS ON THE CURRENT DEBATE

Author: **Markus Patenge**

The concept of *Innere Führung*, with its guiding principle of the citizen in uniform, provides the linchpin of the German *Bundeswehr's* organizational philosophy and leadership culture. Literally meaning "inner guidance" or "inner leadership," and officially translated as "leadership development and civic education", *Innere Führung* aims to tie the self-image of German soldiers, and thus also their decisions and actions in military service, to certain values – precisely those values that the German Basic Law also seeks to protect, promote and realize: human dignity, freedom, peace, justice, equality, solidarity and democracy. This inextricable link between the constitutional values and the military ethos of the *Bundeswehr* as a whole illustrates first and foremost that the soldierly self-image should not be fed by a special military ethos, but must be anchored in the center of society. *Innere Führung* thus represents a practical military philosophy that distinguishes the *Bundeswehr* from many other armies worldwide.

With this concept, the *Bundeswehr* has radically turned away from a command-and-obey type of soldiering. Soldiers are taken seriously and challenged as moral subjects, i.e. they bear direct responsibility for their own actions in military service. Within the framework of legal provisions, it is therefore not orders but the soldiers' own conscience that guides their actions. However, it would be insufficient to reduce *Innere Führung* to just its individual ethical implications. It also has an important systemic value for Germany's military structure. This is because *Innere Führung* is supposed to ensure that pure military logic is not the only yardstick for operational practice within the *Bundeswehr*. The actions required of soldiers in specific military situations must not be determined solely by what is militarily necessary; rather, military practice should ultimately be guided by a peace logic based on human rights. In this sense, the *Bundeswehr* – especially in its missions – must always see itself as an army for peace and guide its actions towards enabling, implementing and preserving this peace. Through *Innere Führung*, the *Bundeswehr* has thus not only committed itself to implementing these values

Abstract

Innere Führung ties soldierly decisions and actions indissolubly to the values of Germany's Basic Law, holds soldiers accountable as moral beings, and embeds purely military thinking within a human rights-based peace logic that guides their internal organization and external conduct.

The restrained use of force by the German armed forces during its mission in Afghanistan testifies to this "ethical success story". At the same time, however, the experiences of real combat operations have brought home the existential seriousness of the soldier's profession and revived criticism of Innere Führung and the debate about an adequate military ethos (with the ideal types "Athens" and "Sparta"). For victims, observers and perpetrators, violence always entails the risk of perpetuating itself in endless spirals in which past violence instils new violence. Values such as peace and human dignity should be understood as a response to this universal human experience. Committing the military to these values also means taking a fundamentally critical approach to military force – which can be legitimized from the standpoint of theological ethics – and containing it accordingly.

It would therefore make a mockery of Innere Führung and its ethical substance to completely deny their suitability for (combat) missions. In order to prevent alienation and disengagement, however, the Bundeswehr and society should address, on as broad a basis as possible, the extent to which aspects of a "Spartan" ethos can be integrated into the concept.

within its own organizational culture – as far as the special military duties allow – but also to promoting their enforcement externally.

But even this does not fully encapsulate the function of *Innere Führung*. After all, it is also supposed to ensure that there is no alienation between the military and society. As citizens in uniform, soldiers should continue to be an integral part of the civic community by adopting its values, representing them and, if necessary, defending them by military means.

Encouragingly, the *Bundeswehr*'s mission in Afghanistan, which has come to an end, has now shown that the theory of *Innere Führung* also finds practical military expression in the troops: "There have been no reports of excesses or transgressions [...] among the German armed forces. The ethical and moral compass of values, adjusted by the primacy of civilians, evidently habitualized a greater restraint in the use of force and thus prevented such events on a larger scale. German soldiers were apparently socialized in such a way that excessive brutality was contained, a certain moderation in combat was ensured and complete disinhibition was countered. As responsible citizens, they apparently do reflect on and examine their actions in accordance with the principles of *Innere Führung*, not only from a military but also from a humanistic and moral point of view."[1]

Thus, *Innere Führung* would actually be an ethical success story for Germany's *Bundeswehr* if it were not also subject to profound criticism within the armed forces.

The debate about *Innere Führung*

Although the positive effects of *Innere Führung* could certainly be experienced during the Afghanistan mission, it has also fueled arguments about the merits or failures of this concept. However, one should not overlook the fact that this debate is by no means new. On the contrary, it can be seen as part of a critical tradition that has constantly accompanied *Innere Führung* since its inception. Nevertheless, the *Bundeswehr*'s transformation from a defensive to an operational army has given this discussion a new dramatic quality: the involvement of German soldiers in combat operations

far from home has now become reality. If the worst comes to the worst, they have to kill and face a real risk of being killed themselves. This development has brought home what the soldier's profession means, not only to the German public but also to the *Bundeswehr* itself. The soldier's craft cannot be reinterpreted as

> *The soldier's craft cannot be reinterpreted as uniformed development cooperation. It essentially includes mastering and applying the tools of war*

uniformed development cooperation; it essentially includes mastering and applying the tools of war.

In view of this changed situation, there is increasing criticism that *Innere Führung* propagates a soldiery self-image that is outdated and fails to do justice to the new challenges facing the *Bundeswehr*. In its moderate form, this criticism is aimed at further developing *Innere Führung*, while more radical proponents of this view demand that *Innere Führung* be consigned to the *Bundeswehr's* history books.

Paradigmatically, two camps oppose each other in this discussion, for which the labels "Athenian" and "Spartan" have become established in literature.[2] The Athenian model propagates a military ethos in the sense of *Innere Führung*. Here, military life is characterized by an enlightened and considered understanding of the values mentioned, which soldiers are prepared to defend as the last resort, even by military means. In contrast, the Spartan image places the aspect of combat at the center of military life and demands from soldiers what can be called traditional military virtues: bravery, obedience, devotion to duty, loyalty, determination and military professionalism. This debate, which Sönke Neitzel also addresses in his book *Deutsche Krieger. Vom Kaiserreich zur Berliner Republik – eine Militärgeschichte,*[3] can be distilled down to the following question: Do soldiers find an ethical concept in *Innere Führung* that also enables them to deal successfully in military terms with combat situations? Or, to put it another way: in view of the

changed operational reality of the *Bundeswehr*, do we need more Spartan soldiers and fewer Athenian ones?

In the following discussion it will be shown that the concept of *Innere Führung* is justified from a theological and ethical perspective, especially in real operations, and must not be abandoned in favor of a pure combat ethos. Despite this clear positioning, there should be no misunderstanding: the debates on *Innere Führung* are important and must be conducted openly. It is precisely because soldiers are supposed to be at the center of society that we need constant reassurance about the ethical and normative foundations of our society. It is a great achievement of the *Bundeswehr*'s leadership to have described *Innere Führung* as a dynamic concept. Although the core essence

> *It is precisely because soldiers are supposed to be at the center of society that we need constant reassurance about the ethical and normative foundations of our society*

of *Innere Führung* is regarded as unchangeable, the concept should at the same time be open enough to keep pace with societal changes. The serious dialog on *Innere Führung* must therefore be anchored within a broad societal debate and must under no circumstances be narrowed down to a discourse within the *Bundeswehr*. Such a development would undermine *Innere Führung* from within and contradict its objectives. One of the most important statements from the Central Service Regulations on *Innere Führung* therefore reads: "Moreover, in view of global political, economic and social changes, it [*Innere Führung*] is subject to an ongoing need for further development. This is promoted by a lively dialog among the soldiers themselves and with individuals and institutions outside the *Bundeswehr*."[4]

This dialog is, however, by no means a one-way street. Although it is initially the *Bundeswehr's* task, as a component of our society, to follow its constantly changing ideas, society must also engage in a continuous learning

process. It is evident, for example, that large sections of society are still struggling with the changed role of the *Bundeswehr*, despite the fact that the *Bundeswehr*'s first combat deployment in the Kosovo War dates back to 1999 – more than 20 years ago. Against this backdrop, it is legitimate to ask whether society's wariness of the new *Bundeswehr* also promotes those tendencies that want to establish a *sui generis* ethos within the German Armed Forces.

The aspect of force as the raison d'être of *Innere Führung*

The concept of *Innere Führung* is the result of a process that reconsidered Germany's military tradition up to the Second World War. Like Germany's Basic Law, however, it grew primarily out of the experiences of the Nazi era and the Second World War. Just as the Basic Law represents a radical departure from National Socialist ideology and its concept of the state, *Innere Führung*, through its commitment to values, clearly distances itself from the soldierly self-image that contributed to the disaster of the Second World War.

As important as *Innere Führung*'s commitment to constitutional and human rights-based values is, its actual raison d'être is much more deep-seated. For these values are also answers to the universal human experience of violence. Thus, *Innere Führung* is also an instrument for controlling and minimizing (military) force. In their pastoral letter "Soldiers as Servants of Peace", the German bishops therefore write: "Understanding the specific dilemmas in using military instruments is, however, of central importance for a responsible use of force. After all, the use of force fundamentally entails the risk that those who use force will become entangled in the violence, thus becoming part of the violence themselves and also harming themselves as individuals or their social and political contexts in a most sensitive way. A critical relationship to violence and its dynamics is a necessary prerequisite in order to resist the evils that are inevitably founded in the use of force."[5] Interestingly, this ecclesiastical view also coincides with statements from the mili-

tary. Lieutenant Colonel Marcel Bohnert from the General Staff, for example, states: "*Innere Führung* is designed to help contain and control the use of military force through the military's social integration and proximity to the state."[6] It is therefore essential to examine the aspect of force in the context of *Innere Führung*.

Violence – in whatever form it may occur – is always a grave evil from the point of view of theological ethics. As a rule, it seriously contravenes the human rights of victims of violence by blatantly violating their right to physical integrity or even right to life.

However, this does not adequately characterize the phenomenon of violence. Violence is not a single, self-contained act; rather, it has a temporal dimension that in turn affects different groups of people. Thus, violence initially has a future dimension that continues to have an effect long after the actual act of violence has occurred. This future power of violence becomes immediately evident once we take a look at the victims of violent acts. For they continue to suffer the mental and physical consequences of violent acts for a very long time, often for the rest of their lives. We know that such experiences take hold of their everyday lives in myriad ways: be it through physical limitations, psychological consequences such as insecurity, fear and depression, or social consequences such as the stigmatization of victims, their exclusion from social life and much more.

As the bishops have written, it is not only the victims of violence who suffer the consequences. Violence can also have serious consequences for those who perpetrate it. Especially the repeated use of force can dull sensibilities, dangerously lowering inhibitions for conducting further acts of violence. There is a risk that perpetrators of violence acquire a habitus that, as a result of becoming inured to violence, makes them emotionally numb to the consequences of their actions. However, this can also destroy them inwardly, forcing them to live with the burden of their actions from then onwards.

At first glance, violence occurs between perpetrators and victims. But violence can also have an enormous impact on bystand-

ers. They can also be traumatized, experience feelings of powerlessness and horror, perhaps even feel satisfaction or approval – often they also become inured to it.

It is therefore not surprising that this complex situation often results in new violence in response, which leads to a seemingly nev-

It is not only the victims of violence who suffer the consequences. Violence can also have serious consequences for those who perpetrate it

er-ending, steadily increasing spiral of violence. Precisely because the long shadow of violence hangs over all those involved, it is a dangerous diminution to regard violence as a purely individual event. Its toxic effect is only fully grasped when also considered in terms of its social impacts. Experiences of violence – whether active or passive – can preoccupy entire societies to such an extent that they become a central focal point in crystallizing their identity. One need only think of the responsibility that Germany still bears today for the Second World War, or of how strongly the experience of being colonized is rooted in the consciousness of many countries and societies of the global South.

Given the impact of violence on the future, which is only briefly outlined here, it becomes immediately clear that violence also has a past. Acts of violence rarely occur out of nowhere. They usually have a history, without which current violence can neither be understood nor overcome. A deeper analysis of current – but also past – acts of violence shows that their histories are extremely complex and often go far back into the past. In addition, the various groups involved in the conflict often have different narratives regarding the prevailing violence. The Israeli-Palestine conflict serves as an example for the many histories of violence. The search for an objective truth in these stories is likely to be doomed to failure from the outset.

This brief treatise on violence is enough to show that violence seriously disturbs human

coexistence. In light of this, it may therefore come as a surprise that neither Catholic theology nor the Catholic Church ethically prohibit the use of force in principle. The Church's teaching on peace, which has grown over centuries, is close enough to people's lives to know that there are situations in which intervention by means of force can be ethically justified. But because of the seriously negative consequences of violence, there must at least be a realistic prospect that correspondingly important assets and values can be protected by acts of force. The prime example of this is self-defense, in which it may be permissible, according to the principle of proportionality,

> *Because of the seriously negative consequences of violence, there must at least be a realistic prospect that correspondingly important assets and values can be protected by acts of force*

to forcibly disarm the attacker or – as a last resort – to kill him. This is justified if, for example, one's own life is in serious jeopardy. However, the right to self-defense can also be extended. For example, someone can also act in self-defense on behalf of others if the victims are unable to protect or defend themselves. Societies as a whole also have a right to self-defense, which – one cannot emphasize this often enough: as a last resort – may justify a defensive war.

However, it is precisely when third parties are threatened by acts of violence that the right to self-defense takes an important ethical turn. The right to self-defense can become a duty to help, namely if one can help to avert the dire situation experienced by the other person. The German Penal Code has even codified this duty in law – admittedly in a different context – in that Section 323c StGB makes the failure to render assistance a punishable offence. Taken from this changed perspective, it is therefore by no means wrong to say that a state has an ethical duty to ensure the protection of its citizens. As a consequence, this ethically legitimizes the Responsibility to Protect principle, which has unjustly disappeared from the consciousness of international politics. If the most serious human rights violations are committed against individuals or entire population groups, then the international community has a duty to intervene. However, recent experiences of this kind of mission have painfully shown that mere military intervention is not enough. Rather, a long-term process of conflict transformation and reconciliation must be initiated to enhance the prospect of lasting peace.

Within theological ethics, force is therefore not fundamentally forbidden. Even if it is basically evil, it can be permitted or even called for if its use secures essential assets, ends serious human rights violations and serves lasting peace.

Impulses for debating *Innere Führung's* further development

Innere Führung's commitment to constitutional values will continue to be indispensable in future. It ensures that military force does not become an end in itself or is used for evil motives. *Innere Führung* is only legitimate, however, if it proves to be an effective instrument for safeguarding or enforcing these values, especially human dignity. Therefore, an *Innere Führung* maxim is that the overarching goal of military force must always be peace. Only within the framework set by *Innere Führung* can the *Bundeswehr* – despite or even through its missions – prove to be an army for peace. This is why the following statement by the German bishops also holds lasting signifi-

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cance: "For as soon as the demanding ethical prerequisites for using force are no longer conscious or are in doubt, the appropriate use of this force can also no longer be expected with certainty – with far-reaching consequences for all concerned."[7]

It would therefore virtually caricature this approach if it were to be abandoned in the face of the *Bundeswehr*'s missions. They represent the *experimentum crucis* for the seriousness of *Innere Führung*.

This high ethical standard must not be allowed, however, to obscure the reality of soldiers' lives. Even as servants of peace, preparing for and proving oneself in combat is an integral part of this profession. Soldiers are trained to be able to use military force. The last decades have shown that this is not just an abstract theory but a real scenario. In order to meet these challenges, the *Innere Führung* approach should offer the possibility to also integrate elements of the so-called Spartan ethos. However, this must be done within the framework of the values already mentioned. For this reason, the *Bundeswehr's* leadership would be well advised to actively lead the way here and develop such an ethos in a constructive dialog with the soldiers and civil society. Only in this way can it be possible to counteract, right from the outset, those tendencies that want to establish a special ethos within individual military units that neither accords with *Innere Führung's* values nor can hope for a consensus within society. Even in combat, soldiers should be citizens in uniform and understand peace as the primacy of their mission.

1 Bohnert. Marcel (2017): Innere Führung auf dem Prüfstand. Lehren aus dem Afghanistan-Einsatz der Bundeswehr. Norderstedt, p. 80. Translation from German.

2 As in, for example, Wiesendahl, Elmar (2016): Bundeswehr without Cohesion. Negative Developments in Innere Führung. In: Ethik und Militär. Kontroversen der Militärethik und Sicherheitskultur 01/2016, p. 43-47, p. 45. http://www.ethikundmilitaer.de/en/full-issues/2016-innere-fuehrung/wiesendahl-bundeswehr-without-cohesion-negative-developments-in-innere-fuehrung/ (accessed 12 November 2021).

3 cf. Neitzel, Sönke (2020): Deutsche Krieger. Vom Kaiserreich zur Berliner Republik – eine Militärgeschichte. Berlin.

4 German Federal Ministry of Defense (ed.) (2008): Zentrale Dienstvorschrift A-2600/1 "Innere Führung. Selbstverständnis und Führungskultur." https://www.bmvg.de/resource/blob/13998/01082632986ceeb2c82c36c61785fec9/b-01-02-01-download1-data.pdf, p. 108. (Accessed 31 August 2021). Translation from German.

5 Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz (ed.) (2005): Soldaten als Diener des Friedens. Erklärung zur Stellung und Aufgabe der Bundeswehr. Bonn, p. 6. Translation from German.

6 Bohnert (2017), p. 94. Translation from German.

7 Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz (ed.) (2005), p. 15. Translation from German.

MILITARY VIRTUES FOR TODAY

Author: **Peter Olsthoorn**

For most militaries today the primary task is the handling of international crises, ranging from humanitarian assistance to peacekeeping, peace enforcing and post-conflict reconstruction. It will be obvious that these new operations require a great deal of self-control on the side of military personnel, who have to do their work in circumstances that are in general stressful, and sometimes frustrating. Incidents in Iraq and Afghanistan, such as the killing of 39 civilians by Australian special forces in Afghanistan between 2005 and 2016, underline the importance of finding ways to prevent military personnel crossing the line between legitimate force and unlawful violence.[1]

To that end, militaries traditionally relied on rules and codes of conduct. Rules make clear to military personnel which actions are off-limits, and rule-based ethics point to the importance of having universal, categorically binding moral norms. Such a confidence in the beneficial effects of rules and codes has its drawbacks, though. According to some the impact of codes of conduct is fairly limited to begin with,[2] while others point out that rule-based approaches are rigid, and largely ineffective when there are no witnesses around. Rules can even impede the ability to see the moral aspect of what one is doing, while that ability is evidently an important prerequisite for morally sound decision making. Although rules ideally codify what is just, in concrete cases what the rules stipulate can be manifestly unjust. Following the rules without too much thinking could in some instances thus lead to "crimes of obedience."[3] Rules, in sum, lack flexibility, even when that flexibility is obviously needed, and soldiers should therefore have some autonomy in their decision making.[4]

To use this autonomy in an ethical way, soldiers need a good disposition, and it is for that reason that many militaries see a virtue-based approach to military ethics and military ethics education as a necessary counterpart to rules imposed from above. Virtue ethics is in keeping with the tendency of many militaries to move away in their ethics education from a functional approach towards an aspirational approach that aims at making soldiers better persons, mainly based on the view that bad persons are not likely

Abstract

How can military personnel be prevented from using force unlawfully? A critical examination of typical methods and the suitability of virtue ethics for this task starts with the inadequacies of a purely rules-based approach, and the fact that many armed forces increasingly rely on character development training. The three investigated complexes also raise further questions which require serious consideration – such as about the general teachability of virtues.

First, the changing roles and responsibilities of modern armed forces are used to refute the notion that timeless, "classic" military virtues exist, for example physical courage. With regard to today's missions, virtues of restraint seem more necessary. Reflecting on the four interrelated and less military-specific cardinal virtues of courage, wisdom, temperance and justice could bring the military and civil society closer together. At the same time, this would be a logical step towards promoting personality development.

Respect is one example of such a "contemporary" inclusive virtue that some armed forces have adopted into their canon of values. Apparently, however, it often refers only to members of one's own organization. And it is no less inappropriate to use it to justify moral relativism or excuse immoral practices, such as the widespread sexual abuse of Afghan boys by men in positions of power ("boy play").

Finally, the essay asks about the general suitability of a virtue-based approach in ethical education, since social psychological research has shown that situational factors strongly influence behavior. The research findings do not render such an approach worthless, but they should be integrated into military personality training.

to form morally good soldiers (although they still could be effective ones …). Such an aspirational approach sits rather well with the way most militaries see themselves: as being in the business of character-building. It is therefore a pity that many militaries seem to have adopted this aspirational virtue ethics approach in too carefree a manner.

There are, in fact, quite a few unanswered questions regarding the suitability of virtue ethics for the military, and this paper aims to address three of the more pressing ones. The most important question, first of all, is of course *which* virtues we need. Are new virtues emerging because of changes in military tasks? Have some virtues gained significance? Have others lost their importance? Next, this paper addresses a virtue that has a modern ring to it but that we perhaps do not need, or at least not in all of its forms. Finally, the last section before the conclusion deals with the sobering question whether virtues matter at all.

Which virtues do we need?

Which virtues military personnel need today depends at least partly on whether what makes up a military virtue is place and time dependent. At first sight a convincing argument can be made that this is *not* the case. Some military virtues are valued in all eras and cultures, for instance because they perform an important function in or for the military.[5] The archetypal military virtue of physical courage seems a textbook example. But a closer look shows that the type of courage that militaries need tends to change over time. Aristotle's famous definition of courage as the mean between rashness and cowardice,[6] for instance, fitted the hoplite warfare of his day very well, as both an excess or a deficiency of bravery would destroy the organized whole the phalanx was. At present we see how the rise of a number of new technologies makes this type of physical courage outmoded for at least some parts of the military: cyber soldiers and UAV operators, for instance, do not seem to need this type of courage at all. They probably do need moral courage, a subspecies of courage that asks us to stick to our principles even if others disagree.[7] Regarding other central military virtues regularly appearing on lists of military virtues, such as loyalty, discipline or obedience, it is at the minimum less evident what positive role they could have for, for instance, cyber operations or operating armed drones.[8] More worrisome: most military virtues mainly pay attention to the interests and aims of the organization and colleagues. They are more functional than aspirational, which means among other things that they do contribute to the objectives of the military, but that there is

> *In light of the changed tasks of the military, the virtues needed at present are most likely more about exercising restraint than about demonstrating physical courage, loyalty, and discipline*

little in them that limits the behavior of soldiers towards civilians. Assuming that the traditional martial virtues such as physical courage are of diminished use in today's conflicts, we need to look for virtues that are better suited for today.

In light of the changed tasks of the military, the virtues needed at present are most likely more about exercising restraint than about demonstrating physical courage, loyalty, and discipline. Such virtues of restraint will be less military-specific, and could therefore bring the military into closer alignment with general society (and perhaps also with the principles of other professions that in general give central place to the interests of outsiders to the organization). Opting for virtues that are closer to "common morality" would fit the aspirational approach that militaries are moving towards better – we already noted that there is a tendency in many Western militaries toward a less functional approach. Now, it is fairly evident that there are important differences between mainly functional role morality and more aspirational common morality: lawyers, policemen and doctors all have obligations and rights other people do not have, and for good reasons.[9] Although for military personnel role morality clearly differs from ordinary morality too, as they are members of a profession that can legitimately use force, one could convincingly argue that militaries need a more outward-looking set of virtues for today's

missions that more often than not require restraint on the side of their personnel.[10] If true, that still does not mean we have to design a new set of virtues from scratch. A likely source to turn to first when looking for such aspirational, comprehensive virtues are the "general" and time proven cardinal virtues that can be found in the work of authors such as Plato and Cicero.

As it stands, of the four cardinal virtues, only courage has made it to the traditional lists of military virtues. The equally cardinal virtues of wisdom, temperance and justice, today probably at least as needed as courage is, are absent on most lists of military virtues (although they do appear in a recent volume on military virtues[11]). That is a loss, seeing that wisdom, justice and temperance are a lot more wide-ranging than the traditional military virtues are. What is more, they are typical virtues of restraint. Choosing these cardinal virtues would also do justice to the idea that all the virtues form a unified whole, and that therefore you cannot have one virtue without possessing the others, too. Wisdom uninformed by justice may come close to cunning, for instance. Likewise, courage is of little use without practical wisdom to guide it, while that same courage is a not a virtue if it does not serve a just goal. And, somewhat similarly, if one lacks the courage to defend what is just, being just is not of much value to begin with. Such interconnections are absent in the rather random collections of virtues that militaries nowadays live by.

A virtue less needed?

Despite their ancient roots, opting for the cardinal virtues would give the military a set of virtues that is more modern and comprehensive. Interestingly, however, there is already one seemingly outward-looking virtue that many militaries include on their value lists, and that is respect. Listing respect as a virtue is however not the concession to the current tasks of the military it might seem: a closer look reveals that respect in the military is often tacitly limited to respect toward colleagues.[12] So although "respect" certainly sounds inclusive, at present the way some militaries interpret it bars it from being that. Such interpretations fail to take into account that military personnel will often be doing their

job amidst the local population. Why exactly militaries are disinclined to include outsiders remains a puzzle, given that respect for outsiders does not diminish the amount of respect left to show colleagues. A more all-encompassing interpretation of this virtue would seem a welcome step ahead.

But respect as an inclusive virtue has a flipside: there are occasions in which a broad interpretation of respect can in fact be too much of a good thing. When deployed, Western military personnel regularly encounter local practices that clash with their Western values, and sometimes pre-deployment training underlines the importance of respect for such local customs.[13] This is partly for good reasons: military personnel sent abroad need to have sufficient knowledge of local sensitivities. Yet emphasizing the need to respect other people's customs can provide Western soldiers with a ground for not intervening in cases of corruption or the cruel treatment of women and children. In Afghanistan, Western military personnel regularly witnessed the practice of "boy play," a euphemism for men in positions of power "owning" boys who serve tea, dance – and suffer sexual abuse. A soldier deployed to Afghanistan relates how the subject wasn't discussed at all during mission-specific training, but that they "did learn that we must respect local culture."[14] Soldiers on a mission sometimes end up believing that "the situation is culturally determined and therefore unchangeable," when it is in fact not.[15] The gradual eroding of moral standards plays a role too: referring to the practice of boy play, a member of the Dutch military explained that "[t]he peculiar thing is that it becomes more and more 'normal' (...) After six months, you start to adjust and start to assimilate local customs and we practically never talked about it, you get used to it."[16]

In reality, our idea that the sexual abuse of boys is part of Afghan culture is mistaken; like everyone else, most Afghans think the practice immoral, and the sexual molesting of boys is not defensible within the value framework of Afghan society. Ironically, the Taliban suppressed the practice of boy play during their years in power fairly successfully; it resurfaced after their rule ended. Afghan law, by the way, still forbids it. But even if most or all Afghans thought that

child molesting was right, would that really imply that we should respect their position? Clearly not, because child molesting is a clear violation of important external standards; condoning every practice that meets internal standards would overlook that we are also member of a more cosmopolitan moral community. That the majority in certain societies approves of certain practices does not make these practices right. A seemingly inclusive virtue like respect does more harm than good if it provides soldiers with a ground to look away.

This looking away is sometimes defended with the argument that moral judgments are place and time dependent. This moral relativism consists of the empirical claim that there is widespread moral disagreement, and the metaethical claim that the truth of moral judgments is "relative to the moral standard of some person or group of persons."[17] Some think that the empirical claim demonstrates the metaethical one. But that empirical claim is most likely incorrect; the nearly universal taboo on killing and stealing testifies to that.[18] That most Afghans do not approve of the practice of boy play also suggests that there is some basic morality that most people agree on. Most of what looks like disagreement about values is in fact disagreement about the norms that we derive from these values. Only the most radical forms of relativism do not see a role for at least some very basic rights to serve as a check on all too particularistic practices.[19] Not speaking out against such practices also overlooks that tolerance, like respect, is a matter of reciprocity: there is no obligation to "bear" the intolerant.[20]

That leaves us with the question where a line should be drawn. According to Thomas Scanlon, a good test when thinking about right and wrong is "thinking about what could be justified to others on grounds that they, if appropriately motivated, could not reasonably reject."[21] Clearly, the practice of boy play does not pass that test. It is therefore important that respect is balanced by other virtues that can function as correctives to too much relativism and the accompanying tendency to put aside one's own values. The already mentioned cardinal virtues such as justice and wisdom, but certainly also (moral) courage, can perform that role. Such

virtues can provide guidance to military personnel in morally ambiguous situations, where providing general rules and guidelines for such complex situations will not work.

But do virtues make a difference?

In the sections above the focus was on virtue-based approaches to military ethics as this is the approach that most militaries have embraced – partly because of shortcomings of more rule-based approaches. But a virtue-based approach has its own drawbacks, the main one being that it assumes a direct relation between character and conduct. An assumption that might very well be wrong: over the last few decades a host of empirical research has shown that situations determine conduct to a far greater extent than character does. We tend to make

> *We tend to make a fundamental attribution error, meaning that we underrate the influence of situational factors and, as a consequence, over-attribute behavior to personality and character*

a fundamental attribution error, meaning that we underrate the influence of situational factors and, as a consequence, over-attribute behavior to personality and character. This is at heart the old intuition that knowing what is good and doing good are not the same thing.[22] Especially Milgram's famous studies on obedience and Zimbardo's equally well-known Stanford Prison Experiment have popularized the idea that situations can make us harm innocent others.

Ethicists take these insights about how situations determine conduct more and more into account, fearing that virtue ethics suffers from a mistaken focus on the individual. The idea that it is unvirtuous individuals that commit atrocities could well be false, seeing that the situational forces soldiers experience in combat are so much stronger than the situational factors that already caused so many research subjects of Milgram and Zimbardo to transgress the most basic norms.[23] Sleep deprivation, de-

humanization, stress, (racial) ideology, strong loyalty to colleagues and the organization and negative peer pressure can make unethical behavior just about inevitable.[24]

Modern social psychology research challenges both virtue ethics and, as a consequence, also any military ethics education that builds on this school of thought. If this so-called situationism is true, militaries are duty-bound to increase awareness of the factors that determine the conduct of military personnel, and make efforts to improve the ethical climate of the organization. The truth of the claim would also imply that the current emphasis on character formation and instilling virtues is by and large ineffective. Some, however, have drawn attention to the fact that the gist of the argument rests on an incomplete, or even biased, understanding of some famous studies in social psychology.[25] We only read, for instance, about the participants in the experiments of Milgram and Zimbardo that succumbed to situational pressures, not about the many who resisted.[26] Moreover, virtue ethics assumes that we can acquire virtues if we work hard enough; it does not at all assume that we are born virtuous. The aim of military training is to teach relevant virtues, and situations might hence have less influence on well-trained soldiers than on the average participant (often a student) in a social psychology experiment.

The unspectacular conclusion that our character and the situation both have an impact on our conduct leaves some ground for optimism concerning the role of character formation. Nonetheless, a military ethics education that does not pay sufficient attention to the shortcomings of a character-based approach would be too theoretical. Military ethics education should not only aim at building character, but also at giving insight in the factors that make unethical conduct more likely to take place. The social psychologist's advice to avoid morally challenging situations is clearly not of much use in a military context, but with a better understanding of the influence situational factors have, a lot more can be done to make the erosion of moral standards less likely to occur.

Discussion

Today's soldiers do need virtues, but not necessarily of the "duty, honor, country" kind. The virtues we teach military personnel are to fit their tasks, and if the virtues militaries traditionally promote are of less use in today's conflicts, formulating a new list of virtues would be an obvious way ahead. Above, a few suggestions have been made regarding virtues needed and less needed, and whether virtues make much of a difference to begin with. However, these questions – which virtues, and do they matter? – are just a few of the questions surrounding a virtue ethics approach to military ethics education. To highlight a few of the others: virtue ethics is based on the idea that virtues can be educated, but is this true? And if it is, how should this be done? If virtues are acquired through training and practice, how do we teach virtues in a classroom? And at what age? – if one's personality is formed before adulthood, this presents a challenge for militaries that want to mold characters.

A more fundamental question is whether virtue ethics actually forms a better basis for military ethics education then deontology and consequentialism. Virtue ethics is about the flourishing of the possessor of virtues, and that makes virtue ethics somewhat self-regarding compared to, say, the utilitarian credo of the greatest happiness for the greatest number, or the deontological golden rule that you should do unto others as you would have them do unto you. For instance: most deontologists think torture should always be forbidden, regardless of what is at stake, while a utilitarian could point out that the harm torture causes outweighs the benefits (that other utilitarians might argue the opposite probably explains the bad reputation that utilitarianism has in military ethics). A vir-

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tue ethicist, though, would highlight that the most important matter is to be the kind of person who would never use torture. Torture, from a virtue ethics perspective, "does not tend to produce in its practitioners the virtues of courage, justice, temperance, and practical wisdom but rather (...) their opposites."[27] But would a potential victim of torture care about the character of the torturer? To complicate matters a bit further: militaries promote virtues for external goals like mission success or stimulating the ethical use of force, as we have noted above, and that makes it doubtful whether it is really virtue ethics that is practiced here. Encouraging certain virtues because of their good effects amounts to what is sometimes described as character utilitarianism.[28] That is not necessarily a bad thing, but it does testify to a rather functional approach towards ethics. Military ethics educators should have the courage to seriously grapple with such questions and complications instead of leaving them largely unaddressed.

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7 Peter de Lee describes an acting sergeant overseeing a Reaper team who, against the opinion of all present, stuck to her judgment that a parcel on the back seat of a motorbike piloted by a Taliban target was in fact a child – which it in the end turned out to be. Lee, Pater (2019): Case Study 2: Moral Courage. In: Skerker, Michael, Whetham, David and Carrick, Don (eds): Military Virtue. Havant.
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"GOD, HOW I HATE THE 20TH CENTURY"
ON CHIVALRY AS A MYTH AND AS AN ETHICAL VIRTUE

Author: **Bernhard Koch**

In the feature film "Patton" directed by Franklin J. Schaffner, which won no less than seven Oscars in 1971, a number of key events from the Second World War are recounted: the Tunisian campaign, the Allied invasion of Sicily, D-Day and the Battle of Falaise Pocket. The focus is on the eponymous U.S. General George S. Patton, who is pictured as a sometimes brutal and ruthless, sometimes merely quirky egocentric. How authentically the film portrays the actual personality of the general, who ruled from Bad Tölz in Bavaria in the immediate aftermath of World War II and died in Heidelberg following a car accident in December 1945, remains a moot point. But both the film character and the historical figure seem to share at least a certain malaise about their own present. "God, how I hate the 20th century" is perhaps the most striking comment made by the protagonist in the film. Patton has two opponents: on the one hand Field Marshal Erwin Rommel and the German Wehrmacht at the war level, on the other hand in particular Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery – but on a different level, namely in the imagination of war as such. Montgomery fights for the good cause against Nazi Germany, Patton fights for his actions to rank among the great deeds of history's greatest commanders – starting with Alexander the Great. Patton's most massive disappointment in the film is not in a military defeat, but in the news that his opponent Rommel was not even present at a battle Patton won. Somewhat stereotypically juxtaposed: Montgomery wants the successful fight, Patton wants the beautiful fight. The means/ends rationality of the former collides with the aesthetic view of the latter.

Poiesis and *praxis*

Perhaps apart from in films, this aesthetic or aestheticizing view has become alienating today and, like everything alien, at the same time challenging. It can also become the source of a questionable, idealizing understanding of warriorship and combat as ends in themselves. A revival of historical chivalry is

Abstract

For the considerations made here, chivalry is understood as a (military) ethical construct in the narrow sense and not as social reality. The starting points are the concepts of poiesis and praxis – purposive action and action for its own sake – which originate in ancient philosophy. Today's thinking is fundamentally shaped by the former: the focus is on changing (world) conditions for the better by appropriate means. Thinking within the framework of just war can also be assigned to the poietic notion. Violence is not an end in itself, but may be used under certain conditions to "establish" peace and justice. For all their undeniable merits, such systems legitimizing violence – especially the currently dominant "revisionist just war theory" – always entail the risk that a duality of good and evil is promoted and, paradoxically, that the originally violence-limiting moment is turned into an escalatory one, for instance by exploiting any technological advantage. The ethos of chivalry in the sense outlined above limits the risk, among other things through the notion of "fairness", that there is an unconstrained legitimization of violence due to an unquestioned moral asymmetry. Born out of the spirit of Christianity, it rejects the optimization efforts that have become almost compulsive in a "Godless" present. As a form of self-commitment, it is rooted in a recognition of one's own creatureliness and the limitedness of all human beings. Even the more recent writings of Judith Butler show some proximity to such thinking in secular form.

impossible, if only because chivalry was associated with a feudal social order and society that we have overcome with good reasons.[1] At the same time, however, this change in perspective points to a fundamental deficit in contemporary ethical thought, which is characterized in a resounding way by means/ends rationality. Our actions are largely based on *poiesis* or, as Aristotle called it, "productive thinking." We want to save as many people as possible in the pandemic and consider which measures (means) will achieve this. We want to alleviate global poverty and ask ourselves which steps should be taken to meet this target. We want to pacify a country and question whether the use of military force can contribute to this. We want to conquer an enemy position and ponder which weapons are appropriate to do so. We want to protect our servicemen and women and call for the procurement of armed drones to do so. This "poietic" thinking is not wrong, but a permanent necessity in everyday life. We would rightly object – even ethically object – if someone stated a goal, but then failed to consider sensibly which means were suitable for achieving it in the first place. If a mountain rescuer sets off on a mission without a rope, he is making a practical error that is also a moral failing because he is endangering people. However, the actual ethical consideration moves away from the concrete actions to the goals of the action: Should we save people at all at our own peril?, or: Which people should we save first? It is the future state of the world, if you will, around which the ethical debate revolves. This way of thinking therefore has one decisive drawback: one is never completely with oneself, but always already – in particular – beyond oneself.

Ancient philosophical thought therefore contrasted *poiesis* with another human form of accomplishment, which Aristotle calls *praxis*.[2] "Praxis" is a human activity that finds meaning entirely in itself. A paradigmatic example for the ancients was dancing. It has no goal beyond itself. Friedrich Schiller, also a classicist, calls "play" the consummation in which man is wholly himself. Others would mention listening to music or contemplating fine art as examples here. Unfortunately, an innate appreciation for such intrinsically valued activities has partially been lost: parents today send their children to listen to music because this is supposed to support cognitive skills, or they take them to the seaside or the mountains with the purpose of creating "hap-

Contemporary ethical thought is characterized in a resounding way by means/ends rationality

py memories". The focus is not on the lived moment, but on a future in which one can pass off the memories or cognitive abilities as one's possessions. Ethical consideration is thus absorbed by an economic rationale, by some sort of asset-enhancing household management. Practice (in the Aristotelian sense), on the other hand, consumes and exhausts.

What do these considerations have to do with chivalry and the ethics of war? The short answer is probably: The duality of "just war theory" and "chivalry" reflects this very duality of *poiesis* and *praxis*. It is taken as a foregone conclusion that human action should create justice. Even the biblical mandate to ensure peace is generally modified to demand that this peace, however, must coexist with justice. Violence, on the other hand, is perceived as morally problematic, but can be justified in order to achieve justice. Violence is thus a means to a good end, to peace and justice; it is not an end in itself. However, an important notion is often lost here: conceptually, both peace and justice are extremely complex. There is no such thing as "peace" or "justice," rather it must be distinguished between their different forms: peace as absence of violence, legal peace, positive peace with mutual goodwill and so on, and also distributive justice, retributive justice, commutative justice, etcetera. These forms of peace and justice – which, after all, are not understood as attitudes but as world states – can conflict with one another. Peace and justice threaten to contradict each other if, for example, it is

feared that the (just) sentencing of war criminals will trigger new acts of violence. Should one then opt for punitive justice at the expense of peace?

Thinkers from the "just war" tradition affirm in a principled way the question of whether violent action can be permitted for just reasons (and with legitimate authority and the right intention). They can draw on a very strong moral intuition in the case of self-defense: if individuals are unjustly attacked, they may (within limits) use force

How do you know about the justice or injustice of your cause?

to defend themselves against the attack, or another person may (within limits) forcibly undertake this defense on their behalf. The decisive factor is a normative asymmetry: the individuals defending themselves use force, which can be legitimized, while the individuals who instigate the original aggression are in the wrong.

With regard to war, which is after all political or at least collective force, it is now ethically disputed whether the normative asymmetry in *ius ad bellum* (i.e. whether there is just cause for using force, for example when entering into war) is also reflected in *ius in bello*. The position of Michael Walzer and his followers ("traditional just war theory") is that in the case of two warring parties, there is asymmetry between the parties as a whole, i.e. in the *ius ad bellum*, but that the individual combatants on both sides face one another on a morally level playing field. Walzer has in mind a situation like the Second World War: although Germany is in the wrong and the U.S. is in the right (*ius ad bellum*), Patton and Rommel have equal rights and duties in combat (*ius in bello*). In the more recent discussion of the so-called "revisionist just war theory," authors (starting with Jeff McMahan and David Rodin) have disputed Walzer's conception: if Germany is in the wrong, then so is Rommel, and if the United States is in

the right, then so is Patton, as long as he adheres to the limits set by legitimate defensive force. Thus, the asymmetry in *ius ad bellum* corresponds to an asymmetry in *ius in bello*, and soldiers who fight for the just cause are superior in moral status to those who fight for the unjust cause (and should not actually be fighting at all).[3]

In the ongoing debates of the past ten or fifteen years, the "revisionist camp" has arguably become increasingly prevalent. It no longer makes sense – especially under the conditions of cosmopolitan individualism – that a soldier can belong to a warring party and, without having the *ius ad bellum* on his or her side, can use violent means and still fight on an equal moral footing with members of the justly contending party. The asymmetry is too glaring. This is also enshrined in the Bundeswehr's concept of *Innere Führung*, which literally means "inner guidance" or "inner leadership," and is officially translated as "leadership development and civic education". According to *Innere Führung*, if you are certain that you will be sent on a mission that cannot be justified, you must not allow yourself to be instrumentalized for it and should resist.

Justice and chivalrous consciousness

In this call to make every soldier think about his or her own deployment lies one of the great moral advantages of revisionist just war theory. To put it succinctly (and somewhat oversimplified): the soldiers of the Wehrmacht ought to have (in fact should have) refused their missions – as Franz Jägerstätter did[4] – and thus could have prevented the terrible suffering of the Second World War. This is a lesson rightly learned from the monstrosities of the Second World War. But this ethical approach also brings with it a serious problem: How do you know about the justice or injustice of your cause? Is it even possible to make such a clear distinction here? Since justice is to be accomplished, but injustice must be prevented, one arrives at a dualism that can turn out to be totalitarian and destructive whenev-

er violent means are used. It supports a world view that is often referred to as "Manichean" in the social sciences because it makes a simplistic distinction between good and evil. Exaggeratedly and metaphorically speaking, "fighters of light" and "fighters of darkness" face one another in this conception; there is thus no longer any room for a contest between two equals, as is a characteristic feature of the concept of chivalry.

The concept of chivalry is actually associated with many different ideas, especially character traits. In Gottfried von Strassburg's "Tristan," King Mark lists a few at Tristan's sword ceremony:

Now that your sword has been sanctified,
And you have been made a knight,
Attend to chivalric values
And also to yourself, to who you are.
Your birth into nobility, be mindful of this.
Be humble and be honest,
Be truthful and disciplined.
Be always charitable toward the poor,
Always self-assured toward the rich;
Take care of and respect yourself,
Honor and cherish all women.
Be magnanimous and loyal,
And keep these things always new.[5]

The first and most important virtue of a knight is self-reflection: "Who you are." In turn, the first thing that reflecting on oneself brings to light is awareness of one's own limitations, but at the same time awareness of one's own dignity. A knight who knows his limits also gives leeway to the other. This is where the other virtues then come into play: kindness, generosity, reliability, and even ensuring a pleasant appearance. A knight who is aware of his dignity considers the consequences of his actions, but is never completely absorbed in a means/ends context.

A very broad concept of chivalry applies in literature, encompassing many virtues for everyday life as well. Some of these may have been more fully realized in literary works than in historical reality, and the mythical ideal image of the "noble knight", or its kitschy counterpart, has itself become the object of ridicule and satire – most artfully, perhaps, in Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote of La Mancha*.[6] But that mildness and fidelity, generosity and humility are important ethical virtues (in Aristotle's sense) can be assumed here. However, as Oxford medieval expert Malcolm Vale points out, much depends on how broadly or how narrowly we conceive the concept of chivalry.[7] A narrower concept in terms of military ethics concerns the behavior of the (noble) warrior in the battle itself: chivalry here implies that the bearer of this quality is willing to conduct the fight in such a way that a) he directs dangers away from people not involved in the fight and even toward himself, i.e., to put it in a more modern way, tries to spare civilians even at his own risk, and that b) he recognizes his opponent as his equal, i.e. he observes the rules of battle even when he himself is threatened with defeat.

Neither of these two attitudes fit the notion that "just warriors" help realize justice: whoever wants to realize justice not in the action itself, but as the goal of his action, will – in the sense of the "poietic" means/ends rationality

> *Whoever wants to realize justice not in the action itself, but as the goal of his action, will repeatedly find himself in situations where he has to accept evil for the purpose of realizing the greater good*

– repeatedly find himself in situations where he has to accept evil for the purpose of realizing the greater good. Sometimes it will therefore be necessary in a war to allow injustice ("collateral damage") against civilians at individual points in order to achieve the just goal. The principle of action with double effect does not represent a decisive restriction, although it requires at a central point that only the good effect may be intended, because at the same time it allows a teleological weighing of the consequences according to the principle of proportionality. Since self-protection may be necessary for the success of the

war, it also takes precedence over protecting uninvolved third parties in cases of doubt. – The second willingness runs into trouble by the mere fact that in the "poietic" model for realizing justice, nothing beyond justice itself is intrinsically valuable – not even the rules of war. Thus, if the rules of war endanger the success of war and thus threaten to thwart the realization of justice, they too must give way to the higher goal.

In particular, the revisionist just war theory has been accused of becoming a model for justifying "total war". It is certainly not the intention of the proponents of this model to provide a blueprint for total wars, but an unbiased and consistent look at this pattern of justification reveals that the accusation is anything but far-fetched. Systems legitimiz-

Systems legitimizing violence can – and this does not only concern the revisionist theory of just war – have both a violence-promoting and violence-inhibiting effect

ing violence can – and this does not only concern the revisionist theory of just war – have both a violence-promoting and violence-inhibiting effect. But revisionism knows no insurmountable internal barriers and can thus be more easily used for unconstrained legitimizations. If we are honest, we quite often think of present-day military operations in precisely this asymmetrical way: "We're in the right, they're in the wrong, therefore in case of doubt we may and must protect our servicemen and women more than third parties – and we may exploit any (technological) superiority against our adversaries." To take a recent example: Probably what pains us most about the withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 – a country where *Bundeswehr* soldiers were engaged for 20 years – is not simply the withdrawal in itself, but the fact that this country has now been abandoned to precisely those people against whom it was – and is still – felt to be morally justified

to keep them from power in this country. This is more than understandable: after all, we expect every value commitment to be fully embraced and emotionally consummated. And we want to help those prevail who we, with good reason, believe to be better. Many political theorists have probably long understood a cosmopolitan foreign policy to mean that, through unification, a perhaps rather informal "cosmopolitan" existence could be created in a global political community, with shared fundamental value commitments. However, Martha Nussbaum has shown in her book on cosmopolitanism that it is precisely liberalism that is not allowed to equalize, but continues to require the difference between states as spatial mediators of freedom.[8] The problematic form of the cosmopolitan pattern of thought also has, after all, a domestic counterpart, which is put forward in various variants, as in the following examples: "Democracy may also be suspended, in case of doubt, against the enemies of democracy." Or like this: "Against the despisers of human rights, action need not be taken in conformity with human rights." Self-commitment is conditioned by circumstances; the higher goal must not be endangered. It is then often referred to as "peace through law", as if peace itself were only the product of a *poiesis* that could be produced by technologically-shaped fabrication – analogous to similar empty phrases such as "climate protection through innovation." Nevertheless, there often remains a sense that humanity does not lie in the enforcement of the humanitarian but, as in the case of military medics or military chaplains, in-between the parties. Military medical personnel may formally belong to one of the conflicting parties, but they are supposed to perform their humanitarian task impartially, i.e. also on injured and wounded opponents. It is not the just cause for war, but an awareness of the equal humanity in every soldier, that should guide the work of the medical service. This suspension of the question of justice in recognizing one's own and others' limitations in answering it belongs as much to the field of chivalry as does the renunciation of punishment in the case

of captured enemies of war. (Incidentally, even the order of the three *ius ad bellum* criteria laid down by Thomas Aquinas[9], namely *auctoritas principis, causa iusta,* and *intentio recta*, can be taken to mean that the definition of just cause is somewhat qualified. The authority, which must be imagined as instituted by God, even includes competence in judging just cause and is, in this sense, superior to it).

Here is probably the greatest challenge that the concept of chivalry offers to our contemporary thinking about the normative aspects of violence: chivalry resists the reduction of our moral consciousness to the point of view of justice. In chivalrous consciousness – if one may express it so sweepingly – a greater breadth of moral thinking is suspended, in particular the distinction between strength and weakness, as expressed, for example, in the protocol "women and children first!" It is not always just to give priority to women and children when rescuing people.

This distinction between strength and weakness always depends, of course, on the context: someone who is strong in relation to one thing is not necessarily so in relation to another. But the fact that strength is not exploited ad infinitum and unearned advantage is relinquished is part of this moral consciousness of dependence and contingency that knows itself to be bound in a more fundamental unity than that which incites violence.[10] We still have examples of this in sport, such as when a soccer team kicks the ball into touch because an opponent is injured, or when cyclists wait for a competitor to catch up who has suffered a puncture during a mountain stage in a cycle race. The jousting tournaments of the Middle Ages also seem to represent a kind of sport. This, of course, immediately raises the objection: but sport is play, and war is bitterly serious. On the one hand this is certainly true, but on the other hand many things have become so bitterly serious to us because we no longer have an authority against which we could once again qualify ourselves and our options for power and violence.[11]

Self-restraint, not self-empowerment

"God, how I hate the 20th century." General Patton does not invoke God by accident. The twentieth century stands under Nietzsche's dictum from *The Gay Science*: "God is dead. God remains dead." If God is dead, we humans must take matters into our own hands, especially the moral success of our world. In a remarkable lecture, Christian philosopher

In a world that surrenders everything to poiesis, the awareness of creatureliness that comes with the virtue of gratitude becomes increasingly difficult

Robert Spaemann showed that here lie enormous implications for theology – which itself is becoming, in a sense, increasingly "Godless." In a world that surrenders everything to *poiesis* – which dreams of biotechnological innovations or human-machine/human-animal hybrids or (supposedly) free choice of gender or age – the awareness of creatureliness that comes with the virtue of gratitude becomes increasingly difficult. Because we can and do constantly question ourselves, we feel constantly threatened internally. Spaemann, however, recalls the life of the early Christians, in which a multiple response was found to "the problem of the inner threat posed by the outer questioning" (relating to the testing of faith):

"First, by the conviction that faith is not compelling knowledge but evidence that owes itself to supernatural grace. […] The second motive is the conviction that, at the end of times, the evidence of faith will also have facticity on its side, that the faithful will be on the victorious side, and, paradoxically, precisely when they have not been victorious here. This awareness eliminates the weakness from which all hatred springs. It brings inner sovereignty, without which the commandment to love one's enemies is

unfulfillable."[12] Early Christians, according to Spaemann, knew that they did not have to – and could not – bring about the world's salvation themselves. There is indeed a difference between play – including knights jousting – and the seriousness of life. But to be serious also means not only to focus on oneself and one's cause, but also to accept others in the awareness that life has been granted to all of us.

Interestingly, this thinking is currently experiencing a (partial) secular renaissance in academia in the recent writings of Judith Butler. In *Frames of War,* Butler focuses on "grievability"[13] and adopts from political lib-

> *To be serious also means not only to focus on oneself and one's cause, but also to accept others in the awareness that life has been granted to all of us*

eralism, to which contemporary approaches to just war are mostly committed, the demand for equality, although on the other hand she strongly criticizes subject constitution as a model in liberalism. For Butler, liberalism fails to make clear that there is a fundamental dependence of all human beings on other human beings. She rejects (like Augustine,[14] but for different reasons) the normative thesis, so important in just war theory, that self-defense is permitted in principle – and within limits – because it is only a "frame" that determines who or what is viewed as "self". Butler laments that not every life is considered grievable, even though she concedes that life itself cannot presume to be preserved in any event (for example, according to Butler, unborn foetuses). Thus, the central imperative is that of non-violence, but it is not directed – and not even primarily – at individual people, but at the structures in which people are interdependently linked.

No actual criteria for dealing with violence can be derived from Butler's previous work on non-violence. Since all these criteria would in turn owe themselves to "framings," this would also be pointless. Given that we have to accept that violent conflicts are a factual reality, her deliberations are therefore not helpful, and unfortunately these notions and the posits they contain have themselves contributed to much strife and exclusion, and thus also to violence. Nevertheless, they can help to question conventional patterns of thought in two ways: on the one hand, they reveal that certain assertions, such as to say that chivalry in the sense of avoiding great asymmetries of power is wrong, since the righteous could never be satisfied, are themselves based on problematic framings. And on the other hand, Butler's stance probably betrays, for its part, a certain closeness to a way of thinking that is also subject to the ethos of chivalry – and which is characterized above all by the insight that things could – in a utopian sense – also be quite different. Thinking violence in terms of justice, as with all approaches to legitimation via "just war," is characterized by thinking in the mode of the necessary. Chivalry, on the other hand (not as a historical but intellectual figure in the sense outlined here), thinks in the mode of the contingent.

The Author

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1 cf. Ehlers, Joachim (2009): Die Ritter. Geschichte und Kultur. 2nd edition. Munich, pp. 13–20. There are also country-specific differences in the historical character of chivalry. On the British tradition, see for example, Maurice Keen (1984): Chivalry, New Haven and London.

2 On the importance of this distinction, see also Schockenhoff, Eberhard (2007): Theologie der Freiheit, Freiburg i. Br., pp. 96-99.

3 On the debate between "classical" and "revisionist" just war theory, see Koch, Bernhard (2017): Diskussionen zum Kombattantenstatus in asymmetrischen Konflikten. In: Werkner, Ines-Jacqueline and Ebeling, Klaus (eds.): Handbuch Friedensethik. Wiesbaden, pp. 843-854.

4 Jägerstetter is already explicitly acknowledged by McMahan at the beginning of his book (Killing in War: Oxford 2009, p. 136 f.).

5 Gottfried von Strassburg (ca. 1210): Tristan & Isolde. Indianapolis 2020, verses 5023–5036, p. 70. Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parsifal receives similar instruction in chivalric virtues from Gurnemanz.

6 The knight becomes a womanizer like James Bond: "... especially when they tell as how yon t'other lady lay among orange trees, in the embraces of her knight, while a duenna half dead with envy and surprise, kept sentry over them ..." (Miguel de Cervantes [1605/1615]: Don Quixote. Translated by T. Smollett. Mineola, N. Y. 2018, p. 261).

7 Vale, Malcolm (2019): Chivalry and the Conduct of Warfare – Illusion and Reality. In: Koch, Bernhard (ed.): Chivalrous Combatants? The Meaning of Military Virtue Past and Present. Baden-Baden, pp. 29–43, p. 35.

8 Nussbaum, Martha (2020): Cosmopolitanism. A noble but flawed ideal. Cambridge/London..

9 Thomas Aquinas (1265–1274): Summa Theologiae, II-II, q. 40.

10 cf. Augustine, Letter to Boniface. In: Ausgewählte Briefe (Selected Letters), Volume II. Kempten/Munich 1917, p. 182: "So think first of this, when you arm yourself for battle, that even your bodily strength is a gift of God."

11 Again, these considerations here are ethical in nature. That the wars of the Middle Ages were also cruel remains, of course, undisputed. See for example, Kortüm, Hans-Henning (2010): Kriege und Krieger. 500–1500. Stuttgart, pp. 204–264.

12 Spaemann, Robert (2001): Der Hass des Sarastro. In: by the same author: Grenzen. Zur ethischen Dimension des Handelns. Stuttgart, pp. 181–193, p. 191. Translation from German.

13 Butler, Judith (2010): Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable? Frankfurt/New York.

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MANHOOD RITES

VIOLENT RITUALS, SEXUAL ASSAULT AND RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM IN THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES

Author: **Rolf Pohl**

Introduction

The Joint Service Regulation on *Innere Führung* (literally "inner guidance" or "inner leadership," officially translated as "leadership development and civic education") says the following about the model of the mature "citizen in uniform", who is bound by his conscience: "*Bundeswehr* personnel fulfill their mission when they actively stand up for human dignity, freedom, peace, justice, equality, solidarity and democracy as the guiding values of our state" – and hence the German armed forces – "out of inner conviction."[1] According to the German "Act Concerning the Legal Status of Soldiers" *(Soldatengesetz),* the cohesion that this requires is essentially based on camaraderie. Its norms, however, are not implemented solely from the top down in linear chains of command and obedience. Rather, according to the sociologist Stefan Kühl, these norms of camaraderie are formed "in the shadow of the official formal organization – through the autonomous, self-initiated actions of members of the armed forces."[2]

From research on rituals, we have known since Émile Durkheim that ritualized action is constitutive for the generation, consolidation and representation of community ties. This also includes the assurance of belonging to the respective reference group, and its internal differentiation through the assignment of particular roles. In the *Bundeswehr,* this certainly applies to well-known official military rituals and ceremonies such as the oath of enlistment or the *Großer Zapfenstreich* ("Grand Tattoo"). But how can we place the bizarre and mostly humiliating rituals of violence and disgust in the *Bundeswehr* in this context? Here too, the rituals are an autonomously active form of self-empowerment, with which the personnel involved aim to create and consolidate a camaraderie-based sense of community. But this ritual bonding takes place through offensive, often even illegal actions. These disrespect, contradict and harm the model of a soldier as a responsible citizen who has the ability – as is postulated of him – to re-

Abstract

Recent scandals occurred in the Bundeswehr include offensive, boundary-transgressing rituals that are intended to create and consolidate a sense of belonging, camaraderie and dependability. It is particularly striking that these rituals of initiation and toughness have often been accompanied by sexual assaults and right-wing extremist incidents.

Humiliating for the initiation candidates, violent and often illegal, these staged rituals are fundamentally at odds with the guiding principles of Innere Führung. However, the ideal of a military personality who is ready for battle and war – which finds a special kind of expression here – has always been part of the military self-image and the goal of military socialization in the Bundeswehr. Therefore, we are dealing with the extreme, perverted tip of an iceberg, as these are not just regrettable isolated cases that, at most, should be punished under disciplinary law but have nothing to do with the structure of the Bundeswehr.

This essay explores, from a social psychology and gender theory perspective, the deeper causes of these rituals and their similarity to initiation rites in so-called "tribal societies". It argues that these rituals can be understood as an attempt at a hypervirile, exaggeratedly masculine self-initiation, which stems from the more or less unconscious desire to produce and strengthen a group masculinity that is ready to fight, kill and make sacrifices. This imprinting of toughness is to be achieved through the bodily overcoming of a civility that is considered to be non-masculine, weak and feminine. Together with sexist and right-wing extremist incidents, these ritual excesses indicate a certain renaissance of an archaic model of the warrior, and hence highlight the limits of applicability of a civic-minded soldierly ethos in the Bundeswehr.

solve conflicts and make peace in a spirit of humanity. In the incidents that have come to light in the recent years in the Staufer barracks in Pfullendorf, in a *Gebirgsjäger* (mountain infantry) battalion in Bad Reichenhall, in parts of the Special Forces Command (KSK), among German *Panzergrenadiere* (motorized infantry) in Lithuania and in the guard battalion at the German Federal Ministry of Defense, it is also striking that the bizarre and violent rituals are regularly accompanied by sexual harassment and assaults, as well as expressions of right-wing extremism, conspiracy theories or anti-Semitism.

What are the deeper causes of this ritual behavior? From a socio-psychological perspective, what is at the core of these boundary-transgressing rule violations, and how are they linked to each other in the military context? This essay will explore the idea that all three phenomena – especially the rituals that are the main focus – can be understood as an attempt at an exclusively male *self-initiation.* According to this hypothesis, this ritual self-initiation is borne of the more or less unconscious desire to establish and strengthen a group masculinity that is ready to fight, kill and make sacrifices, through the forceful and bodily overcoming of what is considered to be feminine, non-masculine civility. Official military training in large part also serves this goal, but seems to be perceived as insufficient. Thus an exclusive subculture with a male-bonding character is formed time and again, especially at the level of lower ranks, to which newcomers must prove their affiliation. The soldiers involved give expression to a masculine and at the same time nationalistic concept of honor, which is intended to ward off the elementary fear of being regarded and ostracized as someone who is marked as female and/or homosexual and denounced as a "weakling", "loser" or as an unreliable "failure".[3] The underlying traditional, archaic and warlike ideal of masculinity is compatible with the heroic male image of the new right. This is surely one of the main sources of the affinities with right-wing extremism that keep coming to light in the *Bundeswehr.*[4]

Now, with regard to this obvious susceptibility to initiation rituals as well as to sexist and right-wing extremist ideologies of inequality and violence, it is frequently pointed out that the *Bundeswehr* is a "mirror of society", and that it is therefore no wonder that the same negative phenomena spread there to a similar extent as in the world outside the military. That is no doubt true, albeit with a significant qual-

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ification that will be discussed later. But if we take the idea of the *Bundeswehr* as a mirror of society seriously, then it makes sense first to look at society as a whole, and in particular at the still predominant structures of gender relations. These have for some time been characterized by erosion and, as a consequence, in particular by a struggle to maintain male dominance – a struggle that plays out in various social arenas. The military is one of these arenas of masculinity.

Male dominance

In postmodern Western societies, traditional gender relations have been in flux for some time, influenced by progress in equal opportunities. However, these changes remain largely superficial as long as the underlying structures of a gender order that is still asymmetrical and hierarchical remain fundamentally untouched. According to the sociologist Sylka Scholz, these superficial changes conceal and deny above all the "intellectual and moral dominance of male value and order systems": It still applies in gender relations, despite all modernizations, and is linked to the "production of a hierarchical two-sex culture". There is a fundamental core to this culture of inequality: the "masculine is considered the norm and superior to the feminine," while the feminine continues to be regarded as subordinate, inferior and of lesser value.[5]

This system of male dominance is deeply embedded in the cultural order of society and in largely unconscious patterns of perception and attitudes (not only those of men). This means that men in male-dominated societies are still subject to a more or less strong pressure to emphasize differences compared to women, to ascribe values to these perceptions of difference, and to posit themselves not only as a different gender, but fundamentally as the more important and superior gender. This self-positing must be protected and – "in case of need" – proven. As a cultural construct, masculinity in this light can be understood as a fragile condition, susceptible to crises. In the event of con-

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flicts – which are always also experienced as a crisis of masculinity – this condition must be repaired or even created anew. In other words, at the center of the self-image of a culture built on hierarchical gender oppositions is the image of an intact and autonomous, yet permanently threatened masculinity.

This threat is particularly evident in the field of sexuality, because a man's desire directed toward women according to the norm of heterosexuality makes him highly dependent: dependent on his own desire and, with this fixation, at the same time dependent on the women onto whom his sexuality remains programmed. Under these conditions, the man is nowhere weaker and (seemingly) more subject to outside control than in the field of sexuality. Thus he experiences an inescapable dilemma: an irresolvable conflict between a compulsive desire for autonomy and a deep-seated fear of dependency. The consequence is the development of a defensiveness and readiness to fight in a crisis, at the unconscious core of which is an ambivalent attitude toward femininity, characterized by fear,

desire and a hostility extending all the way to hatred, as well as toward anything threatening that is unconsciously marked as feminine: signs of "weakness", which are perceived as not masculine, associated with women and femininity, and can now, if necessary, be vigorously fought against in the outside world as legitimate "self-defense". Psychologically, this is one of the main sources of all forms of everyday sexism up to and including manifest sexual and sexualized violence in civilian society and everyday life. And therefore also, if we continue with the idea of the *Bundeswehr* as a mirror of society, in everyday military life and finally even in the everyday life of war. Sexism and sexual assaults in the military, but especially the rapes that occur in almost all wars, are a powerful attestation to this. Sexual violence in war is not only a specific mixture of sexual desire, power and violence as a means of war strategy. It is always at the same time also a kind of elementary proof of manhood.[6]

Seen in this light, the internal rituals of the *Bundeswehr,* which are repeatedly downplayed – even from within the *Bundeswehr* itself – as important "group-stabilizing elements", are not mere late-pubertal tests of courage by immature young men who have gotten a little out of hand, but will eventually calm down of their own accord. Rather, they should be understood as a self-chosen means of generating an intact soldierly masculinity, which has to prove itself ready to defend and fight if its integrity is threatened – all the way to overcoming the taboo of killing. And here, in the training in the use of weapons and in the associated generation of the readiness to kill and be killed, we find the key difference compared to similar male self-initiations outside of the armed forces.

Of course everyday military life and combat deployments cannot be simply reduced to this gender dimension, but they cannot be adequately understood without considering how it operates. While the staged rituals of violence may contradict the soldierly ideal of *Innere Führung,* they do not fundamentally contradict the masculinity-forming goals and tasks which are in any case inherent in military training as a form of organized transition from a civilian to a military masculinity.

Military socialization and gender

Neither the greater integration of women into the armed forces nor the transformation of traditional interstate wars into new asymmetrical ones or into modern, professional high-tech warfare have fundamentally changed the fact that the military and war still have a profoundly male character. "More than almost any other sphere of life, the military determines the construction of masculinity and is itself highly imbued with masculinity."[7] This refers not only to the long military tradition that continues to shape the military today, as well as the dominance of men in the armed forces in terms of numbers, but above all to the values and norms of behavior which are embodied therein and which determine the training of soldiers. Even after the suspension of compulsory military service, the German armed forces remain an influential institution for producing the prevailing construct of masculinity. And this construct includes the self-image of an intact, but multifariously threatened group masculinity, whose militarization within a homosocial fighting community promises protection and successful immunization against these threats.

In his affirmative justification of the exclusively male character of the military and war, one of the best-known military historians, Martin van Creveld, sums up this aspect naively and almost cynically in gender ideology terms. War, according to van Creveld, is and remains a proof of masculinity that is necessary both in terms of culture and developmental psychology. Necessary because, in contrast to the development of female childbearing capacity, there is no biological transition of the boy to manhood, and consequently the boy must first be made male through cultural rites. This generation of masculinity, van Creveld says, can only be done by men themselves, since it is mainly about finally dissolving the bond with the mother and expelling the "female substance" from the bodies and souls of the young adolescents. Only such an initiation can overcome this dependency on women and halfway immunize the boys against future

female influences, which are closely associated with an imagining of female sexuality accompanied by desire, fear and envy. But since, van Creveld continues, there is no longer any traditional tribal initiation in developed societies, social institutions such as the military must inevitably take over this function of

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overcoming femininity. And in the final analysis – in a conclusion that glorifies masculinity and disdains women – he concludes that no field of activity is more suited "to confirming masculinity than war". In view of the "superior sexual and reproductive qualities of women", war offers men the opportunity to finally prove "what they are good for". And so war offers to "the human personality" – which in van Creveld's androcentric view is of course the male personality – "a good opportunity to fully develop."[8]

This reads like a manual for male initiation in a warlike, patriarchal, tribal society. From a critical point of view, this heroizing glorification of war means that belonging to the military and participating in war both have the character of a hypervirile, exclusively male rebirth with initiation-like features, through WHICH traces of the maternal are eliminated and thus the influence of fear-inducing images of femininity is warded off. "The military initiation rite," as Eva Kreisky succinctly puts it, "lets one enter the world of 'true' masculinity."[9] From this perspective, wars also serve to mobilize, deploy and prove this militarized masculinity, which is oriented toward defense and fighting, and to repair its subjectivity, which is experienced as threatened or even damaged.

How and by what methods is this construct of soldierly masculinity created? At the center of military socialization, at the core of which is socialization to kill – a fact which is often

willingly forgotten – there is a fundamental reconstruction of the personality: the transformation of a "civilian self" into a "military self". For Markus Euskirchen, this means: "First, the young man – during basic training – is partially broken down, reconfigured and rebuilt." The subsequent "restructuring" of the young men "takes place under the promise of a super-masculinity, to be acquired collectively."[10] One of the most important means of this restructuring is the development and channeling of mechanisms for processing the fears generated by military training and massively amplified under deployment conditions. The fears are thus to be transformed into an aggressive imagin-

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ing of the enemy – and that means, in a spirit of camaraderie and with esprit de corps, to be warded off and transformed into the seemingly justified fight against an external enemy. In this way, fear can be transformed into hostility, hatred and cruelty.

This transformation into a masculinity more or less geared to war as a part – operating as smoothly as possible – of a killing machinery ready to defend and fight starts first of all with the recruits' bodies. The physical training practices and their methods of hardening, fatiguing, strengthening, punishing and so on are intended to put the soldiers' bodies and therefore their minds into a state of controlled self-discipline and continuous vigilance, with the constant possibility of criticism and punishment.

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be inscribed, as it were, in the soldier's body and soul during the military socialization. This canon of soldierly values also makes clear, as already indicated, what does not belong to it: everything that is considered the opposite of this militarily upgraded masculinity and is typically denounced as feminine (or "gay") and categorized under the labels "wimp", "wuss" etc. And it is precisely in this context that the so-called "initiation rituals" belong, which are therefore primarily assigned the function of proving masculinity.

The bizarre initiation rituals of the *Gebirgsjäger* in Mittenwald, which hit the headlines in February 2010, are a good (or rather: bad) example. In order to advance as a *"Fux"* – a prospective member of the *"Hochzugskult",* an internal team hierarchy – the novices had to eat raw pig's liver and rollmops stuffed with fresh yeast to the point of vomiting, drink excessive amounts of alcohol and – not without titillation for a community of male soldiers – perform naked climbing exercises in front of their assembled colleagues. Only those who had endured and survived these tests were henceforth considered to be "real" *Gebirgsjäger.*

With this knowledge in mind, these rituals and tests of toughness within the team must be classified as something that is largely ignored in the public debate (which is usually quickly stirred up and then, just as quickly, dies down again): they are rituals of a militarized masculinity whose warlike-heroic component is not held in check and overcome by performed rituals, as many assume, but rather is specifically engendered and reinforced.

The logic of male initiation

But how far can we take the comparison made here – comparing military socialization and humiliating *Bundeswehr* rituals with traditional male initiation rites? In all male-dominated societies, initiation or an analogous, more or less organized transition of status is the most important way to produce and secure culturally desired masculinity. According to Arnold van Gennep's fundamental model of *"rites de passage",* male rites of passage follow a basic three-phase scheme, consisting of a phase of

separation *(la séparation),* a phase of exclusion *(la marge)* and a phase of reintegration *(l'agrégation):*[11] After a radical, often violent separation from the feminine world, initiands are subjected to complex stagings and often painful tests, to drive out all trace of the female from their minds and bodies, and to overcome the fears henceforth associated with the image of a threatening femininity. Only after the staging of a symbolic death and a subsequent second birth – a social rebirth in the exclusive group of adult men – is a return to the female world possible, now as a "real", "potent" and usually also warlike man.[12]

However, the findings of recent relevant ethnological research show that immunization against the supposed dangers emanating from women, and especially their sexuality, which is perceived to be threatening, is never completely successful.[13] Masculinity, acquired through initiation or, as in our societies, through initiation-like paths, remains fundamentally a fragile and permanently threatened state. As pointed out earlier, the greatest dangers, even after the virile rebirth (and then perhaps all the more so) appear to come from women, female sexuality and all those relationships and conditions that are perceived as weakening, debilitating, as a loss of the integrity and autonomy associated with one's own sex. This is why working on and with the male body – as it were, the most important bearer of the initiating rituals – is so important. Rituals cannot exist without this reference to the body.

Applying this to the self-staged rites of passage in the military, we see with regard to the role of the body and sexuality that soldiers experience a dilemma: sexuality is elemental to the ideal of male virility and strength, but of course this means exclusively heterosexuality. Homosexuality is still deeply frowned upon, and this is reinforced by the rituals. In the case of the *Gebirgsjäger* in Mittenwald, this sexual dimension is put on physical display: the climbing exercises, performed naked, demonstrate that the soldiers' bodies belong to the whole group. Not only for the purpose of hardening, but also to control possible sexual temptations, which – as if playing with fire – are simultaneously incited and kept at bay in voyeuristic form. The posing of members of the *Gebirgsjäger* with skulls next to their exposed and erect genitals during their deployment in Afghanistan in 2003 serves a similar purpose. There is a striking proximity of sexuality, death and potency in a soldierly

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But where specifically does this leave the soldiers' sexuality, which is constantly mobilized, regarded and used as a means of demonstrating potency and superiority? The theme of sexuality is constantly present in the military, but at the same time it is subject to taboos. Part of the soldier's self-image is a rugged heterosexuality that is regarded as part of the "natural order" and tolerates no deferral. This should not be misunderstood as a "sexual need" that builds up; rather it is a "needed" proof of manhood for reasons of prestige and camaraderie, which is often expressed in the demonstratively increased, group-stabilizing consumption of pornography and prostitution. Here the bodily dimension comes into play again, because from this perspective, which determines male patterns of perception, attitude and action, the principle applies: the man *has* a body that he can control, manipulate, and use as an instrument, if necessary as a weapon. The woman, by contrast, *is* a body and therefore potentially an object to be grabbed. Sexual harassment and even assaults against female colleagues find their (psycho)logical core and their unconscious legitimization here.

Conclusion

Of course these reflections are not aimed sweepingly at the entire *Bundeswehr* culture. But the boundary-transgressing manhood rites as well as the sexist and right-wing ex-

tremist incidents associated with them cannot be adequately understood and effectively combated without a systematic consideration of the gender perspective touched on here. What does this imply for practice? While it is difficult to derive specific, prescriptive suggestions from what has been said, some basic conclusions can at least be outlined. First, there is the need for an independent "up-to-date and unreserved analysis of the situation that goes beyond listing 'incidents'", as the historian Klaus Naumann has called for. The establishment of a coordination office for suspected extremist incidents in the German Ministry of Defense is probably not enough. Such

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an investigation would include questions "about the structural affinities between the military and the far right, the self-reinforcing mechanisms of military-political socialization, and the significance of subcultural milieus for the shaping of political attitudes and their radicalization."[14] Again, this can only succeed if the gender dimension is included in the investigation of these three fields. In view of the fact that more than every second female member of the *Bundeswehr* experiences at least one form of sexual harassment in her

everyday life with the troops[15], this especially applies to day-to-day educational work and to the focus of political education. However, the fight against right-wing extremism and against all forms of sexism as well as the associated militarized ideas of masculinity is not a task exclusively for the *Bundeswehr* but one for society as a whole.

In the *Bundeswehr,* this necessary sanctioning and preventive work is made considerably more difficult by the fundamental contradiction that was pointed out at the beginning: the deep gulf between the ideal of civically and morally responsible military personnel, and ritual bonding to form a camaraderie that is ready to defend and fight, with – since the experiences of overseas deployments – an increasing renaissance of the archaic model of warlike masculinity. In view of this gulf, Graf von Baudissin's dictum of a "demilitarization of the soldierly self-image" is a noble ideal, but in practice it can only be implemented approximately. Yet precisely because this ideal is not fully achievable in the spirit of *Innere Führung,* all measures that strengthen this approximation must be applied and intensified. In contrast to a still widespread culture of denial, concealment and trivialization, it is important that everyone involved has a firmly established awareness of this contradiction. The esprit de corps built on male camaraderie suggests a continuum of a contradiction-free community that in reality does not exist. This gulf and the accompanying typical crises and conflicts must be accepted, embraced and endured. This also requires an openly reflective and self-reflective way of dealing with those emotions and feelings that are repeatedly denounced as unmanly, weak, and therefore, according to military logic, unfit. In particular, it is necessary to deal with personal fears before they are transformed into a potential of hostility and hatred through bonding drills and ritual tests of toughness. With a certain pathos, to borrow an aphorism from Theodor W. Adorno that was intended for a different context, it is a matter of creating and permitting conditions, especially for the soldier, "where you [too] may show yourself weak without provoking strength".[16]

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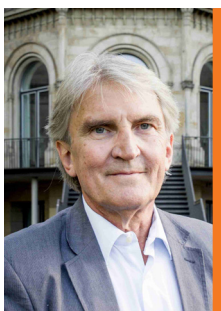
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CIVIL COURAGE IN THE MILITARY – NOT A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS!

Author: Eva Högl

"Soldiers in the Bundeswehr accomplish their mission when, out of personal conviction, they actively defend human dignity, freedom, peace, justice, equality, solidarity and democracy as the guiding values of our country." The *Bundeswehr* derives these basic values, which are laid down in Central Service Regulation A-2600/1 entitled "*Innere Führung – Selbstverständnis und Führungskultur*" ("*Innere Führung* – Self-Image and Leadership Culture"), from the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany. These are intended to serve as a basis for soldiers in all decisions of conscience that they have to make during their daily duties or when on deployment. In the final analysis, this may mean the decision to kill in combat. The *Bundeswehr* therefore places high demands on the personal character of its soldiers. Their self-image should be guided by the principles embraced by the concept of "*Innere Führung*" (officially translated as leadership development and civic education).

Despite this high ethical and moral standard, reports of right-wing extremist activities have recently impacted on the public image of the *Bundeswehr*. At the end of April 2017, the case of Franco A. shook the armed forces. The first lieutenant allegedly posed as a refugee and planned an attack on politicians and other members of the public. In the course of the ensuing investigations, suspicions even arose that there was a right-wing network within the *Bundeswehr*. Parallel to this, in August 2017, the public learned about the farewell party for a company commander from the Special Forces Command (KSK), at which right-wing rock music was played and the Hitler salute was allegedly given. Since then, the KSK has come under the watchful eyes of the Military Counter-Intelligence Service. In May 2020, investigations conducted within this context led to the discovery of a veritable cache of ammunition and explosives as well as Nazi memorabilia at the home of a KSK soldier. Most recently, in the spring of 2021, the public learned of excesses in an armoured infantry platoon in Rukla, Lithuania, in which soldiers from the platoon allegedly sang right-wing extremist and anti-Semitic songs as well as a "birthday serenade" for Adolf Hitler on 20 April. These cases are highly worrying. How could it have come to this? Did the soldiers really manage to conceal their inner convictions from their immediate environment until then? Was no one bothered by it? Why did no one do anything about it?

These questions are first and foremost directed at the comrades and their immediate commanding officers. They are responsible for overseeing the soldiers under their command, keeping an eye on them, and closely following their personal and character development. Ultimately, it is also the senior officers who have a decisive influence on the career paths that soldiers can take when appraising their service. For some time now, their efforts to conscientiously meet this considerable responsibility have faced ever greater hurdles. Numerous bureaucratic obligations tie up senior officers and increasingly deprive them of time with their troops. Additionally, there is an increasing loss of opportunities to sit down together, share ideas and talk to one another when not on duty, as increasingly fewer soldiers have the opportunity to live within the barracks. Separating the accommodation from other facilities also has an effect, as it diminishes the sense of community and cohesion as well as the possibilities for informal social control, especially among the younger soldiers who are obliged to stay in barracks. Finally, the hierarchical difference between senior officers and subordinates can be an obstacle to fully opening up and trusting one another, although it does not preclude friendly interaction.

Whereas a certain detachment is normal towards senior officers, there is often a much closer relationship between comrades. The shared affiliation to a unit creates a bond, people spend a lot of time together and also talk about personal problems or opinions. This raises even more the question of how comrades experienced and perceived the soldiers under suspicion. Did they not notice their way of thinking

and views? Should they have noticed? Or maybe they did not want to notice? Perhaps because it was a comrade with whom they got on well or were even friends. Especially in such cases, it's natural to gloss over things at first by surmising that the good friend is maybe somewhat more conservative, that the comment was perhaps a slip, that he couldn't possibly be a right-wing extremist. It's human to use such suppression tactics to justify to yourself why you're keeping the matter to yourself and remaining passive.

Such passivity therefore needs limits – a threshold from which you feel compelled to act, from which you can no longer look away but must look and report the alarm signs. Social values and norms generally provide a good framework here. Often it's useful to listen to your own gut feeling, whether the inner voice says: "You shouldn't do that!" However, the exact boundaries are determined by each individual's own moral concepts. The more solid and concrete these are, the more precisely the tolerance limit is defined, the easier it is to justify why a threshold has been crossed, and the better you can stand up for your own convictions and defend your values against others. Senior officers must provide assistance here and show their soldiers which differences they can and should settle among themselves – and those they should not. There is a fine line, which senior officers need to define and make tangible, between uncomradely accusations and snitching on the one hand, and the necessary clarification of dubious behaviour or ideas on the other.

If this line is crossed, however, it must also be ensured that complaints about comrades are not dismissed or fall on deaf ears, but are taken seriously and investigated. There are still cases where, for instance, senior officers fail to treat reports of sexual harassment with the necessary respect and therefore do not investigate. They trivialise sexually motivated touching as merely "accidental" and dismiss derogatory remarks as just a bit of "fun". In this way, however, they give the complaining male or female soldier the feeling that he or she is not the victim but perpetrator, and thus achieve the exact opposite to what *Innere Führung* is trying to achieve: namely to develop one's own set of values, stand up for them and act accordingly.

Especially among comrades, it can be very difficult to depart from established views and argue against them. For younger soldiers in particular, it can require a considerable show of strength to distance themselves from the rest and express their own individual opinion in the face of group pressure. As long as this induces nothing more than teasing or banter, it remains unproblematic and bearable. The situation is quite different, however, when such behaviour leads to derogatory remarks, hostility or even exclusion from the community. In comments marking the 65th anniversary of the *Bundeswehr*, Germany's Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier succinctly summed up the motivation to endure such reactions because of one's own convictions when he said: "It's right to participate in exposing extremist activities. It's not treason and it's not an affront to honour, but exactly the opposite."

As the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, I see this as a form of bravery. It's an expression of what is commonly called civil courage – an expression that has military roots. 16th century soldiering language borrowed the term "courage" from the French language as a term to describe bravery, stout-heartedness and determination. To enable it to be also used in a non-military context, the modification "civil

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Especially among comrades, it can be very difficult to depart from established views and argue against them

courage" was derived later. The German dictionary *Duden* defines it as "courage that someone demonstrates by representing humane and democratic values (for example, human dignity, justice) without regard to possible consequences in public, towards authorities, seniors, etc.". In Germany, civil courage in the military is therefore not a contradiction in terms, but rather a synonym for the concept of the citizen in uniform.

As a consequence of this principle, there is no blind obedience in the *Bundeswehr*. Instead, soldiers' duty of obedience even includes the state's expectation that they should refuse an order that contradicts the rules of law or violates human dignity. In his 2010 address marking the anniversary of the 20 July plot in 1944, historian

Fritz Stern summed this up when he ascertained that: "The idea of the citizen in uniform is the guiding figure of the *Bundeswehr*; the cautionary note that even soldiers must follow their conscience – even to the point of disobedience – is the legacy of the resistance." The resistance fighters, according to Stern, were supported and justified by their deep faith in God. They all had "a pervasive sense of responsibility – a sense of duty out of tradition, in the spirit of humanity, convinced by the imperatives of humanity".

After the suspension of compulsory military service, such a sense of responsibility and civil

Just as they apply their acquired knowledge almost automatically in the event of an accident, soldiers should also be able to recognise extremist tendencies in comrades and react to them adequately

courage on the part of the soldiers has gained in importance. For decades, the armed forces had been characterised by the involvement of conscripts, and therefore mirrored society. Many of the young men who completed their military service would probably never have chosen the path to the *Bundeswehr* without this obligation. However, their very presence in the armed forces had a decisive advantage. The very fact that they were not there voluntarily meant that they kept a critical eye on the armed forces and the service activities, as evidenced by many of the submissions sent to Parliamentary Commissioners for the Armed Forces during that period. At the same time, this did not preclude them from appreciating the challenges of military service and enlisting as soldiers for a fixed term. In general, conscripts constituted a not inconsiderable part of the next generation of military personnel. In today's *Bundeswehr*, as a de facto professional army, this broad social spectrum is missing. Those forced to do their military service involuntarily in the past would hardly find their way into the armed forces voluntarily today. This population group is therefore no longer represented among the troops, which means that the military consequently lacks the self-criticism previously guaranteed within its own ranks. This

gap can be filled, in particular, by those who bring with them common sense and a strong moral understanding, or develop them in the *Bundeswehr*.

The fact that civil courage in the *Bundeswehr* is not a mere theoretical construct, but is actually embraced by the troops on a daily basis, is demonstrated by the numerous reports of soldiers providing assistance in traffic accidents or emergency situations in everyday life. They have also responded appropriately and decisively when required to provide official assistance, for example in helping to combat the Covid-19 pandemic or elevate the flood disasters in western Germany. Time and again, their courageous intervention has enabled people to be rescued from dangerous situations and survive only because members of the armed forces have drawn on their knowledge without hesitation and provided first aid. This is largely thanks to the excellent medical and ethical training in the armed forces. In many areas, senior officers demonstrate to soldiers under their command, through their exemplary conduct, how the guiding *Innere Führung* principles should be embraced. They exemplify how soldiers can make conscientious decisions, even when forced to react responsibly within a split second.

Just as they apply their acquired knowledge almost automatically in the event of an accident, soldiers should also be able to recognise extremist tendencies in comrades and react to them adequately. Here, the German Federal Ministry of Defence and the command authorities are called upon to create the appropriate framework. It's essential that sufficient time is set aside for political, historical and ethical education, and that teaching modules are actually provided. Moreover, senior officers must have sufficient opportunities to engage and talk with their soldiers. After all, conversations and discussions are a crucial part of the supervision and enable officers to guide and direct their troops. Ideally, this leads to personal interaction that is not burdened by hierarchical differences, but is characterised by mutual trust and openness towards one another. In this way, the *Bundeswehr* could ensure that civil courage in the military is also not a contradiction in terms in the future.

Author: Matthias Schwarzbauer

A dusty image

Sometimes I feel like shouting into the wind: "*Innere Führung* is a great concept!" But the reaction I would normally get is shaking heads and looks of disbelief, at least in my previous assignments in infantry units: "Nobody needs this" is an answer I get. Or something like, "what are you talking about?" Still, our senior leadership loves to promote the concept, but nobody at the tactical levels seems to be interested in the "basis for military service in the Bundeswehr and … the self-image of soldiers" (No. 101) as the very first paragraph of *Innere Führung* claims. For most soldiers, the concept seems not to be engaging at all. How is this? How come? I have a simple answer: we teach it wrong! We teach it in a way that is boring, elusive, and too abstract. This essay presents my view about the German Armed Forces ethics concept—and how to fix its dusty image.

In the beginning of this essay, I present my underlying assumption: that *Innere Führung* is still a very valuable and relevant framework to guide soldiers through peace and war. I present two main thoughts: firstly, we must admit that moral values like human rights, democracy, equality, and the underlying principle of our German Basic Law are not in opposition to the demands of bravery in combat, loyalty, and the willingness to fight. Moreover, these "two sides of an equation" have to be in balance because being committed to only one part is worthless without the other. Secondly, we must transform the practical teaching of *Innere Führung* by including the full spectrum of the concept—moral values and military virtues—in all ways of ethics education. I present some advice on how to use the text of *Innere Führung* itself to make it engaging and attractive for soldiers, focusing on young officers, to keep *Innere Führung* alive and relevant in the modern German armed forces.

MAKE *INNERE FÜHRUNG* ATTRACTIVE AGAIN!
A PERSONAL ESSAY

Rediscovering the two main themes of the concept

I start with my central assumption: *Innere Führung* is valuable, relevant, and in itself needs no revisions or updates. The concept provides all the necessary guidelines a modern soldier and military leader needs, from their commitment to democracy and human rights to "traditional" military demands such as loyalty and bravery in battle. Looking at the concept's history, one of its main goals was to mark the break between the culpable Wehrmacht and the new Bundeswehr, newly established in a strong democratic system. This ethics and leadership concept has been part of the Bundeswehr since its establishment in 1956 and has later received the status of a Joint Service Regulation. As *Innere Führung* is a sign of "learning from German military history," it bridges the gap between the need for armed forces and the fear of the military's destructive power if used by the wrong hands. And *Innere Führung* makes clear: capable and strong forces are needed to defend democracy–and this is as true today as it was in the 1950s, when the Federal Republic of Germany had just been founded.

With this in mind, my first task is to point out the need for balance between moral values, like human rights, and "classic" military values, like bravery in combat, in talking about *Innere Führung*. To do so, I need to explain my understanding and interpretation of the whole concept, especially regarding its origins in the 1950s: The most important and famous pioneers for *Innere Führung* were the Lieutenant Generals Hans Speidel and Adolf Heusinger, Colonel Johann Adolf Graf von Kielmansegg, Lieutenant Colonel Ulrich de Maizière and Major Wolf Graf von Baudissin (ranks stated as at the end of the Second World War in 1945). They all had significant experience in combat leadership positions, and most of them were wounded and decorated veterans. They were fully aware of what was

needed to prevail in combat. Furthermore, all of them were known for their opposition to and dislike of the Nazi regime. In addition to their wartime experience, Wolf Graf von Baudissin was already thinking about chaos in future warfare, including nuclear war. Once armies and militaries clash on the technologized future battlefield, one can expect direct leadership to be disrupted or made extremely difficult. The individual soldiers then must make decisions on their own, following their training and, in morally difficult situations, following their conscience.

Keeping the ideas of the "founding fathers" in mind, I recognize two main themes in *In-*

My argument is not to simplify Innere Führung by reducing it to the practical value on deployments or in combat situations alone

nere Führung: Firstly, the absolute necessity to prevent any atrocities by the hands of German soldiers in the future – an underlying motive that is often summed up in the brief sentence "never again." This theme is about actively preventing the military from acting as a compliant instrument of a felonious government. Soldiers must be educated in the principles of our democracy and the moral values of the German Basic Law, with particular emphasis on human rights. They must be trained "to render conscientious obedience" (Nr. 401), which means being aware of the limits of orders and following one's own moral compass.

The second theme addresses the creation of a robust and assertive military organization based on strong unit cohesion on a tactical level and mutual trust throughout all leadership levels. Each of the *Innere Führung* "founding fathers" played a significant role in the rearmament of the young Federal Republic of Germany, and most of them later rose to the highest ranks. These officers were certainly not opposed to the military idea and wanted to raise capable forces that could pre-

vail in the Cold War. Of course, regarding their experience with the Nazi regime, they felt the need to put those forces into a coherent moral framework. However, in addition to that, following again their experience, they also placed emphasis on promoting unit cohesion as the backbone of strong (military) forces. This is a logical step. When raising armed forces, you want to build confident forces that can win battles simply because of the responsibility to each soldier under your command, and to the country you serve and the values it stands for. Otherwise, these forces, created to safeguard the young democracy, would be detrimental.

The interpretation of *Innere Führung* with these two themes may be a simplification from an academic perspective, but it is a useful starting point for bringing it back to life among today's soldiers. Let me note here that my argument is not to simplify *Innere Führung* by reducing it to the practical value on deployments or in combat situations alone, as some authors do. Both described themes are parts of one concept. Either one is worthless without the other, both in peace and war. Saying this, I clearly criticize the ethics education in the German military that seems to focus almost exclusively on the first topic, the prevention of the misuse of armed forces and the Bundeswehr's foundation on human rights. In my opinion, the balance is off.

In current discussions about *Innere Führung* the famous image of the "citizen in uniform" is highlighted again and again. However, this image is often (mis-)understood as a soldier who is totally engaged with our democratic values, is part of the political debate, and is motivated per se by our society's moral code. But wait, do soldiers really "strengthen their willingness … to perform their duties thoroughly" (Nr. 401) solely through the idea of human rights, democracy, and morally appropriate conduct? Please do not get me wrong, fighting for democratic values and human rights is one of the most important, if not the single most important idea of *Innere Führung*. However, for me this is the "citizen" part; we do not often speak

about the "uniform" part. The latter, in my understanding, and to narrow it down to its core, is fighting, killing, and dying for our country and, even more importantly, for the values it stands for. This sounds drastic. To make it more specific, this means for soldiers to be brave, to be loyal to law and comrades, and to be willing to endure hardships and to put one's life on the line.

Innere Führung was designed to be relevant to military members both equally as citizens and as soldiers, and when it is taught or embraced in ways that neglect either of these two themes, it becomes worthless. When teaching neglects some dimensions of camaraderie, bravery, and leadership in combat to instead emphasize only sanitized ideals of human rights and good conduct, the full value of the document is obscured. When discussions of human rights never get into the uncomfortable but real territory of being willing to kill for these ideals, again, an opportunity is missed to bring back the relevance of *Innere Führung* to real professional military life.

In my opinion, this is why, talking to peers, subordinates and superiors about the concept, I often hear expressions like "outdated model," "irrelevant," and "unnecessary waste of time," and questions like "*Innere Führung*, what exactly are you talking about?" Even in this publication, experts and scholars regularly question whether *Innere Führung* needs to be updated. For most soldiers, the concept simply does not play any role in everyday military life. They do not fully understand that *Innere Führung* created the foundation for many essential elements of modern German military culture such as the participation of all ranks in decision-making, the concept of mission command, the requirements and limitations of orders, and the demand for superiors to be role models in all matters. Most military members simply miss this fact. And the reason why many soldiers fail to engage properly with *Innere Führung* is the way it is taught, de-emphasizing its value for the real daily challenges of military life, in which practical and ethical concerns are constantly intertwined. Now, how can we increase the acceptance of *Innere Führung* within the armed forces in order to live up to its self-imposed claim to be the "basis for military service in the *Bundeswehr* and … the self-image of soldiers" (No. 101)?

My short answer: by motivating soldiers of all ranks to simply read the short, concise regulation.

You can only discover the full range of guidelines, hidden advice, and promoted values by reading it on your own. Being familiar with the full range of aspects through "first-hand" reading forms the basis of a meaningful discussion of the concept. And I am not talking about agreeing with all of them.

Still, how to persuade the soldiers to actually read it? Again, the answer is simple: we have to make *Innere Führung* attractive again! And this is one of the main tasks for *Innere Führung* education. In other words, right now, we explain the concepts in ways that are too

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vague and too abstract. Our teaching has to make the ethics model attractive and appealing. *Innere Führung* is not an easy model, and yes, it can be abstract. But we can make the concept more understandable and effective by tying it to soldiers' expectations and core military tasks. The text hands us all the tools needed to create the motivation to read it and think about it.

Getting back to the "uniform" part

So the second main part now deals with the question how to regain the balance and whom to address to make *Innere Führung* engaging and interesting in the long run. In this essay I concentrate primarily on young soldiers and specifically on young officers.

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In the "middle ground" of a military career, fully embedded in stressful leadership positions and periodic deployment cycles, most soldiers do not spend much time with ethical fundamentals: they have more practical problems at hand. That is why I focus on the young guys and gals, taking 23-year-old infantry officers as an example. They are the ones who shape and train subordinates and peers in daily personal contact and serve as immediate role models regarding values and ethical thinking. My method is simple: I use only the text of *Innere Führung* itself to provide some interesting, controversial, and often-unspoken aspects as food for thought—

My own career and experiences lead me to believe that most young officers expect and are attracted to "classical" military values, or at least what they understand of them

and to see if there are parallels to young officers' expectations.

Taking the perspective of these motivated 23-year-old infantry officers, I assume that *Innere Führung,* the way they have probably heard about it, is not appealing at all. If we want them to engage with the concept and to view it as personally relevant, the practical dimensions of the text need to be highlighted as much as the ambitious ideals. I am convinced that young officer cadets and aspirants think about their future role and about the military task of serving our society. I am sure that most of them are fueled by the notion of "doing something good" and of "making a difference." Still, it is not necessarily the holistic idea of democracy that motivates them to sign up for military service. And I suspect that most of them do not deep dive into the sometimes "dark" ethical rabbit holes of our profession. Their expectations are far more tangible, like getting deployed, helping and supporting struggling people, and fighting "bad guys" and terrorists. So, what are the virtues and values for young officers, especially those signing up for combat units, that could motivate them and foster their interest?

My own career and experiences lead me to believe that most young officers expect and are attracted to "classical" military values, or at least what they understand of them. These are often "holistic ideals" of camaraderie, bravery, and discipline. More practically, they expect tough training and want to prove themselves in challenging situations. They expect to be trained and prepared for deployments and combat. And they want to be capable and exemplary military leaders even in combat situations, want to learn how to form strong bonds with comrades, and build enduring unit cohesion on their own. All of these values and virtues are clearly called for in *Innere Führung*, some stated openly, some buried at the end of a paragraph—yet they can be found if looking closely.

Looking at the "holistic ideals," the most obvious and unambiguous statement about the characteristics of the individual *Bundeswehr* soldier is the "military code of values," stated in No. 507 of *Innere Führung*. Besides being committed to the norms of the Basic Law, soldiers need to be "brave, loyal and conscientious, comradely and considerate, disciplined, competent and willing to learn, truthful to themselves and to others, fair, tolerant and open to other cultures, and able to distinguish right from wrong conduct." Camaraderie, bravery, loyalty, discipline, and competence are openly demanded in the ethics concept. Teaching the whole range of the "military code of values" makes young officers aware of their whole range of responsibilities.

Further on, *Innere Führung* demands preparedness for crises. No. 402 describes the "ideal Bundeswehr soldier"—defined as the "citizen in uniform"—has to be "ready at all times to carry out his mission." No. 505 makes clear that military missions include combat, and that those missions "may require [soldiers] to kill in battle and to risk their own lives as well as the lives of their comrades." In the introductory chapter of *Innere Führung*, this cruel part of military reality—fighting itself—becomes evident in the requirements for "citizens in uniform," too: "It is their duty to loyally serve the

Federal Republic of Germany and to bravely defend the rights and freedom of the German people. Military service involves risking life and limb and, in the final analysis, the obligation to kill in battle" (No. 105). "Citizen" unambiguously refers to the Basic Law and human rights. However, highlighting the willingness to fight is the explanation to the "uniform" part. Combat is certainly not what makes military service attractive, nor should it be, but it aligns with what young soldiers expect in military service.

Furthermore, officer candidates and young officers demand guidelines on how to be good military leaders—and those guidelines should be clear and straightforward. *Innere Führung* provides a handy appendix about leadership that sums up hints and requirements in short phrases. The concept's text highlights core elements: I consider No. 606 as one of the essential paragraphs in the whole regulation: "Superiors promote trust in themselves by enduring stress, deprivation and danger together with their soldiers. Particularly in difficult and challenging situations, they must demonstrate responsibility and leadership skills. Superiors must be predictable and maintain self-control. In day-to-day activities, *Innere Führung* is reflected above all in the respect that is shown to others." No. 622 states that "superiors who are honest with themselves will increase their authority as leaders." Sharing hardships, acting respectfully, being truthful and predictable – simple guidelines that summarize some of the most important qualities of a leader while being very difficult to follow. Those are standards every officer in the German Armed Forces should pursue. And again, they are clearly stated in *Innere Führung*.

Besides personal qualities, military leaders have a core task: to form strong and capable units by promoting unit cohesion. No. 617 of *Innere Führung* says that "superiors strengthen unit cohesion when the unit works together to overcome stressful situations. This promotes comradeship, trust in unit performance, and esprit de corps." Officers and enlisted have to "take an active role in life in the military community and strive to maintain a spirit of comradeship" (No. 508). In addition, unit cohesion is one of the core objectives to create motiva-

tion in *Innere Führung*. One of the concept's goals is "to strengthen the willingness of soldiers to perform their duties thoroughly … to cooperate, and to maintain troop cohesion and discipline"(Nr. 401). Unit cohesion is a repetitive element in *Innere Führung*. I am convinced

> *Even if they do not align with all its elements, young officers will notice that Innere Führung knows about their profession and has something to tell them*

that cohesion is no goal in itself; it is about having confident and assertive forces.

What if, for instance, we lined up all the quotations mentioned above and let young officers guess where they come from? This could be one first step to motivate to engage with the concept, to deal with it, read it, discuss it, and to deep-dive into the full range of the "citizen in uniform." Even if they do not align with all its elements, they will notice that this Joint Service Regulation knows about their profession and has something to tell them. Highlighting these passages proves to young officers that *Innere Führung* is anything but boring.

Why then do we never openly discuss those in some ways "classic," and in some ways "dark" military elements of *Innere Führung* in our regular ethics and leadership trainings? Does the idea of strong military units, fostered by strong bonds and trust between soldiers and superiors, oppose the "citizen in uniform"? Surely not. Both are balanced parts – or should be. Yet, I feel that in ethics education and training, we are still constrained by our history. *Innere Führung* itself tries to smooth the waters here by stating that the new, democratic "relationship between state, society and the armed forces (…) is fundamentally distinct from the historical situation of the Reichswehr and the Wehrmacht" (No. 204). Yet, the German society and even the armed forces still have a fraught relationship to the core mission of a military organization – fighting and prevailing in battle. Shooting and combat are part of military reality. It is the basis of our training, even if we wish it not to

be. However, we are reluctant to speak about that aspect in ethical matters directly, and the regular seminars on "Death and Wounding" do not meet the need to talk about "active fighting" as the core task of our profession. The "citizen in uniform" bridges the gap between the military as a pure instrument of political power and the fundamental values of our democracy, codified in the Basic Law. The "citizen in uniform" does not neglect the core task of fighting and, in the worst case, killing—it puts it in context.

Yet, this essay is not primarily concerned with explaining the concept of the "citizen in uniform." My goal is to make *Innere Führung* engaging—and the way it is taught. We should not be afraid to start with the "uniform" part. In addition to that, most of the leadership wisdom that *Innere Führung* provides is pointing to unit cohesion—and this has for sure a practical value, thinking about our latest German military history: when asking German Afghanistan combat veterans why they fought, the answer is regularly, "for the man next to me." Incorporating this practical dimension will demonstrate that *Innere Führung* acknowledges a modern soldier's reality.

Some readers will oppose my claims and accuse me of "cherrypicking" passages from the text. But it would be equally unfair to ignore those passages which show a different perspective, motivate to read the paragraphs, or even the whole chapter. If we include those parts in our regular Bundeswehr ethics education and only a few young soldiers read the regulation in full afterwards, we will have taken a big step forward. When more and more officers read and think about *Innere Führung*, we form a basis for further thoughtful discussion. The concept even demands those debates: "The core of *Innere Führung* is unchangeable. It is, however, also subject to a continual process of further development … This process is fostered by an active dialogue amongst soldiers and with people and institutions outside the Bundeswehr" (No. 108). *Innere Führung* itself acknowledges that "within the Bundeswehr … there are conflicts of opinion and tensions between different generations, cultures and backgrounds" (No. 313). I welcome those debates and happily discuss my suggestions.

To end my discussion, I need to add a final criticism of the concept itself. It claims that "the principles of *Innere Führung* form a basis for military service in the Bundeswehr and influence the self-image of soldiers" (No. 101). Some scholars and officers like to repeat this notion: "*Innere Führung* is important, it is the backbone of our military culture." Just because the regulation states it is important does not mean it is. We are responsible for proving its importance in practice—officers, military leaders, political leaders, officer cadets, basic training instructors, military chaplains, generals, and scholars alike. By weaving together both the soldier and the citizen dimensions, however, we can make *Innere Führung* attractive again.

Source:
German Ministry of Defense (ed.) (2008): Joint Service Regulation 10/1. Innere Führung.
(Official English translation only available for the regulation's 2008 version, provided by the Zentrum Innere Führung/The Leadership Development and Civic Education Center.)

Authors: General Steve Thull und Erny Gillen

Introduction

Values do not exist in a vacuum. They arise and grow in groups of people who (have to) act together. Lived in the most diverse situations, they can be experienced implicitly and explicitly in specific cooperations. Communication and mediation mostly happen between the lines and in the context of actions. The expected and actually experienced values find their expression in positive and negative narratives about the joint experience. In these narratives, the mix of values is processed affectively and interpreted existentially: Is my deployment worthwhile? With whom and why am I risking my life?

The *valeurs phare*s (*flagship values*) project, carried out by the Luxembourg Army in 2019 and 2020 at the instigation of the minister responsible, François Bausch (Green Party), and with the expert support of the Moral Factory (Erny Gillen), was concerned with putting the values lived and to be lived, based on the narratives and experiences of army members of all ranks, into words that make sense to the participants and clients.

The outcomes produced during the collaborative process include a Values Charter, Values Grid (see next page, Figure 1), Commentary, and a Military Code of Conduct as a normative mirror, which can be accessed through the army website.[1]

The process and outcomes are briefly outlined and reviewed below.

The participants

The process was initiated out of political conviction and was not instigated by any internal scandals that would have required a political and military response to public pressure. Rather, this *approach* was aimed at achieving a shared understanding of a small and relatively new *sui generis* army[2] with very different national and international commitments. Accordingly, the army's leadership was able to manage the process openly with very little pressure in terms of time or the need to produce results.

RELIABLE, RIGHTEOUS AND COMMITTED TO THE SERVICE OF LUXEMBOURG AND ITS ALLIES
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A VALUES GRID FOR THE LUXEMBOURG ARMY

The Luxembourg Army has agreed on its own Values Grid in a process initiated and expertly facilitated by the Ministry of Defense. It has therefore co-developed its own ethos, reflected on it, put it in writing and set it out in concrete terms in a Code of Conduct. This is a report on the prerequisites and challenges of such a participatory approach as well as on the essential findings ("lessons learned"). It was written in consultation with the Luxembourg Ministry of Defense.

In addition to a steering group, in which those responsible from the ministry and the army were able to set the course flexibly together with the project manager, it was the *Command Senior Enlisted Leaders* and the communications office who were responsible for organizing the interviews, meetings and events internally.

To ensure that the Values Charter and the Values Grid were communicable and presentable beyond the boundaries of the Luxembourg process, educational facilities and institutes belonging to the partner armed forces from Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland were first invited to provide qualitative feedback in terms of a peer review and then later share experience-based suggestions for implementation at a joint event (on-site and online).

The process and outcomes were presented to the public via the press in October and December 2020.

Author

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The major stages and outcomes

Values form part of the genetic make-up of an army. They are transmitted explicitly and implicitly, affectively and ritually, from generation to generation through the uniform, drill, comradeship, and finely tiered hierarchy. They express the identity of army members and of the army itself. They are lived, visibly posted, inculcated, and repeated to create bonds between the diverse people with and without uniforms. In this way, they create a common horizon and give meaning to the military training and deployment beyond the many small, standardized procedures and rules. Sociologist Hans Joas succinctly summarizes the ongoing genesis of values as follows: "Values arise in experiences of self-formation and self-transcendence."[3]

Involving the members of the army

In view of this background and approach, 56 people out of approximately one thousand military and civilian army personnel were interviewed in individual interviews and, in some cases, in small groups about their experiences with values in the Luxembourg Army. In these *qualitative interviews* the age groups, gender and hierarchical levels were proportionally taken into account. Word groups were formed around the most frequently mentioned values such as discipline, righteousness, comradeship and commitment, and fed back to the participants in four mixed *focus groups* in order to find out which of the identified notions found the most approval and understanding within the multicultural, multi-religious and multilingual reality of the army.

Differentiating flagship values

It became clear that the flagship values of commitment, righteousness, and reliability were assigned different weightings depending on the perspective and point of view. To account for this fact, a *dynamic grid* (see Figure 1) was developed around the three flagship values, which can be read and interpreted across three levels and four columns. The differentiations of the flagship values were discussed many times, and were changed and nuanced in French until they appeared coherent according to the steering group.

Relating values in perspective

As a result, the Grid creates meaningful perspectives for individuals, the groups to whom they belong, and the specific task they perform within the larger mission. Read in the overall context, respect, as an expression of personal *reliability*, allows the fundamental equality and dignity of all people to shine through at the righteousness and commit-
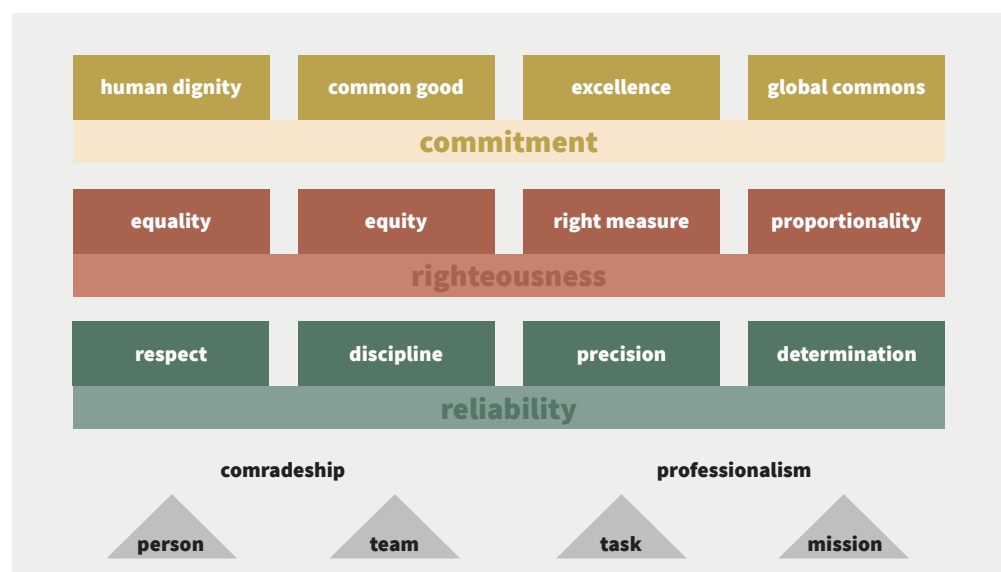

Figure 1

ment levels. In this context, human dignity represents the target value, equality the ethical value, and the required respect the normative value. Applied to the "we" perspective, common good and equity shine through as basic values of discipline. The spirit of comradeship expressed by these six subcategories is embedded in the larger context of human rights and the rule of law.

Respect for individuals

Anyone taking the perspective of a commander in charge of individuals and groups applies the first two columns of the Grid from top to bottom. The demanded values of *respect* and *discipline* are based on equality and equity within the respective groups, and serve the shared commitment to our civilization and culture, which primarily emerged from the contrasting experiences of the Second World War.

Professionalism at work

The next two columns relate to specific tasks and the larger mission. Here, *reliability* is understood as precision in the task and determination in the mission. At the *righteousness* level, the right measure and proportionality are offered as ethical mediation tools to achieve the objectives of excellence and *global commons* in the specific case, as determined through *commitment*. While policy-makers must determine the priorities among the global commons to be defended, such as peace, public health or border protection, for example, in order to activate the military for a specific mission, it is up to the army leadership to determine the level of excellence to be achieved within the bounds of what is feasible. The values differentiated in the last two pillars constitute the *professionalism* of an army under the rule of law.

Values Charter

After the Values Grid had been validated by the political and military levels, the Values Charter was drafted. The Charter integrates the flagship values and their differentiations into the historical, international and institutional fabric of the Luxembourg State as an active part of the international community of values. In this national narrative, the army assumes its mandate with a collective "we", and commits to perform its service to the country and beyond with its allies in a reliable, righteous and committed manner.

The various drafts for the Grid and charter were discussed, nuanced, and enriched with the partner armed forces' educational facilities and institutes before the responsible Luxembourg authorities then finalized the texts. In order to keep the highly meaningful sentences of the Charter and the abstract Values Grid alive beyond the process, a Commentary was written whose elements can be used, for example, in education and training as well as in public relations.

Protecting values

Finally, together with the international partners involved in the creation process on the one hand and the newly appointed Chief of Staff Steve Thull and his leadership team on the other, a seminar was held at the Grand-Duc Jean Military Center in October 2020 to initiate the final step of this process, namely the *specific implementation* of this work on and with the values for everyday practice.

Following the practice-led seminar, where different fundamental, didactic and military tools were presented and then examined in more detail and discussed in small groups, the Chief of Staff convened an open working group that was tasked with drafting a normative Military Code of Conduct and submitting it to him for enactment before the end of 2020.

This text was deliberately written in Luxembourgish because it is the vernacular used among military personnel. While the Values Charter with Commentary and Grid applies to all members of the army, the Military Code of Conduct is aimed directly at all uniformed personnel. The Code thus created now plays a key role in training recruits and soldiers as well as in the cooperation between all members of the army.

Under the leitmotif "réussir ensemble" (succeed together), the Luxembourg Army has redefined its horizon of values and an-

Author

Dr. Erny Gillen, founder and director of Moral Factory, Luxembourg

chored it normatively in its internal regulations. Thanks to the political support, ambitious will of the military leadership and active participation of civilian and military members of the army across all ranks, as well as the technical support provided by partner armed forces, outcomes were developed and set down in a relatively short time that provide support and guidance for current and future missions.

Communicating values

Those who want to measure themselves (or be measured) by their own values must disclose them internally and externally. After all members of the army had had the opportunity to be presented with the process and the Values Charter in advance of the international seminar held at the barracks, the public was informed at a press conference held by Minister of Defense François Bausch and the authors. At the end of 2020, the Chief of Staff was able to inform the press that the last conceptual implementation step had also been completed with the laying down of the Military Code.

Findings from the process

Even if it is still rather early in September 2021 to review the sustained success of the valeurs phares project for the Luxembourg Army, some key factors can already be identified here that have led to the successful implementation of this values anamnesis, the codification of a dynamic structure of values as well as their translation into the norm-governed work and life in the Luxembourg Army.

Leadership commitment

The unprejudiced, interested and financial commitment of the responsible ministry from the very beginning was decisive for realizing and implementing the valeurs phares project. Equally important was the army leadership's willingness to respond positively to the minister's request and to open itself to an external, professional analysis of its implicitly lived values.

Professional expertise and empathy

The project's success also required professional and independent support. Without a transparent and comprehensible approach, and without a person from the applied ethics field who was networked beyond national borders, the process would hardly have gotten off the ground, especially at the beginning. Patient empathy and a target-led approach based on integrity are indispensable qualities for any external person in whom members of the army can entrust themselves.

Institutional trust

Institutional trust is essential for the success of such a project. This was ensured by the steering group and the internal support group. This way, the values lived and to be lived across the army could be ascertained, critically reflected upon and finally defined in an open-ended manner. The necessary freedom granted by the ministry and army leadership for such a sensitive process was guaranteed by the ethical advisor.

Putting values in relation

The Values Grid, Values Charter and Commentary complement one another and create a framework for the Military Code. In the interplay between the four documents, which were developed in a participatory manner, the potential for further and corrective interpretations and applications is preserved. The freedom granted by the political leadership at the beginning to co-develop their own military ethos will thus continue beyond the completed project as an impetus and challenge for ethical action.

Willingness to implement findings and implementation tools

At the end of this stage of the process when it came to precisely formulating the Charter, which had grown as part of the moderated participatory process within the Luxembourg Army and the critical feedback from the foreign military partners, the military leadership decided on the wording and style of the text within the context of the steering group.

This procedure was explicitly endorsed by the ministry and motivated the then newly appointed Chief of Staff to embrace the Luxembourg Army Charter. The presence of the Minister, along with the statements made by himself and his staff at the international seminar, confirmed that the project was jointly intended and that the result was politically recognized.

The fact that the basic text of the Charter was quickly followed by a *Code of Conduct* for everyday life, which was called for by the military leadership, must be seen as another key element for the success of the project's military implementation beyond the project period. Without comprehensible support through specific rules of conduct, the values and Charter would not become second nature to the military. The Code thus becomes a crucial mirror in which everyone can check whether their actions are in line with the collective values!

1 https://www.armee.lu/actualites/2020/engagement-droiture-et-fiabilite-presentation-de-la-premiere-charte-des-valeurs-de-l-armee-luxembourgeoise: Werte-Charta, Kommentar und militärischer Verhaltenskodex (accessed 16 November 2021).
2 The Luxembourg Army has been able to recruit EU citizens as volunteer soldiers since 2003. Representing 16.2% of this corps in October 2021, they come from Belgium, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain. Luxembourg had a population of 634,730 as of January 1, 2021, with 47.2 percent foreigners. The Portuguese community (14.9%) accounts for the largest share among the 170 nationalities. This considerable multiculturalism is a feature of both the country and army. Further details about the demographics at: https://luxembourg.public.lu/de/gesellschaft-und-kultur/bevolkerung/demografie.html (accessed 16 November 2021).
3 Joas, Hans (2000): The Genesis of Values. Cambridge, p. 1.

"WE MUST ALSO REACH THE SOUL"

Thinking about values and virtues and discussing them is a necessary part of ethical education - but is it enough? How can their significance be made tangible? What can the military chaplaincy contribute here? The editors of "Ethics and Armed Forces" talked to adult educator Heinrich Dickerhoff, who has many years of practical experience in this area. A conversation about chivalry, swordplay and myths and their significance (not only) for soldiers.

Mr. Dickerhoff, you've been conducting workshops for many years, including for the military chaplaincy and zebis, about "chivalry" and behavior in conflicts. Before we get to the methods, first some theory: you refer to "formative" ethics as opposed to "normative" ethics, i.e. a system that gives us rules. Could you explain that in more detail?

First of all, the two don't have to be contradictory. Rules are necessary. But if I'm told to do something and I don't know why, I have a strong inclination not to do it – or for only as long as my actions are being controlled. Formative ethics works through role models. These can be tales of chivalry, but also certain behaviors or people. For example: I was a boy scout in my youth, and there you learn specific rules, but these were connected with a sense of self-esteem. It was a point of honor to follow them.

But it's not about blind obedience; rather it works on the basis of sympathy and trust. For me, that's a good kind of authority. We also need this formative element, we need to encourage people to perceive their own dignity and act from that.

Profile
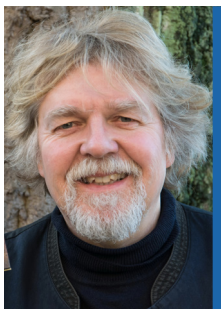
Dr. Heinrich Dickerhoff, born in 1953, studied Catholic theology, history and Jewish studies. From 1978 to 2016 he worked at the Catholic Academy Stapelfeld near Cloppenburg, Germany, and became its Educational Director in 2006. His main areas of work include experiential theology and occidental cultural history. Since he retired in 2018, he has been working as a freelance/volunteer storyteller and experiential educator (e.g. traditional archery, sword fencing), including in bereavement and end-of-life care.

When we refer specifically to "chivalry" and the virtues associated with it, such as consideration for weaker people, fairness, honesty: isn't that a myth?

It's a myth, for sure. The historical knights were highly specialized armored cavalrymen. But within this caste, this idea developed through dealing with Christianity. Very few were able to embrace it consistently, but it had an effect beyond the nobility even in the Middle Ages. It's about humility and helpfulness, about serving a higher cause. Transferred to the *Bundeswehr:* I really like the phrase "We serve Germany" or the fundamental stance "We serve a democratic state, we are not mercenaries or employees".

But high ideals can also fail. Think of the soldiers who would like to help on missions but cannot or are not allowed to, that's very stressful.

Knowing that one could fail is integral to many tales of chivalry. They don't represent fantasies of omnipotence like many of today's superheroes. I think ideals that are not broken are dangerous – because they either overburden you or make people arrogant. Humility also means not slavishly following ideals, but recognizing your own limits and fallibility. Nevertheless, I can understand it when soldiers who were in Afghanistan tell me now that they've been withdrawn, they feel as if they'd fought like Don Quixote against windmills.

Let's get to the "how". In your workshops, people practice wielding blunt swords or shooting with the longbow. How do you explain why this evidently receives such a positive response?

For me it's clear: you don't just learn with your mind, but with all your senses, even if you don't learn consciously – and that doesn't just apply to soldiers. I've worked in educational institutions for 40 years, and of course we have to address the mind. But we also have to reach the soul, for example through fairy tales or art. And we also learn with the body, in my courses, for example, with longbow shooting and sword fighting. These activities are glad-

ly accepted, probably also because both are considered masculine; and in the armed forces male patterns of behavior still dominate, while in school and church things are predominantly female.

And what does the sword reveal to oneself that doesn't reveal itself to the mind to the same extent?

First of all, we don't do sword fighting, that would be far too dangerous. It's more like partner exercises. But just lifting a sword that weighs about two kilos does something to people. I remember an old lady, over eighty, who could no longer do those exercises, who said: "I can feel my strength again." That's because the sword forces you to adopt an upright posture. But you can't explain that with words.

But where exactly is the transcendent here, i.e. the point at which this bodily experience points beyond itself?

The sword and the bow are no longer perceived as weapons. The transfer takes place more through the association with a fantastic past or the role reversal. I start by learning with the sword: I have to control myself, I must not let myself be carried away by it. That involves the whole body. So the first experience is: I have power, power is all right, but I have to control it – I think that's a very important experience.

Are people sometimes frightened by the possibilities that the sword gives them?

It's not just about the power of weapons; parents, for example, also have power. Power is not evil, but power is a temptation. In my experience, if you're aware of it, the willingness to deal with it very responsibly also grows. For it's not only an abuse of power to use the entrusted power in an uncontrolled way, but also not to use it. This creates a power vacuum and ultimately chaos.

How important is it to reflect on such experiences with the participants?

Depending on the timeframe, sometimes you can only provide impetus. It's important to focus on where you are learning in life, consciously or unconsciously. For example: You can tell mourners a hundred times that they need to let go – that's almost, of course, a banality. But at my grief seminars with the longbow, participants have told me: For the first time I *felt* something about letting go.

And whether with the sword, archery or horseback riding, it's precisely the freedom of purpose that gives me the chance to distance myself from everyday constraints. For me, that's also the task of religion: to show that life could be different instead of just repeating things that are taken for granted. Incidentally, this is also an important task for the military chaplaincy, when people are not only in physical danger during a mission, but separated from everything familiar.

And if it simply doesn't mean anything for somebody?

You can only accept that. I'm not a missionary for the use of the sword! Interestingly, however, I've never experienced this with soldiers, neither with weapons nor with fairy tales, simply because they were always curious. By the way, medieval and Norse stories in particular are very male-compatible. For me it was a highlight every time the sergeant said: Come on, Heinrich, tell us another fairy tale!

A nice conclusion, thank you very much for this interview, Mr. Dickerhoff!

Questions by Rüdiger Frank.

FULL ISSUES

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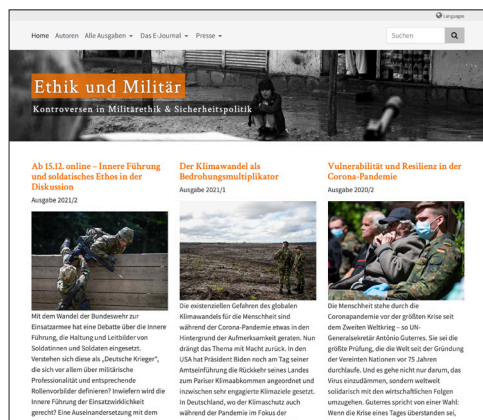
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