

Western Ways of Warfare: A Non-Western Meta-Legal Reflection

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Abstract

For long-term exploration and analysis of the western paradigm (or method of intervention) in conflicts, this study aims to examine its historical, philosophical, and meta-legal context. It is assumed that, rather than mere methodological exercise, any reflection that would facilitate the understanding of the conceptual ‘West’ and, by extension, its way of warfare, should essentially be epistemological and compellingly ethnographic. So, going beyond the Russian-Ukraine war of the 2020s, the study revisits two different but related philosophical questions. One is ontological: Is there a way of war that is peculiar to the West on whom Fukuyama’s work, for example, rests? The other is epistemological: how can the claimed western way of war be understood or explained?

This meta-legal reflection specifically adds to, and complements, existing epistemological discourse around a western way of war by revisiting the intellectual tradition of scepticism: in this context, the perspective that knowledge, including a western paradigm of warfare, is impossible. Drawing insights from western political thought and public theology, it revisits the question of whether or why the rule of law still takes precedence over security when it comes to military strategy. Also, by building on the context and insights for understudying western intervention in armed conflicts, scholars should have more accessible grounds in the future for assessing, analysing, interpreting or predicting western engagements in declared wars.

Keywords: Political theology; Western way of war; Cultural practice; Scepticism; Meta-legal reflection; Rule of law; Military Strategy