

A QUEST FOR MODERN ARMIES FORMATION: COULD IDEOLOGY REALLY HELP?

Kucera, Tomas. (2018). *The Military and Liberal Society – Societal-Military Relations in Western Europe*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge. pp. 215, ISBN: 978-1-138-65760-1

It is common wisdom that not all the major politico–security disputes were solved in the aftermath of the Cold War. On the contrary, numerous hypotheses assume the complication of global problems at a multilateral level. What is widely argued among scholars is that international relations could be understood through internal processes occurring within the sovereign countries. One such example is militarization and the role of the armed forces within modern societies as a precondition for intensified cooperation among the countries. Over the last decades, with the establishment of the modern armies, a central dilemma in military studies was how to determine the reverse causal societal-military relations in the specific geographic area, which might correspond to regional security dynamics.

One such academic endeavor is a monograph authored by Tomas Kucera “The Military and Liberal Society: Societal-Military Relations in Western Europe”, which was published in 2018. This book focuses on how some meta-ideologies could shape the function, type, mission, and ethos of the armed forces in liberal societies after the Cold War was over. The qualitative approach this author undertakes is based on a multiple case study, and compounds (West) Germany, the United Kingdom, and the Swedish armed forces. The central research question of this book, as the author posits, is to inspect the extent to which the liberal ideology of the Western European societies determines their military policies, and consequently the structure, tasks, missions, and functioning of their armies. This research differentiates two correlated concepts: the liberal ideology and military policy. Kucera believes that military policy conceptualizes three respective segments: the mission of contemporary militaries, their composition, and their dependency on institutional culture, and he elaborates on each of these segments thoroughly.

The book is organized into five thematic chapters which all complement each other. In the first one, the author begins with a theoretical assessment of causal mechanisms that come from modern societies towards the military. He deploys reconstruction of a theory of liberal societal-military relations, which implies that international structure, no matter how it is organized, heavily influences internal political occurrences within all the countries of the international system. Thus, shaping the internal processes with their key involved actors, the structure of the system (unipolar, bipolar, multipolar...) and its occurrences, indirectly shape the strategic outlook of militaries worldwide. It begins with a sociological analysis of a modern soldier and the concept of the liberal state. Kucera does not purely imply

the theoretical concept of the liberal state, but rather, points out towards the contemporary states with liberal ideologies.

The central part of the book advances the knowledge of military strategy, through three case studies, out of which one is historical – West Germany. Its rearmament and liberal armed forces building are one aspect of the analysis, while the other deals with the post-Cold War transformation of the Bundeswehr. The author dedicates two chapters to describe the process of West German's armed forces rearmament based on liberal premises. In the third chapter, the author argues that NATO aggression without the UN mandate in FR Yugoslavia was an event that triggered German's very first military engagement outside its reunited territory. This intervention has increased the legitimacy of the Bundeswehr in the eyes of the domestic public and has alleviated further public consents for its foreign engagements (with an exception of Iraq in 2003).

The fourth chapter analyzes the Swedish armed forces establishment, its nonalignment policy and active participation within the UN peacekeeping as a prerequisite of such analysis for Swedish case. Thus, the author identifies a discrepancy between the tradition arising from the total defense concept in the late sixties and seventies, and the force for international participation. Even though the Swedish armed forces were actively involved in the UN peacekeeping missions during the Cold War, their formation is characterized by its adaptability, which the author of this book coins as a “cosmopolitan army”.

The fifth chapter describes the strategic culture of organizing British military policy in the XX century. The author identifies several key tasks of the British armed forces, namely – imperial policing and counterinsurgency missions. According to his arguments, the UK's army was the one which was the most dependable on the international crises. The Gulf War, interventions in the Balkans, the Kosovo crisis, interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, were only some of the major events which derived new purposes and new strategic orientations of the British army.

This book promoted the idea that liberalism, as a meta-ideology, influences the military policy of the societies based in Western Europe. The author identifies several prerequisites through which modern European societies shape their military compositions. These compound three constitutional specifics of modern militaries: military mission, the physical composition of the armed forces, and their institutional culture, which includes military ethos and professional identity as two sub-constituencies. The military mission has not been substantively changed in accordance with the author's stance. On the contrary, Kucera casts an argument that describes liberalism as an internationally potential peace provider, but which has failed in practice. This is why having a modernized military could provide countries to deal with security challenges in a “more liberal way”. The military mission is, thus, specified in accordance with new tasks such as preservation of

international law and order, as well as the large-scale violations of human rights. As the author underlines, militaries of liberal societies should be perceived as an instrument of international justice rather than a tool of national interest.

The author concludes that the United Kingdom and Germany exist as the two poles. While the imperial history of the British Empire rendered practices and norms of its military force, in the post-Cold War era it was easy to justify the British troops' presence across the globe by the "force for good" phrase. On the other hand, the author argues that Germany lays completely opposite of the UK, as the German society was not ready to see and justify its troops' engagement outside the country during the nineties. This was obviously due to historic reasons, after which foreign military assertiveness was not widely accepted by the public. Sweden stays in between these two cases. It was militarily neutral for a long time, but it also pioneered the UN peacekeeping missions' participation. This discrepancy between engagement in international affairs beyond the Swedish borders and staying militarily neutral is a controversy that shapes the military ethos of the Swedish armed forces.

Given that liberalism and its norms are promoted as the highest *virtue*, it seems that this book's author overemphasizes ideology as a driving factor of the military culture, rather than including other structural and social factors that shape the military ethos. He recognizes the importance of the international system but simultaneously neglects the relative influence coming from domestic political actors and elites which figure political debate over the usage of military force abroad. Even though Kucera intended to determine the compatibility of military means with strategic ends in liberal societies, he failed to do so. The choice of the UK, Sweden, and Germany as the cases for research was a good idea, but the author's justification for choosing this case is gloomy. The last objection which could be addressed towards this research is the problematic level of analysis. The author sequences liberalism as an ideology rather than placing it into a theoretical framework as one of the dominant discourses of international relations or security studies. This decreased the epistemic contribution of this research in terms of potential theory re-conceptualization by the findings obtained from the case studies.

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