



Securing the New World Order:
An Analysis of Representations of the
Legality of Security Council Actions in
the Post-Cold War Era

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of representations of international legal texts which describe and justify the post-Cold War role of the United Nations Security Council. The post-Cold War era has seen a revitalisation of the Security Council and an expansion of its role in maintaining international peace and security. The resulting debates about the legality, legitimacy and morality of Security Council actions reveal a great deal about the powerful myths that shape the identity and the identifications of internationalists.

The thesis has three principal aims. The first is to analyse the theories of collective security upon which international legal doctrines are based. I explore the underlying assumptions about the causes of security crises and the effects of military intervention which inform arguments about the legitimacy of Security Council actions. Those assumptions limit the capacity of international lawyers to achieve the goals of peace and security or to engage with the process of globalisation.

The second aim is to explore the operation of collective security texts at the ideological or cultural level. I argue that while international lawyers are not successful on their own terms in offering an account of the operation of law and politics in the collective security field, legal texts do have an effect as cultural products. Texts about intervention operate to legitimise and naturalise a new set of power relations emerging in the post-Cold War era. I draw on literary, cultural and film theory to explore the fascination, appeal and effects of intervention narratives.

The third aim is to consider how international lawyers might develop the ethical practices necessary to think critically about the power effects of the knowledge they produce. I argue that such issues can only be addressed by complicating the way in which power is understood to be operating in and through international law. While international law remains concerned primarily with attempts to develop constraints on the exercise of power as it operates through repressive means at the level of the state or international organisations, it ignores forms of power that operate in more productive, private and personal ways. Those who participate in shaping perceptions of the legality of the actions of multilateral institutions need to develop a self-reflexive intellectual practice, one which recognises that law's stories are both an exercise and an effect of power relations.

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