

Call for Papers

German Military and Police Forces Abroad since 1945: Foreign Deployments and International Missions

Joint Conference of the German Police University (DHPol) and the Centre for Military History and Social Sciences of the Bundeswehr (ZMSBw)

25–27 November 2026, Münster (Germany)

Deadline for submissions: 15 June 2026

The deployment of German military and police forces abroad has been a central instrument of German foreign and security policy for decades. In both the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, a wide range of forms of military and police activities abroad have been developed since the end of the Second World War—from training and advisory missions in the 1950s and 1960s, to deployments in the context of the Cold War, and to multinational missions in crisis and conflict zones since the 1990s.

These foreign deployments and missions offer a particularly productive field for the joint study of police and military institutions and actors. In this context, the traditional division of labour between police and military becomes increasingly blurred within the tension between internal and external security. At the same time, professional self-understandings, role perceptions, and institutional logics in both fields are renegotiated. Particularly in crisis and conflict regions, the boundaries between military and police tasks often become indistinct—ranging from warfare and stabilization to public order and the fight against crime.

A comparative perspective thus promises new insights into the spheres of experiences, practices, and interpretative frameworks of both institutions, as well as into their mutual interactions. Nevertheless, military and police deployments abroad have largely been studied separately to date. Systematic analyses that examine similarities, differences, and interactions between the two fields remain scarce.

The aim of this conference is therefore to bring together, for the first time in a joint forum, current research and practice-oriented perspectives on German military and police deployments abroad. In addition to historical and interdisciplinary research contributions, the conference explicitly seeks to include experience-based accounts from practitioners. Individual paper contributions following a comparative approach are explicitly welcome, but not required. Rather, the comparative perspective will be developed and sharpened through discussions, comments, and collective reflection during the conference.

This approach opens up new perspectives on how police and military actors legitimize, implement, and reflect upon their actions abroad; how they translate knowledge, norms, and practices into international contexts; and how their role perceptions evolve within the tension between internal and external security. At the same time, it allows for the identification of institutional blind spots arising from differing mandates, legal frameworks, documentation

practices, and organizational cultures, all of which shape the conditions of military and police assignments abroad in lasting ways. Finally, examining the perceptions and ascriptions of local populations in areas of deployment provides new insights into what is understood locally as “police” and what is perceived as “military.”

As a conceptual and methodological framework, the conference adopts an experience-based historical approach that encompasses not only formative experiences during foreign deployments, but also preceding individual and institutional expectations as well as evolving memories over time. The focus lies on the experiences, expectations, and interpretative frameworks of both military and police personnel deployed abroad, as well as of actors and institutions in Germany and in the areas of deployment who were involved in or affected by these deployments.

Guiding Questions

From the perspective of such an experience-based historical approach, contributions addressing the following questions are particularly welcome:

- What individual, professional, and institutional expectations shaped German military and police actors prior to their overseas deployments?
- How did deployed personnel perceive and interpret their engagement on the ground?
- What impact did these experiences have on professional self-understandings, role perceptions, and institutional identities?
- How were stress, danger, uncertainty, and psychosocial exceptional situations processed at both the individual and institutional levels?
- What experiences did local security forces, political elites, and civilian populations have with German military and police actors?
- To what extent did military and police experiential spaces differ, and where can overlaps or mutual learning processes be identified?
- How did interpretative frameworks and memories of deployments change over time?
- Which bodies of experience, narratives, and institutional lessons informed subsequent German engagements and security policy debates?

The conference languages are German and English. Travel expenses for presenters may be reimbursed in accordance with the German Federal Travel Expenses Act (Bundesreisekostengesetz).

Submission

Please submit an abstract (max. 300 words) and a short biographical note (max. 150 words) by 30 May 2026 to:

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Organizing Committee

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Venue

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