MILITARY INTERVENTIONS IN INTERNAL WARS

The Study of Peace or the Study of War?

av

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This thesis sets out to increase our understanding on how to conduct successful military interventions in internal wars, such as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. But, instead of investigating different variables which might contribute to success, the focus is on the practice of knowledge production.

Numerous scholars have focused on how to conduct military interventions in internal wars successfully. However, research is conducted in different disciplines, such as Peace Studies and War Studies. According to interdisciplinary advocates, this might impede a rational advancement of knowledge. The aim of this thesis, therefore, is to scrutinise whether military interventions in internal wars are understood and approached differently in different disciplines, and to investigate whether these differences result in different knowledge about how to conduct successful military interventions in internal wars. The investigation has been conducted in two steps.

In the first step – focusing on theory – research on peace operations and counterinsurgencies was compared, regarding underlying assumptions, independent and dependent variables, causal mechanisms and methodology. Several differences were identified. Not only are the underlying assumptions, theories, and variables different between the two research areas of peace operations and counterinsurgencies, there are also differences in methodological approaches, such as the unit of analysis. These differences could imply that disciplines frame the way we understand the object of study and how we conduct research.

In the second step – focusing on practice – the ISAF mission in Afghanistan was interpreted from the two disciplinary perspectives. Several differences were identified here as well, suggesting that disciplinary approaches influence our knowledge of how to conduct successful military interventions in internal wars. Departing from the differences found between the two research areas in the first part of the thesis, different ways to overcome these differences are suggested. Following these suggestions, research on military interventions in internal wars might become more rational, potentially increasing our understanding of how to conduct these operations successfully.

Key words: Afghanistan, civil war, counterinsurgency, insurgency, interdisciplinarity, ISAF, military intervention, peace operation, Peace Studies, War Studies.