Constructing War and Military Power after the Cold War: The Role of the United States in the Western Definitions of War and Military Power in the Post-Cold War Era

Based on a constructivist theoretical framework, the research problem that animated this study asks how and through what mechanisms has the meaning of military power changed after the Cold War. In order to focus on military power, a paradigm of war-framework is elaborated. Thus, in order to analyse shared western understandings of military power - what constitutes military power in the post-Cold War era - a framework for analysing the institution of war is developed.

Concerning the changing nature of shared western understandings of war in the post-Cold War era, the Cold War institution of war is analysed. In addition, seven discourses of war that have challenged this institution are analysed. These discourses - the end of the Cold War, the Revolution in Military Affairs, asymmetric warfare, new wars, humanitarian interventions, War on Terror, and the privatisation of war - have transformed the sedimented Cold War era western understandings of war. This particularly so concerning the character of faced threats to be countered with military force, shared understandings about the legitimate objectives and means of war, and the constitutive elements of military power.

Concerning the changing ‘nature’ of military power in the west after the demise of the Cold War, the American-originated discourse of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) has gradually spread within the west - first with the defence establishment of the United States, and later also in Europe. The 1991 Gulf War raised the discourse of RMA into the American academic debate concerning the role and nature of military forces in the post-Cold War era. Relying on advanced technological capabilities and changes in operational concepts and military organisations, the discourse of RMA became part of the US DoD’s official agenda by the mid-1990s, and by 1997 the policy of exploiting the RMA in order to transform the US Armed Forces was promulgated. The RMA-discourse has also spread to characterise the European understandings of effective post-Cold War era military power, the European RMA-exploitation strategy has not been promulgated.

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- war
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Where deposited

Additional information