

Wars of Russia: causes, determinants, course and consequences of military combat operations of the Russian Federation in the post-Cold War period

Objectives

The project aims at analysing the armed conflicts, in which Russia has been engaged since the end of Cold War. The main objectives of the project are as follows: an assessment of the role of the use of force in the contemporary Russian foreign policy; an assessment of the specificity of the Russian military operations on both strategic and tactical levels; an assessment of the adequacy of strategies and means chosen during these conflicts to pursued objectives and justifying values; an assessment of the level of conformity of Russia's behaviours and actions in military operations with the relevant norms of international law (including humanitarian law); comparison of the Russian and Western way of making war.

Work plan

The project will be divided into four stages: a) analysis of historical and present determinants of the Russian military combat operations; b) analysis of Russian military operations under the rule of Boris Yeltsin (1991 – 1999); c) analysis of Russian military operations under the rule of Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev (since 1999); d) summing up the research and formulating conclusions concerning Russian practice of military operations in the post-Cold War period.

The analysis of each case will cover the historical context, reasons, justification and objectives of the intervention, the position of the Russian authorities and society, compliance of Russian activities with international law (in particular the right to use force and humanitarian law), mission conduct, and finally its results on a national and international scale.

Significance

After the collapse of the USSR, the Russian military operations aimed at maintaining the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, as well as its influence in the region: their scale, geographical scope and effectiveness were however limited. Vladimir Putin's rule led to the renaissance of the Russian military and industrial complex (uninterrupted growth of the defence budget until 2016, development of new types of weaponry, unconventional ways of conducting offensive operations, known as the "hybrid warfare"). Russia's military operations have in fact broken the undeclared Western monopoly of the use of force, existing since the '90s and became a major feature of the international order during the second decade of the 21st century. All mentioned factors show that studying causes and reasons of contemporary military engagements of the Russian Federation in the various parts of the world, objectives of its military operations, as well as strategies and methods used, is crucial for understanding the current shape of international relations and their dynamics, especially - although not exclusively - in the politico-military dimension.

Russian engagements in armed conflicts in the post-Cold War period, taking into account the significance and impact of these endeavours for the shape of international security order, their frequency and costs have been studied relatively frequently, both in Poland and abroad. Polish literature however is dominated by a descriptive approach, while the Western scholars have focused generally on particular cases of the Russian interventionism and their impact on the Russia – West relations. Therefore, the project represents a substantially innovative and unique approach, what is evidenced by five factors: comprehensive and systematic analysis; unique, interdisciplinary methodology; comprehensive approach; focus on the existing regularities and links; efforts to verify current theoretical framework on armed conflicts.

Expected results

The research will have an added value in form of new data collected, more comprehensive and deepened analysis of contemporary armed conflicts and – above all – proposition of new explanatory model to interpret dynamic and evolution of contemporary Russian military engagements. Such issues are currently exceptionally topical. Since the end of the Cold War the Russian Federation has intervened militarily in armed conflicts in Eastern Europe, North and South Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East, devoting to that actions significant resources and risking seriously its international reputation. Its military activity has had a considerable impact on the recent international crises (Ukraine, Syria), as well as on the functioning of the post-Cold War international order, becoming a challenge for the Western countries, in particular for Poland. Studying Russian practices and policies on use of force could be crucial both for better understanding of current state of international affairs and for formulating more elaborated prognoses of future developments. The project will also offer an opportunity to test theoretical concepts concerning the character and conduct of contemporary military conflicts and Russian way of use of force in international relations.